

INFORMATION TO USERS

This was produced from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure you of complete continuity.
2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark it is an indication that the film inspector noticed either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, or duplicate copy. Unless we meant to delete copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed, you will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted you will find a target note listing the pages in the adjacent frame.
3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed the photographer has followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.
4. For any illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and tipped into your xerographic copy. Requests can be made to our Dissertations Customer Services Department.
5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases we have filmed the best available copy.

University
Microfilms
International

300 N. ZEEB RD., ANN ARBOR, MI 48106

8212216

Aronson, Jacqueline Stahl

SAMUEL JACKSON PRATT: SYSTEM AND SENTIMENT

City University of New York

PH.D. 1982

**University
Microfilms
International** 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Copyright 1982

by

Aronson, Jacqueline Stahl

All Rights Reserved

SAMUEL JACKSON PRATT: SYSTEM AND SENTIMENT

by

JACQUELINE STAHL ARONSON

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York

1982

© COPYRIGHT BY
JACQUELINE STAHL ARONSON
1982

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Jan. 25, 1982
date

Robert D. Dery
Chairman, Examining Committee

1-26-82
date

Phillip J. Fede
Executive Officer

Coleman T. Parsons

Marvin Magalanes

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Acknowledgments

I am most grateful to Professor Robert Adams Day for suggesting the subject of this study and for his wise guidance throughout the various stages of its preparation. I thank Professor Coleman Parsons for his meticulous criticisms and for the untiring patience and good humor with which he answered my questions about documentation. I thank Professor Marvin Magalaner, from whose comments on the manuscript I have profited. I wish also to thank Deena Frazier of The New York Society Library, who made the Hammond Collection of the library available to me and who gave generously of her time to help me in my research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION vi

Chapter

I. Samuel Jackson Pratt: A Biographical
Summary 1

II. Systems, Style and Structure in
Liberal Opinions 22

III. Didacticism: The Themes of War and
Parental Tyranny in Emma Corbett 129

IV. The Lesser Novels: Characterization and
Sentiment in The Pupil of Pleasure,
Travels for the Heart, Shenstone Green
and Family Secrets 248

APPENDIX 286

BIBLIOGRAPHY 288

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the novels of Samuel Jackson Pratt, evaluating their worth and interest. The novels are related here to some other representative novels of the period (although these comparisons are tangential to my primary purpose) and are seen as reflecting their author's complex mind. Like most novelists who deal with human beings caught up in a social milieu, Pratt was a social critic and moralist.

During the final three years of his life (1811-1814), he published an anthology of extracts from his works entitled "Morality of the English Novel and Romance" in Literary Panorama. The series, "designed to illustrate the perspicuity of novelists as moral teachers,"¹ reflects the lifelong interest in this role of the novelist apparent in all of Pratt's fiction.

As moral exempla, Pratt's fictions explore the effects of sentimental doctrine and social milieu on the lives of his protagonists, several of whom (those in Liberal Opinions and Family Secrets, for example) are similar to modern anti-heroes. They are rendered ineffectual as their search for the perfect system of beliefs and their image of themselves as men of sentiment collide with the

complexities of human interaction in everyday life.

The subject of my second chapter is Pratt's first and most interesting novel, Liberal Opinions Upon Men, Animals and Providence. Untidy in its organization, the work includes a protest against man's cruelty and barbarism to the lower order of creatures in its indictment of the evils of contemporary education and society.

The events of the "novel" take place within the context of two social milieu: London and a rural boys' school. In his portrayal of the character of Benignus, his whiningly luckless protagonist, Pratt shows how that young man misuses the philosophy he has been taught, "To be good is to be happy," as an excuse for interfering in the lives of others. Meanwhile Benignus' allegedly well-meaning sentimentality helps him to avoid confronting his own life on its own terms while simultaneously managing to deny many of its realities. Pratt's implicit criticism of his protagonist is a criticism of the distorted values inculcated in the young by those entrusted with their education.

Chapter III, an examination of Emma Corbett, or the Miseries of Civil War, is concerned with two kinds of devastation: domestic and national; and the effects of parental tyranny on youth and the effects of war on both youth and age. Through the portrayal of an allegedly anti-sentimental and worldly, yet idealistic character, Sir Robert Raymond, Pratt comments on the politics of war and the hypocrisy of certain alleged patriots. With some

subtlety and a good deal of complexity Emma Corbett turns its principal characters topsy-turvy (a technique he also uses in a drama he wrote on the effects of the French Revolution).²

Pratt contrasts the novel's allegedly tough realist, Sir Robert, with its villain, Emma's father, Charles Corbett, who regards himself as a man of sentiment. Sir Robert deludes himself about his own nature and Corbett deludes himself about his own motives. While Emma Corbett deals ostensibly with war, its underlying theme is shown to be the human condition and the nature of illusion.

The milieu of the characters in The Pupil of Pleasure is Buxton, a fashionable resort. Against the background of its frivolous pleasures Pratt highlights the evil schemes of his protagonist, Chesterfield's disciple, Sedley. Larger than life, the novel's villain melodramatically illustrates the terrible consequences of a philosophical system Pratt interpreted as vicious. But paradoxically the opposite of Sedley's viciousness--the perfect virtue of Sir Henry Delmore and his family--is shown to have its own dangers. Thus the characters in The Pupil of Pleasure who are portrayed as models of sentimental virtue are betrayed by the naivete and unworldliness that is apparently inseparable from their virtue into a dangerous vulnerability to the stratagems of worldly evil.

Pratt said that in Travels for the Heart he intended to demonstrate that it is life's trifles that give it meaning

and educate the heart. Imitative of Sterne, Pratt's slim travel book combines froth and didacticism. In apostrophes directed against "Prejudice" and "Partiality" the Traveler teases the narrow insularity of his London-bred readers and adjures them to enlarge and expand their hearts beyond the confines of their own kingdom and to accept and appreciate people of all manners, all modes, and all persuasions, as well as all languages."³ The exhortation is conventional, even banal, but it is serious nonetheless: prejudice and unyielding attachment to the familiar are human characteristics which still require vigilance to be overcome. Pratt's light and frequently facetious protests against this human failing in Travels for the Heart is accompanied by graphic examples of boorish London youth vandalizing the shrines they visit. Pratt shows the need for visitors to behave with civility and respect, as grateful guests in the countries where they sojourn.

Shenstone Green is a lighthearted comic utopia. Charming and amusing, it nevertheless has a serious point to make about human nature, and the need for established systems of government. Thus, for example, when the novel's idealistic protagonist Sir Benjamin Beauchamp wipes the sweat from the brow of one of his laborers, the man asks to be treated to some spirits, which he receives from his employer. But then he spreads the rumor that Sir Benjamin is mentally deranged. And so it goes in this utopia--the actions of the idealistic are consistently misinterpreted and the cynics

win the day.

Pratt's last novel, Family Secrets, Literary and Domestic, runs to five lengthy volumes. His most insistently didactic novel, it is the one most directly concerned with sentimentality. His least schematic novel, it presents sentimentality most ambiguously. Family Secrets repeatedly attacks sentimentality, but on the level of its plot the lesson it appears to be teaching is that sentimentality is a virtue which finally rewards those who are patient. But the overt criticism of sentimentality, which is one of the novel's themes and is present throughout, is both confusing and thought-provoking.

Pratt viewed the world around him, created an imaginary world that represented that real one, and in so doing rendered his judgment of it. Sometimes, as in Family Secrets, that judgment was an ambiguous one, one which forced its readers to think. The writer who can confuse and provoke his readers on the subject of serious moral choices without alienating them is worth examining. The tools of Pratt's exploration of the novel's moral questions--systems and sentimentality--are elements whose significance I feel justified in stressing.

Notes to Introduction

¹ Robert Mayo, The English Novel in the Magazines, 1740-1815 (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1962), p. 422.

² Travels for the Heart Written in France. In Two Volumes (Dublin, 1777), I, 31-32.

³ "Hail Fellow! Well Met!" in Harvest Home: Consisting of Supplementary Gleanings, Original Lramas and Poems . . . (London: R. Phillips, 1805), II, 1: "The maid is the mistress, the master's the man, / For higgledy-piggledy now is the plan."

Chapter One

The records of the life of Samuel Jackson Pratt offer a fascinating inconsistency--two birth dates are given. The Dictionary of National Biography and two nineteenth-century sources give 1749 as the year of his birth.¹ The Parish Register of St. Ives, Huntingdonshire, however, gives the year as 1747.² Since a brother, Thomas, was born in 1749, it is unlikely that Samuel Jackson was born in the same year (Hayre, p. 10, n. 2). Not alone nineteenth century biographers, but also the Monthly Mirror, printed in 1803, during Pratt's lifetime subtracts two years from his age--a change he would hardly have wished to make out of vanity--the number is too small. Perhaps Pratt had other reasons. In any event, the question of his birthdate, the circumstances of his marriage, and the differing reports of his early life, present inconsistencies are a challenge to the researcher attempting a biographical summary.

An 1814 memoir--in effect an obituary--in the Gentleman's Magazine said, "[Pratt] was descended from a very respectable family; his father, it is believed, having been High Sheriff of Huntingdonshire."³ The qualification "it is believed" is somewhat unusual, since obituary notices tend to stress the known and gloss over the uncertain in their subjects' lives.

A memoir that appeared in several consecutive issues of the Monthly Mirror in 1803 describes Pratt's father's prominence and the grandeur of his family "seat." This memoir said of Pratt's father that besides serving twice as high sheriff for his county, he was for many years "an upright and assiduous magistrate."⁴ Other contemporary sources say that Pratt's father was a brewer, and indeed he may have been a brewer who also served as sheriff and magistrate.⁵ After noting Pratt's attendance at Felstead school, the Monthly speaks of the historic importance of the mansion in which Pratt was allegedly reared and goes on to mention Pratt's tutelage by Dr. Hawkesworth:

Mr. Pratt received the rudiments of classical education as Felstead, a celebrated seminary in Essex, in which country the family seat of Rookwood-hall was situated. This mansion was once the residence of the Capels, and is famous in history for being the place where the princess Elizabeth was concealed from the jealous rage of her sister Queen Mary, till she could be conveyed to a more secure retreat. It appears that afterwards, Mr. Pratt was sometime under the private tuition of the celebrated Dr. Hawkesworth, a fact we have ascertained from his elegant dedication of the fifth volume of his "Gleanings," to the Marquis of Lansdown. (p. 363)

After impressing upon the reader the "original splendour of [Pratt's] situation," the memoir continues, "Fortune smil'd deceitful on [Pratt's] birth." It alludes to undisclosed forces that frustrated Pratt's hopes of an independent fortune and reduced him to "that

mediocrity of condition which has been his lot for so long:"

The causes that led to the decay of his family, and the frustration of his hopes as a man of independent property, it is not our business to enquire into, nor are we qualified to develop them. It is sufficient here to observe, that his life seems early to have been chequered by hopes and fears, by success and disappointment; and that, in consequence of these alterations quickly succeeding each other, he fixed in neither of the learned professions, though his genius and his talents would have reflected a lustre on the highest situation in the church, or at the bar. (363-364)

Pratt's disappointed hopes of an independent fortune found expression in his novels. The heroes in all the novels except Emma Corbett have independent fortunes. Unfortunately, vicarious satisfaction could not pay Pratt's rent.

Several of the statements in this memoir seem suspect, some are mysteriously vague, and one of them leads to an inference that is contrary to facts of Pratt's life that are verifiable in contemporary sources. What is obviously suspect is the reported grandeur and historical importance of Pratt's home. Anna Seward said that Pratt's father was a "petty grocer."⁶ If he were, he would hardly have owned the mansion described in the memoir. Although after 1784 Miss Seward was an enemy of Pratt's and probably wished to be as disparaging as possible, the fact that no other report but the Mirror's alludes to the grandeur of Pratt's home suggests some exaggeration.⁷ Also questionable is the information that Dr. Hawkesworth was Pratt's tutor, since the source of that statement in the memoir was

one of the several miscellanies Pratt himself wrote.⁸ Moreover, in 1801, when Pratt wrote of Hawkesworth as "one of the dearest Friends and wisest Instructors of my youth," he might safely make such a claim, accurate or not, since Hawkesworth had died in 1773. There is some question also as to whether Pratt received "the rudiments of a classical education" at Felstead. Pratt is thought to have attended the school in 1760, but although he is listed in Alumni Felstedienses, the dates of his admission to the school and his departure are not given.⁹

In contrast to the 1803 memoir the Gentleman's Magazine makes no mention of Pratt's education, merely remarking that Pratt "commenced his literary course very early in life." (398) As to the causes of Pratt's declining fortunes, the 1803 memoir is vague. Finally, the statement in the memoir that Pratt had "fixed in neither of the learned professions," is contrary to contemporary records. When Pratt's first published poetic effort appeared in the 1771 Annual Register, it was attributed to the "Rev. Mr. Pratt, of Peterborough." Another contemporary source described Pratt as "an esteemed and popular preacher" at the time his first poem was published.¹⁰

Besides ignoring the fact that Pratt ever took orders, the 1803 memoir fails to mention his career as an actor, a part of Pratt's history that is recorded in contemporary accounts of the stage and included in the Gentleman's Magazine memoir of 1814.¹¹

Pratt said that the Monthly Magazine's memoir was written by a "female friend" whose identity he did not disclose. The style, however, and the laudatory tone and content of the sketch, suggest that Pratt may have written it, or at least had a hand in it--a suggestion that was made at the time the sketch was printed (Hayre, p. 3). In any case, an impression of Pratt's background very different from that conveyed in the sketches in the 1803 Monthly Magazine or the 1814 Gentleman's Magazine emerges from Anna Seward's letters to her friend Richard Polwhele.¹²

Miss Seward writes that Pratt married Ann Larry, who had been her girlhood friend, under false pretenses, and that after exhausting his wife's modest fortune of fifteen hundred pounds, he prevailed upon his parents to procure for him deacon's orders and the curacy of a parish church in Peterborough. Miss Seward was regarded as a bitter and vindictive woman in her day, a view accepted by scholars today, and can therefore hardly be considered a wholly reliable witness.¹³ Josephine Grieder remarks however that "in view of other evidence, her account does not seem improbable" (p. 468).

If Miss Seward's girlhood friendship with the ill used Ann Larry made her a biased judge of Pratt's character, her belief that he was responsible for the scathing reviews of her poem Louisa, a political novel, which appeared in the European Magazine and English Review of 1784, would almost certainly have prejudiced further her reports of Pratt.

Moreover, Miss Seward's correspondence with Thomas Sedgewick Whalley, described by Grieder as a "clergyman in absentia, literary dilettante, and husband of heiresses" (p. 470), indicates that she felt Pratt had taken "unwarrantable liberties with his name and literary reputation" (Grieder, p. 471). According to her account, Pratt's conduct in relation to her friend as well as to herself was deceitful and dishonorable: she reported that Pratt presented himself to Miss Larry as "Montague," a noble orphan soon to inherit a large fortune, and the author of the then anonymous Lady Julia Mandeville.

Miss Seward's version of subsequent events is that the lovers eloped to Scotland and that, on their return to Birmingham, Pratt was arrested for debts which his wife paid. After Pratt had dissipated his wife's remaining money, and finally told her the truth about his circumstances, he took her and their infant daughter home to St. Ives to his parents (Grieder, pp. 467-468).

The marriage seems to have taken place in 1768. If the date of his birth recorded in the parish records of St. Ives is correct, Pratt was twenty-one when he married. If, however, Pratt presented himself to Miss Larry as not yet having come of age, and still awaiting his inheritance, he would have had to subtract a year or two from his age--subtracting two years would have given him more time to think of a plausible explanation as to why the promised fortune was not forthcoming.

According to Miss Seward, a few years after taking orders Pratt abandoned his young wife and child and ran off with a Mrs. Melmoth, a strolling actress who was already married, and whose name and profession he took.¹⁴ The pair were companions for the greater part of the next twelve years. Together they acted in itinerant companies in Ireland, Scotland and London.¹⁵ Between acting engagements, Pratt, using the pseudonym Courtney Melmoth, published various works of prose and poetry. His characteristic themes were benevolence, distress, and grief at the loss of the worthy dead.

As these themes suggest, Pratt saw himself as a man concerned with conventionally sentimental values. What we know of his early life, however, suggests that his conduct was frequently guided not by lofty spiritual aims, but by fleshly, materialistic impulses. Yet Pratt's inconsistencies were human inconsistencies. As Dr. Johnson has said, "A man may be very sincere in good principles, without having good practice."¹⁶

The account of Pratt in the Monthly Mirror of 1803 is couched in panegyric, Miss Seward's account of Pratt is disparaging, and there is no extant autobiography.¹⁷ The interested researcher must fall back on information given in the few accounts written by Pratt's friends, and make his own judgment.

But if Pratt was irresponsible in his private life, abandoning his wife and child, and borrowing money without

bothering to repay it, in his literary efforts he was indefatigable. Moreover, the products of his toil were marked by inventiveness and ingenuity, and often by excellence. Some of the contradictions in Pratt's life and character find parallels in his works--that is, he adopts lofty themes and praises sentimental virtues, but also treats of vice and deceit and worldliness.

The DNB reports that from the time of the publication of his first separately published work, a prose-and-poetic pamphlet entitled Tears of Genius Occasioned by the Death of Dr. Goldsmith, subtitled An Elegy on the favourite English poets lately deceased, imitative of the style of each (1774-1775), Pratt depended largely upon his pen for support. In 1775, he attracted the interest and patronage of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, "Queen of the Blues," to whom he dedicated his first novel, Liberal Opinions. Writing to her on October 23, 1775, after the publication of the first two volumes of Liberal Opinions, Pratt thanked her for her "approbation and enclosure." He ended his letter with a plea for further financial assistance.¹⁸

Between 1775 and 1780 Pratt, retaining the pseudonym Courtney Melmoth, wrote six works of prose fiction, as well as poetry, Biblical commentary, and literary criticism.¹⁹ One of the works of fiction, Travels for the Heart, was written in France. The slender, two-volume work, describing his journey to France and his experiences there, has marked affinities to A Sentimental Journey and The Life and Opinions

of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman.²⁰

Following the publication of Travels for the Heart, Pratt continued to live in France with Mrs. Melmoth. Still using the assumed name Courtney Melmoth, on January 28, 1778, Pratt presented a copy of Travels for the Heart to Benjamin Franklin, to whom he had been introduced in November 1777.²¹

In a letter, in which part of the date is missing, but which was probably written January 4, 1778, Pratt petitioned Franklin for a job. The letter states that Pratt's "great object" is to establish a "Connexion with the Cause of America. I at present desire employment and not reward."²²

The job was not forthcoming, but at some time between February and May Franklin loaned Pratt thirty-eight guineas. On May 12 Pratt wrote to Franklin again, asking for an additional loan of fifteen guineas and promising to repay the full debt in a short time. Pratt added that he and Mrs. Melmoth were ready to start for England in a day or two and asked Franklin to keep the fact a secret. The tone of Franklin's answering letter was impatient, but he enclosed money.

It was with greater inconvenience to myself than you perhaps imagined that I furnished you with the thirty-eight guineas before, and now with twelve more, which make the whole fifty guineas. I have too many occasions for money here, and too little to supply them. But I have relied and do rely on your honour and punctuality for the speedy repayment. I wish you and Mrs. Melmoth a good journey.

It shall be a secret with me as you desire, but I am sorry to understand that it is necessary.²³

Before he left France, Pratt wrote a letter, undated except for the year (1778) addressed to Franklin's grandson, William Temple Franklin, asking his help:

Plead for me in his [Franklin's] breast that no idle censures may affect me in his opinion till I have had fair time to combat and overcome uncommon misfortunes by reiterated endeavours. His judgment must be suspended--'tis all I ask.²⁴

Perhaps William Temple Franklin interceded for Pratt with his grandfather. In any case, the relationship seems to have endured, as evidenced by a manuscript letter from Franklin to Pratt, undated except for the year (1784), which thanks Pratt warmly for some books, and encloses "a trifle." In the letter, Franklin asks Pratt to intercede on his behalf with Mrs. Melmoth regarding a portrait of himself which the statesman had shown her but did not offer to her because "[she] did not appear to desire it." Franklin writes that Mrs. Melmoth's quarrel with him is pleasing to him, but that "the reconciliation, when [he] can obtain it, will be more so."²⁵ Given Franklin's reputation as a womanizer, his remark suggests the eager anticipation to make up a lover's quarrel.

By 1780 Pratt had moved to Bath and entered into partnership with a bookseller named Charles Clinch.²⁶ The pair maintained a circulating library, subsequently known as Godwin's Library, as well as a shop at the northwest corner

of Milsom Street. They also occasionally published books, including Pratt's novel, Emma Corbett. In Bath, Pratt became a member of Lady Miller's Bath-Easton literary circle and entered the poetical competition for the prize vase.²⁷ Lady Miller was a provincial poetess and social arbiter. The poetry produced by her circle was held cheap by Dr. Johnson.²⁸ Nevertheless, Fanny Burney, who visited the group in 1780, reported that it contained "few people who are not of rank or fame, and excluded all who are not people of character very unblemished."²⁹

Pratt made two trips to France, the first in 1777, before he joined the Bath-Easton circle; the second visit was part of a trip abroad made during the period 1789-1794. Pratt attributed both trips to a desire to travel, but Anna Seward has something else to say about his second trip. In a letter to Robert Polwhele, she writes that Pratt left England in 1789 after "being caned in a public coffee-house, by a gentleman, whose wife he had traduced in a newspaper" (II, 573).

Whatever mistakes and imprudence Pratt may have been guilty of, his attitude toward benevolence was not all for show. He sometimes acted with genuine generosity. Towards the end of the last decade of his life, Pratt befriended Joseph Blacket, a sick and penniless young cobbler-turned-poet. He found Blacket a home, first with one well-known patron of the arts, Sir Richard Phillips, and then with another, Sir Ralph Milbanke. Pratt edited and arranged for

publication Specimens of the Poetry of Joseph Blacket in 1809. In 1811, shortly after the young poet's death, Pratt arranged for the publication of two more volumes of poetry entitled, The Remains of Joseph Blacket. These finally realized over five hundred pounds, which went to Blacket's indigent widowed mother and his orphan daughter.³⁰

Pratt's benevolence was applauded in the press.³¹ Byron, however, who thought little of Pratt, considered his motives to be self-serving. In a letter to his friend, the translator Robert Charles Dallas, Byron said that "Cobbler Joe" was "a divine subject for subscription and biography; and Pratt who makes the most of his dedications, has inscribed the [volumes] to no less than five families of distinction."³² Annabella Milbanke, Blacket's patroness (and Byron's future wife), reported to her mother that at their second meeting Byron cautioned her "'against placing confidence in Pratt, of whose roguishness he had had personal experience.'"³³

Although Byron's attitude seems severe, it was nevertheless true that from the time of his first literary effort, a poem called "Partridges, an Elegy," published in the "Annual Register" for 1771, Pratt presented himself first and foremost as a man of feeling--sensitive to the distress and suffering of those about him.³⁴

During the years between the publication of his last novel, Family Secrets (1797), and his death in 1814, Pratt worked with his characteristic industry. His literary

output during the final decade and a half of his life was of three types: new works that included sentimental poems, travel books and a miscellany containing three plays; new editions of poetry and sentimental anecdotes he had published previously; and compilations of selected prose and poetry written by others. Pratt was probably also responsible for a new translation of The Sorrows of Werther listed in 1809 as by "Dr. Pratt." Pratt was unslacking in his literary toil, as the list of works from 1799 to 1814 in my Appendix indicates.

Pratt changed the title of his poem Bread; or the Poor, first published in 1801, to The Poor or Bread in 1802, and to Cottage Pictures; or the Poor in 1803. Such excessive changes may have been attempts to make old works seem new. Although he continued to work, in a variety of genres, the financial distress Pratt suffered towards the end of his life was great.

Pratt had his detractors but he also had friends who tried to protect his name and reputation. One such was John Taylor, mentioned in connection with Anna Seward (n. 17). Robert Charles Dallas was another. He persuaded Byron to substitute new verses for some that he had written for English Bards and Scotch Reviewers ridiculing Pratt.³⁵ Other friends encouraged and supported Pratt emotionally and financially. Among those who gave Pratt money as well as encouragement were Mrs. Montague, Mrs. Siddons, Benjamin Franklin, Dr. William Mavor, and William Hutton. Franklin's

name is the most renowned in this list. It is interesting to note that in 1778, when, as we saw, Pratt met and succeeded in borrowing a total of fifty guineas from the statesman during a short period of time, Franklin was seventy-two, old enough to be a canny judge of character, but apparently adventurous enough to take a chance on a young man (and a young woman) of uncommon charm. At any rate, Franklin, as his 1784 letter indicates, stayed in touch with Pratt and continued to send him small sums as tokens of his esteem.

Pratt's staunch friends in England did more than supply token support. During his last years Pratt spent much of his time visiting his many friends. They cared for him in their homes and supported him when he was living with them.

In 1802 Pratt moved to Birmingham, where one of his friends, Dr. Mavor, a classical scholar and minor writer, started an annual purse to raise money for him. Other friends, among them William Hutton and his family, contributed generously to this fund.³⁶ After a lifetime of "endless labour all along" Pratt was brought to the point where he depended largely on the benevolence of his friends for his subsistence.³⁷

In the summer of 1814 Pratt was thrown from his horse and suffered injuries from which he never recovered. He lingered on for several months, writing until the end. At the time of his death he had ready for the press a volume of poems called Pillow Thoughts; the poems, however, were never

printed.

Pratt did not, like Savage, have Dr. Johnson to defend him; his works, and the questions they raise about what it means to be a fully human and social being, must speak for him. He was an original writer as Chateaubriand defines one: "An original writer is not one who imitates nobody, but one whom nobody can imitate."

Notes to Chapter One

¹Biographia Dramatica; or a Companion to the Playhouse, ed. D. E. Baker to 1764; Isaac Reed, ed. to 1782; Stephen James, ed. to 1811 (London: Printed for Rivingtons, 1812); John Nichols, ed. Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century . . . (London: Printed for the Author by Nichols, son and Bentley, 1812-1816). Vol. IX, 722.

²C. Ruth Hayre, "Samuel Jackson Pratt: Novelist and Poet, 1747-1814," Diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1949, p. 10, n. 2, hereafter cited in the text as Hayre.

³Gentleman's Magazine, 84 (October 1814), 398, hereafter cited in the text.

⁴Monthly Mirror, 15 (June 1803), 363, hereafter cited in the text.

⁵See David Rivers, Literary Memoirs of Living Authors in Great Britain (London: R. Faulder, 1798), II, 155.

⁶Anna Seward (1747-1809), was the daughter of Dr. Johnson's headmaster at Lichfield Grammar School. Although she had not yet been born when Dr. Johnson was at school in Lichfield, she knew him later. She was known as the "Swan of Lichfield;" Sir Walter Scott published her poetical works with a memoir in 1810. See Margaret Ashmun, The Singing Swan: An Account of Anna Seward and Her Acquaintance with Dr. Johnson, Boswell, and Others Of Their Time (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1931).

⁷See John Taylor, Records of My Life (New York: Bull, 1833), p. 39. Taylor, Pratt's friend and contemporary, wrote, "I cannot but feel much pleasure in the opportunity of rescuing [Pratt's] character from the relentless rancour of Miss Seward's posthumous defamation."

⁸John Hawkesworth (1715-1773), a miscellaneous writer, succeeded Samuel Johnson in 1744 as compiler of the Parliamentary debates for the Gentleman's Magazine, and from 1746 to 1749 contributed poems signed Greville, or H. Greville, to that journal. In company with Johnson and others he started the Adventurer, a periodical which ran to 140 numbers, of which 70 were from the pen of Hawkesworth himself. Hawkesworth and his wife kept a school at Bromley, Kent.

⁹This date is given in an article in the Essex Review, 7 (April 1898), pp. 26-40. The article is a brief summary of the history of the school, by "An Old Felstedian," whose name is not given. In the course of his remarks on Pratt, the writer avers: "It must be submitted that he was a sorry poet; many such have blossomed at Felsted, but few, happily, have come into full leaf outside the pages of the school magazine."

¹⁰E. W. Brayley, A Topographical and Historical Description of the County of Huntingdon (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1808), p. 485.

¹¹See Josephine Grieder, "'Amiable Writer' or 'Wretch'? The Elusive Samuel Jackson Pratt," Bulletin of Research in the Humanities, 81, No. 4 (Winter 1978), 467 n. 6:

John Genest, "Some Account of the Irish Stage, from 1660 to 1774," Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830 (Bath: Carrington, 1832), X, 526, records that "In the course of the [1772-73] season, Pratt, better known as Courtney Melmoth, made his 1st app. on the stage in Antony in All for Love--he afterwards acted Publius Horatius--Lusignan--Alwin--Jaffier and some few other characters--he was tall and genteel in his figure, easy in his deportment, a sensible speaker, but deficient in powers and force."

While many sources recorded in this biographical summary of Samuel Jackson Pratt's life appear in the DNB and CBEL, I am particularly indebted to Josephine Grieder for conversations with her concerning Pratt and in the article cited above, hereafter cited in the text.

¹²Letter dated June 18 [1805] in Richard Polwhele, Traditions and Recollections; domestic, clerical, and literary (London: John Nichols, 1826), II, 566-77, hereafter cited in the text.

¹³See Joseph Wood Krutch, Samuel Johnson (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1944), p. 404. Apparently Miss Seward bitterly disliked others besides Pratt. Krutch writes of the "bitterness" of Miss Seward's dislike of Johnson.

¹⁴See Joseph Ireland, Records of the New York Stage from 1750 to 1860 I (New York: T. H. Morrell, 1866), 105.

¹⁵William Smith Clark, The Irish Stage in the County Towns 1720 to 1800 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 368.

¹⁶James Boswell, Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides (1785; rpt. New York: Viking Press, 1936), p. 357.

¹⁷See Taylor, p. 34. Taylor states that Pratt had written a lengthy account of his life of which he had made an extract, which "he gave to me to read at his lodgings, while he was writing something for the press which waited for him." If Pratt wrote such an autobiography, it was never published, and the manuscript of it has not been found.

¹⁸Hayre, p. 24, states that seven manuscript letters from Pratt to Mrs. Montagu, the dates of which range from 1775 to 1786, are in possession of the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. She adds that there are also nine letters written by Pratt to Mrs. Montagu among the manuscripts of the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

¹⁹The prose fiction included Liberal Opinions (Vols. I and II in 1775, III-IV in 1776, V-VI in 1777); The Pupil of Pleasure (1776), Travels for the Heart (1777), The Tutor of Truth (1779), Shenstone-Green (1779), and Emma Corbett (1780); the poetry included The Progress of Painting (1775), Garrick's Looking Glass or the Art of Rising on the Stage, A Poem in Three Cantos (1776), and The Shadows of Shakespeare, A Monody occasioned by the Death of Mr. Garrick. Being a Prize Poem written for the Vase by Bath-Easton (1779); The Sublime and Beautiful of Scripture (1777) (Biblical commentary); Observations on the Night Thoughts of Dr. Young (1776), and An Apology for the life and writings of David Hume (1777). In addition, his farce Joseph Andrews was presented at Drury Lane April 20, 1778, but it was never published; and lines by Pratt, stigmatized by Charles Lamb as "a farrago of false thoughts and nonsense," and chosen in preference to an epitaph by Burke, were engraved on the monument to Garrick which was erected in 1797 in Westminster Abbey.

²⁰Anticipating that Travels for the Heart might be called imitative, Pratt states in his preface that, "[T]he very PLAN of these Travels, and those of Yorick agree in no part so much as that they were both written to amuse the heart, and with a design to be printed" (TH, I, p. xiv). Travels for the Heart, I, p. xv, further asks the reader to delay judgment: "To obviate all objection that might arise from the notion of the idea of these volumes being borrowed, from that beautiful work called the sentimental Journey [sic], it is requested that the reader peruse the performance before he judges of it."

²¹I am indebted to Hayre, p. 27 for the information that letters between Pratt and Franklin are preserved at the library of the American Philosophical Society. I am also indebted to Stephen Catlett, Manuscripts Librarian of the American Philosophical Society, for making Pratt's fifteen letters to Benjamin Franklin available to me. The letters are catalogued in the Calendar of the Papers of Benjamin

Franklin, in the Library of the American Philosophical Society, ed. Isaac Minis Hays, 5 vols. (Philadelphia, 1908).

²²Franklin Papers, VIII, 1, referred to by Hayre, p. 29. Pratt's genuine sympathy with the American cause is evident in his sixth novel, Emma Corbett or the Miseries of Civil War, (1780) which went into nine editions and was translated into French in 1783.

²³Franklin Papers, IX, 152.

²⁴Franklin Papers, CVII, 143.

²⁵I am indebted to Roy Goodman, Reference Librarian of the American Philosophical Society, for the information that the text of the letter in question appears in the works which follow. See The Writings of Benjamin Franklin, ed. Albert Henry Smyth (New York, Macmillan, 1906), IX, 283; the letter is headed "To Samuel Jackson Pratt." See also The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin, ed. John Bigelow (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons) IX, 72-73; the letter is headed "To M. Melmoth."

²⁶See Grieder, p. 469: "Pratt and Clinch took over from Andrew Tennent the shop which he had established at 24 Milsom Street in 1770; in April 1782 Clinch sold his share to Pratt; James Marshall joined the firm in 1787, and Pratt left it sometime thereafter." See also p. 469, n. 14: "V. J. Kite, 'Libraries in Bath 1618-1964' (thesis accepted for a Fellowship of the Library Association, 1966)."

²⁷Although Hayre states that "after 1778 Mrs. Melmoth no longer figures in Pratt's life" (p. 35) the letter from Franklin dated 1784 indicates that she did figure in his life at that time. Probably she lived apart from Pratt from 1778 until about 1783, since it is unlikely that Pratt would have been accepted, as in fact he was, in the Bath-Easton circle were Mrs. Melmoth his companion during that period.

²⁸See Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill, revised by L. F. Powell (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1934), II, 336-37; when Boswell named a gentleman of Johnson's acquaintance who wrote for the Vase, Johnson said, "He was a block-head for his pains."

²⁹Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay . . . ed. by her niece (London: Colburn, 1854), I, 309.

³⁰John Blacket, "Joseph Blacket and his Links to Byron," London Quarterly Review, 5th Ser., 29 (January-April 1925), 26-40. John Blacket is the poet's grandson.

³¹Grieder, p. 475, n. 27: "Contemporary reports, all of which mention Pratt's efforts, include three articles in the Gentleman's Magazine, 79 (May 1809), 451-52, 81 (October 1811), 337-41, and 81 (November 1811), 442-46; 'An Untaught Bard's First Appearance in Public,' Literary Panorama, 6 (April 1809), 414-42; and a note in Pratt's own The Lower World (London: Sharpe and Hailes, 1810), pp. 95-97."

³²Byron's Letters and Journals, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (London: Murray, 1973), II, 76, hereafter cited in the text.

³³Quoted in Malcolm Elwin, Lord Byron's wife (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1963), p. 109. Noted also by Grieder, p. 476.

³⁴The poem is a sentimental one in which the speaker, a partridge, expresses her grief as she laments the killing of her mate. The poem's final lines offer the speaker's own life as a sacrifice to sportsmen's guns in order that the lives of her young might be spared. Pratt, most of whose writings must be called sentimental, took the transformation of sensibility and sympathy into love, pity, and benevolence towards birds, beasts, and Blacks, as well as towards one's fellows, as his characteristic theme. His best known poem, "Sympathy, or a Sketch of the Social Passion" written in 1781 (which had gone into a tenth edition by 1817), presents a plea for sympathy for the helpless and the distressed.

³⁵See The Works of Lord Byron. Poetry, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (1918; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1966), I, 322, n. 2. Lines 319-26 originally read:

In verse most stale, unprofitable, flat--
Come, let us change the scene, and 'glean' with Pratt;
In him an author's luckless lot behold,
Condemned to make the books which once he sold:
Degraded man! again resume thy trade--
The votaries of the Muse are ill repaid,
Though daily puffs once more invite to buy
A new edition of thy 'Sympathy.'

³⁶Grieder, p. 478, n. 34:
The editor of The Life of William Hutton, Stationer, of Birmingham; and the history of his family. Written by himself. With some extracts from his other works (London: Knight, 1841), adds information about his financial plight: "In the latter years of his life Pratt's principal or sole means of support were derived from an annual purse made up by his Birmingham and other friends, to which William Hutton and his family contributed" (p. 72). The same source says that Pratt had proposed in 1802 to become Hutton's biographer.

³⁷ See Hesther Piozzi, Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, L.L.D. . . ., ed. Arthur Shero (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974) p. 81.

Chapter Two

The original title of Pratt's first novel was Liberal Opinions upon Men, Animals and Providence; all editions subsequent to the first bear the title Liberal Opinions, or the History of Benignus.¹ The novel was dedicated to Mrs. Elizabeth Montague, "Queen of the Blues" (blue-stockings), whose patronage the young author enjoyed.

Liberal Opinions was published in 1775, when the author was twenty-eight. The title suggests the scope of Pratt's ambition. In six volumes he constructs, as a framework for his views, what on the surface looks like a sentimental novel in which a young man, Benignus, journeys to London and falls victim to its snares and temptations. On a deeper level, the novel is an indictment of eighteenth-century rationality.

Ernest Baker has called Pratt's original title for his first novel "bizarre," but a title of that sort is characteristic of the age and appropriate to Pratt's purposes.² It is likely that Pratt chose the title in the belief that its inclusiveness gave him "freer scope and . . . sanction for indulging speculations" (I, 4) than did "those compositions which are formally fettered by the chains of

criticism" (I, 21). He explains that Liberal Opinions is "somewhat unmethodical . . . and that I might not tire by systematic sameness, I have varied my style, as often as I varied my subject" (I, vi). The variety and irregularity Pratt prized point to his kinship with Sterne, and indicate his novel's debt to Sterne's masterpiece The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman.

Baker places Pratt among those writers (Mackenzie, Mrs. Bonhote, and Jane Timbury) whose prose fictions imitate Sterne's sensibility rather than his humor, and adds that while in Liberal Opinions Pratt availed himself of Sterne's miscellaneousness, he did so "without going too far in copying his willful eccentricities" (V, 99).

Notwithstanding Baker's view of Pratt's prose fictions, Pratt's portrayal of sensibility in Liberal Opinions, and in each of his other prose fictions with the exception of Travels for the Heart (1777), is self-indulgently moist, lacking Sterne's light, humorous touches. But when Pratt turns his efforts away from the scenes of sensibility to comic and satiric scenes, he is in firm control of a prose marked by lively inventiveness. The comic and satiric scenes in Liberal Opinions more than compensate modern readers for the swampiness of its pathetic scenes; and the modern reader must bear in mind that the appetite of Pratt's contemporaries for the pathetic made them relish scenes we tolerate only as relics of a bygone age.

Pratt demonstrates in his first novel that he is more than just another among Sterne's innumerable imitators. Liberal Opinions shows Pratt's sensitivity to the nuances and possibilities of language at the same time that it reveals him as an original thinker and a discriminating intelligence. Whether he is deploying the rhetorical and sensuous possibilities of sound to amplify meaning or to undercut it, or whether he is simply giving play to his sense of whimsy, in the finest portions of this prose fiction his skillful use of language lends energy and vitality to Liberal Opinions.

Pratt set a number of serious and ambitious goals for himself in Liberal Opinions. First, he declared his general intention to supply his readers with "fresh instruction [and] unhackneyed entertainment" (I, 6). The "instruction" was to be moral, the "entertainment" decent, suitable reading for a young female. In Volume II Pratt says he intends "to vindicate the ways of God not only to man, but to every other living creature" (p. 165). Now since the only "fresh" aspect of Pratt's didactic intention is his desire to include "every other living creature" besides man in his vindication of God's ways, we need some explanation as to why he considered the conventional goal of his literary instruction "fresh." What comes to mind is the possibility that Pratt intended to teach a conventional lesson in an unconventional way. Instead of showing a good man or an evil one, or even a flawed young man like

Tom Jones, whom the reader nevertheless admires, Pratt has chosen as the protagonist a well-intentioned but self-deluded young man, whom he exposes to ridicule. Pratt instructs the reader through this young man's experiences.

Some readers and reviewers of the first two volumes of Liberal Opinions expressed "hearty disapprobation of the design and spirit of the work."³ Perhaps in answer to this criticism, Pratt's Preface to Volume V, written in 1776, focused on certain of his didactic aims. In the Preface Pratt declared his intention

. . . to analyze the real characters of men, to display the strange and ridiculous inconsistencies of human opinion respecting HAPPINESS: and . . . to fix, by predominant arguments, the highest degree of that happiness, in the practice of Virtue, and in the precepts of Christianity (V, viii-ix).

The novel itself, however, does not support Pratt's statement of moral intentions. Pratt's real achievement in Liberal Opinions is to hold up to ridicule the eighteenth-century's expansive faith in Reason, particularly as manifested in the almost religious faith many of his countrymen placed in the apparent rationality of organized systems. As Swift ridiculed the projects and the experiments of the scientists of the Academy of Lagado, as Fielding exposed the hypocrisy of the theological and philosophical pedantry of Thwackum and Square, as Sterne ridiculed Walter Shandy's schemes for his son's education, so does Pratt in Liberal Opinions ridicule and expose the doctrines, schemes, and

systems that the novel's protagonist, Benignus, stumbles upon in his quest for happiness.

Benignus, an innocent like Candide, believes the platitudes that he has been taught. He sets out to prove that the maxim, "To be good is to be happy," is all the guidance he needs to attain happiness. His journey through life is organized as a sentimental education in the course of which he confronts successive value systems whose advocates represent them as logical and rational guides to happiness. He explores, one by one, four of these systems: benevolence, traditional education, religion, and systems as an end in themselves.

Pratt uses the word "system" repeatedly. Each use adds strength to his attack on systems and alerts the reader to his didactic intention. In the course of his peregrinations, Benignus visits a Society of Systems, where the focus is not only on moral and educational systems, but on religious and philosophical ones as well. Liberal Opinions suggests again and again that systems invariably take a man either too far or not far enough. Because they constrict the range of behavior possible to him by limiting his alternatives, they encourage rigidity and discourage spontaneity and originality. Hence systems are frequently inadequate, useless, or disastrous guides to conduct. Moreover, as Benignus's history will prove, a too rigid reliance on any system obstructs not only spontaneity and originality, but also mental acuity.

In his search for happiness, Benignus fails to learn what he needs to know about systems because he approaches them not as a philosopher, seeking to understand them, but as a disciple eager to obey them. Thus he fails to learn that no one system can provide all the answers. He does, however, discover that even obviously flawed systems such as his mentor Draper's have admirable features, and that therefore one should perhaps not totally disregard such systems. Finally, his experience with Draper gives him a hint of the fact that perhaps the best way to deal with systems is to take a liberal view of them.

The early pages of Liberal Opinions recount the unfortunate events that befall Benignus as a result of his trust in the received opinion that "to be good is to be happy." Benignus is not introduced, however, until page seventy-two of the first volume of what purports to be his history. What precedes his introduction is a melange of essays and sketches that Pratt called "moral Fancy pieces" (I, p. 6). Only those concerned with education and with the mistreatment of animals have a discernible connection to Benignus's story. Rather they give Pratt an opportunity to ride some of his favorite hobby horses, particularly those that fit his view of himself as a man of sentiment. Pratt justifies them by saying that although he does not mean to "run riot in the wilderness of modern digression," neither does he wish to be "absolutely tied down to the rules of writing" (I, p. 4).

How little fettered he was by the rules of writing is evident in the variety of subjects presented in the opening essays and in other essays introduced throughout the novel. In these essays and sketches, Pratt comments on the lamentable tendency of teachers to require conformity of their students, on the absurdity of "grand tours" as a means of educating youth, and on subjects as diverse as the art and economics of writing dedications and the fidelity among birds, animals, and even insects as compared with the faithlessness among human beings. One of his main concerns is the frequent brutal treatment animals receive at the hands of men.

The reader finally meets Benignus at age sixteen, when he is about to embark on his life's journey. Following a series of misfortunes that befall him at school, Benignus, unaware of the part he plays in provoking mistreatment from his school fellows, sends his guardian a letter that contains an "explicit account" of the humiliation, punishment, and ostracism that he has suffered. Benignus's guardian, a worthy clergyman beloved by his flock, "died of an apoplexy an hour after the receipt of Benignus's letter, which he was preparing to answer" (I, p. 121).

Pratt does not make clear whether Benignus is responsible for his guardian's death, but the reader must consider the possibility that the death resulted from the clergyman's shock at his nephew's ill-treatment. In any case, whatever precipitated the apoplectic fit,

Benignus becomes rich as a result. He leaves school and sets out for London in search of a more congenial atmosphere for his benevolence, and of a true and worthy friend.⁴

Benignus's trip to London is the most conventional part of Liberal Opinions. In the coach he meets an uncharitable Quaker, a brawling grocer, and a sorrowing father named Greaves who becomes his first mentor. The latter two passengers play significant roles in the succeeding narrative, which begins with a recounting of roadside adventures that bears comparison with similar scenes in the prose fictions of both Fielding and Smollett.

Once in London, Benignus stays at the home of Mrs. Darling, an elderly cousin, and her niece Alicia, a young lady who ridicules Benignus's country ways. In Mrs. Darling's drawing room Benignus has the opportunity to meet Mr. Draper, the young man of fashion who will become his second mentor.

In the company of men and women of fashion, new misfortunes beset Benignus as he embarks on a life based on hedonism, and falls victim to deceivers of both sexes, losing in the process not only some of his awkwardness but also some of his interest in benevolence. Finally, he loses his friend and mentor Draper, who dies in a duel defending his young friend's now tarnished reputation.

Seeking distraction from his grief at Draper's death, Benignus falls in with dissolute companions. In the course

of his adventures in this company, he is seduced by Mistress Blake, the "merry" wife of one member of the group, and enters into a liaison that robs him of money, honor, and health.

As Benignus's adventures become more sordid, he becomes increasingly disillusioned and pessimistic about the possibility of finding happiness by the paths of vice or virtue. Suffering has taught Benignus nothing. Broken in body and spirit, with twenty pounds, all that remains of the large fortune he brought to London, he retreats to a cottage in "the depth of an unfrequented forest" (I, p. 135). There, "retired from the bustle and intrigue of life" (II, p. 99) he dies, alone, his dog and all but one of his other (unspecified) domestic animals having succumbed to starvation before their master.

Before recounting Benignus's history, the editor describes the cottage in which he finds Benignus's body, together with the manuscript that recounts his history. The editor tells us that it "resembled rather a charnel-house, than the cottage of simplicity" (I, p. 75). Since Pratt presents the grim scene of Benignus's death as a preface to his history, the wretched meaninglessness of his death may be Pratt's measure of his life. His death by starvation, is "a sacrifice to SYSTEMS, and a memento to the children of men . . . now and then to follow their own noses" (V, p. 136).

One of the most significant critical questions confronting the reader of Liberal Opinions is that of how Pratt intends the reader to view the novel's protagonist. The "editor" asserts that he values Benignus's manuscript "beyond every other worldly possession" (I, 177), a statement that leads the reader to think the editor will be sympathetic towards Benignus. In point of fact, the editor takes a consistently ironic view of Benignus, and particularly of his moral yearnings. It is a view he evidently expects his reader to share. Instead, the reader frequently responds to Benignus with compassion. Because the "editor" does not mention that Benignus is an orphan not yet sixteen years old, nor make any allowance for Benignus's innocence based on this circumstance, the reader tends to react against his severity: paradoxically, the reader assumes the role of Benignus's defender. Moreover, since Benignus's greatest fault--his desire to think better of himself than he perhaps merits--is an almost universal human failing, most readers, certainly Pratt's introspective, sentimental readers, tend to regard it with compassion.

Benignus begins his history with an account of his birth, his babyhood, and his development as a social being.

The history of my very babyhood is peculiar--I was certainly born to be the sport of fortune.-- The day which gave me to the world, took my mother out of it; and a month afterwards my father caught a fever,--sickened and followed her. Thus was I an orphan in the nursery--I soon discovered a love of society--my guardian (who was a clergyman) provided me with books, and little companions, and put out my fortune (which consisted of twelve thousand pounds in specie) at interest. The books which he put into my hands were the Spectators-- They first put me upon speculation, . . . I had not the general objections of a boy to school, because I was eager after every sort of knowledge . . . in all my readings and researches, the attachment to my fellow creatures was my first and favourite passion. Benevolence was the leading principle of my life. I considered myself as born to the great duty of making everybody happy around me. . . . The Spectators [sic] which were all the private library I had at this time--with Virgil, Homer, Sallust, . . . were all full of expressions which encouraged me, in my generous principle: they one and all declared, that

To be good, was to be happy.

(I, 79-81)

Chapter One, reprinted in part above, illustrates one of Pratt's strengths as a writer of prose fiction: the compression, succinctness and control he often achieves in spite of his tendency to lapse into prolixity. It also reveals some of the pretensions of his protagonist Benignus. Specifically, the passage points to Benignus's tendency to think of himself as unique. Different from other boys with respect to his eagerness for knowledge, Benignus sees his

passion for benevolence as a divine gift, given him because he has been "born to the great duty of making everybody happy around me."

Resolved to carry out his destiny according to the "noble principle" of benevolence (I, 82), Benignus finds the practice of his principle among his school-fellows "sometimes a little mortifying" (I, 82-3):

I began to put in force my system immediately: I entered into the common pleasure of a schoolboy, and tried every possible method to endear myself to my companions. Whenever they committed a childish fault, I took the blame upon myself--when- ever any disputes arose, I endeavoured to compro- mise the matter to the general tranquillity; and whenever they broke out of their toys, I privately repaired the loss with new ones. But some how or another, these efforts did not turn out quite satisfactorily. I got several severe whippings for fothering errors which were not my own; I was stigmatised by the lads as a busy body, for inter- fering with quarrels which did not concern me; and I was accused of partiality for making presents to one playmate in preference to another. And thus my benevolence was in the very first outset, re- warded with severity, and contempt. However I was too well grounded in the truth of my grand prin- ciple, and had indeed naturally too tender an heart, to suffer a few slight mortifications to relax the vigour of my virtue. The morning of life is the meridian of generosity, and though I was a little miserable at my disappointment, I made myself certain, that if I continued
 To be good, I should certainly be
 happy--

(I, 83-84, italics mine)

The passage is Benignus's declaration that neither whippings from his master nor contempt from his school-fellows will induce him to "relax the vigor of [his] virtue." The first full episode of Benignus's history bears out the truth of

this final pronouncement. It tells what happens to him when he persists in trying to lead his schoolmates to the path of virtue.

Benignus learns from a boy "who was piqued at being unengaged in the adventure" (I, 85) that a number of his schoolmates plan to rob an apple orchard and a hen-roost. Unfortunately, when Benignus tells the reader that "the shock I felt at the news is indescribable" (I, 85), he reveals himself as a prig. Again, when Benignus explains to the reader that the business "was altogether repugnant to all the precepts I had read and so immediately combated my notions of benevolence" (I, 85-86), his tone is so lofty that he elicits little sympathy from the reader.

Benignus seeks out the "wrongdoers" (I, 87) "gathered together in the true circle of consultation" (I, 87), and tries to persuade them to give up their plan. The word Benignus chooses to describe his school-fellows--"banditti"--may be Pratt's way of indicating Benignus's pretentiousness. At any rate, Benignus's schoolmates respond to his suggestion with derision. Calling him "a listener, a poor, cowardly brat, without spirit for glorious enterprise,"--they advise him to stick to his books; then they "set up a great shout, and fairly hissed [him] from their society" (I, 88).

Benignus retires to his chamber, and bursts into tears. Why, he asks himself, is it "necessary that in the effort to do good to others, I must make myself

miserable?" (I, 89). Somewhat relieved by his outburst, Benignus answers his own question. He tells himself, "Well, well, no matter: these little miscarriages are but so many trials of my integrity" (I, 89).

Benignus's next action is to consult his Spectators. Not surprisingly, he finds that every paper he consults is "flat against" (I, 86) escapades such as the one his schoolmates have planned. The contrast between the commonplace diction of "flat against it" and the formal diction of the Spectator serves as an authorial comment on the inappropriateness of Benignus's research. The editorial ambitions of the Spectator scarcely extended to the regulation of the conduct of adolescent boys. Nevertheless, all the Spectators agreed that theft is bad and honesty is good.

Failing to influence his schoolmates by a direct appeal, Benignus, after much hesitation, unfolds his schoolmates' scheme to the headmaster, begging that the only punishment to the boys might be "a salutary lecture of reproof" (II, 91).

The schoolmaster's response is not what Benignus expected:

The master looked extremely solemn, while I was speaking, but how was I amazed at the conclusion, to see half a smile prevail over the habitual wrinkles of his forehead. He bid me "not be so much concerned--that boys would be boys--[. . . such small depredations, upon apples and poultry, were always among the adventures of every lad of spirit, and that it would not be political in a master to whip them violently away, lest it should hurt their future courage to combat the

adversities of life--] observing, (in the close of his harangue) that in general those children made the best men, which were foremost in such puerile achievements--

(I, 90-91, italics mine)

The master's tolerant attitude is implicit in his half-smile, his cliché comment that "boys would be boys," and in his language. He speaks of "small depredations" and the "adventures of every lad of spirit." Moreover, although the solemn Benignus is perplexed by the master's response, the latter's explanation that it would not be "political" to whip lads of such spirit lest it hurt their "future courage" persuades Benignus that if he has not abetted the cause of virtue, he has at least not harmed the culprits.

Confused by his schoolmaster's point of view, Benignus indulges in some characteristically moralizing reflections:

He that steals a chicken, said I, at ten years old may be tempted to take a purse at twenty--I rambled very far in the labyrinth of reflection . . . --The master and the boys are both wrong--I have done my duty.

(I, 91-92)

Benignus's moralizing tone in this passage is again judgmental and priggish. Pratt seems to be mocking his complacencies rather than admiring his ideals and philosophy. Perhaps the most obvious sign of Pratt's mocking attitude is in the reference to "the labyrinth of reflection," which

in the philosophical map of Liberal Opinions is dangerously near the "maze of systems."

When Benignus's classmates come back from their adventure with the evidence of their crimes displayed for all to see, the headmaster meets them and, contrary to the liberal opinions he expressed earlier, whips them "on the spot" (I, 93).

After he has whipped the culprits, the master points out Benignus as their "accuser" (I, 92), and departs, leaving Benignus at their mercy. Benignus describes his fate. The boys, he tells us,

. . . spurted ink upon my cloaths, spit in my face, kicked me in the breech, and loaded me with every insult, that a set of barbarous brats could possibly inflict upon the cat which they had tied to the stake. In conclusion--not a boy would sit near me--I was avoided as a pestilence, and some of the smartest actually made verses upon my TREASON, as they called it, and sung them about the yard to ludicrous tunes.--My sensations at these insults were a mixture of ten thousand feelings, at the same moment.

(I, 94-95)

In this passage, Benignus's allusion to the "barbarous brats" who were whipped as a result of his meddling, juxtaposed with his description of his own exquisitely discriminated sensations following their abuse of him, exemplifies the moral posturing that sometimes diminishes the reader's sympathy for the young man's suffering.

Pratt frequently undercuts Benignus's pretensions, as in the boys who rob orchards. The

editor quotes some verses he has written on the subject, entitled, "Ode to a School-Fellow." The verses express their author's liberal opinions and tolerance of boyish pranks, and make clear that as a boy the editor joined with the mischievous rather than the scrupulous:

Blithe as the ruddy morn we rose,
And slept at night, with--all a boy's repose.

(II, 106)

. . . .

Can'st thou, my friend, recall these joys
Yet cease to wish we still were boys?

The merry moonshine-pranks we play'd,
The little thefts at evening's fall;
The truant rambles we advent'rous made,
When bold we scal'd the orchard wall.

One plucks the fruit,--and one receives
below!

(II, 108)

The poem's general celebration of boyhood's "joys" and "merry . . . pranks," and its specific mention of scaling of "orchard wall[s]" and plucking of "fruit" is an implicit criticism of Benignus's reaction to his schoolmates' pranks. In his youth, St. Augustine was himself guilty of joining a band of boys and robbing an orchard. In his Confessions, St. Augustine writes that he stole for "love of doing wrong." He describes his theft:

Late one night a band of ruffians, myself included, went off to shake down the fruit [of a pear tree . . . loaded with fruit that was "attractive neither to look at nor to taste"] and carry it away . . . We took away an enormous quantity of

pears, not to eat them ourselves, but simply to throw them to the pigs. Perhaps we ate some of them, but our real pleasure consisted in doing something that was forbidden.⁵

Although Liberal Opinions does not mention St. Augustine, Pratt, a former clergyman, would almost undoubtedly have been familiar with the Confessions, as would his more educated readers. And the Confessions support what the half-smile of Benignus's headmaster implied,--that boyish delight in the forbidden is universal.

Despite the fact that Benignus has been abused for his attempts to live virtuously and to persuade others to follow his example, when his school-fellows relent and take him back into their company he again assumes responsibility for their moral instruction. This time he attempts to dissuade them from robbing birds' nests, and in the process discovers to his chagrin that whippings are not the only harmful consequence of his attempts to exhort his peers to virtue.

Perceiving that his classmates are about to set off on a hunt for birds' nests, Benignus tries to intercede by reading them a cautionary tale. The story tells of a shepherd who punishes his children when they mistreat birds, by doing to them what they have done to the birds. But instead of being impressed by the moral of the story,

Benignus's school-fellows learn new mischief from it and make sure that their "teacher" knows it:

[The boys] renewed their sport with a vigour, which [his] poor story seemed to have redoubled. Indeed, they carried the matter so far as to wish they could hit upon a robin's nest, that they might try what fun could possibly lie in the experiments related in the narrative.

(I, 109-110)

Disappointed again in the results of his scheme, Benignus once more trudges back to school by himself. As he walks along, he recalls that when the story he has just read aloud was read to him, he "wept and trembled" (I, 112). He reflects that since his school-fellows "delight in slaughter, death and massacre" (II, 112), his latest failure to persuade them to virtue is the result of his own moral superiority. His mistake, he decides, was in thinking that his school-fellows were like himself.

In spite of his belief in his moral superiority, Benignus puzzles over the paradox that his active pursuit of virtue seems to bring him more misery than his passive acceptance of evil:

. . . how is it, [Benignus asks himself] that (though I do all the little good in my power) I am still miserable!--How is it that on those days in which I only do harm, I am less insulted, than on those in which I labour to do good.

(I, 113)

Unfortunately, Benignus's recognition of the apparent paradox he articulates effects no change in his behavior.

Benignus's last misadventure at school shows him once again seizing the opportunity to do a benevolent action and once again reaping misery instead of happiness.

One day, as Benignus returns to school after a solitary walk in the woods, he comes upon a sheep caught among briars. At the cost of a great deal of toil and dirt he disentangles the animal. A passing horseman, seeing the sheep mangled and besmirched, assumes that the boy is responsible for its sorry condition, and strikes Benignus in the face with his whip. When the bloodied Benignus arrives back at school, the master refuses to hear his explanation and canes him severely for spoiling his clothes. To add to Benignus's humiliation and misery, he is made "a public example before the very boys whom [he] had been advising to be tender-hearted," (I, 118) and sent to bed hungry.

Benignus spends a sleepless night ruminating on the misery of his mistreatment by others. At last he cries out to the Almighty:

Good God cried I, for what have I been thus
chastised--fretted, and insulted--is it for my
benevolence--? If
To be good is to be happy,
wherefore are all my best designs thus frustrated?

(I, 119)

Benignus sounds like another Job. He perceives himself as one who has had to undergo such trials and

afflictions as are visited only upon a man as perfect and upright as Job. When the first rays of morning light break in upon the boy's fruitless reflections, he sits down at the window of his room and writes the letter to his guardian. That, as we know, precipitated that worthy clergyman's death. After posting his letter, and before learning of his guardian's death, Benignus describes this gentleman:

The clergyman to whom my father thought proper to leave the direction of his affairs, was as honest, and inoffensive a priest as ever harangued from a pulpit. He was esteemed by his parishioners profoundly learned, insomuch, that scarce any business was done in the village without his knowledge.

(I, 120)

The last sentence of Benignus's description of the clergyman suggests Chaucer's clerk, the prototype of a good priest, whose life, like the life of Benignus's guardian, was a blessing to all the lives it touched. Moreover, Benignus's praise of the priest's mildness and of his devotion to his flock, juxtaposed as it is with the report of the good man's sudden death, emphasizes what the world lost in losing such a man. The reader is reminded that no one, least of all the worthy, is safe from catastrophe at the hands of the merely well-meaning.

The clergyman's death makes it necessary for Benignus to leave school and go to the home of his lately deceased guardian to take over his affairs.

In disclosing the estate Benignus is to inherit, Pratt is as specific as Defoe might have been. The specificity Pratt brings to each mention of Benignus's finances is implicit testimony to the necessity for exactitude in matters of economy.

Upon inspection into matters, it appeared that the good clergyman had died worth three thousand pounds, besides his dwelling house (which he built), a large garden, a small paddock adjoining his garden, and a considerable quantity of furniture. (His living fell again into the hands of the patron.) The whole of the above he had given to me, subjected to the payment of a small legacy of £100 to a very distant relation, and twenty pounds to the poor of the village, to be distributed amongst the properest objects, on the second Sunday after his decease--

(I, 125-126)

After Benignus settles his affairs, and distributes twenty pounds to the poor of the parish according to his guardian's wish, he attempts to make these parishioners doubly happy by distributing another twenty pounds. The results are calamitous. The extra money attracts beggars and pickpockets from other parishes. Joining with the poor of his guardian's parish, they make use of Benignus's largesse to drink, riot, brawl, and break his windows. Benignus is blamed for the accident of one drunken beggar who tumbles into a ditch and drowns, and for the misfortune of a prominent farmer's wife, who "was frightened into an untimely labour by the riot" (I, 152).

Smarting under the blame heaped on him, Benignus reflects: "Twas ever thus with me at school. I must somehow or another have a strange method of going about benevolent actions--or I have peculiar ill-luck--or else my ideas of happiness must be dreadfully confused" (I, 14). Only in the last part of his reflection does Benignus consider the possibility that he plays some part in his own misery--which awareness he suppresses quickly. Once again he blames his misery on outside forces, just as he did earlier when he asked himself "How is it that on those days in which I only do no harm I am less insulted than on those days in which I labour to do good?" (I, 113).

Benignus's glimmer of insight into his misery remains just that--a glimmer. In each instance, his incipient insight fails him. His way of handling his distress--by blaming it on others--is unattractive. Yet it is a very human failing, particularly in the young. On the whole, this section of Liberal Opinions expresses a tolerant view of adolescents, allowing them their tendency to blame others and their exaggerated sense of their own importance. The author seems to expect his readers to share this tolerance, at least some of the time.

In the next phase of Benignus's history, his young manhood, Pratt presents a protagonist who, older and chastened, has come to recognize some of the comic absurdity of his earlier grandiosity. Benignus has gained some comic perspective with his years, and although he continues to

stray from the path of virtue. Pratt extends to many of the errors of Benignus's young manhood, the same tolerance he showed for his adolescent errors.

Writing his history in his secluded cottage in the woods, the hermit Benignus looks back on his life and adventures after he left school and offers a warning to other men not to "rush into the tumults of life without a virtuous monitor" (V, viii):

Unhappy is he, who, in the days of his youth, traverses this intricate world, without a guide, and of all other preposterous passions, the most preposterous is that, which induces an orphan of fortune to trust himself to mankind, with neither experience to direct, prudence to advise, nor economy to regulate. Let no man who is new to the active scenes of a city, ever venture again into a metropolis, unattended: let no man indulge his inclinations for travelling, without first considering that if he is miserable at home, he must tread warily indeed, if he does not increase that misery abroad. Let no man rush into the tumults of life without a virtuous monitor: in a word, let every Telemachus tremble at the conduct, which is not first sanctified by the approbation of a Mentor!

(V, vii-viii)

The volumes that precede and follow Benignus's warning tell of his adventures and of the mentors he acquires. Benignus's two monitors contrast sharply with one another. He does not speak of their virtue directly, but leaves the reader, if he will, to judge each man by his conduct or by whatever standards he considers appropriate.

Benignus gives a characteristically sentimental description of his first mentor, Greaves, one of the passengers in the coach that carries him to London:

His person was tall and spare; his complexion extremely pale, and somewhat tinged with a faintish yellow: there was a pathetic cast in his eyes, that rather denoted the langours of incessant uneasiness, than the deadness of dissipation; and the ruins of a smile, which appeared to be constitutional, gave a philanthropy to his face, which defied the depredations of sorrow and time.

(I, 215)

Greaves's paleness, together with the "pathetic pensive cast in his eyes," the "ruins of a smile," and the "philanthropy of his face" suggest that Benignus envisions him as a man of feeling; perhaps at this point the reader is meant to as well. Greaves's name is significant: he is grieving for a daughter who has been ruined in London, but whom he hopes to rescue and take back to the country. Although Benignus's description of Greaves reflects his eager responsiveness to the appearance of a man of feeling, Liberal Opinions does not make it clear whether or not Greaves is meant to be regarded as a sentimental man. While he looks melancholy enough for the role, and confides his daughter's history in intimate detail to Benignus at their first meeting, his advice to Benignus suggests that he has a low opinion of mankind, an opinion antithetical to the sentimental, Rousseauesque view of man.

Despite Greaves's criticism of what he calls "the mercenary spirit of the times," (II, 57), and his complaint that man has degenerated so that his worldly interests "prevail over the prospects and promises of futurity," (II, 101), his counsel to Benignus is concerned not with his soul but with money. He tells him, "Oeconomy . . . is now almost the only security from contempt . . . I think my heart is not an unfeeling one [but I] have always found it prudence, to keep a friend in my pocket, and on no terms to lie at the mercy and compassion of another" (II, 75).

The narrator does not comment on this statement. Nevertheless, the fact that Greaves, a man of feeling in Benignus's eyes, refers to money as a "friend" is strange. Greaves's further warning to Benignus not to depend on "the mercy and compassion" of others as protection against the "inhumanity of mankind" (II, 82) suggests a cynical view of what a man may expect should he leave himself at the mercy of his fellows. Benignus, however, in his admiration for his new friend, appears not to recognize Greaves's views as being totally unlike those that a man of feeling might be expected to express.

Although Benignus does not recognize Greaves's economic theories as being essentially the same as those of two other fellow passengers, Grocer Brawn and the Quaker, he does recognize the similarities in the outlook of the latter two. The grocer advises Benignus to conduct himself

according to his own (the grocer's) system; he then explains to Benignus his notion of a prudent economic policy:

Stick to the main chance. Go to church and hear good sermons, and read good books, and take good advice, and keep your money in the till, and put the key in your pocket, and keep yourself out of debt--but above all, mind this--neither lend a sixpence, nor borrow six a pence [sic], for that's the only way to live, take my word for it.

(I, 195)

The last traveller to impart his economic principles to Benignus is the Quaker:

I never give any money myself, but then I give [a] store of spiritual food . . . I travel far and near to bestow religious consolation of the spirit gratis . . .

(I, 169-70)

The grocer's response to the Quaker's implicit self-congratulation is brief: "I never pretend to give away any thing" (I, 169).

Benignus recognizes that although the grocer's appearance is coarse and his manner truculent while the Quaker's appearance is plain and his manner genteel, "the two are not so different as they think:"

Here now . . . are two of opposite characters--the quaker, for aught I see, is as mercenary as the grocer, though their avarice is differently modified according to the different prejudices of their education.

(I, 170)

In spite of Benignus's insight into the Quaker's hypocrisy, Pratt, true to his affirmation in his Preface to Volume V to adhere "to human nature" (V, v-vi), portrays Benignus as too young and impressionable to see any imperfections in Greaves. He is unaware of the inconsistency between Greaves's ready tears for a beggar on the road, or for a pathetic tale, and his economic theories, founded not on a love of human kind but on self-interest. On the contrary, Benignus admires his new friend without reservation.

Whenever the gentleman in black spoke, there was so much serenity and good sense in his remarks, shaded, and as it were, softened by some latent anxiety, that I own my curiosity was extremely excited to know more about him.

(I, 215)

Despite Benignus's admiration for Greaves, however, the older man's counsel is wasted on him, for he soon falls under the spell of his next mentor, Draper, a capricious and extravagant figure, a man who neither counsels prudent economy nor practices it. Draper behaves with such warmth, charm, courage, and benevolence that he evokes in Benignus an admiration which leads to emulation and, by degrees, to disaster. Although Draper is appealing, part of his education of Benignus consists in introducing his pupil to worldly vices. He is not the "virtuous monitor" (V, viii) Pratt earlier specified as desirable for a young man.

In Liberal Opinions, as in each of his other prose fictions, Pratt is careful to introduce enough pathos to satisfy the assumed taste of his female readers. Two of these sentimental additions, probably meant to relieve the serious and satiric portions of Benignus's trip to London, are interwoven with the narration of that journey. The first is the interpolated tale in verse of Mr. Greaves's daughter Almeria. The verses, entitled, "Almeria; or The Penitent. Being a Genuine Epistle from an Unfortunate Daughter in _____ to her Family, in the country" occupy twenty-two pages and comprise the whole of Chapter XXXVIII, Volume Two. A few verses follow:

'Behold,--she said,--on the damp bed of earth,
Behold th' unhappy man, who gave thee birth;
In dust he rolls his sorrow-silver'd-hair,
And on each muscle sits intense despair;

(II, 26)

To stop the crimson tide, my hair I tore,
Kiss'd the deep gash, and washed with tears the
gore.
'Twas love,--'twas pity--call it what you will;
Where the heart feels--we all are women still.'

(II, 30)

The verses are marred by almost every conceivable fault. They are shrill, melodramatic, jingly, trite, conventional, and often tasteless. The couplet that joins "In dust he rolls his sorrow-silver'd-hair" with "And on each muscle sits intense despair" is mechanically jingly, and offends in other ways as well. The images are jarring,

and the phrase "intense despair" is too abstract for the concretely visual image in the earlier line. The phrase seems to be added primarily for the sake of rhyme and meter.

More important than the fictional Almeria's tin ear is her lack of delicacy. Her choice of language is too explicit and graphic for a poem meant to be read by her family, as the following couplet illustrates:

Ev'n in the moment of unblest desire,
Oft would the wretch complain I wanted fire;

(II, 34)

As Pratt's bookseller declares in the third volume of Liberal Opinions, "[I]t is the happy mixture of [sentiment and bawdry] both together--a little of both, delicately dashed, that does the business [of selling novels]" (III, 70). Almeria's verses are meant to sell novels.

A comment offered by Draper is equally accurate in describing Pratt's technique not only in Liberal Opinions but in The Pupil of Pleasure, which followed it. Draper explains to Benignus, "Bawdry, Sir, candied over by sentiment, is swallowed eagerly by the coyest maiden" (IV, 28). Apparently when he wrote Liberal Opinions Pratt expected his reader to tolerate sentiments expressed in verse that might be rejected if they were presented in plain prose.

A convention of the eighteenth-century novel is that the protagonist's journey from the country to the city be eventful. The events of Benignus's trip include his meeting

with Greaves and the presentation of Almeria's verse tale as well as the sentimental verses of a repentant highwayman. The highwayman's tale is so exaggerated that the contemporary reader might take it for parody rather than for one more example of Pratt's "moral Fancy pieces."

The highwayman, who has robbed an earlier coach, stops Benignus's coach and, conscience-stricken, thrusts the purse he has stolen into Greaves's hands, together with a manuscript. The penitent robber asks Greaves to see that the purse is returned to its rightful owner.

The manuscript, it does not surprise the reader to discover, contains verses entitled, "Soliloquys of a Highwayman." They tell the story of a gentleman who, desperate because he cannot feed his sick wife and seven starving babes, turns highwayman but soon repents--which repentance his verse history affirms:

Ah! family forlorn!
The sport of fortune, famine, and mankind . . .

(II, 86)

But a dear wife, now starving far from hence,
Seven hapless hungry children at her side,
A frowning world, and an ungrateful friend,
Urge him to actions which his heart abhors.

(II, 90)

The verses end by describing the highwayman's response to his crime and his resolution to starve rather than rob a second time:

My knees shook hard, my feeble accents fail'd
 The father's--husband's tears bedeviled my face
 And virtue almost triumph'd o'er despair!

--Guilt bears me to the ground--I faint--I fall!
 The means of food should still be honest means,
 Else were it well to starve!

(II, 93)

The subject of these verses, like the subject of Almeria's, sin and repentance, serves Pratt's didactic purpose. The verses make a moral statement to the reader and persuade Benignus that "To be good is to be happy" must be true since to be wicked is clearly to be miserable.

When the coach reaches London, Benignus and Greaves take leave of each other; the former in search of adventure and opportunities for benevolence, the latter in search of his daughter. In a parting gesture, Greaves puts his daughter's verses in Benignus's hands and asks him to have them published. Why Greaves imagines that an inexperienced boy new to London will be able to have his manuscript published requires a willing suspension of disbelief in the reader, but Pratt furthers his didactic ends by putting this sentimental effusion in Benignus's hands as he enters London and the next phase of his education.

Counterbalancing the narration of Benignus's painful experiences at school, and in keeping with his promise to

vary his style as often as his subject, Pratt has focussed on the comic and pathetic aspects of Benignus's journey to London. His description of Benignus's arrival the first morning illustrates this playful quality, and leads the reader to anticipate that Benignus's experiences in London will be more benign than they prove to be.

On his first morning in London, Benignus dresses by six and goes downstairs to find that no one, not even a servant, is up and about. He retires to his chamber, and there gives himself to a review of his past and plans for his future. From these reflections Benignus progresses to a soliloquy in which he resolves that he will use his stay in London " . . . to learn wisdom from the wise; and get understanding from experience" (III, 21-22). Reviewing his past mistakes, Benignus admonishes himself:

Prepare thyself, therefore, for oddities of all sorts. Keep honest prudence before you, and as thou journeyest along, esteem her as the safest monitor, of thy youth. Be very cautious, and be very happy.

(III, 24)

Benignus's mind swiftly progresses from reflection to evaluation, and then, characteristically, to a fair degree of self-satisfaction:

This well-connected and solid chain of argument, put me in such high spirits, and made me (in my own conceit) so very clever a fellow, that I could lie no longer; but, springing from my bed with the agility of a man, delighted with a flattering idea, I danced about the room as light as a

feather; and seriously believing, I was now a match for all the artifices of the world, I cared not how soon I rallied [sic] forth to encounter them.

(III, 24)

Whereas in the country Benignus's self-satisfaction evoked contempt from all sides, from his editors and readers as well as from his school-fellows, the playfully ironic tone he adopts in introducing his adventures in London engages the reader's sympathy at last. This sympathy will be sorely tested, however, when Benignus succumbs to many of the temptations and some of the less attractive vices of the city.

Just after Benignus decides that he will allow his benevolence to be guided by discretion, he looks out of the window and spies a beggar about to breakfast on a dirty piece of bread. Learning from the man that this breakfast was the one that Lady Pamper's dog had discarded, Benignus's in spite of his resolve to be prudent, throws a shilling out of the window. Having relieved the beggar's distress, Benignus examines his behavior, and finds it to be thoroughly admirable. His latest judgment of himself brings the chapter to its conclusion:

I closed the window, and prided myself upon having displayed that true medium betwext bounty and profusion, in giving only one shilling at a time, instead of two. Yes, yes, said I, I see there is nothing like it--a cautious man is an excellent character.

(III, 29)

The humor with which Benignus mocks his adolescent delight in his own prudent restraint again elicits the reader's sympathy.

The lightly satiric tone in which Pratt sketches Benignus's early experiences in London is sustained through the final chapter of Volume III. At this point, in the literal center of the six-volume novel, Pratt introduces Benignus's second mentor, Mr. Draper, the man who hates systems, and who is the dynamic center of Liberal Opinions.

Benignus first meets Mr. Draper in Mrs. Darling's drawing room, and is struck by the ease of his manner and his "mirth inspiring" (III, 211) appearance. Draper "looked about thirty, . . . but there was no symptom either of care or caution, sorrow or suffering, about his character. . . . He was, in short, all laugh, loll, and liberty" (III, 211-212). Although in manner and appearance Draper is the antithesis of Benignus's first mentor, the recently admired Greaves, Benignus decides that Draper is "the most entertaining young man in the whole world" (III, 214) and a desirable acquaintance.

Yes, said I to myself, softly, this is the very acquaintance I wanted; . . . --How easy he sits in his chair! what breeding in his step, what polite pliability in his bow! what a flow of words!

(III, 214)

Impressed as Benignus is with Draper's charm, he is too high-minded to consider the obviously frivolous Draper worthy of

being more than an "acquaintance." In fact, however, Draper becomes the one person who gives Benignus the friendship and fidelity that he has so fervently sought.

Early in the course of their acquaintance, Draper decides to make Benignus his protege. He indicates his willingness to become Benignus's mentor at the tea table, when the clothes Benignus is wearing--which he brought with him to London--become the topic of conversation:

Draper said, he would walk with me to his taylor, in the course of the excursion he had in store for me; not, cries he, that I would have you suppose I am bigotted to frippery, even though you now see me so APEFIED: but the ridicule of fools, is ten times keener than the cut of a razor; if custom bids a man be a monkey, he must e'en adopt the character, sir; and I would either dress or strip, rather than be the topic of a moment's titter, to any man breathing. . . . What say you, Benignus, shall we move? 'tis too early for the ladies, and we may enjoy many a delicious joke as we go on.

(III, 216-217)

The tone and inventiveness of Draper's apologia, the way he expresses himself when he speaks of the "delicious joke" he and Benignus will enjoy together, suggest the life-affirming charm of Benignus's new mentor.

Pratt concludes Volume III with a sentence that emphasizes Benignus' immaturity and his delight in his new mentor at the same time that it communicates to the reader a sense of Draper's spontaneity and warmth. "I admired Mr. Draper, even more than sugar-candy; . . . I readily embraced his offer, and making our adieu's to the ladies, we walked

out of the room like old acquaintances, arm in arm together " (III, 217-218).

As Volume IV opens, Benignus and Draper are going to the tailor; they meet Mr. Spangle, one of Draper's acquaintances. The conversation reveals to Benignus that Spangle, who is a married man, occupies himself with planning and carrying out the seduction of virtuous and celebrated young women; sometimes he even trades his wife's sexual favors for those of another man's wife. Draper explains to Benignus that the basis of his friendship with this coxcomb is merely convenience:

I hate difficulty, though I have no objection to variety . . . [and as Spangle] never repeats his visits to his ladies, . . . I always have them almost as soon as himself, without the trouble of dangling after them or debauching them; so that I have all the enjoyment, without a spice of the wickedness; and if a man can be good on such easy terms, he is a fool you know to refuse them; . . .

(IV, 21-22)

Draper's idea of what constitutes virtue is not Benignus's. Moreover, the crudely utilitarian basis of the "friendship" between Spangle and Draper shocks Benignus. His judgment of both men is severe: "What a pair of precious fellows, said I, are here: a seducer of the modest, and a receiver of the seduced" (IV, 23).

Benignus is mistaken, however, in thinking that Draper's manner and appearance, together with his relationship to Spangle, reveal all there is to know about him.

Benignus still has much to learn about Draper, none of which he could have deduced from his early impressions, since his moral judgments are both narrow and hastily formed.

Leaving Spangle behind, Draper and Benignus proceed to the tailor, where they hear the latest gossip. It concerns a gentleman named Mr. Sudberry, who is sick and in debt to the tailor, and has been tricked by the bailiff. This bailiff has called insults to Sudberry's wife through the key-hole, provoking the sick man to rush out of his door and expose himself to arrest. He is taken to jail, his wife and three babes trailing behind him.

Hearing of this vile trick, Draper rushes off with Benignus to assist the distressed Sudberrys. As he leaves the tailor, Draper expresses his anger and contempt in the most suitable manner: he tells him that he will no longer favor him with his custom.

Benignus and Draper arrive at the jail and Benignus bursts open the door, revealing "Mrs. Sudberry and her children, weeping on a dirty floor, Mr. Sudberry supporting himself against a chair" (IV, 61). From this point on, the scene becomes increasingly pathetic as Mr. Sudberry's hungry children beseech him for bread, the youngest in baby talk:

Oh my dear papa--my dear papa, give brother and I a piece of bread and butter, pray do, indeed we will be good and deserve it--indeed we will; won't we, Patty?--I litty piece of bren e brittle too,

lisped a little angel, still unweaned from the knee, I hungry as well as Patty.

(IV, 63)

What can one say about such dialogue? It is excessive--but to Pratt's readers, children were the very touchstones of sensibility.

The scene continues as a servant girl "touched by the innocent prattle," (IV, 13) brings some bread. The children plead that it be shared with their parents as well as amongst themselves:

Pray, sir, give poor papa and mamma a bit, said the eldest. I will, cried the second, offering half to Mrs. Sudberry, who was silently thanking God on her knees--No, me vil feed my own papa, cried the suckling--Poor Sudberry attempted to kiss the child, but wanting strength to kneel . . . fell backwards . . . They wiped their sweet lips each upon its bib, kissed me round for my goodness, and putting their pretty palms together, [they] thanked God for a good dinner.

(IV, 64)

The passage, interesting to today's reader only as an example of an earlier fashion, illustrates Pratt's sentimentality at its swampiest. To contemporary readers, however, Pratt's sentimental excesses were justified as a means of proving the worthiness of the Sudberrys as objects of Draper's benevolence.

After he has fed the family, Draper stands bail for Mr. Sudberry, and arranges for the family to return to their own living quarters, joining him for dinner at his house.

Benignus is struck by the kindness of Draper's manner when he tells Sudberry of his release:

At his return Mr. Draper politely and tenderly informed Mr. Sudberry, that he was now at Liberty to remove his family into more agreeable apartments, and said he had taken the liberty to order one of the fellows to call a coach for that purpose.

(IV, 76)

Draper's rescue of Sudberry helps Benignus see him in a new light: he regards him as "one of the worthiest of men" (IV, 57). Pronouncing this judgment, Benignus tries to bring all his knowledge about Draper into a coherent whole:

A little eccentric and irregular, said I to myself, a little out of the common road, but not the less kind and hospitable for that: the sallies which look most suspicious, are probably mere sportiveness, the effects of health, high spirits, heat of blood, and an animated fancy . . . let me not be too severe upon his vivacity, but allow so good a character, upon the whole, its pleasantries and laugh.

(IV, 57-58)

The passage suggests that either Pratt has snatched the pen from Benignus's hand, or that Benignus's character is beginning to develop a new and appealing flexibility. The reader feels more sympathy for Benignus's overly rational explanation of Draper's conduct and character than he had felt for Benignus's earlier analyses of the characters of his school-fellows. Evidence of the new amplitude in

Benignus's character, which unfortunately is confined to his acceptance of Draper, appears in his later description of his friend and mentor as a "social Proteus . . . of infinite variety" (IV, 70). This description suggests Benignus's growing recognition and respect for Draper's individuality. One way in which Draper shows his individuality is in not requiring any expressions of gratitude for his kindness. When the Sudberrys prepare to leave Draper's home, and Mr. Sudberry tenders what he refers to as his "testimonies of respect" (IV, 119), Draper tries to silence him. The tone and diction of Draper's reply, like its content, indicate how heartily he wishes to dispense with such ceremonies and forms of sentimentality:

My stars and garters! cried Mr. Draper, what a pity it is, Sudberry, you and I are strangers! What a deal of sentiment might you save (and I see you talk in some pain, and upon my soul, you give me as much pain to hear you talk) if you did but know that I am so sincere a despiser of all formality, that I never suffer a slip of buckram, even in my coat.

(IV, 129)

So pr'ythee now, don't pursue the cursed subject of acknowledgment . . . Without any parade, therefore, get into my coach, or if you like it better, a hackney coach, and tell me, in a word, what will make matters thoroughly easy till this day se'ennight, when I challenge every one of you to a haunch of venison. Lookee, now, what can one do! Your wife is in tears, again--There--there--then-- . . . for God's sake, put this into your pocket and call me when you have done crying.

(IV, 123-124)

Although Draper's entreaties succeed in restraining Mr. and Mrs. Sudberry from any further expressions of gratitude, they fail to influence the babies. Draper and the reader must suffer another passage replete with gratitude and baby talk:

Mr. Draper was hurrying away, when one of the children caught him by the hand, and enchantingly cried, you be good gentlemine, and must not leave my dear papa and mamma. They only cry for your goodness, and cry because they be full of glad, not sorry. . . . Me vil kneel down thus, and pray God Mighty love him [Draper] for it, lisped out the youngest, throwing itself at the same time on the carpet, and folding its hands.

(IV, 124-125)

When Sudberry's youngest prostrates himself before Draper to pray for him, the scene is as pathetic as Harley's final swoon, even though the Sudberry baby survives. Draper responds to this last effusion by exclaiming "murder and assasination . . . there's no standing this" (IV, 125). Pratt, however, has had it both ways. He has satisfied his reader's appetite for the tearful, the poignant, and the pathetic, and, through Draper, registered his objections to the excesses he has permitted his pen.

During the Sudberrys' visit, Draper's footman enters and gives Draper a card that requires an answer. As Draper withdraws, taking Benignus with him, he turns back for a moment to ask Mrs. Sudberry to pour a cup of coffee for him, promising that he will return "in the melting of a lump of sugar" (IV, 111).

Benignus's narration of the events that follow begin with a disclosure of the intensity of his admiration for Draper:

By this time, my adoration was so extreme for Draper, that it was almost grown on the other side idolatry; and as I followed him along the passage that led from the dining-room, I could have kissed, with real reverence, the hem of his garment.

(IV, 111-112)

Several times in the novel Pratt says that he regards the guidance of a mentor as crucial to a young man. Draper's conduct, then, must be viewed not only as it advances the narrative but also as it influences Benignus's behavior. Regarded in this light, each of Draper's actions represents either a wise or foolish example for a mentor to set for his pupil. The reader must ask himself, what ethical and social lessons will Benignus learn from the impending experience, and are they the lessons that Draper intends, consciously or unconsciously, to teach?

Benignus's first lesson indicates that Draper consciously intends to teach Benignus to become a man of the world. This lesson begins when Draper takes Benignus to an apartment at the back of his house, where Priscilla, a beautiful young courtesan, is entertaining herself at a harpsichord. Without prelude or ceremony Draper gives Priscilla a hearty kiss, and introduces Benignus to her, and proceeds to chide Priscilla for being "so impatient a simpleton" (IV, 113) as

to send for him while he was engaged with guests. Having registered his displeasure, Draper commands "Pris" to "tell me at once what you want, because I have but five minutes to spare" (IV, 114). Pris answers teasingly with a question that reveals that Draper's footman, Mr. Thomas, has been carrying tales: "Pray who is that married lady, Mr. Draper, cried Priscilla, in a sly tone, you are so merry with?" (IV, 114). Draper does not answer Priscilla's question, but ascertaining that Mr. Thomas has been the source of her information, he asks Benignus to summon the footman, and carelessly turning to Priscilla, asks her to sing a song for Benignus.

Almost immediately, in fact before Draper has had time to choose the song he wishes Pris to sing, Thomas appears. In the exchange that takes place between Draper, his footman, and Priscilla, Benignus learns several lessons about courtesy and the proper relationships between a gentleman and his mistress and between a gentleman and his servants. Draper begins:

Oh, Thomas, (here Thomas entered) your year is up to-morrow, I think?--Yes, sir, said Thomas, turning pale, and Priscilla paler still.--Well then, you will put up your luggage with all convenient expedition, and here--here--are your wages, and a guinea extra for the favour of your moving off to night. On my knees I intreat you, my dear Draper, said the lady, with the tears in her eyes, to--to--As I have a soul to perish, sir, answered Thomas, I have done nothing to my knowledge which-- . . .

(IV, 115)

Draper's reply to the footman's protest that he has done nothing to warrant dismissal--"I don't accuse you of any thing--but I am in the humour to change" (IV, 116)--arouses Benignus's wonder. Its impact on Priscilla is more powerful. She promptly tells Draper that because she too is in a mood for change she is leaving him:

Nay then, said the lady, and if you come to that, so am I, sir!--Are you? replied Draper, with amazing coolness.--You know I hold it sinful to baulk one's reasonable inclinations--so my dear, pretty Priscilla, accept this foolish piece of paper (he gave her a bank-bill; I know not of what value); accept it as a token; and if you should not again alter your mind, suppose me now taking my last adieu. Mr. Draper again rang the bell, and bowing with great civility, as he went towards the door, went out with as much placidity as he came in.

(IV, 116)

Benignus marvels at his mentor's unsentimental self-command and seeming indifference to Priscilla's pronouncement, an indifference whose genuineness is supported by the "air of perfect peace" (IV, 117) with which Draper rejoins the Sudberrys.

Benignus might have learned several implicit and explicit lessons from observing Draper's encounters with Priscilla and with Mr. Thomas, but as his later history demonstrates, he fails to learn them. The first lesson Draper seems to be teaching, and which Benignus fails to profit from, is that a gentleman need not sentimentalize his relationship with his mistress or with his servants.

The second lesson seems to be that a gentleman need not take women or their whims seriously, but may rather accept with equanimity the fluctuations of the female mind. This principle proves apt when Priscilla, after precipitously leaving Draper, changes her mind and returns, and Benignus notes that "Draper had sufficient attachment to receive her again in his train" (IV, 220-221). From this last turn-about Benignus might have learned that women are mercurial, but also that their desires, particularly for change and variety, are the same as men's. A little later, Draper tells Benignus that he is "no enemy to gallantry" (IV, 143), and suggests that even the most virtuous of women is fair game for a gallant who knows that women sometimes give up their principles to satisfy their desires. For example, when Draper, apparently on a whim, saves one Diana Dickens from Spangle, causing Benignus to praise him as the "guardian angel of endangered virtue" (V, 21), Draper explains that his attitude towards "endangered virtue" is not at all what Benignus thinks it is:

Guardian Angel indeed! I save the girl because I would not have her fall into the hands of a coxcomb, who I believe cannot give her even carnal satisfaction, . . . a ruined woman shall always find refuge either in my purse, or my bed-chamber. But still, ardent as I am, I bring no woman from the shade of honour, to the streets of shame; . . . send my soul to eternal anguish, if I would seduce the angelic wife of Sudberry, . . . yet, if she (of her own free will) preferred me to Sudberry, I would rush to her bosom in all the luxury of throbbing expectation.

(V, 21-22)

The passage makes clear to Benignus as well as to the reader that Draper's notion of acceptable gallantry does not preclude a liaison with a friend's wife, provided the lady is sufficiently eager.

In the encounter with Priscilla, Draper reveals himself as a kind-hearted rake. But Benignus does not recognize Draper's libertinism. A consistently sentimental hero, Benignus clings to his innocence, using it as a shield between himself and those aspects of reality that he chooses not to recognize. Thus he says that he can make "neither head nor tails" of Draper's transaction with Priscilla, in which he gave her money and bid her adieu. Benignus notices only his mentor's kindness to the distressed Sudberrys, and resolves to "plague himself no more" (IV, 117) about what he cannot understand.

Some time after Priscilla returns to Draper's establishment, he invites Benignus to live with him, an invitation Benignus gladly accepts. On the first night that the two bachelors reside together, Draper says good-night in a way that suggests his awareness of Benignus's most significant weakness: he tells Benignus "go to bed and sleep: lie down a child, and rise a man" (IV, 220). Draper's words, like the tale of Jack Bookwit he tells Benignus later, indicate that he recognizes that Benignus is too child-like for his years. He is too easily persuaded to accept the judgments of others, too easily deceived, and, as the reader will see, too easily seduced.

When, on his first day in the city, Benignus found that he was the only person awake in Mrs. Darling's household, he burst out in a soliloquy in which he compared the "dull, dreary, dreadfully solemn" morning in London to the bright cheerfulness of a morning in the country, where "the milk-maid is awake and singing at her pail" (III, 19). According to Benignus's philosophy as a sentimental hero, the country is a place of pure thoughts and pure feelings. In London, his perspective changes. What happens to Benignus when Draper takes him to the country belies his innocent view of pastoral bliss. He is seduced by a mercenary courtesan who is as unlike Draper's mistress, the polite, accomplished, warm-hearted Priscilla, as she can possibly be.

The excursion to the country takes place one morning when Benignus has an appointment with his business agent. Draper asks him to "waive your appointment with that money-telling fellow, your agent, . . . and dedicate the present time to mirth, and to me" (V, 6-7). Won by Draper's grace and affability, having just acquired a new suit of clothes, Benignus is easily persuaded to accompany his mentor to the country. Draper's cavalier attitude towards "that money-telling fellow, Benignus's agent" implies that it is all right for a gentleman to be negligent about his business affairs and that mirth is more important than mere money. In this instance, Draper's lesson is the very antithesis of Greaves's, but apparently Benignus notices no disparity.

After Benignus and Draper reach their destination, they come upon "several young ladies, with a matron in the midst, . . . drinking sherbert." Although he trembles increasingly as he comes near them, Benignus admits he "by no means wished to retire" (V, 26).

Nevertheless, he wishes to deny much of his responsibility for what follows, and does so by insisting on the extent of his innocence at the moment of his arrival:

Draper addressed the matron with great familiarity, and, with as little ceremony, gave every one of her daughters (for such I thought them) a kiss; desiring me afterwards to follow his example: to which the young ladies seemed to express no aversion; and I undertook the point with less confusion than might be expected from my natural bashfulness. Elegance, variety, and fashion, appeared to superintend the features, forms, and dresses, of these young women; and I concluded the mother of such a lovely train, to be at once the richest, happiest, and cleverest of all parents.

(V, 26-27)

Benignus's parenthetical assertion that he thought the young ladies were the daughters of the matron whom Draper addressed seems disingenuous, especially since Benignus admits that he undertakes the task of kissing the several young women "with less confusion than might be expected" from his "natural bashfulness."

After the ceremonies of introduction have been completed, Benignus and Draper engage the ladies in a conversation about love, some aspects of which surprise Benignus:

The ladies were by no means reserved; and methought they talked a little oddly before strangers (for such I was certainly) about the delights of love and the voluptuousness of bathing at sun-set. Draper too, was a little more free than I ever saw him . . .

(V, 27-28)

Although the conversation seems odd to Benignus, and Draper seems unusually unrestrained, Benignus continues to deny the reality of the situation.

In view of the many hints that Benignus would have understood, had he cared to, his failure to recognize that Draper has brought him to a bawdy house suggests how relentlessly determined he is to maintain his innocence. Such alleged innocence has, of course, the advantage of making it possible for Benignus to indulge his passions without taking responsibility for doing so. Benignus pleads inexperience as the reason for his fall from virtue. He says of the courtesan who seduces him, "She was the very first of the sex that had successfully solicited my passions" (V, 40).

The summary of Chapter Forty-eight reads: "In which a lady hath a fall." The fall referred to is literal as well as metaphoric; it suggests the crudely effective method

by which one of the young ladies initiates her seduction of Benignus.

The seduction episode begins as Benignus, feverish and excited by all he has seen and heard, is wandering alone in the garden. He meets one of the young ladies who, joining him in his ramble, catches her buckle on "something" and tumbles down. As she does so Benignus sees that her undergarments, all of "purest white," have become discomposed. Benignus is shocked and ashamed to discover that he has retained neither enough "courtesy" nor "friendliness for a fellow-creature in distress," (V, 31), to help the lady rise. But when, by her own efforts, "she had got upon her legs," (V, 31), Benignus runs to her, draws her to his bosom and "imprinted the kiss, till it echoed on her lip " (V, 31).

Benignus now tells the reader, "her hand, dropt languishly down by her side, and rested upon--mine" (V, 32). From this point the seduction proceeds swiftly as Benignus and the lady, whose name is Lucy, pluck primroses together.

After we plucked the primroses--the lady told me that her name was Lucy, that she was her own mistress, that she was very apt to fall in love, and that indeed she lived at the present moment in a very loving family; in a minute or two afterwards, she took a fancy to my new watch-chain, and upon drawing it from my pocket, and finding she make no objection to the watch itself, I gave her both. She then mentioned something about spring silks, and pointing to a lilac then in her hand, said, she should of all things, doat upon a sack exactly of that colour; and in conclusion gave me a gentle slap upon the cheek with a

myrtle spring, wishing at the same time, in plain English, that it was bed-time.

(V, 33-34)

Although Lucy speaks of love in the true sentimental vein, she escorts Benignus to a room that is furnished for "criminal conversation:"

The room into which she conducted me seemed to have been furnished by Pleasure herself: the most voluptuous magnificence appeared on all hands, and every ornament was emblematic of the purpose for which it was admitted into the place. A large lustre was supported in the center by a naked figure, in the act of lighting tapers, while the ceiling represented the Graces binding the brows of a groupe of Bacchanals, with garlands of myrtle, intertwined with roses. On one side stood a crimson canopy, on drawing the curtains of which I discovered a sofa of the blackest satten; at the top, Venus in a flowing rope [sic] of Tyrian purple, was depicted in an attitude of presenting a veil, while Adonis, who stood smiling behind her, seemed to watch an opportunity to steal it away.

(V, 35-36)

In its lush sensual quality, the room and the language used to describe it prefigure the voluptuously furnished interiors described in such novels of decadence as Huysmans's Against the Grain. But, although Benignus's first experience of passion begins in voluptuousness, it ends in remorse, and with remorse comes the desire to fix the blame for his conduct on someone other than himself. When Benignus

reproaches Draper, however, his mentor's reply is irritatingly offhand:

I caught Draper by the hand, and exclaimed, O friend, how could you deceive me? You led me into the fire, and I have burnt myself to death. Pshaw, said Draper, never be so cursedly squeamish, what has happened, is all for the best: you were a mere baby before, and now I suppose you--have made a man of yourself.

(V, 37-38)

Whether or not Benignus's experience with Lucy makes a man of him, he is so enchanted by her that he keeps her for three months. During this time her extravagance causes him to "squander away a tolerable fortune, without having done a single action that can be recorded to [his] advantage" (V, 45). Also during the period of Lucy's reign Benignus forgets his old friends Mrs. Darling and her servant Benjamin, his first guide through London's streets, and even loses some of his interest in the Sudberrys, "making long strides from fashion and folly, to destruction," (V, 45). Benignus explains his conduct by referring to that popular neoclassical antithesis between passion and reason: "How contradictory and inconsistent is man! how is he led captive, in the shackles of the passions, in defiance of his better reason?" (V, 39). Besides offering the excuse of irresistible passion, Benignus further excuses his conduct by making clear that he was in the hands of an experienced seducer. He appeals to the reader's sympathy by revealing the manner in which Lucy extracts his promise to visit her

the next night, and by emphasizing the fact that Draper encourages him in his passion:

In the ardour of my revels with this bewitching woman, I had, in the most solemn manner promised, at her request, to revisit her on the succeeding evening, and I was to bring with me, according to her injunction, some tokens of my regard to her. However, not to insult the reader with the repetition of scenes, that bring blushes in my face, even as I mark them upon paper, I shall in brief inform him, that the most dangerous of all passions, were now awakened: Draper, rather fanned than extinguished them--the path to personal excesses was now shewn me: I was in the hey-day of blood, and I now sought happiness, not in benevolence, but--in dissipation.

(V, 41-42)

Benignus's description of his swift descent into fashionable vice, led by Draper "through all the ceremonies of elevated prostitution, . . . equipped at all points as a man of gallantry" (V, 48), illustrates the comment of the bookseller in Volume IV that bawdry candied over with sentiment is eagerly swallowed by the same maiden "who abominates the writer who says the same thing in a plainer way" (IV, 28).

The Benignus-Lucy affair is bawdry from start to finish. The sentiments that candy it over to make it decent are Benignus's assurances that he is suffering for his sins, and that his conscience is never at peace. And these assurances are convincing enough so that the reader may continue to enjoy Liberal Opinions without doubting the moral efficacy of the book. True, some contemporary critics took exception to the book's general "tendency" to give implicit approval

to libertinism, but this censure did not prevent the book from going into five editions within the decade after its publication (MR, 468).

As mentor, Draper does more than encourage Benignus to pursue worldly and fashionable dissipation; he also takes his intellectual education in hand. He tries to introduce Benignus to some of the significant ideas of his time. The true focus of Liberal Opinions becomes clear in the next six chapters, in which Draper successively introduces Benignus to the systems of a freethinker, a pious lady, and a clergyman who has had a spiritual rebirth as a result of a chance encounter that taught him to forsake a traditional education in favor of nature's guidance.

Varying his "style as often as his subject," as he promised in his Preface to Volume One, Pratt moves from the bawdiness and sensuality of the Lucy episode to the "sketches of a certain systematical Society" that comprise the next seven chapters.

The "Society of Systems" investigates the question of human happiness through the opinions of several speakers. One is the clergyman whose meeting with a horseman results in his adoption of the system of the Bible, nature and Shakespeare. In addition to the clergyman, there are three other speakers who debate about human happiness: a poet, a patron, and a freethinker.

Whereas the clergyman describes how he came upon the system that brought him happiness, the poet and patron

maintain that they are the most miserable of men, each because of his particular calling. The poet maintains that owing to the partiality of nature, he is the only poor man of the society. He says that although he is thought to have "the poetic power of building palaces, without either brick, cement, mathematics, or mortar" (V, 54), he is unable to provide himself with food and drink. He complains of his exploitation by his bookseller: "I [do] little more than pluck the bird, for the table of my bookseller. He [feasts] upon the body, and I [starve] upon the feathers" (V, 57). The description is appropriate to the pen of a poet, and Pratt was a poet.⁶

The patron counters the poet's claim to sympathy. He asks, first, "Hath not the poet all the advantages and all the pleasures of literary reputation? . . . and do not these, together with a fame handed down by the historians from generation to generation, more than make up for temporal inconveniences?" (V, 60). He goes on to articulate a whole catalogue of complaints about the inconveniences of his life as a patron:

Is there any being amongst all orders created,
 placed in so horrid a situation as a patron? . . .
 If he patronizes he is for ever pestered with
 dunces; if he refuses to swallow the flummery of
 dedication, he is immediately purged with a dose
 of lampoon. . . . --to have one's doors beset and
 besieged by a parcel of harpies, armed against
 one's pocket not only with talons, but talents?
 Are we not obliged to keep an extra servant, on
 purpose to repeat the lye of the day to every man
 that hath the look of an author about him?

The patron concludes his argument by declaring that at that very moment he has lying on his window seats "upwards of forty epistles dedicatory, the offerings only of the last winter" (V, 63-64). One of the charms of the debate between poet and patron is that a hungry poet will always elicit the reader's sympathy more than a patron who complains of being obliged to hire an additional servant for the sole purpose of chasing away the needy writers who inconvenience him with their importunings.⁷

Unlike the poet and the patron, the clergyman, who is the next speaker at the Society of Systems, describes the misery of his life only in the past. His purpose is to compare his previous unhappiness with the happiness of his life after his spiritual rebirth. His monologue tells the reader and the fictional audience, of which Benignus is a member, the events that preceded his transformation.

Pratt makes his criticism of traditional systems of education explicit from the opening pages of Liberal Opinions. Skillfully varying his rhetorical stance so that it is by turns aphoristic, metaphoric, magisterial, and humorous, he argues that education which enforces society's rules and traditions is the principal means by which authority exercises its power. By teaching respect and reverence for tradition, it enforces a conformity that limits both the spontaneity of youth and the courage of age. Pratt asserts that because "the power of education is as strong . . . , as

the appetites of nature . . . both readers and writers go in leading strings" (I, 6-7).

The term "leading strings" suggests the restraints and infantile dependencies that make man respect what he has been taught more than what he sees for himself. Pratt charges that instead of being taught to ask questions and think for themselves, students are taught to accept unquestioningly the traditional ideas and prejudices of their elders. Ideas and traditions, Pratt says, are "handed down from father to son with the same care as the rents of the family estate" (I, 8). Pratt's view of the second, third, and fourth-hand ideas concludes his opening argument: "an intellectual obligation," he says, "is as servile as a pecuniary one" (I, 9).

Having delivered himself of this simile, Pratt shifts to a less oratorical tone and addresses the reader directly.

The most sensible people are frequently parrots--they think as they are bid to think, and talk the dull dialect of their teachers, from the cradle to the coffin. A man of original contemplation, is a prodigy; and (like a prodigy) the eyes of every body are upon him the moment he appears--even the few which are pleased with his fortitude, admit the very conviction they feel with some reluctance--for we part from nothing we have any length of time been accustomed to venerate--without pain.--Thus, many people who have talents for speculation, check the impulse to speculate through a dislike of being particular. Genius, therefore, rusts in inactivity, and men content themselves with going on, in the old road, to avoid the charge of singularity, and the smiles of derision.

(I, 10-11)

In this passage Pratt is concerned with the prevalence of conformity and the checks on originality in contemporary society. He shared a growing interest of his day in "original genius," and thought that original invention was depressed and genius enslaved by imitation of the ancients. His plea is that originality should be regarded as a gift, not as a danger to society.

The neglect and derision suffered by persons of "original contemplation" as a consequence of being educated to fit the traditional expectations of their culture is foremost among Pratt's targets in Liberal Opinions. He expounds this theme throughout the novel with rich and metaphoric examples, often with a good deal of humor.

One of Liberal Opinions' liveliest and fullest treatments of the dangers that beset the mind fettered by tradition is the incident at the Society of Systems. There, at a meeting of the society to which he has been taken by his mentor, Benignus meets an articulate critic of tradition. The critic is a venerable clergyman, who has suffered much as a result of the stupidities and rigidities of his traditional education. He asks permission to relate his history in order to describe how he lost touch with the basic rhythms of nature, and how at last he regained not only serenity, health, and "a responsible corpulence" (V, 76), but most important, his capacity to touch those harmonies that, according to sentimentalist orthodoxy, vibrate between man and nature.

The old gentleman, granted permission to speak, describes the process by which his nurse, his schoolmasters, and his colleagues all contrived to "thwart his natural inclinations, in favour of established customs" (V, 70), finally weakening his body and corrupting his mind:

While I continued in the swathing cloaths I was in a state of nature, incorrupted sic. My eyes really saw, my hands really felt; and had I been permitted to go on, I should have been intimate with substance, and reflected shadow; truth would have been my guide, nature my companion, and common sense my friend.

But after experiencing a natural infancy, the boy is exposed to an unnatural education. I was taught to consider objects, as they actually were not. . . .

As to the school-master, I was compelled (by virtue of that magic sceptre, which whips in at the tail, the wisdom which is to accomplish the head) to adopt all the absurdities of a pedant: and this prepared me for the still greater absurdity of colleges.

(V, 67-69)

The speaker reveals that in pursuing his studies "the sort of virtuoso vigilance" (V, 72) he brought to his scholarship so confused and misled him that he at last mistook falsehood for truth, and imagined charms in delusion:

Accustomed to delusion, I forgot the horror with which I viewed her deformity in my childhood, . . . admired the force of her intellect, and adopted her as the friend and guardian of my studies.

(V, 70-71)

Arriving at the point of choosing a profession, the speaker tells how his parents "determined his genius to what . . . it had the greatest repugnance:--even to the CHURCH" (V, 70). In keeping with the tradition of filial duty, he obeys the parental injunction, pursuing his studies with an intentness "that impaired the sight of his soul, even more than that of his body" (V, 70). He is at last "rewarded by the presentation of an excellent living" (V, 72). The words, summarized below, in which he describes how he prepared to write his first sermon are a serious indictment of his education. They reveal the indignation he still feels, after fifty years, about his education and its consequences.

The young clergyman begins to prepare his first sermon by fixing upon a verse, "by no means inapposite, though somewhat peculiar" (V, 73). Led by the scholarly scrupulosity taught him by his schoolmasters, he enters his library at four o'clock on Thursday, and, scarcely taking the time to eat or sleep, loses track of the time of day and the day of the week. He has deteriorated to such a degree that he has lost touch with the natural rhythms of life. Engrossed in endlessly comparing one commentary with another, the tolling of the sermon bell finds him unprepared with his sabbath duty. He has not so much as "penned a slip of paper on the subject he had so long contemplated" (V, 74-75). In his panic and confusion he snatches the first sermon that comes to hand, unfortunately

the very one delivered at his induction a short time earlier. Band and gown askew, head covered with a purple cap "instead of a canonical full-bottom" (V, 73), he addresses his congregation in a trembling voice. His bondage to the traditions of scholarship, to "villanous commentators" (V, 73), "dismally dark explicators" (V, 76), and "learned contradictions" (V, 74), has made a farce of a momentous day in his life, a day that he has labored mightily and long to prepare for. He has appeared before his flock, clothed not in the dignity of his calling but as a comic buffoon, a lesson to his listeners of the possible consequences of a traditional education.

Having by the example of his history warned his listeners of the dangers of an education in which people lose touch with their own natures as well as with a larger nature, the speaker declares that notwithstanding his early misfortune, he has at last "found out real felicity" (V, 77). Before he continues, he courteously asks whether he has not "already trespassed on [his audience's] indulgence" (V, 76). The question, obviously rhetorical, is answered not by a member of the fictional audience but by the fictional narrator, who expresses approval of both the speaker and his tale:

The whole company were so entertained by this venerable speaker, (who appeared to be stepping into his seventieth year, and yet commanded attention, both by his manner and appearance) it was the unanimous desire of the society, that the President should dispense with ordinary ceremonies [sic],

and allow the gentleman to finish his story, in which he was to discover the road to real HAPPINESS.

(V, 77)

The narrator's informal tone in this passage is in contrast to his characteristically ironic one, and invites the reader's sympathy for the speaker and for the views expressed. His diction also tends to enhance the reader's receptivity to the speaker's views. When the narrator, referring to the speaker's age, says that he "appeared to be stepping into his seventieth year," the active verb conveys a sense of energy and vigor not usually associated with age. Finally, "ceremonics," an unusual form even in 1776, suggests that the proceedings have an importance beyond the commonplace. The narrator's words affirm the fact that he, like the fictional audience, admires the speaker. Stylistically, the words illustrate Pratt's skillful control of tone and nuance, evident in all his prose, but especially in his prose fiction. Pratt deploys subtle shifts of tone and a range of dictional variations to meet the rhetorical and didactic requirements of his prose narrative. At the conclusion of the chapter the narrative voice says that the speaker is going to tell how he found happiness. Pratt's strategy here is to heighten the reader's interest by anticipation.

The clergyman concludes his tale in chapter fifty-five, the midpoint of the fifth volume of Liberal Opinions. He describes an encounter that marked the beginning of his spiritual and bodily recovery. Bemused by years of reading

pedantic commentary, and short-sighted for the same reason, he is walking in his garden one evening when he hears a voice giving thanks. He looks over his hedge and with the help of his glass makes out two figures: a man and a horse. The man, who has just been thrown by his horse, is binding the animal's knee with his handkerchief.

Seeing the clergyman, the stranger asks him to hold the animal's bridle while he completes his humane offices. The two men thus begin to walk down the road together. For the clergyman, it is an auspicious ramble. The adventures he and the stranger have together provide him with a model for a way of life that seems to him to be freer, more natural, and more spontaneous than the existence he has been leading for "nearly thirty years of his life" (V, 65).

First they encounter a young woman carrying a baby "nestled in the softness of slumber within her bosom" (V, 82). The stranger asks the clergyman to hold his horse, whereupon he approaches the woman, gives her something from his purse, and immediately rejoins his companion.

The clergyman, whose education in sensibility has taught him that the recipient of benevolence owes his benefactor gratitude and an account of his misfortunes, is surprised at his companion's swift return. He asks him what he learned of the woman. The stranger explains that their exchange was brief because he had "so little cruelty and so little impertinence" that he did not attempt to

inform himself of her history (V, 84). He amplifies this with a statement that is a sentimental set piece:

I gave her the modicum I could spare, and that was too little a recompence for what she gave me in return. What did she give you? A tear, said the man: lookee--'tis still upon the back of my hand, verging to the very finger that brought my tribute-money from the purse; and there it shall remain: the heart from whence it rose, consecrated it, ere it fell: I will not wipe it away; it will teach me sensibility.

(V, 84-85)

The passage is conventional in its moist sentimentality, and its tear tracking, so popular in novels of sensibility and so frequent in Pratt's succeeding novels. It is unconventional in its presentation of the stranger's respect for the poor woman's privacy. Pratt affirms her right to have her past remain her own concern, despite her present need to accept alms from a stranger. The young clergyman recognizes that in his benevolent treatment of the mute beast and the young woman, the stranger demonstrates delicacy and restraint beyond what he, the clergyman, had been taught.

As the evening progresses, the stranger's behavior continues to surprise and at times perplex his companion. Although he sometimes demonstrates a more than conventional benevolence, at other times he acts with cruel severity. The examples that follow, however, demonstrate that the clergyman regards the stranger's various and apparently contradictory behavior as natural and spontaneous.

The experiences of the clergyman and his walking companion may be divided into two categories. The first category comprises the clergyman's observation and judgment of his companion's treatment of persons and animals, and his companion's reverent response to Nature, as illustrated by the latter's actions at the onset of a sudden thunderstorm and the rising of the moon. The second and more important category of experience comprises the clergyman's judgment of how the stranger has treated him. His companion's kindness to him, and his openness about himself, influence the thirty year old (II, 65) clergyman's judgment more than his observation of the man's reverence for Nature.

The experiences that follow the encounter with the young woman fall in the first category; they involve, successively, a boy robbing nests, a one-armed soldier, and a hound chasing a hare. In the first encounter, the walkers come upon a young boy who has in his hat a nest filled with birds. They watch as the boy takes one of the birds out and tosses it into the air, letting it crush itself against the ground. Seeing this the stranger throws the bridle into the clergyman's hands, seizes the boy, thrashes him with his whip, throws him on the ground, and leaves him there.

The boy's punishment is merited, and yet Benignus, a member of the clergyman's audience, must recall that when his schoolfellows robbed nests and tormented the birds they went unpunished (I, 110). The disparity between the fate

of his schoolfellows and the young boy of the story must seem illogical and confusing to him.

Next, the companions come upon a one-armed soldier who is trying to extricate a lamb from some brambles. The stranger hurries to the man "with inconceivable eagerness" (V, 87), assists in the business and, shaking the maimed soldier cordially by his remaining hand, gives him some money. The soldier's rescue of the lamb would surely have reminded Benignus of his own rescue of a sheep--and of how different his reward was from the kindness with which the soldier is rewarded. For his trouble, Benignus was severely beaten, first by a passing horseman, later by his schoolmaster.

The events of the last two encounters would tend to make life and human nature seem to Benignus increasingly irrational and unpredictable, and contribute to his growing confusion as he listens to the speaker's tale.

The clergyman, too, feels an initial perplexity at the stranger's actions, although at this point in the narrative, he has seen several proofs of his companion's benevolence and only one evidence of his severity, and that one amply provoked. The next incident, however, deepens his confusion. A hound pursuing a hare runs in front of the two men. Since it is natural for hounds to chase hares, the stranger's response, which is to throw his whip at the dog so violently that the animal's leg bone snaps, mystifies the clergyman. Still more puzzling is his companion's

gleeful reaction to his deed. Delighted with the results of his action, he skips about, rubbing his hands together joyously. In this last encounter, the stranger's act, seeming to the reader more cruel than his punishment of the nest-stealing boy, seems to the clergyman proof that the stranger enjoys the exciting freedom to be capricious. This freedom evokes in the young clergyman wonder, admiration, and a desire for emulation.

The incident of the hound and hare concludes the series of encounters the two companions have shared. Shortly after this last encounter, a thunderstorm strikes. The stranger drops in his knees and bows his head. Before he takes cover, however, he notices that his companion has a slight cold and is very thinly clad. Seeing the clergyman's distress, he complains that the night is "insufferably hot" (V, 89), and insists that his companion carry his greatcoat on his shoulders. Meanwhile, he, coatless, takes shelter under a luxuriant elm-tree.

When the storm subsides, the clergyman tells of watching "the stranger hail . . . the rising brightness with an unaffected fervor of gratitude" (V, 89). The clergyman is struck by his companion's reverence of Nature in all manifestations of her beauty, power, and mutability.

The stranger's company is edifying to the clergyman in many ways, both expected and unexpected. The clergyman had expected to gain pleasure; he also receives kindness

and the chance to witness the exercise of the autonomy that his singular companion regards as his human right.

The clergyman decides that the man he has been accompanying is apparently free of rules and systems; he seems to interpret his world according to his own perceptions, and to enjoy a life superior to the constricted life of systems and rules.

What the clergyman has seen of his companion's reactions to their successive encounters has awakened in him the wish that he too may live a different life, that he too may cast aside the constraints of a traditional education and learn to experience life as he experienced it during his earliest years, first hand, spontaneously, guided by his own intuitions and emotions.⁸

Despite the inconsistencies apparent in the conduct of the stranger whom the clergyman chooses to emulate, Pratt extends the same sort of tolerance to his choice of mentor as he has extended to Benignus's early passions, enthusiasms, and mentors. His attitude towards the clergyman's "awakening" appears to be a liberal one. He regards the change in his world view as his own affair, to be judged only by his own conscience and his God.

Although Pratt seems to intend the reader to believe that the most significant themes in Liberal Opinions are benevolence and virtue, as illustrated by the traditional tale of the unprotected innocent who comes to a city and is corrupted, an equally significant theme, and one that Pratt

returns to again in his later novels, is religion. Thus although the clergyman who speaks before the Society of Systems does not address himself to the question of his own religious beliefs or to the conflict between orthodox Christian belief and the skepticism of the freethinkers of Pratt's time, the speaker who follows him does. This speaker proves to be a freethinker, the first of two who appear in Liberal Opinions. His arguments form the core of the episode of the Society of Systems.

In the Preface to Volume V, Pratt comes down on the side of virtue and piety by putting a contrast before his readers. He says that it is his intention to contrast the "lustre of virtue" with the "squalid appearance of vice," and specifically to contrast "the system of the Freethinker with the system of the Lady who speaks in the FRAGMENT" (V, xiiv). One of the ways Pratt tries to prove that he is not of the freethinker's party is by portraying him as unpleasant looking:

The person that now stood up, had a deep gloom upon his face, his brow was pursed to a settled frown, and very rigid features (together with a hoarse, querulous voice) rendered him extremely forbidding: yet he had a penetrating eye and did not want words. In short, he was a downright Freethinker, and thus, to my entire amazement, shewed himself off.

(V, 91-92)

However disagreeable he looks, the free thinker is the first of the speakers of the Society of Systems who does not

complain of his misery. Instead, he maintains that searching for happiness is "hunting after a thing that never was, never is, nor ever shall be" (V, 92). Speaking immediately after the clergyman has revealed the system that he says has brought him happiness, the freethinker asserts that he will take it upon himself

. . . to prove that according to the present government and establishment of affairs terrestrial, it is impossible a man of sound thinking should be happy.

(V, 92-93)

The freethinker's view of terrestrial life is in keeping with his gloomy aspect. He says of the earth "that it is upon the whole, a very moderate planet, and that the contriver of it could be no conjurer." The freethinker amplifies this somber view with a series of comparisons between men and beasts that reveals his low view of human nature:

What right has the raven to fly through the pure air while the rational draggles it on foot upon the polluted earth? My very dog hath greater speed than its master. Why for the sake of expedition could not man have had four legs instead of two; and why, in the name of reason, are those two unable (bestir themselves as they will) keep pace with an ass? Why should the ordure of the brute be fragrant while that of the last best work of the most sapient Creator is intolerably offensive? Tell me, ye who stand forth to defend the supremacy of man, and the dignity of human nature, tell me why the most beautiful part of it, is so imperfectly framed, as to become a mere thoroughfare for the dirty work of digestion? Wherefore too, is the seat of joy so indelicately made, at the same time, the seat of our actual off-scourings? And

why pray, do we boast of our erect figure? If we carry our noses nearer to heavens, we thereby are less sensible of the perfume of vegetation: . . .

(V, 95-96)

The freethinker's comparisons are conventional, and not particularly persuasive. All his arguments could be countered by a humanist. He continues his argument in an equally conventional fashion, dividing man's life into three ages-- childhood, maturity, and old age. He then asks,

Are not the first ten years of a very niggard appointment of time, either whimpered away in the puling weakness of infancy or trifled out in the frivolousness of childhood? Are not five more groaned away under the smartings of the rod? . . . Are not twenty years more passed under the tyranny and slavery of my passions?

(V, 98-99)

At the point indicated by my ellipsis in the quotation above, the freethinker asks "what right hath one being to give pain to another, upon any pretence whatever?" (V, 99).

This last question is more effective in context and rhetorical style than those that precede it. The freethinker's rhetorical powers are further illustrated in some of his concluding questions:

Are not love, hate, jealousy, ambition, avarice, prodigality, all in a conspiracy against me: each by turns predominant, and all fretting my heart, agonizing my bosom, distracting my head, and tearing my poor victim of a body all to pieces? Is not exquisite joy so contrived, as to do me as great an injury, and shake my frame as violently, as the extreme of grief? Are not most of my days, in most of my years made often insufferable,

generally insipid, by either the langours of sickness, the throbs of anxiety--the miseries of sympathy, and the innumerable revolutions, whirled at the peace of my soul, on the pilgrimage of my existence? Are not, moreover, the lees of life (when the vessel of mortality is running out its dregs) every way deplorable? And am I not then, again, to revert to the first principle, and re-inherit all the decrepitude of the babe, without finding any entertainment in its gewgaw or rattle? Horrible--horrible, most horrible! In the last scene, when the breath hath deserted my body, why am I-- . . .

(V, 99-100)

The view of human life that the freethinker expresses is consistently gloomy; it fails to take into account any of life's joys. Neither his intelligence nor the expressive power of his rhetoric lightens this gloomy outlook. Pratt seems to be suggesting that an irreligious man, lacking the comfort of a faith in a better life after death, must necessarily have a dark vision of life. Another motive may have been his wish to avoid alienating the majority of his church-going readers. In any event, Pratt undercuts the freethinker's most energetic argument at exactly the moment at which he launches into the question of the immortality of the soul. He interrupts the speaker's discourse by making it necessary for him to blow his nose. He then shows us, through Benignus, how the president of the society has reacted to the speaker's tirade:

The President took this opportunity to break the thread of his diabolical argument by the decision of the hammer. He struck it forcibly against the desk, and I could not but fancy I heard something of a good heart in the sound:

certainly, said I, the President is tired of this wretch's system, and knocks down his sophistry with a becoming indignation.

(V, 101)

The critical, judgmental nature of the words "diabolical," "wretch's system," "sophistry" and "becoming indignation," as well as the attribution of a "good heart" to the President who silences the freethinker, are probably meant to assure the reader of the steadfastness of Benignus's Christian beliefs, and of Pratt's as well. However, since the goodhearted president will later act as procurer for his wife, we are left with the question of what Pratt really thought about people who take it upon themselves to silence those whose opinions about religion differ from theirs. Pratt may be suggesting that those who are most vigorous and righteous in their attempts to denounce the allegedly immoral opinions of others may be the basest of hypocrites.

After being silenced by the gavel the freethinker sits in gloomy silence, whereupon Benignus tries to expose him further by putting some facetious questions to him. Benignus ends by calling his opponent a "freethinker." The latter draws his sword and swears he will "put Benignus to death for the insult" (V, 103).⁹

When the freethinker threatens Benignus's life, one member of the audience, a priest, immediately flees:

The priest left me to nature and providence, and Draper protested, as he threw his body, shield-like before me, that if any man dared but to touch a hair of my head, he would eradicate him from the face of the earth.

(V, 103)

The alleged danger to Benignus's life functions as a moral test that this man of the cloth has failed. Contrasted with the priest's failure, Draper's courage and loyalty testify to his natural goodness. Although Pratt portrayed the clergyman who was Benignus's guardian as wise and good, the priest who deserts Benignus furnishes an example of the failure of the Christian faith in itself to confer either courage or compassion.

Since aesthetic balance was highly valued by Pratt's contemporaries, and contrast was a favorite didactic tool, Pratt probably intended the two portraits of clerics to balance and contrast with each other. Thus the reader is left not with a lesson about the importance of religion in man's moral development, but with the lesson that men should not judge each other by external appearances or professed principles, but rather by their conduct.

Despite the fact that the Society of Systems is dedicated to the investigation of human happiness, the meeting Benignus attends ends in a full-blown and bloody Smollettian fracas. The disturbance that marks the end of the meeting

serves several purposes. First, it provides a conclusion full of action and excitement and a change of pace for the reader, who has been subjected to a full chapter of the freethinker's arguments. Second, the melee suggests the chaos wrought by the articulation of such ideas as the freethinker's questions suggest. Finally, the disturbance may be Pratt's implicit comment on the irrationality of those who look to systems to show men the way to happiness.

In the dispute between Benignus and the freethinker, when the latter drew his sword, apparently with the intention of running Benignus through, when Draper immediately threw his body in front of Benignus to protect him from the threatened assault. For Draper, despite his faults, besides being Liberal Opinions' most impulsive character, is its most good-hearted and most spirited. Although he does not speak of religion, Draper behaves charitably towards the Sudberrys. Perhaps more significant is the fact that it is he who puts into Benignus's hands, as a corrective to the freethinker's opinions, a "fragment" that makes a case for piety.

As Draper and Benignus leave the meeting of the Society of Systems Benignus's thoughts are so confused that he

attempts to elicit from Draper an account of his own system.

Draper answers Benignus:

To the very bottom of my soul, I hate the very name of system, . . . and yet, as every man must form to himself some opinion of this world and its government, this, Benignus, is mine. I admire the system just as it stands: I can see the hill and dale, bush and briar, dell and dingle, wood and water, lawn and labyrinth of life, without being offended at them, either in the moral or natural world: on the contrary, I think they form a considerable part of its beauty, and even of its convenience: a fig, Benignus, for the smooth path alone; . . . I love variety, and the present world pleases me sufficiently upon that account . . . the human soul abhors sameness . . . there are too many charms in the present agreeable system for me to complain of it: it hits happily my rambling temper . . . I am for a System of variety.

(V, 108-110)

Although Draper says that he hates "the very name of system," he offers his views in good temper; his speech is a defense of the world as it is. When he says that the present world pleases him "just as it stands," he speaks as a man who enjoys life. His speech gives a general impression of good sense and good-humor. Moreover, when he describes some of the varieties of this world that please him, he reveals a reverence for Nature that both Pratt and the eighteenth-century reader would have found appealing:

[A]ll the objects of [this world] are pleasing from their frequent changings; streams love to meander, the very trees twist themselves into a hundred shapes, the many coloured clouds are shifting every minute before us, wildernesses wind, flowers are whimsically varied: the rising light

wears at this instant a different face from what it will presently wear: all things gratify my love of vicissitude, . . .

(V, 110-111)

Having shown Draper as courageous, life-loving and good-natured, and having added to these qualities a reverence for nature, Pratt seems to be portraying him as too attractive a person to possess the libertine ways he has also displayed. The portrayal is in contradiction to Johnson's views. In a well-known passage of The Rambler, Dr. Johnson says,

"Vice, for vice is necessary to be shewn, should always disgust; nor should the graces of gaiety, or the dignity of courage, be so united with it, as to reconcile it to the mind. . . ."10

Pratt, sensitive to critical censure, may have recognized this conflict between what the eighteenth century would have regarded as Draper's too lively appeal and his licentious habits, and dealt with it by removing him from the scene. Before doing so, however, he allows Draper to refute the heresies expounded by the freethinker, to whom Benignus has been exposed through his aegis, and to make one final attempt to counteract Benignus's propensity for relying upon the judgment and systems of other men to direct his life instead of placing his faith in God.

Immediately after Draper and Benignus have discussed the latter's detestation of systems, and his love of the world as it is, Draper gives Benignus something to read. It

is a fragment, "evidently the work of a female pen," in which the author seeks to justify the ways of God to man. Serving as a Christian answer to the freethinker's arguments, it is Liberal Opinions' most significant interpolation.

Pratt's chapter summary informs the reader of his intention to refute the freethinker's argument:

Scenes for the heart and a fragment wherein happiness is placed first in a corn field, then in a cottage, then in a great many children, and, lastly, in every state and every house, that thinks proper to open the door to content.

(V, n.p., italics mine)

But although the fragment expresses the view that God's benevolence makes it possible for man to attain happiness in this world and hereafter, and is therefore intended to serve as an answer to the antithetical views expressed by the freethinker, its argument is unlikely to have convinced the critic who castigated the "spirit" of Volumes I and II of Liberal Opinions by saying that:

The spirit and tendency of Pratt's work evidently appears to be nothing less than to bring the principles and practice of Benevolence into contempt, and to attack the strong-holds of Virtue.

(MR, p. 468)

In spite of Pratt's avowed intention to inculcate morality in his readers, Liberal Opinions offended even the generally friendly critic, Philip Parsons. Although Parsons praised many aspects of Pratt's fictions, he took him to task for

Liberal Opinions's many impieties. In his Dialogues of the Dead with the Living, he represents Fielding as criticizing Pratt's injudiciousness for introducing in it the immoral Lucy and her infamous gallant, the expression of whose sentiments tend to bring benevolence into disrepute. Fielding says:

Dear Melmoth, how could you . . . make the infamous gallant [the fop with whom Lucy deceives Benignus] of the more infamous Lucy in his accursed letter to her. (Vol. VI, p. 102) say of Benignus, "Ask, and he gives -- knock at his purse, though ever so gently, and he opens it unto thee"?¹¹

Apparently contemporary readers found the alleged piety of the fragment feeble and less convincing than the viciousness of Lucy and her pimp.

The fragment opens with an apostrophe praising the "benignity of Heaven." Then, in a repetition of Pratt's narrative device of presenting the freethinker's argument by means of questions, the fragment poses its own set of questions:

Hath nature given being to anything on purpose to torment it--given it eyes, to see what elegance which it may not share; wants, which though perceived shall not be gratified; appetites which solicit in vain . . .

(V, 115)

The questions are put with some delicacy, appropriate to the "female pen" of its author. Some readers, however, might

reflect that the answer to each question might be "yes." Apparently dismissing skepticism on the part of the reader, Pratt depicts in "scenes for the heart" a happy farmer and his idyllically contented family. Before this ideal farmer enters the scene, however, Pratt describes the placid and contented lives of other cottagers who farm their lands:

The sun, it is true, scorches; but then the poor man is seasoned to it, and while he sweats in the eye of Phoebus, he stoops to the exercise of the sickle, whistles chearily [sic] in his progress, and tells blithly [sic] to his companion the story of his last frolic . . . the rain often invades him at his work; . . . the passing shower is grateful to the heated husbandman. I will not deny the coarseness of his raiment; but then it is the warmer on that account. His food also is far from being delicate; but yet it is for that very reason the more wholesome.

(V, 118)

In the description above, the fictional author of the fragment invites the confidence of her readers by what she takes to be her perfect honesty in admitting that the sun is hot, rain is wet, and that the clothing and food of a poor man are different from those of a rich man. But her attempt to prove that "whatever is, is good" does not win our confidence, for her images deny too completely the hardships that burden the lives of such toilers as she asks her readers to contemplate.

In spite of Pratt's appeal to our good hearts and the author's nods in the direction of the hardships of the cottagers' lives, we recognize that the passage falsifies

and idealizes the lives it depicts. The characters of poor farmers are more often brutalized as a consequence of the harshness of their lives than made "blithe and frolicsome."

The description, of the particular farmer whose life we are to observe and judge, again strikes a false note because of its idealization.

The sun hath made his "golden set" in the west:
the hours of labour are over. Now then look at
the cottager. The sickle is laid across his
shoulder: his eldest boy trudges after him . . .
his watch-dog . . . before him: the zephyrs of the
evening bestow the gradual coolness; and the song
of the nightingale attends him over the leas,

he is this minute plucking the latch of his straw-
built cottage. The housewife hath left her wheel,
and the children of this prolific matron, are play-
ing the gambols of infancy upon the plain, clean,
brick floor: the father's kiss echoes on every
lip . . .

(V, 118-120)

The mood of the passage is that of a fairy tale: even the most innocent readers would be likely to recognize that the image of the contented cottager for whom the nightingale sings as he makes his way home, is unreal. The reference to "zephyrs" in this passage, like the allusion to "Phoebus" in the last, and the mention of the father's kisses that echo "on every lip" gild the farmer's life with a poetic lustre one tends to distrust. Pratt himself in Volume I of his later Harvest Home (a work in which the prose is part miscellany and part travel book, but at any rate is not

fiction), deplores the number of babes born to poverty that are abandoned.

I said earlier that Pratt explicitly intended this fragment as an answer to the freethinker's complaints. As such, it functions as a parallel to the freethinker's reflections (V, 99-100) on man's fate, as in this passage:

Happy infancy! my youngest is sporting with its plaything: Happy childhood! my eldest is delighting itself with pictures that illustrate the fable, painted and written to the tenderness of rising ideas: Happy maturity! that bestows upon one of either sex, those attractions which make them a world to each other.

(V, 122)

The rhetoric of the happy cottager's lyrical effusions is absurdly sophisticated, and the content in no way answers the freethinker's complaints about the miseries of childhood and maturity. On the subject of old age, the cottager is silent. The question the reflective reader must ask himself is, what are the combined effects of the freethinker's arguments and those of the pious author of the fragment, within the context of Liberal Opinions? Both are extreme positions that work, not as Pratt says he intended, "to justify the ways of God to man," but almost to cancel each other out. Juxtaposed as they are, they would cancel each other out completely if the end of the fragment marked the final appearance of either point of view in the novel. But this is not the case. Liberal Opinions has

yet another freethinker, who makes his appearance in the final volume of the novel, VI.

This freethinker, far less respectable than the earlier one, who had expressed his opinions in the open forum of the "Society of Systems," is a sightseer who inflicts his views on a captive audience in a round house. His excuse for being in such a place, in the middle of the night, is his system, which bids him "to see as much of this world as possible-- because as to the next, we must take that upon trust" (VI, 148).

Whereas the first freethinker's audience was unanimously and loudly opposed to his expression of his opinions, as well as to the opinions themselves, some members of this last freethinker's audience express their agreement with his views.

For example, the skepticism about the next world referred to above (VI, 148) is echoed by a young lawyer who is among the freethinker's listeners. He says:

For my part, I don't approve of giving long credit and I had rather have chambers in Lincoln's Inn rent-free, than take any of my father's mansions which are in Heaven, upon trust.

(VI, 149)

The speaker's denial of the Christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul is reinforced by denials of other aspects

of Christian belief expressed by another member of the round house audience:

When I assure you that all the children of this world were originally designed to be happy, and that stealing a paltry apple created an universal curse the moment it was swallowed, and that there has been the devil to play [sic] in the world ever since; you put on a solemn face, and you exclaim against the cursed curiosity of a sex which is still so incorrigible, that a forbidden apple would set, even at this moment, every daughter of Adam a longing. Yet in the name of truth, which is the most glaring absurdity?

(VI, 157-158)

Benignus, an unwilling auditor, responds in shocked disbelief to the lack of faith implicit in these questions:

Do you dispute the scriptures? Do you hold in disbelief the sacred lessons of Human Faith?

(VI, 158)

When the speaker answers "A figs [sic] end for Faith," Benignus protests against the speaker's "licentious singularity," to which the speaker retorts,

. . . there is not one man in a thousand but would give himself the lye if he dare, and does not privately disbelieve the greatest part of his public credenda . . .

(VI, 159)

The speaker's last assertion may express one of Pratt's privately held opinions. The fact that Pratt, instead of giving the pious female who speaks in the fragment the last

word on the subject of Christian faith, has dragged in a second freethinker, may be evidence of his own religious skepticism.¹²

Upon reading the fragment, Benignus is more perplexed than strengthened. Praying for guidance, he asks God to rescue him from the anarchy of the ideas that assail him:

Do Thou call my sentiments into order, and into rectitude! do Thou--power of peace! parent of nature! and regulator of the heart, . . . do thou guide me into the right way--breathe into the spirit of thy inexperienced subject--oh everlasting essence, that truth which surpasseth all systems-- . . .

(V, 128)

Once again the adversary is "systems," opposed in this instance to "truth." Moreover, although Benignus's prayer makes him feel a little better, when he and Draper meet the next morning, his mentor chides him for looking "pale and dismal."

Benignus tries to account for his pallor by saying that he suffers from a constant sense of spiritual perturbation, "for the want of acting upon some stationary principle" (V, 130). Draper, however, understands his young friend well enough to recognize that when Benignus speaks of his need for a "stationary principle," he is once more searching for an external guide, and he sets about to persuade Benignus of the folly of his search:

You put me in mind, said Draper, of a man I once knew, who, having heard much, and read more,

pinn'd his faith upon the sleeve of another, and at last, indulged himself in such habits of credulity, that he had no opinion of his own. . . . he was so thoroughly variable, that, read whatever he might he always adopted the precept of the page in hand.

(V, 130-131)

He shifted his religion much oftner [sic] than his linen.

(V, 133)

Draper recounts the misfortunes visited upon this man, Bookwit, whereby as a result of adopting the recommendations of one writer after another he brings himself first to within an inch of the gallows (V, 131), and finally to penury. Bookwit reacts to this latter adversity in a most abrupt and unphilosophical manner, by hanging himself.

Draper interrupts his narration by pretending to defend Bookwit's action, saying, "Alas, poor Jackwit--what could he do, Benignus? There are, my friend, events in life, which unsettle us from top to bottom, inside and outside, at once. A hard blow given by the hand of fortune, when we expect a smile, has occasioned many a whimsical exit out of this world." (V, 135-136). The word "whimsical" indicates that the seeming vindication of Bookwit is spurious, and what Draper really thinks of a man so duped by other men's thoughts and writings that his life can hardly be said to have been his own.

Draper ends his tale by describing the spectacle of Jack Bookwit found "dangling by the neck a sacrifice to

SYSTEMS, and a memento to the children of men, (and, amongst others, to thee, Benignus) now and then to follow their own noses" (V, 136). Draper's abrupt switch to the vernacular seems a commentary on the evil consequences of random reading and abstract philosophies as compared with the salutary effects of relying on one's own perceptions. But the exemplum by which Draper means to encourage Benignus to rely on his own sense rather than other men's systems fails to achieve his purpose. For Benignus fruitlessly continues to search for systems, a search that ends only when he has exhausted his fortune and his health, and retreats to the forest to die.

In the last volumes of Liberal Opinions Pratt directs the reader's attention away from Benignus's systematic search for virtue and Draper's impulsive search for pleasure to the abstract philosophies of two freethinkers and a pious lady. The lady presents her view of life through an interpolated fragment in which she attempts to vindicate the ways of God to man. In these volumes Pratt also introduces Benignus to five more systems, all of which he presents facetiously.

At this point in the novel, the reader has seen that neither virtue nor dissipation has made Benignus happy. Further, Draper's hedonism, which includes elements of both benevolence and "gallantry," has led him to a meaningless--and fatal--duel at age thirty.

The five systems that Benignus encounters before he becomes a recluse are presented by their sponsors, Green, Dab, Pinquefont, and Smack, who sponsors two systems.

Alexander Green, whose system Benignus encounters first, bilks Benignus of a hearty meal and a large quantity of liquor on the occasion of their first meeting. He then gives Benignus an avuncular warning against consorting with strangers such as he.

Rich one day and penniless the next, Green takes both conditions in stride. His system for courting happiness is simple. It requires only that he gamble, drink, and frolic away the night until his purse is light. He tells his friends (Benignus is now among them) that his cash weighs him down, and asks them to help him liquify some of it. His friends oblige him, and together they drink through the night, climbing onto the table and drinking from their hats. Although Pratt presents Green as open-handed and good-natured and seems to suggest that he does not wholly disapprove of the "sallies of delirious joy" (V, 172) that the company indulges in, his apparently tolerant attitude towards the boisterous camaraderie he depicts cannot be construed as approval.

Lemuel Dab, a poet and philosopher, is regarded by Green as the happiest man he knows. Dab's system for ensnaring happiness is summed up in the two precepts Dab

offers to Benignus. (1) "Take things as You Find Them" (VI, 57) and (2) "Know when to Stop" (VI, 58). Having articulated these principles, Dab says,

There it is, the greatest, wisest, and the most wholesome system upon the face of the earth . . . unsettle by systems and long-laboured literary roundabouts, . . . you can come no closer to the ultimatum of all things desireable . . . I found my system . . . upon the fundamentals of 40 years experience . . .

(VI, 58-59, italics mine)

Dab's wholesome precepts are somewhat undercut however by the fact that Pratt has given him the appearance of a Smollettian grotesque. The reader learns, for example, that Dab's skull "formed at the top a complete cone, . . . like a Stilton cheese" (VI, 66). Indeed, Pratt tells us that so singular was Dab's appearance that it might be unsafe "for women in certain situations, to look upon him" (VI, 67). Benignus himself finds Dab's appearance so "uniformly uncouth," and ridiculous, "that even his darling rule of 'taking things as we find them' could scarce reconcile one to him." (VI, 65).

The third system is called "The happiness of insensibility: with the system of a sleeper." The sleeper is a Mr. Pinguefont, a monstrous hulk of a man who wishes only to "laugh and grow fat . . . eat, drink, and sleep care away" (VI, 180). Every room of his house has "either a couch, a sofa, or a . . . tent bed" (VI, 177-178). In the door of each room there is a cut through which his servants may see

whether he is asleep or awake, for they have been instructed on no account to disturb his sleep, although the most urgent business require it, on pain of losing their places.

Pinguefont not only protects his sleep from the intrusion of either servants or business, he also falls asleep and snores in his chair during his guests' visit. Such rudeness and insensibility is anathema to Benignus, who cries out his shocked censure of his host's manner of living:

Bountiful heaven! said I, upon what an animal the sun of thy prosperity shineth! And can it be possible, that a creature endowed with such faculties as man, formed also for immortal purposes, should limit his ambition to the pleasures of food and sleep? Can that be happiness? Can the soaring mind be contended with such gross corporeal gratifications? Or can he whose existence is confined to the narrow circle of a few fleeting years, suffer them to escape without leaving any traces that deserves recollection? [sic]

(VI, 186-187)

As befits his idealized view of his own sensibility, Benignus's reflections end with a prayer for the unfortunate. In spite of this admirable show of concern for others, however, Benignus does not live up to his ideals. Upon leaving Pinguefont's house he goes home with his friend Blake, who has introduced him to Pinguefont, and proceeds to make love to Blake's wife. He hardly reflects on whether such conduct, like Pinguefont's sloth, "deserves recollection."

Mr. Smack, whom Benignus meets when he goes drinking and carousing with Green, proposes the last two systems: daily immersion in cold water, and what he refers to as "rural felicity." When Benignus asks Smack whether his health has improved as a result of his daily baths, the reply is lukewarm. Smack makes up for a somewhat uncertain endorsement of his first system, however, by the zeal with which he proposes his second.

Maintaining that when he first came to London he was "within an ace of what you might call a handsome man" (V, 174), Smack laments that after his arrival in the city he underwent "an absolute metamorphosie" (V, 174). But he goes on to tell Benignus that he intends to repair his health by retreating to the country:

[I will] take a bit of a box in the country towards Kennington [sic], which Mr. Launcelot Squib, my apothecary says, is the very heath of health. Yes Benignus, and there I mean to live amongst the salutiferarious [sic] gales of rural life, as the poet has it: . . .

(V, 174)

Smack's faith in the "salutiferarious gales of rural life" as a means of regaining one's health does not stand the test of experience in Benignus's case. His visit to Blake's snug retreat eventuates in the ruin of Benignus's health through venereal disease, and the depletion of his fortune by a costly lawsuit.

Just as Benignus's first trip to the country with Draper had resulted in the corruption of his mind by the seductive Lucy, so his next visit to the country without Draper results in the corruption of his body. Perhaps Pratt's true opinion of rural life as a wholesome restorative for mind and body is indicated by Smart's absurd malapropism "salutiferarious." At any rate, we know that Pratt chose as his last home Birmingham, hardly a rural paradise even in the eighteenth century.

In his Preface to Volume V of Liberal Opinions, Pratt said that he would not "croud the last scene with persons married or murdered to the novel-reader's satisfaction . . . [but would adhere instead] to human nature" (V, vi). Yet literary custom and not human nature must be held accountable for the silly, sentimental, moralizing aspects of Draper's death, which takes place toward the end of the novel. There is, for example, very little of human nature in the letter that Draper writes to Benignus during his dying moments, and which appears at the center of the concluding volume of Liberal Opinions, forming the climax of the novel. Like most other deathbed epistles in sentimental fiction, Draper's proceeds along sentimental, moralistic, and didactic lines. Addressed "To the ever-dear Benignus, Most beloved Companion" (V, 112), the letter discloses the fact that Draper has left all his worldly goods (with the exception of his estate, which his father has wisely entailed) to a cousin, and expresses regret that the estate cannot be in the

possession of "the only man I love in the world," as "testimony of tender friendship."

After declaring his love for Benignus, Draper goes on to describe in detail the duel he fought with the "gallant" whom he challenged for daring to slander Benignus's name. This young man became enraged after Benignus discovered him hiding under Lucy's bed. Draper's duel in defense of the reputation of a boy he has known for merely a few weeks is silly, if only because Benignus's reputation was already tarnished by the time Lucy's gallant arrived on the scene. The very accident that gives Draper's adversary the opportunity to make his fatal thrust is ludicrous and trivial. As Draper describes the incident, his sword, accidentally striking against a button on his adversary's coat, snapped off, leaving him defenseless before his adversary's fatal thrust.

Draper's letter ends with his effort to employ his "expiring" moments to instruct Benignus and persuade him to reform. Enjoining his pupil to forsake the ways that he himself has exemplified, and to abandon the companions that he himself has introduced, Draper counsels Benignus to

. . . quit the society of Lucy, and all her set; to enter (as soon as is expedient) into chaster connections; to take more care of his worldly affairs; to be less the prey of parasites, and-- and--(I write--in great ag--ony Benignus--) to remember the name, and the friendship of his expiring

Theobald Draper

For three days Benignus tries, unsuccessfully, to repay Draper's love by searching for his friend's murderer and by holding nightly vigils at Draper's grave. Finally he turns to "the whirl of worldly recreation" to which Draper had introduced him, in his efforts to forget his grief, to still his pain, "to bury, . . . the anguish of [his] soul" (VI, 122).

The conventionally sentimental treatment of Draper's death, together with Benignus's response to loss, illustrates Pratt's tendency in Liberal Opinions to mingle the didactic with the sentimental, and to include a substantial measure of worldliness in the fare he offers his readers.

In Liberal Opinions, Pratt has used the conventions of the sentimental novel as a framework for a novel that makes some acute observations about human nature and contemporary society, and makes them with intellectual daring and originality.

The realistic elements in Liberal Opinions are adroitly fitted into the sentimental framework, so that the contemporary reader who was open to Pratt's satiric thrusts was rewarded with opportunities to consider the novel's intriguing ambiguities, whereas readers who were content with the novel's sentimental verities did not have to go beyond them. The ambiguities that interested the more reflective of Pratt's eighteenth-century readers, concerned as they are with universal elements in man and society, are likely also to engage the interest of modern readers.

Pratt's treatment in Liberal Opinions of the relationship between benevolence and systems is an example of the novel's originality. Benignus had made a system of the maxim, "to be good is to be happy." Yet he frequently translates his maxim to mean "one interferes and rescues the victim," and the results of his efforts are frequently disastrous.

Benignus finds that his system cannot guarantee happiness or success, and that interventions do not always succeed. He never benefits from his experiences, however; instead he insists on adhering to his system. Thus his system is antithetical to personal growth. Yet Benignus's final actions--turning to the worldly companions Draper has introduced him to but warned him against--suggest that Pratt is saying something about human nature, as well as about systems. In effect Draper's letter says, "Don't do as I do, do as I say." Benignus, however, follows Draper's example, not his warning. In showing Benignus as influenced by Draper's behavior, Pratt is suggesting that human nature and human example have more power to influence human behavior than do systems.

It is through Draper that Pratt expresses his most significant observations about human nature. Draper's conduct, the example he offers to Benignus--the fragment and the history of Bookwit--as well as his advice to Benignus, articulate several of the moral precepts to be found in Liberal Opinions. Briefly, in his

characterization of Draper Pratt presents a set of sensible precepts that most men would endorse, but that represent goals men aspire to rather than achieve. These precepts are: Man must revere God, but at the same time respect his own intuitions, and keep a careful eye on his accounts. Further, he must do all this without neglecting fashion: the manners and dress society values and requires: Finally, Draper's death teaches that a man must never duel, if he wishes to live to grow old.

In contrast to Benignus's view of benevolence, which is based on morality, Draper's view of benevolence is based on psychology: he maintains that when men treat their fellows kindly, they do so in order to feel good themselves. In his discussion of benevolence, Draper takes a matter-of-fact, even irreverent attitude toward the subject:

I always follow every agreeable feeling, and am directed by one uniform principle of gratification. The malicious passions shake a man all to pieces, set his pulses a stuttering, and every way render him disagreeable to himself. The gentle and pacific passions, on the contrary, diffuse such a fine soothing set of sensations over both soul and body . . . Thus I am the most selfish fellow in the kingdom; and curse me if I believe such characters have the least merit in any of their actions.

(V, 131-132)

[W]e are miserable as misers, or bountiful as angels, just as we are in the humour: for man is the most whimsical of all creatures.

(V, 134)

Draper's theory of benevolence focuses on the motivation of the self-interested benefactor, whereas Benignus's focuses on the consequences to those who are benefitted by the actions of the benefactor. The benefactor's happiness is an incidental result of an allegedly selfless act, not a motivation for the act.

Draper, the character most frequently admired by contemporary reviewers, is a daring conception because although he is generous, benevolent and gracious to the objects of his charity, and although some of his kind acts are presented in sugared, sentimental scenes, he is not, on the whole, a sentimental character.¹³ Draper's disdain for ceremony, his unwillingness to be considered better than he is, his insistence that the motivation for his kindness is selfish rather than altruistic, all illustrate Pratt's willingness to take risks in character portrayal.

Both the narrative voice in the preface to Volume III and Greaves's voice in his final letter to Benignus stress the "romantic" nature of the ramble through city and country in search of happiness. The judgment that Benignus's quest is romantic in the sense of being unrealistic is integral to Pratt's portrayal of the world of Liberal Opinions.

Just as the early essays which precede Benignus's history illustrate a world in which men frequently mistreat birds and beasts, so also Benignus's history shows a world in which men frequently mistreat one another. In fact,

the world of Liberal Opinions is portrayed as so dangerous and ultimately so vicious that Benignus needs more than a "virtuous monitor" to protect him from its snares and deceptions. After Benignus has brought "[d]isease, disgrace, disaster and defeat" (VI, 206) upon himself, Greaves, in a letter to the unfortunate youth, tells him that he needs to be "armed at all points" with "weapons of defense" (VI, 206) against the antagonists he must encounter in the metropolis. Greaves's martial metaphor indicates that he views life in London as warfare rather than a mere contest. Such a struggle requires, in addition to weapons and the guidance of a man of experience, a clear-sightedness that Benignus's preconceptions and his love of systems preclude. As Benignus's self-willed blindness catapults him into disaster after disaster, he gradually becomes more and more disillusioned about mankind, until at last he seeks peace by withdrawing from men, choosing in preference the company of animals.

Pratt's daring is also illustrated in the interpolated tale of the clergyman who experiences an intellectual and spiritual rebirth. By portraying the stranger who is the agent of this transformation as eccentric and impulsive, even irrational, Pratt has dared to communicate to the reader not only that rationality has its limits, but that sometimes the intuitive and impulsive can achieve what reason and rationality cannot. In his characterization of the stranger on horseback, Pratt has allowed

full scope to his imagination, depicting a man who is both odd and unconventional as possessing what is perhaps man's greatest power: the power to change the way in which another man views the world. Though the horseman's actions sometimes surprise, and sometimes shock, he succeeds in precipitating a powerful and life-affirming change in the clergyman. Whereas all the clergyman's education did not enable him to write a sermon, the hours he spends in the company of the horseman initiate a change that restores his bodily and spiritual health. Pratt's characterization of this irascible stranger who influences the clergyman so profoundly seems to make the point that spontaneity, untrammelled by systems, frequently leads to benevolence.

The summary of the concluding chapter of Liberal Opinions describes it as "An explicit criticism on the Life of Benignus which is strongly recommended to every young reader of both sexes." In it, Pratt gives full play to his didactic bent. The text of the chapter is a letter written by Greaves to Benignus a few months after Draper's death. In it the writer first criticizes Benignus, then counsels the youth.

Greaves's condemnation of Benignus's passions and curiosity is inexplicable. Both Pratt and the reader would maintain that passion and curiosity are valid and appealing qualities in a youth of spirit and imagination. Certainly the attitude of Benignus's fictional editor, whose

ode celebrated boyish joys and excused the pranks committed in the pursuit of such joys, excused them and indeed said that the best boys, boys of spirit, indulged in them. Even Benignus's whipping schoolmaster, at least in theory, excused boyish pranks.

Greaves begins by berating Benignus for bringing "[d]isease, disgrace, disaster, and defeat" (VI, 206) upon himself by allowing his heart to triumph over his head (VI, 208). Reproving Benignus for his extravagant abuse of his "naturally noble excellencies" (VI, 211), Greaves asks indignantly "Into what innumerable temptations have you thrown yourself, by the indulgence of a fatal curiosity!" He goes on to advise that "it is only by flying from temptation, that youth and spirits can possibly avoid them" (VI, 209), declaring that "passions" as "violent" as Benignus's, "though they might have lain dormant in a village, have been called out in London" (VI, 213). Greaves's vision of London as inherently destructive (VI, 205), a city whose wickedness is powerful enough to release men's darkest passions, is conventional, but his condemnation of the triumph of Benignus's heart over his head is surprising, coming from a man who in Volume II shed sentimental tears at the plight of a beggar to whom he gave a coin.

The final portion of the letter proves to be an amplified version of Greaves's earlier rules of economy.

Greaves counsels Benignus to put money away for his old age: "Let the sick [old] man rather depend on the panacea of his purse, than on the pity of his physician" (VI, 219). Although the sentiment is banal, the sounds of the repeated explosive "p's" in Greaves's words lend them force. The combination of this force with the whimsical effect resulting from the alliteration of the words and their tongue-twisting quality tends to make the sentence memorable much as an aphorism would be.

Are Greaves's words to be regarded as reflecting the ordinary prudence of a worldly man, or as reflecting a dark view of man? Since he is portrayed as a virtuous character, and since his repeated insistence on the need for independence originates with Pratt, it would seem that Pratt's vision of man, like Greaves's, is dark, or at least somber.

The pessimism apparent in Volume II, Greaves's early warning to Benignus to keep a "friend" in his pocket, (II, 75) has deepened. In spite of the fact that the old and feeble should be natural objects of compassion and benevolence, Greaves urges Benignus to prepare, while he is young and strong, to pay well for the care he may require in his old age.

Cynicism concerning the nature of human relationships is expressed again in the final words of the novel:

Liberty is independence, and slavery is a state of pecuniary obligation. Get honestly, and give

cautiously. Whoso putteth in practice these rules, shall certainly live all the Days of HIS LIFE.

(VI, 221)

Since one of the essential elements of an eighteenth-century world view, and certainly of a sentimental one, is a belief in the interdependence of all living creatures, the every-man-for-himself element in Greaves's sentiments is noteworthy.

Pratt's miscellaneousness in Liberal Opinions is no mere echo of Sterne. It allows Pratt, whose great principle of composition is contrast, to present a number of different voices juxtaposed or contrasted in such a way that they sometimes amplify, sometimes undercut, and sometimes lend ironic coloring to other voices in the novel. Individual voices thus counterpointed gain additional depth, complexity, and ambiguity by the relationship of each to its immediate context as well as to the work as a whole.

Benignus's disastrous adventures and grisly death offer evidence that the world of Liberal Opinions is so harsh that mere good health, good intentions and a large independent fortune are insufficient protection for an inexperienced young man who is determined to satisfy his "curiosity" (VI, 2) and his desire for adventure.

Yet Benignus's withdrawal from the world, following his pessimistic conclusion about its treachery, is not necessarily persuasive, or representative of other views in

Liberal Opinions. In the course of the novel, Pratt has juxtaposed against Benignus's increasingly unattractive misanthropy four other significant voices. The first is the narrative voice of the author, whose ironic tone in the chapter summaries adds a Fieldingesque appeal and perspective to the novel. The second is the occasionally unreliable, but prevailingly sensible voice of Benignus's fictional editor, who deprecates Benignus for being too "scrupulous" in his attitude towards his schoolmates' pranks, an attitude his editor regards as unbecomingly fastidious. The third voice is that of Greaves, Benignus's first mentor, whose final letter reproves Benignus for the "ignoble life" he has led. Yet because Greaves is harshly critical of Benignus's "curiosity" and "passions," which Pratt and many of his contemporary readers would have regarded as admirable in a young man--there is some question as to how much weight the reader is to give to Greaves's views. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Benignus's voice is juxtaposed against Draper's, his ebullient, charming and worldly second mentor. Draper is a man of the world; his voice is attractively urbane and civilized.

The several voices Pratt presents in Liberal Opinions articulate different approaches to life: ironic, easy-going, prudent, hedonistic and worldly. Sometimes Pratt has deployed the individual voices, many of which present points of view that are incomplete, in such a way that they counterpoint each other. Pratt has used a conventional

eighteenth-century literary form--the sentimental novel--to undermine some of the eighteenth century's most cherished beliefs--especially its faith in rationality.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹Liberal Opinions upon Men, Animals, and Providence, Vols. I and II in 1775, III and IV in 1776 (London: G. Robinson and J. Bew, 6 vols. in 3, 1777), hereafter cited in the text. All editions subsequent to the first bear the title Liberal Opinions, or the History of Benignus.

²Ernest A. Baker, The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance, Vol. V of The History of the English Novel (London: Witherby, 1934), p. 16, hereafter cited in the text.

³Monthly Review, 52 (June 1775), 468, hereafter cited in the text.

⁴See also Sarah Fielding, The Adventures of David Simple in Search of a Faithful Friend (1744; rpt. New York: Oxford Press, 1969).

⁵R.S. Pine-Coffin, trans., Saint Augustine's Confessions (N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1961), Book II, p. 47.

⁶Ironically enough, however, in 1780 Pratt became a bookseller.

⁷Near the end of his life Pratt assumed the role of patron to Joseph Blackett; see biographical chapter, p. 11.

⁸In Emile, Book II, Rousseau writes, "Let us lay down as an incontestible maxim that the first promptings of nature are always right."

⁹See John Locke, Treatise of Civil Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration (1689-1690; rpt. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1937), pp. 212-213; Locke states that "atheists" are not to be granted the toleration accorded to other men of unorthodox beliefs.

¹⁰Rambler No. 4, Saturday, March 31, 1750.

¹¹Philip Parsons, Dialogues of the Dead with the Living (London: Printed for N. Conant, 1779), p. 69.

¹²Pratt's sympathy with religious skepticism is suggested by his publication in 1777, during which year he brought out the final volumes of Liberal Opinions, and An Apology for the Life and Writings of David Hume, a pamphlet that revealed his respect for Hume. In it he stressed that David Hume's system, on account of the rectitude of his life, could not be wrong. But although Pratt may have found support for his own skepticism in Hume's writing, however liberal his personal religious beliefs may have been, the skeptics in Liberal Opinions are not men of rectitude like Hume. On the contrary, the first is portrayed as a wild and choleric zealot, the second as a dandified scoffer. Moreover, each has crossed the line that separates the skeptic from the freethinker.

¹³Thus, Monthly Mirror, 15 (July 1803), 10:
"[T]he character of Draper, [is] admirably drawn and will bear comparison with the most felicitous productions of Fielding, Smollett, or Richardson."

Chapter Three

I

Of the six novels Samuel Jackson Pratt wrote between the ages of twenty-eight and thirty-three, the epistolary novel Emma Corbett; or the Miseries of Civil War was the most popular. First published in 1780, by 1798 it had gone through nine editions in England and six in America.

Emma Corbett tells the story of Emma, an exemplary woman loved by two exemplary men. It is also a study of the relationship between Emma and her father. Finally, it makes a plea against not only civil war, but all wars. A sentimental novel, its themes, incidents, and events serve didactic ends.

Ernest Baker describes Pratt's prose fictions as "luscious sentimental novels."¹ But the seriousness, psychological acuity, subtlety, and most particularly the moral ambiguity of Emma Corbett make it more worthy of attention than Baker's description indicates. In addition, Pratt's brief careers as a preacher and an actor had clearly sharpened his ear for the rhetorical potential of sound and cadence, with the result that

the language he uses to depict theme and character in EC is so full, vivid, and vigorous that the book lends itself to being read aloud. Moreover, it is interesting and vital not only because of the felicities and persuasiveness of its sound patterns, but also because in his use of language Pratt deploys texture and sound as well as syntax and pattern to modify, amplify, shade, and at times ironically undercut meaning.

Although Emma Corbett can be distinguished from other sentimental novels such as Brooke's The Fool of Quality (1766-72) and Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling (1771) and Julia de Roubigné on the basis of its psychological acuity and subtlety, and by Pratt's zest for language, it nevertheless sets forth values similar to those of most other sentimental novels of its time: barring war or death, nothing is as important as sympathy, sensibility, and love. In spite of EC's focus on love, however, its attitude towards the kind of sentiment exhibited, for example, in The Man of Feeling and Julia de Roubigné is ambiguous. On the surface, the novel exalts tenderness of heart, yet the fate of its central character, Sir Robert Raymond, suggests that danger as well as delight is inherent in surrendering to such feelings. The reader watches Sir Robert change from a man of wit and rationality into a man whose sentimental flames burn out only into death. His death emphasizes the desirability of rational controls

over emotion and impulse, and makes clear that such controls are particularly necessary for those most susceptible to tender feelings. The prose fictions of some of Pratt's contemporaries--for example, Mackenzie, and less obviously, Sterne--suggest this ambiguous attitude toward tender feelings. It is evident also in Goethe's Werther (1774), which was thought to have been translated by Pratt in 1790 and was almost certainly read by him earlier.²

Today's reader must overcome our age's antipathy to Pratt's rhetorical excesses in EC, which in their day were considered to be the marks of a tender heart. Critics of Pratt's time still regarded pathetic scenes, however sententious and conventional, as important criteria by which to judge the worth of the novels and romances of the day. Critics, authors and readers were agreed that the primary purpose of the novel was to teach, and pathetic scenes were considered an effective way of teaching morality, especially to young female readers.

There are two pairs of sentimental young lovers in Emma Corbett. Each individual of each pair is quivering responsive to tender emotion, and the conduct of each is based on a delicate counterbalance of principle and feeling. Emma Corbett and Henry Hammond are the main pair; Edward Corbett, brother of Emma, and Louisa Hammond, sister of Henry, are the ancillary pair,

although we learn of the latter relationship only through Louisa's letters to Emma. The pattern of brothers and sisters intensifies the emotional force of each character's response to what befalls any of the others; in addition, Louisa and Edward serve as foils to Emma and Henry.

As heroine, Emma Corbett is a standard bearer. Her virtue and sensibility furnish implicit norms by which degrees of virtue and sensibility in other characters may be evaluated. Moreover, although Emma is a woman of tender feelings, she is hardy, unlike the frail Louisa, whose sensibilities are so exquisite that even good news, if it is not revealed gradually enough, precipitates collapse.

Henry Hammond, the man Emma loves, has many qualities in common with other sentimental lovers. Like David Simple and Harley, to mention two well-known examples, he idealizes his mistress, and is young, handsome, and poor. Also like David and Harley, he writes poetry inspired by his mistress, and sends tear-stained letters that attest to sensibilities as tender as those of his beloved.

A large part of Emma Corbett consists of the letters of Emma, of her father, Charles Corbett, and of his old friend Sir Robert Raymond. Emma's letters predominate.

EC begins as Henry prepares to leave for America to fight on the side of the British against the colonists, partly from principle, but also because he hopes to earn enough money to marry Emma. Since Emma's father supports the cause of the colonists, Henry's decision to take arms against them provides the novel's main plot complication.

Although Emma's father claims that his principles alone account for his violent partisanship, other issues are clearly involved. Most of his fortune is in America, and his son Edward has gone to the colonies in an effort to save some of these assets. Throughout, Charles Corbett's principles vie with expedience. He professes that principles only determine his conduct, but he acts according to self-interest, and his letters sometimes reveal this as he moves from one position to another, responding to his conflicting feelings and impulses.

Corbett is determined to separate his daughter Emma from Henry before Henry leaves for America, as he believes he has separated his son Edward from Henry's sister Louisa. Corbett's opening letter instructs Henry to visit his home no longer and seek no further communication with Emma. Henry replies that he will continue to meet with Emma. Corbett is enraged at Henry's refusal to do as he is bidden, yet in reality Henry's behavior is more honorable than that of

Corbett's son Edward. When Corbett opposed the marriage of Edward to Louisa, citing Louisa's poverty as the reason for his objection, Edward arranged a secret marriage to the woman of his choice. The juxtaposition of Edward's stealth with Henry's openness underscores the latter's courage.

Aware that Henry will leave very soon for America, Corbett shrewdly avoids making an issue of a few last meetings, perhaps believing that once Henry leaves, he will be able to persuade Emma, hitherto a dutiful daughter, to marry Sir Robert Raymond, his friend of many years. Sir Robert, who has inherited a substantial fortune, is on his way to England from India to pay Corbett and Emma a visit as Henry sets off for America.

Emma's father prepares her for Sir Robert's visit by praising his friend's excellencies. At the same time, Corbett first hints at and later discloses their own desperate financial situation, telling Emma, "But for you, my child, your unfortunate father would have no support" (I, 237).

Emma responds to her father by offering to support them both by the labor of her hands (II, 12). But Corbett has a different plan in mind. At this point, Sir Robert Raymond arrives for an extended stay at Castleberry, and Corbett discovers a fortunate coincidence: his friend is the previously anonymous new owner of the estate he has been forced to sell. Sir

Robert persuades Corbett and his daughter to continue to make Castleberry their home.

Having settled the pressing question of where Corbett and Emma are to live, Sir Robert prevails upon Emma's father to confide the state of his finances. Emma's father admits to his friend that he is ruined. Sir Robert lends him the money he needs, gallantly insisting that by giving him the opportunity to be of service, Corbett confers an obligation rather than incurring one (I, 261). Sir Robert explains that at this time in his life his happiness depends on being able to gratify his benevolent impulses, as well as on being a part of "the dear domestic circle that includes Emma and her father." He asks only that Corbett keep his loan a secret from his daughter, for he has fallen deeply in love with Emma, and does not want "the hand of gratitude" (I, 263).

Emma Corbett is in fact composed of two unequal books: the first a well-plotted but contrived drama in a domestic setting, the second an improbable and heavy-handed melodrama set in the American wilderness. In Volume I, Pratt focuses on revealing character and generating conflict. Conflicts between the well-realized characters are seldom subordinated to his didactic intentions.

By contrast, the plot of Volume II is a clanking mechanism that relies on coincidences, melodramatic

reconciliations, and, finally, on the accumulation of enough dead bodies of the young and worthy to dramatize the truth of the novel's subtitle. In this portion of the book, Pratt focuses so exclusively on proving moral points that his handling of characterization and plot suffers, as didactic precepts become ends in themselves. For a time even Sir Robert is reduced to being hardly more than Pratt's agent for disseminating the sentimental morality that was the popular cant of the time. As for the plot, it is, to say the least, action-packed. It advances from crisis to crisis with almost parodic rapidity.

The action begins with Emma's realization that her father is determined that she marry Sir Robert. She also learns that Henry has been wounded. These two circumstances precipitate her flight from her father's house. Disguised as a man, she courageously sets out for America. Her father, discovering that she has fled, and simultaneously learning that his son Edward, whom he thought dead, is alive in America, asks his friend Sir Robert to rescue his children.

Sir Robert boards the ship that is also carrying Emma to America, but neither is aware of the other's presence until the ship is taken and the captives are herded together.

Shortly after Emma and Sir Robert find each other, Emma swoons. She has just recognized the officer

guarding her: it is her brother Edward. The ship reaches land and Sir Robert is taken to General Washington who "happened to be quartered in the same town" (II, 138). Sir Robert tells the general of Emma's search for Henry. The general wipes away a tear, and, declaring "I am not at war with the affections" (II, 139), sets Emma and Sir Robert, now accompanied by Edward, free.

As the three wander in search of Henry, Edward dies in his sister's arms. It falls to Sir Robert to dig Edward's grave and bury him. Shortly afterwards, Sir Robert takes sick, so that he remains behind while Emma, who has added to her disguise by darkening her face with berry juice in order to pass as an Indian, sets out in search of Henry. When she finds him she discovers that he has been struck by an arrow. She removes the arrow and sucks the wound to remove the poison with which she has been told arrowheads are often coated. As she cares for him, Henry, thinking he is about to die, bursts forth with a passionate apostrophe addressed to Emma, whom he does not recognize as the person caring for him because she has retained her disguise in order to spare him until he is strong enough to survive the shock of recognizing her. In spite of Emma's care, Henry becomes weaker. The edible plants, roots, and berries growing wild that Emma has been gathering cannot nourish him

adequately and he and Emma are in danger of starving to death. Fortunately she sees a group of soldiers passing by and appeals to them for help. The soldiers share their provisions with the starving lovers. Once Henry seems to be recovering, Emma reveals herself to him. The pair go back to the inn where Sir Robert has been recovering from his illness.

As soon as Henry feels strong enough, he rejoins his men in battle, and soon afterwards Emma receives word of his death. Searching for his corpse, Emma finds his still warm body, brings him home, and again nurses him back to health. The happy pair prepare to marry. Sir Robert, pressed by Henry to attend their wedding, invents an excuse for not accepting Henry's invitation which Emma, aware that he loves her, sees throughout but, wishing to spare him pain, rejoices in.

Some time after his marriage to Emma, Henry recognizes that he is growing weaker. He asks Sir Robert to help him conceal his deteriorating condition from Emma. She, in turn, asks Sir Robert to help her conceal her own waning health from Henry. Soon Henry dies in his wife's arms. Some time after Henry is buried, Emma tells Sir Robert that "SHE IS WITH CHILD" (II, 233).

Sir Robert makes plans to return to England with Emma. He writes to Corbett, warning him that Emma's appearance and his own are much changed. Pratt portrays the voyage home with unrestrained

sentimentality. Emma sews baby clothes and asks Sir Robert to promise that, should she die in childbirth, he will tell her child that the clothes that first covered it were made by its mother's hands.

When Sir Robert and Emma reach Castleberry, their arrival is marked by the tolling of death bells, as Louisa Corbett's coffin is carried downstairs. When they see Corbett, he is being supported on each side by a servant. In spite of Sir Robert's warning, Emma's father fails to recognize her or Sir Robert.

On the morning following her return home, Emma dies in childbirth after being delivered of a daughter. Emma's babe and Louisa's son are now both orphans, two more testimonies of the terrible consequences of civil war.

Some of the correspondents receive answers to their letters on a quid pro quo basis; the letters of other correspondents remain unanswered. Corbett, for example, always receives a response to his letters, whereas Sir Robert, although he receives responses from Corbett, does not receive any from his primary confidant Berkeley. Edward Corbett, Emma's brother, receives no answers to any of his letters. Writing from war-torn America, his chief concern seems to be that the conditions of war put "a dreadful stop to this branch of communication, although [it is] the only one which can relieve the pain of so perilous an absence" (II, 115).

sentimentality. Emma sews baby clothes and asks Sir Robert to promise that, should she die in childbirth, he will tell her child that the clothes that first covered it were made by its mother's hands.

When Sir Robert and Emma reach Castleberry, their arrival is marked by the tolling of death bells, as Louisa Corbett's coffin is carried downstairs. When they see Corbett, he is being supported on each side by a servant. In spite of Sir Robert's warning, Emma's father fails to recognize her or Sir Robert.

On the morning following her return home, Emma dies in childbirth after being delivered of a daughter. Emma's babe and Louisa's son are now both orphans, two more testimonies of the terrible consequences of civil war.

Some correspondences in EC are reciprocal between the two writers, whereas others are almost totally one-sided. Corbett, for example, always receives a response to his letters, whereas Sir Robert, although he receives responses from Corbett, does not receive any from his primary confidant Berkeley. Edward Corbett, Emma's brother, receives no answers to any of his letters. Writing from war-torn America, his chief concern seems to be that the conditions of war put "a dreadful stop to this branch of communication, although it is the only one which can relieve the pain of so perilous an absence" (II, 115).

Pratt uses these silences to excellent advantage. When Emma receives no replies to her letters after Henry has left her, Pratt introduces two anguished and over-wrought letters (II, 44, 46), allowing Emma's language and style to reveal her self-pity and hysteria. The exposure of Emma's less attractive qualities adds a human dimension to a portrait that is frequently too conventional and idealized. On the other hand, the silence maintained by Sir Robert Raymond's primary correspondent, Frederick Berkeley, allows Pratt to keep the focus on Sir Robert, the most interesting character in the novel.

The first letters in EC are not love letters, nor are they letters from the heroine of the title, or from Sir Robert. They are letters written by Emma's father, Charles Corbett, and her lover, Henry Hammond. Presented without an introduction, the letters between Corbett and Henry are ostensibly concerned with the attempts by Emma's father to separate Henry from Emma, in other words, with a conflict between the generations.

But the letters are about another issue as well. The correspondents are an old man and a young man, and the exchange between them makes some implicit assumptions about the power and tyranny of the old over the young, a theme that is very much in keeping with EC's subtitle The Miseries of Civil War. For war is surely

the most effective annihilator of youth age has made use of. On one level, the letters between Charles and Henry Hammond that open EC serve to reveal the novel's love interest as well as the inevitable obstacle or complication impeding this love. On another level, the letters explore the machinations of an old man trying to bend a younger man to his will.

Corbett's first letter has a power and impact that derive from the nature of its subject, the writer's intention to sever the bonds of his long friendship with Henry Hammond, his daughter's lover, and from the directness and immediacy of his epistolary style:

Hammond, you have hurt me.
 I can no longer look on you with pleasure.
 Forbear your visits.
 My daughter Emma shall not be your's /sic/.
 I have an objection.
 Will you hear it explained?
 Being explained, will you remove it?
 You can: you ought: you must; or this
 closes our connection.
 To be at a word: will you render it
 possible for me to call you my son?
 I write in confidence.
 Reply without delay.
 I love exactness. Farewell.
 Charles Corbett.
 (I, 1, line division my own)

J. M. S. Tompkins has described the style of the letter as "simple /and/ energetic."³ Considering the plainness of its diction, Corbett's first sentence has an unexpected force. The series of short, simple declarative sentences that follow seem intended to

disarm Hammond. The writer presents himself as a plainspoken, straightforward man, someone Mrs. Chapone would have described as characterized by "singleness of heart."⁴ Yet when we compare Corbett's first letter with his subsequent letters, we note that he employs a different style for each of his correspondents. Such chameleon-like variability suggests that Emma's father is a man to be watched, not trusted, but the reader gains this information only gradually.

Pratt's simple maneuver of beginning abruptly with Hammond's name captures the reader's attention. Hammond is accused of having "hurt" the man who has been his guardian, who has been both a parent and friend to him. The charge is relatively mild, suggesting to the reader an initial impression of Corbett as an even-tempered and moderate as well as a plainspoken man. The terseness of his third sentence, "Forbear your visits," comes as a surprise, and lends additional force to the blunt prohibition, "My daughter Emma shall not be your's," that follows. The climactic impact of this sentence results from the contrast between its melodramatic resonance and the more modulated tones of the sentences that precede it. In this brief letter sharp variations in sentence length produce a sense of momentum, and create three distinct rhetorical climaxes. The first climax is the assertion, "My daughter Emma shall not be your's."

Each of these climaxes comes at the end of four lines, as if each sequence of four lines were a stanza in a poem. In the penultimate climax in the eighth sentence, "You can: you ought: you must; or this closes our connection," the rhetorical repetition (anaphora), beginning each of the first three clauses with the same word, has the effect of emphasizing the urgency of what Corbett is demanding of Henry. This sense of urgency increases the tension achieved at the end of the letter. The blunt imperative force of each parallel verb in the eighth sentence (beginning with "You can,") transforms Corbett's language from a tool into a weapon. Although he hopes that the tone of his letter will affirm his rational character, what it really conveys is his desire to manipulate Hammond.

In the concluding lines of this letter Emma's father makes a sudden plea that Henry make it possible for him to call him "son." Then, continuing in the pose of a straightforward man who says what he must, using as few words as possible, he warns, "I love exactness." Yet although he urges Hammond to be exact, Corbett does not state the conditions Henry must fulfill to regain his love, and to be allowed to marry Emma.

Neither Corbett's letters to his friend, Sir Robert Raymond, who rescues him from financial ruin, nor those addressed to Emma, whom he believes to be his only surviving child, have the sincerity of tone of his

letters to Henry Hammond. In his exchanges with Sir Robert and Emma, and even with Henry's sister, Louisa, Corbett rants, howls, and whines, responding primarily to his own needs. He manipulates each correspondent by simulating whatever emotion he thinks will serve his purpose. Only in his exchanges with Henry does he later show real warmth.

Henry's letter in answer to this first from Corbett suggests what his subsequent letters confirm, that he has the courage to hold to his convictions even in the face of Corbett's attempts at emotional blackmail. The only young person in the novel who stands up to Corbett, he is paradoxically the only young person who evokes sincere affection from him. But although he is unique in opposing Corbett's will, in several other respects he conforms to the norms of sentimental lovers in eighteenth century fiction. In the throes of powerful emotion, he not only weeps, he writes verses. But he most distinguishes himself not by being suitably noble, generous, honest, sympathetic, and principled, but by demonstrating in his epistolary duels with Corbett that the becoming modesty he evinces is accompanied by a becoming self-respect, a quality only faintly discernible in certain prototypical sentimental lovers, such as Harley and Mr. Hickman (Clarissa).

With an appealing lack of suspicion, Henry Hammond answers Corbett's first letter in a way that indicates that he takes the older man's letter at face value. Joyously and impatiently, he invites Emma's father to tell him what he must do to "obey" him:

There is then a possibility, O my dear Mr. Corbett, of surmounting this objection! You ask, as a favour, what you might claim as a right. Generous friend! O, name the circumstance, hint your expectations, and give me--all that I can desire--an opportunity to obey them. Have you not been the guardian of my youth? Are you not the father of Emma? I am all impatience, and I am

Ever yours,
Henry Hammond (I, 2)

Henry's letter conveys his youthful, buoyant optimism, but it also indicates his regard and affection for Emma's father, and suggests one possible basis of that regard and affection: Corbett has been the guardian of his youth. Whatever the basis of his feelings for Emma's father, his letter indicates that he trusts him; he believes that the former will ask him to fulfill a condition within his power to fulfill.

Corbett's response to Henry's eagerness is a command: the opportunity to "obey" him that the youth invites. "Resign your commission,--that commission which, against all dissuasive hints, you have solicited and procured. Lay down your sword, or else draw it in the cause of liberty and heaven" (I, 3). Corbett's injunction has the virtue of directness, but the

skeptical tone of his "your promises are fair," which opens the letter, as well as the detached and impersonal tone of his "the language in which they are expressed is proper to your age, and suitable to your character" (I, 3; italics mine) reject the warmth and affection that were expressed in Henry's letter to him.

But although the beginning of Corbett's second letter to Henry is coldly impersonal, its tone quickly changes. Just as an effective preacher alters his tone to keep his audience, Corbett, adopting a tone of passionate intensity, inveighs against what he views as the "assassination of America" (I, 5), the cause Henry intends to join.

Corbett reminds Henry that his son Edward, Henry's school-fellow, who went to America "to defend his property," has been murdered by the "spoilers" who set his house on fire and laid waste "his little territory" (I, 5). He continues, "My darling son is no more" (I, 3). At the moment when these words burst from him, he speaks as an anguished parent, as spontaneous and indifferent to the effect of his words as he will ever be in the course of the novel; these words are evidence of his trust in Henry.

In an effort to persuade Henry (whom he now addresses as "O my dear Harry,") that his cause is a cruel one, that his "ardour . . . has taken a wrong direction" (I, 5), Corbett indicates his willingness to regard

Henry's decision as an error in judgment, although a serious one, provided that he rectify it. In another attempt to bend Henry to his will, Corbett resorts to the argumentum ad hominem: "whom I thought tender, him I find bloody" (I, 5). To this last attack Corbett adds another, which he seeks to justify by declaring that his conscience makes him "unwilling that the son of a dear deceased friend should thus prostitute his courage in an action so peculiarly base, so peculiarly barbarous" (I, 7, italics mine).

Corbett's ad hominem attacks on Henry Hammond employ language by turns eloquent and passionate, the spell of whose sound, structure, and rhythm tends to make the reader accessible to its argument. With the elegant balance and brevity of "whom I thought tender, him I find bloody," the forceful, albeit less than subtle imagery of Henry "prostitut[ing] his courage," and with the rhetorically effective repetition of words and sounds in "so peculiarly base, so peculiarly barbarous," Corbett has fashioned phrases that he intends shall repeat themselves in Henry's mind like aphorisms.

Henry's answer is a model of rationality and sympathy. He writes, "You arraign my humanity. Wherefore? May we not consider a public contest in different points of view, and yet be friends? Both may act from feeling, and both on principle" (I, 8). Henry recognizes that he will need to rely on more than reason to

regain Corbett's friendship, love and acceptance. Wisely ignoring Corbett's charges against his "humanity," Henry addresses himself to exactly the question Corbett might be expected to respond to. He reminds Corbett that he is innocent of Edwards death.

I was not accessory to the death of your son; and had it been my fate to meet him in the field, I can conceive the point on which nature would have insisted. She would gracefully have led us both a little from the line of duty, and spared one in sympathy to the other. Nay more, had I seen the sword tremble at his bosom, my own should for that moment been as a shield, and you know not how far I would have ventured for the brother of Emma. (I, 9)

Having addressed himself first to Corbett's grief by assuring him that he would never have caused or allowed another to cause Edward's death, Henry expresses some of his feelings about Corbett's accusations against him, as well as about his offer to give Henry his daughter and half his fortune should he meet his conditions.

Corbett had questioned Henry's "humanity;" now Henry speaks of an equally abstract concept, his own "soul." Persuaded that Corbett's view of him is unjust, Henry's defense of his "soul," what today we might call "character," is passionate and eloquent:

Change sides! No, Sir; if these are to be the terms, take back the hand you permitted

me to win, and possess, undivided, her fortune and your own. You have not looked accurately at my soul. As I am not, on the one hand, so sensual, to gratify my passion at the expense of the holy faith and the solemn services which I have sworn to my country; so neither am I so sordid on the other, as to court her inheritance without many endeavours, consistent with the powers of my youth, to add something to her fortune. Patrimony hath dropt from my hope, but nature may, perhaps, have bestowed the equivalent.
(I, 9-10)

In the sentence beginning "As I am," in which Henry disavows any "sensual" or "sordid" motives for courting Emma or for fighting on the British side, balance, antithesis and sound contribute to the force and elegance of his argument. The repetition of the "s" sound in the first half of the sentence lends texture and fluidity to that portion of Henry's defense of his character while simultaneously slowing the pace of the prose and emphasizing the onomatopoeic quality of "sensual" and "sordid." In the last sentence of the passage, Henry says that although he cannot hope for a "patrimony . . . nature may, perhaps, have bestowed the equivalent." His words offer additional evidence of his self-esteem and of his becoming pride in his natural endowments.

In spite of the keen intelligence and perceptiveness Henry brings to bear in that portion of his letter in which he acts as his own advocate, it is the final portion of that letter that is most moving. Henry

experiences what he takes to be a sudden flash of insight. Abruptly interrupting himself, he records his inner dialogue:

But why do I argue with so much gravity, when perhaps you intend all this in the way of trial; willing to see if my attachment to my native country was not less than my passion for my mistress. Yes, yes, this is your experiment. You wanted to know whether it was appetite or affection that influenced me in regard to your daughter, and you will not be displeased to find the basis as solid as your friendship or solicitude might desire.

Adieu, dear Sir: I thank you for the stratagem: and glory in every success that draws me nearer to your heart.--Adieu!

Henry Hammond (I, 11)

At such a moment the immediacy possible perhaps only in the epistolary novel is best appreciated. The form is, at its best, a record of a mind in motion. Thus Henry's sudden inspiration reflects a mind in motion as well as being a stroke of genius on Pratt's part. Pratt's imagination has supplied exactly the kind of wishful thinking a man in Henry's situation might fall prey to in order to deny the hopelessness of his plight. Although having lived with Corbett, Henry knows, on some level, how little chance he has of influencing a mind "fixed in [its] opinions" (I, 129), (the judgment is Sir Robert's), he is so deeply attached to Emma and to her father that he suppresses his knowledge of Corbett's rigidity in order to hold on to a delusion that offers some semblance of hope. But

even as one part of Henry's mind encourages him in his attempts to make Corbett see things his way, another part recognizes the hopelessness of his efforts.

Having hit upon the idea of a love test, Henry decides that he has passed the test admirably, and that he will be rewarded by being allowed to act according to his principles without sacrificing Emma's hand. He expresses his sudden elation, the upsurge of joy, the resurgence of hope he feels, in his excited "yes, yes," and in his jubilant "I thank you for the strategem: and glory in every success that draws me nearer to your heart." His expressions of happiness evoke the reader's sympathy as well as Corbett's.

Corbett's answer to Henry's letter displays many of the maneuvers that are characteristic of him, but it is perhaps the most sincere he writes in the course of the novel:

Poor misguided youth! Receive the last kindness I can ever shew you: receive my pity. You will, in common politeness, cease to render yourself unwelcome, and save me from an appearance of inhospitality. I think you ought, as a man of honour, to drop corresponding with Emma, and let it seem to be your own act and deed self-suggested, and self-inspired. This, however, your conscience will best settle. To that I refer you. As you so soon depart, a few more letters cannot be very material. Further avowals of love, however, I shall consider as seductions. Farewell. To wish you success in your undertakings would be to partake of your folly: you will therefore excuse me. I will only say, what is perfectly true, that I am extremely sorry for you. Heaven place your

feet in a fairer path. In that you are going to tread, Mr. Hammond, you may find havock and horror, but never can find either honour or happiness.

Charles Corbett (I, 12-13)

Corbett's "poor misguided youth!" reflects his comprehension of Henry's mistake, and his genuine pity, but he is unbending in his decision that Henry shall not marry Emma. He pronounces his curse, disguised as prophecy, that Henry "may find havock and horror, but never . . . honour or happiness." The alliterated "h's" are a give-away, evidence of Corbett's willingness to use any device, even bombast, in his effort to bully Henry into doing his will. Henry replies: "What you are pleased to call seduction appears to me so absolute a propriety that I must take the liberty to persist in it" (I, 13 italics mine). . . . "It is Emma, . . . and only Emma, can prevail with me to stop the current of affection or of correspondence. I refer you to her conscience, since it is not an apt reference you make to mine" (I, 14).

We watch Henry's character define itself when he can no longer deny Corbett's attack. The battle lines are drawn, and, ironically enough, it is Corbett who plays controlling England to Henry's struggling America in the conflict between them--itself a kind of "civil war."

Corbett's response to Henry's preceding letter is blind rage, defamation, abuse, name-calling, and an attack of alliteration:

Inexorable boy! I shall urge you no more.
Here let all connection cease for ever.
When I permitted you, under the fair disguise of simplicity which you assumed, to seek the affection of my child, I had no conception there beat in your bosom so sanguinary a heart. Yet, practice on her as you please, she will return, I trust, to her duty, and have done with her deceiver.

Charles Corbett (I, 15)

In what is perhaps his most abusive letter to Henry, Corbett attempts to belittle and denigrate the young man whose letters show him to be not a "boy" but a man of courage, just as subsequent events show Emma to be not the "child" her father thinks her, but a woman of spirit.

Justifiable anger marks the beginning of Henry's response to Corbett's latest insults: "Have a care, Sir. You are going over perilous ground" (I, 16). He mitigates this expression of anger and demonstrates concern for Emma's father by returning the "political portions" of his letters for safe-keeping. Henry concludes his letter with a prayer "that heaven may bless you and make us once more friends" (I, 17). Neither artificial nor mannered, Henry's simplicity eloquently reflects his sincerity.

Corbett responds to Henry's prudent and unmistakably heartfelt gesture with genuine affection. Once again he presses Henry to accept his friendship and his conditions. Urging that "it is not even yet too late" (I, 17), he closes his letter with a passionate appeal: "I pant to embrace you, to give you the paternal benediction, and to give you with it, my only child" (I, 18).

Resigned in tone, generous in sentiment, the last letter in the series is Henry's. In it, he begs the older man "to drop the subject [of his allegiance to the British side of the conflict] and to believe, in this farewell sentence, that there is not a blessing in human life which is not sincerely wished you, by Henry Hammond" (I, 19). Having shown Henry to be decent and civilized in conduct, and generous in spirit, Henry's letters to Corbett prove that he is worthy of Emma.

In introducing these letters I suggested that besides advancing the overt plot of EC, they introduced the theme of the destruction of the young by the old. When Corbett tries to explain his sudden aversion to his daughter's lover to Sir Robert, his words seem to support the notion that in the passionate intensity of his response to the younger man there is a good deal of rivalry: "Had Hammond remained neuter on

motives of like benevolence, . . . For my own part, I cannot remain neuter. My soul is on fire" (I, 145).

Although the use of "neuter" to mean "neutral" was not unusual in the eighteenth century, Corbett's use of it seems to lend further support to the idea that he fears being supplanted by his "son" Henry. Indeed, the letter quoted above continues with Corbett's statement that were it not that Emma needs him, he would join the colonists in their struggle, a statement that suggests rather emphatically the strength of his competitive feelings towards Henry.

Letters of Emma Corbett, her father, Charles Corbett, and his old friend Sir Robert Raymond, make up most of Emma Corbett, with the greatest number of its pages devoted to Emma's letters and Sir Robert's. Yet it is Charles Corbett's epistles, neither so numerous nor so lengthy as his daughter's or his friend's, that frame the novel. Letters written by him open each of the two volumes of the novel; a letter from him closes Volume I, and the letter written by Robert Raymond that concludes Volume II is concerned with Charles Corbett, for it is he who prevails at the novel's end, assuming that outliving the young people he tyrannized over constitutes a kind of victory.

Despite the political beliefs he alleges, Charles Corbett represents power. Emma's conflict with him,

like Henry's, is also a kind of "civil war" in which Corbett has the final victory.

His use of power, language, and people is according to the accepted mode of his society. One way for such a character to wield power in the eighteenth century was the exercise of parental power, particularly, as Richardson so dramatically reminds his readers, paternal tyranny.

Paternal tyranny may take many forms. It may appear in the form of Mr. Harlowe's barbarous treatment of Clarissa, fierceness alternating with unrelenting coldness, the threat of violence never far. In Julia de Roubigné (1777), the heroine of the title, instructed by her father to give up Savillon, the man she loves, and marry Montauban, the man he has chosen, does what she is told in spite of her profound love for Savillon.⁵ So obedient is she to her father's wishes that although his power is not expressed by harsh words or harsh actions, it is nonetheless palpable. Similarly, Rousseau's Julie abandons St. Preux and marries Wolmar in order to satisfy her father's wishes, however unreasonable they may be.⁶ In the nineteenth century, paternal domination may also assume the benign form of a fretful Mr. Woodhouse, who simply cannot bear change of any kind whatsoever. At the start of the twentieth century the hypocritical Theobald Pontifex, having been bullied by his own father, in turn

tyrannizes over his son. Comparing Mr. Corbett with Mr. Woodhouse and with Mr. Harlowe, to cite two extreme cases, Emma's father has almost nothing in common with Mr. Woodhouse, but he has a great deal in common with Mr. Harlowe. For although Corbett would think his methods very different from Mr. Harlowe's, he is little inferior to him when it comes to unmitigated selfishness, or to willingness, when more subtle maneuvers fail, to bully his daughter into submission to his will.

In order to understand Charles Corbett's role in Emma Corbett, as well as some of the implications of the novel's subtitle, we must begin with an examination of his relationship with Emma. Emma's father is cunning and subtle enough to recognize that guilt is a far more powerful and subtle weapon than physical force, which is both external and finite. And indeed, Corbett's spurious consideration provokes such guilt in Emma that she is an invalid for a large portion of Volume I, the period during which she lives with him. In Volume II, in spite of the hardships she encounters in the American wilderness, Emma enjoys vigorous good health until the plot and Pratt's didactic intentions make it essential for her to be sick.

In much epistolary fiction the rationale for writing letters need be neither probability, nor credibility; it can be just possibility. Since each letter is subjective and therefore written in a way that is characteristic of

its writer, each letter emphasizes certain qualities in the character who writes it.⁷ It may emphasize Emma's alertness to other people's motives, particularly her father's, at the same time that it emphasizes Sir Robert's inherent decency and his appealing humor. For Corbett, it makes dissimulation easier. The letters he writes give him the opportunity to be more subtly devious than he would otherwise be shown to be.

Pratt accounts for the fact that Emma and her father communicate by letter even though they live in the same house by indicating that both are sick and confined to their rooms. The letters between Corbett and Sir Robert, who owns and lives in the house Emma and her father also inhabit, are accounted for not only by Corbett's illness, but by his pretense of delicacy in talking about money. Thus when Corbett writes to tell Sir Robert that his fortunes "are altered so much for the worse" (I, 256), that he no longer expects Sir Robert to desire Emma to be his wife, he writes to Sir Robert to tell him so and ends the letter with great politesse: "Excuse the awkwardness of corresponding under the same roof. There are points that cannot be spoken to. This is one . . . I venerate and love you. But do not mention the subject [of the marriage treaty] to Emma, or to [me]" (I, 256).

Since Emma's father has experienced Sir Robert's generosity, it is very unlikely that when he wrote this letter to Sir Robert he was really willing to break off the marriage plans. The letter is devious, because Emma's father really expects his friend to reaffirm his intentions with regard to marrying Emma. Corbett's letters to Emma show the kinds of pressures he puts on her, which ultimately precipitate her flight. Because his letters are made to sound like speech, in his first letter to Emma we can hear the urgency of his importuning her, and that quality gives the letter immediacy. I give the opening portion of a characteristic letter below:

Well, my dear and dutiful daughter, ever kind, and ever considerate to me, I have not teased you by premature importunity--I left you, quietly, to the effects, first of society, and then of solitude. I want words to tell you how I am touched by those exertions you have made to acquire a conquest of reason over passion; . . . In short, my sweet girl, it seems now to be a proper crisis to communicate the hopes, anxieties, and expectations of my heart. O! I have some important secrets to disclose; yet I tremble to begin. Wherefore should I tremble? You are delicate and obliging. (I, 182-83)

The opening portion of Corbett's letter communicates a great deal of what the rest will amplify. The rhetorically significant first sentence which praises Emma serves also to remind her of her father's consideration in allowing time first for "society," then for

"solitude" to restore her spirits after Henry's departure. The second sentence, besides giving evidence of his own tender heart, defines his daughter's efforts to appear composed as "a conquest of reason [her unaffected warmth and courtesy to Sir Robert] over passion [her grief at being separated from Henry]" (italics mine). Corbett utilizes his specious praise to serve his own ends. Building to a rhetorical climax in which he tells Emma that he "tremble[s]" to disclose his "hopes, [and] anxieties," he concludes this portion of his letter with a rhetorical question which is meant to remind Emma how much she owes him, followed by praise of her delicacy and willingness to oblige. This maneuver, by which the speaker praises the hearer in order to communicate expectations which the hearer would then feel guilty were he to disappoint, does not fool Emma, as it did not fool Clarissa.⁸

Although the kind of excessive sentimentality Corbett indulges in is present in each of Pratt's other novels, nowhere else does it serve as a device for selfish manipulation. In the following portion of his letter, Emma's father is unashamedly maudlin in his effort to leave nothing to chance in preparing Emma to comply with his wishes:

Ere I quit this sublunary scene, I have two great ends to wish accomplished; and, after that, welcome the moment which shall re-unite me to . . . your mother, and who gave to me

my NOW only child . . . in this very room:--for here was Emma born, and here is the proper place to date an address which intreats her to make her birth a blessing to me.--When and where, then, shall an aged father whisper his wishes to a daughter?----O, let the reciprocal duties be exchanged my dear Emma, without much delay. I love you with my whole soul, and you will return the full luxuriance of my affection. (I, 183)

The repetition of the "wh" sound in "when and where, . . . whisper" as well as the italicizing of the first and third words, which lends them more than ordinary stress, in combination with the "w" sound in "wishes" lends a sighing, almost incantatory quality to Corbett's question. By combining this sound quality with the image of "an aged father [not yet daring to] whisper his wishes to a daughter," Pratt achieves a synthesis of sound and image so effective that it produces a paradoxical response in the reader. Since Corbett has been utilizing his considerable rhetorical skills for the purpose of controlling and manipulating Emma, his most moving passages for that purpose are frequently recognized by the reader as his most insincere, and tend to rouse in the reader's heart an indignation on Emma's account that is swiftly transmuted into sympathy for her. Indeed, Pratt portrays Corbett's designing insincerity with such brilliance throughout Emma Corbett that it engages the reader's interest in Emma's fate more fully than any authorial intervention could possibly manage to do.

The final portion of Corbett's letter reverses his rhetorical position. Where before he presented himself as a helpless, aged man, he now speaks with dignity and authority:

The Times are greatly changed, and require great innovations of conduct. New modes of duty spring from new circumstances. Let us generously accommodate ourselves to incidents, which render improper to-day, what might yesterday be right. I solicit an interview. Take your own time; yet think, that time is very precious, and treat me like a friend--treat me like a father. I write to my child. I write to Emma, and her heart will tremble to the tender claims of
 Charles Corbett.
 (I, 183-84)

This conclusion of Corbett's letter contrasts sharply with the portions which precede it. The most striking difference is in his tone of voice. Dignified, authoritative, magnanimous, Corbett now speaks with the voice of a man confident of his strength. The sentimental language and pathetic images of the earlier portions of his letter have been eliminated. In their place Emma's father employs language abstract enough to have what Dr. Johnson might have called "the grandeur of generality," entirely eschewing images of any sort. The confidence Corbett manifests in this final portion of his letter to Emma bespeaks an assurance that needs no props.

Recognizing the implied command in the letter, and "trembl[ing] at every step" (I, 186), Emma hastens to

obey her father's summons. When she reaches his apartment and finds that he is not there, she waits for his return, pen in hand. Writing in what Richardson refers to in Clarissa as "the height of present distress," Emma gives a vivid description of her mental state and of her panic when she hears him approaching. In writing to the moment, Pratt, at his best, is the equal of the best of others who write sentimental fiction in the epistolary mode:⁹

Hah! I hear a noise.--He is coming. For some days I have penetrated a certain design, and I predict the purpose of this meeting. Perhaps---Oh, heaven! he is just at the door. He stops at the head of the stairs--I hear him sigh heavily. This is not, I feel, a moment in which I can bear any addition of distress. Here is a private door that leads to my apartment. My father is pacing about on the other side. I hear the handle of the door shake in his hand. Some violent agitation is upon him. At this time the interview would kill me.--He is opening the door. I hasten my retreat. Adieu! (I, 186)

The timing of Emma's letter, is, of course, impossible. Nevertheless, the informal sound patterns, the exclamations and the fragmented sentences and rapid pace convey a sense of urgency. Pratt is letting the reader enter Emma's mind and experience the events as they happen. Richardson does something similar when his characters write of events in the recent past. Those letters, like Emma's, are not letters so much as attempts to give the reader access to the stream of the characters' consciousness.

But Emma is more than expressive, she is plucky and intelligent, as the letter she writes her father after her hasty retreat demonstrates. Although she had somehow managed to get to her father's chamber, so great was the emotion evoked by that threatened interrogation that she had to return to her bed and communicate with him again solely by letter. The letter suggests that Emma's intelligence is more than a match for her father's deviousness, even if it can be no match for his power:

I send this, my dearest father, to your apartment, to beg you will defer the honour you intend me till a quieter opportunity. I find myself so extremely and suddenly indisposed, that I should ill reward your kind attention, by dividing mine: and indeed, were I not afraid of seeming to press too hardly on your indulgence, I should intercede with you to make my excuses for absenting myself this whole day from the company below; that I may try to recover myself by keeping quite still in my own chamber.

(I, 187-88)

The tone of Emma's letter is deeply respectful, yet it is without such excessive humility as would tend to reveal the fear she wishes to conceal. Although the restraint and respect evident in Emma's letter to her father excite the reader's admiration, perhaps more admirable are several qualities absent from it--the excess and insincerity that mark his letters to her.

Instead of trying to outwit her father, she asks to be allowed to defer their meeting. She hopes in fact

that a delay will enable her to compose herself enough to undertake the task of explaining the impossibility of obeying her father's command by transferring her affections from Henry to Sir Robert.

Still determined to impress upon his daughter how indulgent a father he is, Corbett's response to Emma's request is solicitous almost to the point of obsequiousness:

My dear child! thank you for this relief. It is mutual, though I deplore the occasion. Take a moment of better spirits, and better health, for our affectionate conversation. Compose yourself. Nurse your tender heart into tranquility. I should not be equal myself to the talk this morning. Pass the day in all the privacy you think fit; and for your excuses to the worthy Sir Robert, depend upon your friend and father

Charles Corbett

(I, 189)

Such a display of fatherly indulgence sets the stage for Corbett's grand scheme.

Having been granted the delay she requested, Emma suddenly feels an impulse, "more strong and more sacred than that of common curiosity, to know the full scope of my suspicions" (I, 236). The wished-for but dreaded meeting with her father takes place and confirms Emma's suspicions. In a letter to Louisa she describes the interview:

Come hither, dear Emma, said my father-- drawing me gently to him.--his hand trembling as he touched my gown.

--Come hither, I want to thank you for the long series of soft compliances, which your dutiful heart hath poured into this aged bosom. But for you, my child, your unfortunate father would have no support.

Unfortunate, Sir, did you say?

O most unfortunate, my Emma! I am in distress--worldly distress. (I, 237)

I am in the arms of poverty.

.
Here it begins, my child!--but where will it close? Oh slavery--oh imprisonment! how terrible are thy horrid walls and galling fetters to one whose bosom burns with the divine flame of liberty!--How insupportable to an old man!--to a father, whose daughter's consequence in life must flow from his.

(I, 238-39)

Oh, Emma! bred up to elevated expectations, what is to become of thee? Your brother is slain, Your father old and enervated, a prey to pain of body from the most piercing of human disorders, and to anguish of the mind, from reflections the most cutting.

(I, 240)

Your property both at home and abroad (for mine was naturally your's) lost or despoiled!

Emma! what is to become of thee? Would you renovate my youth--would you rebuild your fortunes?--

I could not speak, Louisa.

If you would, continued my father, receive with a smile those accents which inform you, there is a gentleman--rich, generous, virtuous, worthy, and of whom you have a good opinion--a gentleman who would esteem the hand of Emma--

--Ah, what have I said!--shameful sacrifice!--pardon, pardon me, my child. You shall not be sold, my love. No, no: let us be above the sordid commerce. Let us enter the gloomy gates together. Let us be poor--let us be necessitous--let us combat the common wants of nature,--but let us not be contemptible.

I sunk, death-like, into his arms, a weeping father's arms; which, staggering under their burden, bore me to the bed.

(I, 240-41)

What can one say about Corbett's performance? Only that it speaks for itself: melodramatic, manipulative, but perhaps most important, rhetorically dazzling. For example, when we read aloud the portion that begins, "I am in the arms of poverty" (I, 238-39), and the penultimate one in which Corbett cries out, "You shall not be sold, my love." (I, 240-41), we discover in both cases that the powerful, dramatic, and overwhelmingly resonant sound of his impassioned apostrophe reverberates throughout each passage in such a way as to suggest their effect on his daughter, lending a sense of inevitability to Emma's collapse, "death-like," into her father's arms. And she must collapse not only because she is a sentimental heroine, but also because no other response is possible following her father's histrionics.

After Sir Robert has rescued him from financial distress, Corbett continues his attempts to manipulate Emma as well as Sir Robert, although the wished-for marriage is no longer necessary to insure his economic security. He writes to Emma, referring none too obliquely to "the generous hand, the generous heart," that has rescued him from shame and Emma from indigence, asking finally,

if, oh Emma, there should be such a character, moving under your eye, and inviting your notice, what--what are the emotions, what the sentiments you owe him?

(II, 9)

Frightened by her father's questions in spite of his pleading tone, Emma asks him to delay the dreaded interview on account of her illness. Emma's illness allows her to delay answering her father's question, but before she feels equal to discussing her future with him, he sends her the news that a cousin has died from whom he has inherited ten thousand pounds and Emma eight thousand pounds, but that should she marry someone in any way connected with the revolution, she would in that case receive only three thousand pounds. Hopeful that her cousin's bequests will make the dreaded discussion with her father about the possibility of her marriage to Sir Robert unnecessary, Emma responds to the good news with joy and gratitude:

Blessed be the memory of the man whose generosity has taken such a load from my heart! Yes, my dear and venerable father, I am revived. Sickness and sorrow stand suspended at your tidings. We have now sufficient to gratify every wish that contented natures can form. . . . Ten thousand pounds will gild the evening of a virtuous life, and three are competent to all the wants of

Emma
(II, 33)

Corbett, receiving Emma's letter, feigns ignorance of its implications. Pretending he does not understand her fairly pointed comment about "contented natures," he again refers to Sir Robert's offer of marriage.

Emma's answer to her father's still oblique references to his expectations is eloquent and to the

point:

I will not affect to misconceive you, my only parent. You seem constantly anxious to connect me to some worthy man, as the associate of my life; yet do not recollect that my choice is made, my principles fixed, and my heart inalienably engaged. . . . I have been brought up to consider the happiness of life, not as deducible from the maxims of the world, but from implicit reliance upon that power whom heaven has seated upon the throne of the soul, as an unerring judge in all cases of moral arbitration.

(II, 36-37)

Emma addresses herself directly to the fact that she recognizes that her father wishes her to marry. Careful to refer to Corbett's wish to connect her with "some worthy man," she implies she does not know the identity of the man he has chosen for her, as well as suggesting that he has perhaps not yet chosen the particular man he wishes her to marry. She feigns ignorance to avoid being drawn into a discussion in which Henry's virtues would be compared to Sir Robert's, since her anticipated rejection is not based on a real or imagined want of merit in the latter, but on what she regards as the indissoluble bond that unites her with the former; for she loves Henry and doesn't love Sir Robert.

Emma declares that it is far beyond her power to change the "object" of her love, "but with a change of its purity" (II, 39). Stating that she does not love Henry less because he is absent, she declares that the "holy ardour [of her affection] . . . burn[s] . . .

bright and pure, and nothing but death [will] extinguish it" (II, 41). She adds that the loss of that portion of her cousin's legacy that marriage to Henry would entail seems but a "light" sacrifice to her, declaring, "the union of our souls is too sincere, and too strong, for five and twenty times the conditional five thousand pounds to loosen or dissolve" (II, 41).

Emma's rhetorical gifts are quite as striking as her father's; moreover, the passion and eloquence of her words are enhanced by sincerity. Nevertheless, her boast about the ease with which she feels able to sacrifice her cousin's "conditional five thousand pounds" appears less than discreet. The latter portion of her letter, however, indicates she is aware of the effect her ardent pronouncements might be expected to have on her splenetic father.

Because she knows her father's temper well enough to be able to predict his displeasure, she anticipates his anger, if not his rage, at what she realizes he is likely to consider her defiance of him. Counterbalancing her declarations of love for Henry, Emma reveals the exact nature of the sacrifice she had been prepared to make for her father had circumstances required it:

I felt myself about to declare that not any earthly motive could induce me to embrace the gorgeous bribe: but I am suddenly checked, and find, upon scrutiny into this filial bosom, O my dear, dear father, that one motive, and only one there might have been, which could make your Emma the victim of money.

Had the late convulsions of fortune remained in their full force-- . . . and had those venerable hairs been indeed consigned to sorrow, and none but a daughter's duteous hand to help a parent's poverty; in that dire case, my beloved father, if you have a true sense of my nature, you will guess what I should have been tempted to do. I should have accepted the conditions in the codicil, and secured to my father a resource from indigence at a time of his life when humanity is the least able to bear it. I would not then have "married an officer engaged in the national contest." Yet even then, my affection would remain, though its ultimate views would be changed.

(II, 42-43)

Emma's declared willingness to give up marriage to the man she loves in order to provide for her father, if it had really been necessary, has no discernible effect on Corbett.

Shortly after Emma and her father have exchanged the letters we have been examining, Sir Robert leaves Castleberry and Emma receives word that Henry has been wounded. Distraught and ill, she writes to her father imploring him to come to her bedside:

Oh for pity, my father, hasten to me--aid me in this dreadful conflict--rescue me from myself--wipe away the bitterest tear that anguish ever drew from the heart of a daughter, and recover me, ere it be yet too late, from the arms of death.

(II, 32)

Corbett, enraged by what he regards as Emma's perverse obstinacy, recognizing that his soft pleadings have not

been effective in inducing Emma to obey his wishes, tries other tactics: insult and intimidation.

In response to her plea that her father come to her so that they may discuss their differences, Emma receives, not the hoped-for visit, but a letter full of fury and contempt. In it Corbett makes a false analogy between his daughter's "puerile" affection for Henry, and his own "sacred principles." He rants, "Ungrateful Emma! perverse and insensate child! you merit neither the grief you cost me, nor the tenderness you receive from me" (II, 82). Corbett speaks of his principles, but his conduct towards Emma has been based on self-interest as well as expediency.

Nonetheless, he is shocked when he discovers that his tirade against Emma has driven her from their home. Suddenly finding himself alone, he writes to Sir Robert to ask his help in finding Emma and restoring her to him. He begins his letter by simultaneously expressing his anguished sense of loss, and crying mea culpa:

Oh Raymond, Raymond! my oldest friend, my truest companion! Pity, ah pity the anguish of a father--pity a parent whose persecutions have driven away his child! Emma hath eloped.

(II, 90)

Following this melodramatic expression of his alleged grief and remorse, Corbett quickly changes his theme

from his own guilt to Emma's. Vowing to cut Emma from his affections forever, (II, 92) he proceeds to revile her, saying that she is "hard-hearted" (II, 91), a "run-away" (II, 92), "disobedient . . . [and] base" (II, 93). In his next letter, however, Emma's father expresses not anger but concern for Emma, bemoaning the fact that she is "young . . . unfriended, alone, of delicate frame, and harrassed by fatigue! Sick also! Never used to travel unattended" (II, 101).

But even in what he describes as "the effusions of a repenting heart" (II, 101), Corbett thinks first of his own comfort. His lament, "I am sick, and Emma is not at my side" (II, 103) exposes his narcissism. Thus when he begs Sir Robert to help him "recover the treasure of [his] age" (II, 102), it is evident that his concern for Emma's safe return arises less from any real concern for her than from his wish to make sure that her presence will enliven and console him in his solitary old age. His response to Emma's flight to America reveals not only the hollowness of his paternal affection, it also exposes the shallowness of his commitment to the colonists' cause. Although earlier he has expressed the wish to join the colonists in their struggle, he now equivocates, declaring that "in the patriot I extinguished the parent" (II, 99-100),

by way of introducing the apostrophe, no less passionate than inevitable, that now bursts from him:

Curse on the rage of party! Execrated be the tyrannies of war! Ah what are the causes, countries, worlds, to the loss of one dear child, adorned with the virtues of Emma Corbett! Blind doating zeal, what hast thou to do with an old man's heart? What with the sacred season of the silver hair? Is mine an age to engage in these tumultuous subjects?
(II, 100)

Although initially Corbett's apostrophe addresses itself to "the tyrannies of war" this universal theme serves to introduce Corbett's real theme, his loss of Emma. Raging against his own miscalculation in precipitating Emma's flight, self-pitying and apprehensive at the thought of a bleak old age without her, Corbett is concerned not with the universally evil effects of war, but with the discomforts of his own old age.

While Emma's flight has a narrowing effect on her father, it broadens her own outlook. Pratt focuses effectively on the contrast between Corbett's shallow patriotism and Emma's deepening public concern as well as her selfless concern for her father's well-being and happiness. Journeying to meet the ship that is to carry her to America, Emma, finding herself alone in the unfamiliar and frightening atmosphere of a common public house crowded with sailors, ignores her anxiety and distress and proceeds to write a letter to Sir

Robert, asking him to mediate between her father and herself, and to "sustain his heart:"

Assure him that his dear, dear image lives unimpaired in my heart. Tell him that my absenting myself in this manner is not the truant trick of a girl who triumphs in the vexation of a parent, but proceeds from a motive most virtuous, most irresistible, most conscientious--from the duty that appeals to my heart, my sense, and my soul.

(II, 95-96)

.
Obtain for me the paternal pardon--sustain his heart, and do not leave him a prey to sorrow.

(II, 98)

Emma's epistolary style, her use of alliterative sound patterns, repetitions of words and syntactic patterns, reflects her father's favorite rhetorical techniques; her sentiments and sincerity are hers alone.

Paralleling Emma's filial concern for her father is her public concern--her anxiety lest her actions set an improper and dangerous example for other young women. Her letter reveals a developing sense of the social responsibility she had expressed when she declared her reverence for "beauteous decorum" (I, 123, see above p. 53): "I will forbear to justify my departure, because I would suffer some reproach myself, rather than try to establish an irregular example" (II, 96).

Nevertheless, Emma struggles to explain the spiritual justification of her actions:

The Power who is giving me strength to sustain the great business I am about to undertake . . . seems looking down from his heaven of heavens with approbation . . . I would not have yielded to the least semblance of a scheme, which is most terrible to my nature, could it by any means have been avoided.

(II, 97)

Emma's trust in God's guidance for "the great business" is more moving and eloquent than the rhetorical virtuosity which characterized the early portion of her letter. She has succeeded in reconciling her conduct, not with the church or society, but with her own conscience before God. Although Corbett ultimately wins the "civil war," his is a pyrrhic victory, for from the moment that Emma begins to be guided by her own impulses she prevails. Although the dictates of eighteenth century morality forbade Pratt from giving his heroine the final triumph, she succeeds in living one full year according to her own beliefs and desires.

Corbett's attempts to manipulate and control Sir Robert are successful in spite of the fact that the latter's wealth would render him a powerful adversary were he and Corbett in real conflict. This is so partly because Sir Robert judges Corbett's heart by his own, and partly because both are pursuing the same

goals: first, Sir Robert's marriage to Emma, later, Emma's safe return home. Paradoxically, Corbett's attempts to manipulate and control Henry and Emma fail, in spite of the fact that their affection for him increases the vulnerability that is a condition of their youth. How may we explain this paradox? Perhaps the answer has to do with the exigencies of EC's plot, which requires that the young lovers withstand Corbett's attempts to control them. But it may also be true that because Henry and Emma have both lived with Corbett, they are well enough aware of his lust for power and control to recognize that they must struggle against it at all costs to preserve their integrity.

II

Because the nature of the epistolary novel requires characters to express themselves primarily through correspondence, their words and letters are actions at least as significant as the events they report. And when letters are actions, the world is not reflected but created inside them. In Emma's first appearance, that is, the first letter she writes as distinct from the first mention of her, Pratt reveals to the reader the spiritual perfections, particularly sensibility and idealism, that make her suited to her role as sentimental heroine.

Emma reveals this aspect of herself by describing her response to Henry's tenderness. Perhaps because Pratt recognized that characters may reveal themselves most effectively when they speak of others, he makes use of Emma's description of her last evening with her lover to help the reader sense elements in her relationship with Henry that lend subtlety and interest to Emma as heroine.

I reflect upon your generous kindness with a kind of weeping rapture that wants a name.

 Yet this little delay, my dear Henry!--into what an exultation of spirit did it not throw us? Last night, my beloved friend--
 . . . was all spirit and all soul. Every inferior sense was annihilated, and the registering angel, if such there be, can hardly have marked a passage more soft, more affectionate, more beautiful, or more pure. During the whole course of that previous interview, alike elegant and ardent were the expression of our lips . . . Virtue shall be summoned to open her immortal page, and transcribe the correct pleasure of last night amongst the whitest transactions of humanity . . . my most congenial and most amiable friend, could I speak or write of the spotless hours which we have passed together, . . .
 (I, 21-22)

The words Emma uses to describe her last visit with Henry--"pure," "elegant," "ardent," "correct," "whitest," and "spotless"--emphasize the important moral dimension of the relationship between these sentimental lovers. Stressing the ideal nature of her relationship with Henry, Emma repeatedly uses the words "friendship" and "friend" in her early letters.

"Friend" appears five times in this first letter. Although Emma speaks of her relationship with Henry as "ardent" as well as "pure," in describing their time together as "all spirit and soul" she seems to deny desire. Does Pratt wish the reader to wonder whether the lady protests too much? Because Pratt does not always seem to be a highly conscious writer, the question of whether or not he wishes the reader to notice this is unimportant. What is significant is that he is sometimes his most interesting when he seems not to recognize the implications of his own ideas.

As I read your pages of this morning, distress and joy, complaint and resignation, the tear of anguish and the smile of hope, all struggled together. In every pulse I felt the force of your tender eloquence . . . Every varying' sensation took its turn to reign: at one moment I was soothed, at another chilled. What feeling of the soul did not alternately assert its dominion? I was disturbed, quieted, agonized, and made supremely happy.

(I, 24)

Aware of the feeling of her very "soul" when she reads a letter, Emma is indeed a woman of feeling.

Apparently wishing Emma's perfections to surpass those of other sentimental heroines, Pratt bestows such abundant virtues and graces upon her that, inevitably, some are inconsistent. Just after Emma has given evidence of her sensibility and responsiveness by

describing herself as "disturbed, quieted, agonized, and made supremely happy" (I, 24) all within a few moments, she undertakes to prove not how strong her passions are, but how strong her propensity to calm content is:

I am not prone to make any event in life a source of unnecessary misery. On the contrary, I have a strong constitutional propensity to content, and a kind of resisting quality in my nature, which disposes me to ward off all imaginary evil. But the departure of Henry is not an imaginary evil. It is a blow, which, however suspended, cannot fail most deeply to affect whenever it falls;
(I, 25)

The allegedly "resisting quality" in Emma's nature, which she says disposes her "to ward off all imaginary evil," does not seem perfectly consistent with the emotional volatility she demonstrated earlier in this letter. Nevertheless, her language in the passage above, the abstract diction, restrained tone, and quiet understatement in her final sentence, offer eloquent support to her claim that she has "a constitutional propensity to content," whether or not such a propensity seems consistent with other qualities her letter has emphasized. Moreover, a certain lack of self-knowledge characteristic of sentimental heroines (Clarissa comes to mind in this respect), might account for Emma's inconsistency.

When Emma assures Henry that she is able to return his love in good measure, she again appears more self-assured and less modest than a female given to "weeping raptures" generally is:

. . . but, thank heaven, I find my nature sufficiently susceptible, and my heart sufficiently enlarged, to answer the demands which your tenderness and constancy are daily drawing forth and tho' it be a proud boast, I will venture to say that, in sentiment and friendship, in good will and good wishes, I can never die your debtor.

(I, 22)

Just as the subject of her love for Henry elicits from Emma an unexpected but eloquent display of self-confidence, the subject of female conduct elicits Emma's eloquence in defense of the need for female conduct to conform to society's rules. Stressing the importance of decorum in a woman's life, Emma says,

I respect and venerate every rule which reason has prescribed to render female conduct correctly amiable; and to preserve that beautiful decorum, without whose graces woman is both despicable and wretched.

(I, 123)

Emma's reasonable tone and vigorous and succinct language lend the passage force and resonance. Nevertheless her professed veneration for "every rule which reason has prescribed to render female conduct correctly amiable," (italics mine) is not perfectly believable at this point in the narrative, and far less so when

she dons the disguise of a man and, unaccompanied, embarks on her American adventure.

Did Pratt notice the inconsistency between Emma's reverence for "every rule which reason has prescribed to render female conduct correctly amiable . . . beauteous decorum," and her American adventure? Did the contemporary reader notice it? Because the answer to both questions is "very likely," Pratt was careful to punish Emma at the novel's end for daring to make her own rules and acting on them.

Emma's spirited and eloquent defense of decorum seems to contradict her earlier assertion that nature and virtue have furnished the principles by which "all the actions of [her] life have been governed" (I, 59):

You bid me cease to love [Henry], it is impossible--

.
 What is rooted in nature cannot, without much labour, be eradicated by art . . . Shall I be unnatural, in order to be filial? Shall I propensely set one great duty against another, and so destroy the excellence of both? . . . To be attached, is the dictate of nature. To be attached to a man of sense and morals, is the dictate of delicacy; . . . while the merit of the object increases, is it a fit time to withdraw from it the love, which nature and common sense seem to say should increase in proportion?

(I, 59-61)

Reasoned and eloquent though Emma's argument is, it does not persuade her father to give over his attempts to

induce her to submit to his will. It does, however, show that Emma is a young woman who is, as Professor Grieder has remarked, "aware of her filial obligations but steadfast in her affections and courageous in defense of her principles."¹⁰ Moreover, the letter attests to Pratt's capacity for portraying internal conflict convincingly.

In the face of her father's determined effort to induce her to marry Sir Robert, Emma defends her constancy to her first love:

. . . in point of attachment I hold myself at this moment as religiously united to Henry as if all the forms of the earth had passed my lips in confirmation. The same idea will be lodged in my bosom, whether that confirmation be remote or near. It is not intended by heaven to be the affection of a year only. It is to last for life. It is to follow its object through all the perils and dangers. Its holy ardour is to burn equally bright and pure, and nothing but death is to extinguish it.

(II, 39-40)

Emma's ideas are dangerous. For a young woman in eighteenth century England to declare herself as much married as if "all the forms of the earth" had been gone through, and then to call her "ardour" "holy," whether or not it had been "invested with the public sanction"--in other words, to regard herself as wed to Henry because she feels herself to be--would surely have been considered sinful.¹¹ Yet her words are an

eloquent expression of one of the significant questions EC asks.

The question may be phrased in this way: under what circumstances may a young female totally rely on principles of decorum as her chief guide to correct and moral conduct, and under what circumstances might it be permissible or even necessary to ignore a parent's command, consulting no other guide than her own conscience, whose imperatives, it may be assumed, transcend those of decorum? The moral conflict is reminiscent of Clarissa's, but instead of respecting the prompting of her soul, as does Emma, Clarissa acts according to her "deification of social law, her instinctive feeling that the conventions of her society constitute an absolute moral command."¹²

Once again, even as he emphasizes Emma's ideal virtue, Pratt is somewhat ambiguous in his treatment of her defense of her actions. Having just asserted her respect and veneration for rules prescribed by reason to regulate female conduct, Emma speaks next of what transcends the demands of decorum: the demands of nature and the dictates of virtue. Still mustering arguments to justify her fidelity to Henry in spite of her father's disapproval of this suit, Emma says, "To delicacy I grant much. To custom all which she ought to expect. But to nature, chastened and regulated by real virtue, I devote my heart" (I,

124). Emma's intelligently discriminated sentiments, her limitation on what custom "ought to expect," for example, are clear and forceful. Moreover, they are consistent with her actions and with her role as a sentimental heroine. Such a heroine would be likely to cherish the Rousseauvian belief that the individual whose education has developed her natural piety, wisdom, and reason, who is moreover aided by nature and virtue, and uncorrupted by what Emma refers to as "the gaud[y] trappings of tinsel," (I, 125) is capable of judging for herself what conduct is natural and virtuous. Emma's sincere and earnest defense of her right to pit her intuitions against tradition marks her as a sentimental rebel. Thus, although Caroline Arnold and Sir Robert respectively refer to Emma and her American adventure as "glorious," in an age in which authors, critics, and the public agreed that the main function of the novel was to inculcate morality by example, Pratt was bound to punish Emma for her revolutionary ideas.¹³

Just as Pratt endowed Emma with a plethora of virtues suitable to a sentimental heroine, he endowed Henry with an almost equal number of virtues suitable to his character as a sentimental hero. And as with Emma, Pratt shows a disregard for perfect consistency. Henry's letters to Charles Corbett indicate that he possesses strength of character and

restraint, qualities not usually valued in a sentimental novel or a sentimental hero. Thus, in spite of the fact that a locket with a lock of his beloved's hair inspires Henry to write pages of verse, the style of the letter we are examining, written minutes before Henry is to leave for America, is calmer and more restrained than one would expect from a young man who is about to leave his home, his country, and his beloved. Its substance contains his admonition to Emma to use more restraint in the expression of her feelings than she has lately exercised:

Ten minutes, while the chaise is getting ready, are mine: they shall be devoted to Emma. Check, I once more conjure you, the extreme of sensibility; a few silent tears, a few gentle sighs, and the luxury of a soft and tender sorrow, I wish not to restrain--but such another conflict as that of last night---

.
And yet I feel the absurdity of my own argument--Fasten not, however, on any desponding images. We shall meet again, and in happier days--The sweets of social and family intercourse shall yet be our's and in the dear bosom of domestic peace, we shall enjoy without restraint, contrivance, or disguise, all the benefits of so delicate and well-directed an attachment--Trust me, we shall.

(I, 64-65)

At a time when the expression of feeling, one aspect of sensibility, was highly valued, such displays of emotion as Emma allegedly indulged in were regarded not only as acceptable responses to distress, they were expected, indeed almost required of a well-bred young woman in

Emma's situation. Henry, as Emma's lover, would have been expected to sympathize with her expressions of distress, instead of admonishing her to limit them to "a few silent tears, a few gentle sighs." In giving Henry strength of character and restraint along with sensibility, thus making him an ideal hero rather than an ideal sentimental hero, Pratt is giving his readers an ambiguous view of sentimentality. Pratt may be subtly criticizing "womanish" sentimental heroes of the Harley type. In his portrayal of Henry, Pratt repeatedly emphasizes strength and restraint as manly virtues.

Emma's response to Henry's scolding but optimistic letter illustrates her tendency to fluctuate between wretchedness and radiant hope:

Yet, a few words, my loved friend, and then--what then? O adieu . . . perhaps for ever!

Ah, my poor heart!

Yet it is not so: . . . It is our persons only that shall be separated, our souls shall be drawn perpetually together in converse sweet, communion high--pure as precious--delicate as delightful.

What, alas! is space--what is distance? Our hearts shall know no disunion--I will not, I do not despair.

Henry! I am less wretched than I was last night; . . . though my tears are flowing till they obscure my sight--you may see their traces on the paper--I will have faith in your prophecy.

What a day for your journey! It is emblematic of our affection: inclined to sunshine and to shower, to smiles and tears alternately.

(I, 66-67)

Emma's reference to her heart--a catchword, like her frequent reference to Henry as "my loved friend"--guides her feelings in a hopeful direction. An idealist, she does not despair for long. Emma's values, as well as Henry's, are spiritual rather than worldly, her notions of felicity elevated. In the letter we are examining, her language, particularly the level of abstraction and the Miltonic maneuver of reversing the order of nouns and their modifiers, as in "converse sweet, communion high," tends to elevate the tone of her communication. Emma's letter represents a process by which she attempts to articulate freshly all that she is thinking and feeling so that Henry may understand her hopes, fears, and uncertainties. One of the benefits of this process for Emma is that it gives her a fresh outlook on her situation and Henry's. From such a perspective she is able to draw new courage to struggle against the despondency evoked by Henry's departure.

However intense her own feelings, however difficult her struggles, Emma is responsive to Henry's feelings and struggles. When Henry tries to hide his uncertainties from her and perhaps from himself, Emma, sensitive enough to recognize his pain as well as his uncertainty, tries to comfort and cheer him. The final paragraph of her letter reflects her effort to imbue her spirits with courage and to share that

courage with Henry. To that end, Emma, as intensely responsive to Nature as a proper sentimental heroine ought to be, turns her grateful attention to the weather. When she declares that the day that Nature has bestowed on Henry's departure is "emblematic of [their] affection . . . inclined to smiles and tears alternately," her conceit is more than apt, it is wise. Nature, even the kindest nature, is not in man's control, and man must often make a virtue of necessity in order to adapt to it.

III

Sir Robert Raymond is much more than an agent in the machinery of Emma Corbett's plot; he is its most fully realized character, the most powerful force in the novel. Indeed, he holds it together. Among his minor competencies is his ability to arrest, temporarily, Pratt's (and Emma's) tendencies towards hyperbole and rhetorical excess. In a letter to her sister-in-law and confidant, Louisa, Emma describes Sir Robert:

Sir Robert Raymond, our host, is a broad set, brown faced, good natured, very sensible man, with some, not disagreeable, particularities; a large fortune, some time since bequeathed him, and no sort of impertinence in consequence of it. Humour, serious sense, and observation, divide his character. He was bred to physic, and in the earlier part of

his life practiced as a sea-surgeon. He is full of anecdote, and extremely assiduous to animate conversation, without engrossing it.
(I, 149-50)

Unlike Sir Robert's letters, which present him in a humorous and self-mocking light, Emma's letter describes the kind, civilized, and unpretentious man beneath the entertaining surface. Her temperate, amiable description is all the more admirable when we realize that at the time she writes this letter her father has already begun to thrust Sir Robert upon her as a suitor--one who, because she loves Henry, is most unwelcome. By portraying Sir Robert's virtues as recognizable even to a comparatively inexperienced young woman, particularly to one who has excellent reasons to find him disagreeable, Pratt simultaneously enhances our opinion of both Emma and Sir Robert.

Because the style and tone of Emma's letter are so different from her often melodramatic effusions, the possibility must be considered that her admirably astute description of Sir Robert suggests something more about Emma's response to society's expectations of her than had been revealed by her relations with her father or her lover. It suggests that some of the panic and near-hysteria which Emma exhibited was a conventional female response to the expectations of a male-dominated society rather than the result of her emotional instability. Emma's description of Sir

Robert is evidence of the soundness of her mind. On the other hand, if Emma's view of Sir Robert is an example of Pratt's snatching the pen from her hand, then the reader may wonder whether Pratt was not at least as interested in Sir Robert's portrait as he was in his heroine's. Moreover, Emma's description suggests that Sir Robert's goodness has the power to bring out the best in those characters within his orbit who are capable of being affected by its force. Sir Robert Raymond is that rarity in English prose fiction of the eighteenth century, a good man, fully drawn, whom we believe in from the start.¹⁴

Sir Robert's wryly amusing first letters introduce the elegant mind of an inelegant-appearing man, as his first letter to Emma's father demonstrates:

The prospect, Corbett, is not clear, I find; but something impels me to try whether it may not be improved. I suspect, however, that a youth of twenty-five in scarlet will leave an impression scarce to be erased by a middle-aged man in a suit of snuff-colour, with sash sleeves, after the manner of our ancestors: . . . Yet I will come; for I want the stability of domestic comfort after all my migrations.

(I, 80)

Your daughter strikes me as the very woman, and has, in my eye, no other fault than of being too young, which I quarrel with chiefly because I strongly suspect she will think me too old. No matter, I will put the best foot forward, and be with you in a day or two. Mean time, I will get me a new wig; and, to shew you how much I am in earnest, will try to deceive your Emma as much as conveniently may be, by ordering it to be made so as to resemble a responsible head of hair; for I find, since I came home from India, there is nothing in a young Lady's eye so ridiculous as a wig. And when I left my native land, a flowing peruke was a Cupid in full dress. O tempora! But we will see what can be done.

Dear Friend, I am your's, and remember I have been so twenty-eight years.

(I, 81-82)

Pratt was a gifted rhetorician; when we study Sir Robert's letter in close detail, we discover that its simplicity and artlessness are only the finished ends of complex and subtle means. Sir Robert's opening sentence, for example, may be viewed from several perspectives. On the one hand it is direct, saying what he wants to say, promptly, simply and clearly. On the other hand, his use of "prospect" as a metaphor, operating on several levels at once, is subtle. He is alluding to an immediate path before him: the problems and delights of courting Emma. But "prospect" also refers to the vaguer, more distant future, just below the novel's horizon. His "something impels me to try" is poignant in its modesty. His colloquial "I will get me a wig," and "But we will see what can be done" suggest not just that he is without pretense, but also

that he is too reasonable to be either foolishly submissive to fashion's dictates, or willfully eccentric in his appearance. Too modest to believe that his wealth and his title alone will be, or even ought to be, enough to satisfy Emma, his references to the new wig he has ordered make clear to her father, and to the reader as well, that he is willing to make reasonable efforts to alter his appearance to please a beautiful, if presumably conventional, young woman.

The reassuring final sentence of Sir Robert's letter is sensitive and tactful. His humorous self-mockery, his honesty in expressing his desire for "the stability of domestic comfort" rather than professing love for a young woman he does not yet know well, the appealing plainness of his language and tone, his refreshing directness, all reveal warmth, goodness, and sense. Pratt's introduction of Sir Robert has set up a dynamic tension of sufficient complexity to engage the reader thoroughly in the destiny of the novel's true hero.

When, persuaded that he cannot win Emma's love, Sir Robert finds the atmosphere at Castleberry too "charged" to bear, he decides to leave. Writing to his confidant Berkeley of his anticipated retreat, he censures "the unfitness of such storms as his passion for Emma", to the sober reason of his life" (II, 70). His is a mind that values emotional restraint more than

emotional expressiveness. But Sir Robert is not permitted to make a clean break. Emma's father, furious and distraught because she has run away to America, prevails upon Sir Robert to go to America in search of her and her brother. With the beginning of his American adventure, abrupt and radical changes occur in Sir Robert as he dwindles into a man of sentiment.

Was this change a lapse on Pratt's part? Several possibilities, none mutually exclusive, suggest themselves. Perhaps Pratt was unsure of his attitude towards Sir Robert, and permitted it to shift freely during the months of composition. In any case, the change in Sir Robert's character is reflected in the drastic changes in his language and style. When he writes to Berkeley to tell him that he has changed his plans and is about to leave for America, Sir Robert says that he will "follow the fortunes of the incomparable Emma in her tender pilgrimage over the waves" (II, 98). Sir Robert's descent to the hyperbolic and high-flown language of sentimentality heralds a change in his character that the remainder of the novel confirms.

Although Sir Robert, in his criticism of sentimental and novelistic conventions which follows, on page 73, undoubtedly presents some of Pratt's views, he is more than a projection of Pratt's novelistic theories; he has an independent being of his own.

Yet Sir Robert's criticism of sentimentality is not only consistent with his character and wry humor, they are organic to Emma Corbett's plot because they grow out of his response to the painful uncertainty of his relationship to Emma.

As a seasoned man of forty-three, Sir Robert recognizes that Emma may already have absorbed so many fashionably sentimental notions about love, particularly about the qualities required of the proper sentimental lover, that his own chances of winning her love may be slim. His apprehension is increased by his intuition that his young rival, Henry Hammond, possesses exactly the qualities most desirable in a sentimental lover.

Sir Robert's criticism of sentimentality is both explicit and implicit. Explicitly, he ridicules it in several droll and ingenious epistolary monologues. His implicit criticism is inherent in the way he lives. Emma Corbett's most significant moral lessons are to be found in an examination of Sir Robert's conduct, intentions, feelings, and most important, his fate.

How did Pratt set about creating the character of Sir Robert? He had delineated his own moral and artistic intentions in his first novel, Liberal Opinions (1775-1776). The principles central to his moral and aesthetic theory, he writes, are the principles of

utile et dulce and of contrast. Of the first he says:

I am confident, no man either looks into a book, or hears a story, without some notion of being entertained, and those people who think to raise pity, or attention, by expatiating on the subject of sorrow, and formally entering into prolix accounts of calamity, will certainly miss their aim . . . utile dulce, being constantly essential in every composition; not excepting those which are designed to persuade us to virtue, exhort us to repentance, and prepare us for immortality.
(III, 138-139)

In the Preface to Volume V of the same novel, Pratt says that it has been his "constant care . . . to make every contrast conspicuous" (V, xi) because, as "the real gem is set off by the foil, the charms of beauty are heightened by deformity: in like manner the lustre of virtue derives greater brilliancy from being opposed to the squallid [sic] appearances of vice . . . [thus it] is the most commendable task in which a moral painter, either serious or comic, can engage" (V, x).

Having revealed his intention to be a "moral painter," and his technique of using contrast as the way of rendering his work useful and agreeable, Pratt goes on, somewhat in the manner of Fielding in his prefatory chapters in Tom Jones, to delineate the reader's task:

I tell you faithfully what has happened, and discover to you not only incidents but persons of the drama: be it thy business to

account for, and to analyze, to censure, and to condemn.

(III, 181)

The reader's responsibility, according to Pratt, is not only to "account for," that is, to figure out the causes of incidents and the motivations of characters, but most important, to judge and evaluate persons and events.

Pratt's prose fiction between Liberal Opinions and EC developed in the direction of greater subtlety in moral conceptualization and artistic technique. Thus while the contrasts in Liberal Opinions are as "conspicuous" and schematic as Pratt designed them to be, in EC the contrasts between characters are less conspicuously insistent; for example, Sir Robert and Henry Hammond are more subtly contrasted than, for example, are Benignus' mentors in LO, the impulsive Mr. Draper and the prudent Mr. Greaves. In EC Pratt does not contrast a perfectly reasonable man with a lover of consistently lyrical and excessive sentimentality; instead he depicts the differences between Emma's lovers with subtlety, humor, and imagination. Consequently, Emma's responses to Sir Robert and Henry Hammond are not uncomplicated and conspicuously contrasted; she does not simply love one and hate the other. Deeply in love with Henry, she nevertheless admires and esteems Sir Robert. Henry and Sir Robert are more alike than different.

That Henry Hammond is a man of sentiment is apparent in Volume I when we read the conventional verses his love for Emma inspires, and in Volume II, when, thinking he is about to die, he delivers a passionate apostrophe addressed to Emma, praising her ideal virtue and beauty, unaware that the person listening to his effusions is Emma herself. Although as a man of sentiment, Henry is to be compared with Sir Robert who is characterized, at least in Volume I, as a man of reason, a good many of Henry's responses seem surprisingly un-sentimental, just as a good number of Sir Robert's responses seem immoderate if not unreasonable. As we have seen, one surprising departure from the usual reader expectations of Henry as a sentimental lover are several letters he sends to Emma at the eleventh hour, chiding her for the excessive emotionality she expressed at their last meeting in response to his imminent departure.

Two examples of Sir Robert's occasional lapses from reason, one incidental, the other central to our view of him, suggest his complexity. The trivial first: Sir Robert, overjoyed when Emma asks to become his pupil in the study of surgery, because he believes it is "a decent way of telling me my friendship is not disagreeable" (I, 169), sends his friend a report of

his pupil's progress in a few weeks time:

My fair pupil makes a surprising progress in her new studies; and were not her heart too soft to support the pain occasioned by her hand, she would, in a little time, perform her amputation, and dress her wound with the best of us.

(I, 180)

"Surprising progress" indeed. Sir Robert speaks not with the voice of reason but with the voice of a lover, so charmed by the company of his pupil that her every motion elicits his wonder and proves her genius. Moreover, surgery of all professions is consummately physical, an incredible choice of study for Emma to have made, even in the unlikely event that she is already planning to go to America.

But man of reason though he is, Sir Robert cherishes ideals as absolute as any man of feeling might boast of. For example, he is unwilling to make what society would call a "reasonable compromise" in the choice of a wife. He absolutely refuses to address "one of those prudent young ladies, which in the matrimonial bargain, cling to the solid comforts" (I, 113).

At the close of Volume I, when Sir Robert lends Corbett the substantial sum necessary to restore his fortune, (a sum there is almost no possibility that Corbett can repay), he tells Corbett that he (Corbett) has done him a service by relieving him of a sum of money that is "too much to be dissipated, and not

enough if I had a passion to accumulate" (I, 261). His balanced and antithetical statement masks, in the dress of wit, the sort of consideration for his old friend's feelings more suitable to a man of sentiment than to one of reason. In spite of Sir Robert's criticism of certain sentimental conventions and of certain nonsensical prejudices of sentimental lovers, Volume I depicts elements in his character that foreshadow his transformation in Volume II to a man of feeling who accepts the tenets of sentimentality so fully that he actually cherishes the pain that results from his loss of Emma.

Although Pratt wanted Emma Corbett to appeal to readers who required liberal doses of sentiment, he also wanted to ridicule some of the excesses in so many contemporary novels. The fact that Emma Corbett was guilty of some of the same abuses, as well as of several more flagrant excesses than any Sir Robert ridicules, seems not to have troubled Pratt. Since Volume II of Emma Corbett, as well as the fragment that brings Volume I to a close, are drenched in blood, tears, and misery, and since there is no apparent irony in any portion of the fragment, we may guess that he believed that the subject of war justified excess as a necessary means of dramatizing the moral lessons he intended his work to teach.

Just two pages before the extended extract given below, Sir Robert begins to rail against "cursed sentiment!--a term . . . of late invention, to express old emotions in a new way--a term, which many use, more affect, few understand, and still fewer feel" (I, 108). Following this complaint, he changes his rhetorical strategy from expressing his criticism of sentiment in succinct, forceful, balanced and antithetical sentences, to a humorous and perhaps less elegant mode of expression. Tempering his argument with levity, Sir Robert communicates his sense of outrage on the subject of sentimental conventions, simultaneously amusing the reader and advancing the novel's plot:

Difficulty! there it is again. That is another cursed thing which enters into the spirit of modern attachment! It is the first cousin of sentiment, . . . a sly old neighbor of mine, . . . tells me that difficulty is the happiest thing in the world to sentimental lovers. I hinted to my friend in reply to this, that I then might consider my age, my dark complexion, my wig, and my fair round body, as so many points in my favour, since they would, no doubt, throw a respectable quantity of the aforesaid difficulty in the way of my wishes, meaning my overtures to Emma Corbett. Aye, quoth my friend--but they are not the right sort of difficulties. There are . . . difficulties which impede and difficulties which advance . . . Of the latter, you, Sir Robert, to my recollection, have not one; for you are too rich to experience an objection on the side of cash, which by incurring the contempt of the father, might possibly recommend you to the child. You are too sleek and too plump to make a young lady mistake your countenance for the seat of sentiment, and there is so terrible an air of plenty all over you, . . . Alas, poor Sir Robert! you may think yourself well off, if

she does not conceive towards you a generous kind of aversion, and order you to assume a genteel size, to wear your own hair, and to adopt the melting mood, before she suffers a second visit.

Thus spake my friend--and I don't know what to think of his doctrine. Give her up, I positively cannot.--Gain her is not a little improbable. Yet I have met her several times since my arrival, and she has not yet ordered me to assume a genteel size, nor to wear my own hair. I design to make some little alterations in the head way, 'tis true, but this is more in frolic than in seriousness; for I love to adopt little drolleries. They belong to my temper, and have accompanied me to a very good end, through life--which, I really find, requires many little lifts to go pleasantly through.

(I, 111-114)

I have quoted the lengthy passage above so that the reader may get the full flavor of Sir Robert's whimsical charm and clear-eyed realism. Almost every time Sir Robert comes on the scene in Volume I, the novel's mood changes, frequently from swampy to droll and engaging. Moreover the passage illustrates several techniques characteristic of Sir Robert's use of language.

Sir Robert uses terms of self-mockery at the same time that he maintains a perspective on his feelings by externalizing his apprehensions. An amusing example of his self-mockery is his facetious suggestion that since difficulties are "the first cousin of sentiment," perhaps the very qualities in his appearance that might lead Emma to reject him will "be so many points in my favor." Sir Robert's neighbor, is, of course, his own creation. Presented as a shrewd

observer of human nature, the neighbor provides Sir Robert with the opportunity to speak frankly of his fears. The relief he derives from acknowledging and verbally refuting his misgivings strengthens his resolve, so that he is able to pursue his goal with a clearer head, and conceivably a more courageous heart, than he possessed when he initiated his imaginary debate.

Having taken an adversary position in relation to his imaginary neighbor, Sir Robert's next action in his struggle to overcome the onslaught of his own "realism" is to take an adversary position in relation to the friend for whom his letter is intended, although Berkeley has said nothing about the baronet's romantic goals:

It is on this account, Frederick, that I regret having seen the fair Emma Corbett. My partiality is not, I find, such a one as I can accomodate to my old habit of a quaint joculariry. It has a little jarred the harmony of my little system already. I do not enjoy the passing scene quite so care-free--and why should I disguise any thing from Frederick Berkeley?--and I feel an earnest desire to touch the heart of this girl so, that I should be as necessary to her felicity as she is to mine; and the fear of not being able to accomplish this, makes me, at times, most peculiarly miserable. Thank discretion, however, she knows as yet nothing of the matter; and I shall have the advantage soon of being under the same roof. I could treat her with great tenderness; indeed I could, Frederick . . .

Before I quite accede to Corbett's invitation, I will consider about it; and shall be glad to hear from you in the mean time. But you need not write any of your objections to my pursuit, lest you inspire me with a love

of difficulty, and I should, like a sentimental lover, exert myself to oppose them, in proportion as they appear insurmountable. But you may send me word I am engaged in a hazardous undertaking, not doubting my success, if you please.

(I, 115-16)

Sir Robert is doing more than giving voice to his principles regarding marriage: he is carrying on an internal argument with himself. His struggle against the point of view he attributes to his old friend, one that society, at least its "prudent" members, would expect him to accept and conform to, and one he half suspects is most appropriate to a man of his age and situation, is an effective if not perfectly rational way to cope with his own doubts and irrationalities.

However useful and entertaining Sir Robert's strategy of fabricating an opponent is, it is not by itself adequate to maintain his courage and perspective. But as a technique for communicating his feelings it works as well as it does only because his letters contain more than his humorous sallies: they reveal, honestly and directly, his vulnerable hopes, fears, and yearnings. But in spite of his displays of rueful modesty, Sir Robert has enough self-respect to insist on his right to be himself, however imperfect or foolish that self may be. When he writes to his friend, "Look'y' Frederick, leave me to settle my own singularities, and do you settle your's" (I, 105),

although his tone is jocular, his respect for his individuality is evident.

Pratt has been careful to show that Sir Robert and Henry both value themselves, thereby sharing an inner likeness, perhaps in order to emphasize their external differences. The most striking of these is their epistolary style. Pratt has made the contrast between Sir Robert's style and Henry's conspicuous by "framing" Sir Robert's first letter, that is, by preceding it and following it with Henry's verses. Twelve stanzas of sentimental ingenuity precede the baronet's first letter. The first two stanzas suggest the tenor and tone of the whole:

Address to a LOCKET with a braid
of EMMA'S Hair

I.

Come, thou soft and sacred avour,
The remembrance chaste impart;
Take thy station on my bosom,
Lightly lodging near the heart.

II.

While that tender thing shall flutter,
Thou the sacred cause shalt know;
Whether pleasure or disaster,
Thou wilt see what stirs it so.

(I, 77)

In a later verse epistle, accompanying a "present of some Pens, given at parting" Henry praises Emma's

white hands. The epistle is seventeen stanzas long; reprinted below is the second stanza:

Whiter than your whitest feather,
Is the hand which you'll embrace;
Yet more white the fair affection,
Whose emotions you shall trace.
(I, 99)

Henry Hammond's jingly and conventional verses appear insipid when they are juxtaposed, as indeed they are, with Sir Robert's description of Emma's effect on him:

I am now in love 'nolens volens'. You may laugh, but I feel it is not in my power to extricate myself. Would the wench had not fallen in my way! These are what I call cross incidents. When a man is jogging on, and has got soberly to the resting-place, then to have a slap on the shoulder from such an urchin as Cupid, then to be attacked bow and arrow in hand--is not this too bad--Is not this too ridiculous--too humiliating?
(I, 105)

Withholding authorial comment, Pratt juxtaposes an example of one of Henry's characteristic modes of expression with an example of one of Sir Robert's, allowing the reader to decide which of the two is the more interesting. There is of course no contest. Henry, the young lover who sends conventional verses to Emma, pales when he is compared with Sir Robert, the rotund and middle-aged admirer whose wit and energy invigorate even the time-worn figure of Cupid, the "urchin" who impudently slaps his shoulder.

When he chooses to reveal his feelings, Sir Robert avoids dramatizing himself or them. Thus, in the extended passage in which he criticises sentiment, we see that there comes a moment when he describes some of the effects his feeling for Emma has had on his state of mind. He begins by admitting that his "partiality" for her has "a little jarred the harmony of my little system already" (*italics mine*). Offering evidence of the seriousness of his suffering, Sir Robert says, "I do not enjoy the passing scene quite so care-free." Touchingly understated, simple and free of self-pity, his words poignantly reveal how all-encompassing is his love for Emma.

However matter-of-fact Sir Robert's words are, it is important to note that the word "system" in eighteenth century prose and in Pratt's prose particularly (see my chapter on Liberal Opinions) is a warning that what follows will be a characteristic attempt to dignify with reason an irrational impulse. Just as since the seventeenth century Englishmen had often used the term "project" ironically, so also Pratt's use of the term "system" tends to be shaded with irony.¹⁵

Having admitted how profoundly his love for Emma has affected his life, Sir Robert's tone, which has changed from humorous to serious, becomes still more serious as he tells his friend, "I could treat her with great tenderness; indeed I could, Frederick."

But however touching his confidences, and in spite of having just said that he is unable to "accomodate to my old habit of quaint jocularly," his "partiality" for Emma, he nevertheless succeeds in doing something that looks very like such an accommodation. In the final paragraph of his letter, Sir Robert changes his tone from tender back to jocular, as he cautions his friend that he "need not write any of your objections to my pursuit, lest you inspire me with a love of difficulty . . . But you may send me word I am engaged in an hazardous undertaking, not doubting my success, if you please" (I, 116). In spite of the humorous tone that he affects, Sir Robert's final plea for encouragement, to which he jestingly adds, like a polite child, "if you please," reflects his earnest and serious commitment to exert all his powers to win Emma's love, as well as his willingness not to "disguise any thing from [his friend] Frederick Berkeley" (I, 116).

Volume I of EC sets forth the plot and characters in a leisurely way; Volume II moves in double time: the viewer sees the movements of the characters as mechanical and ludicrous, the rapid succession of events as incredible.¹⁶ A number of passages in Volume I, and the early pages of Volume II foreshadow the change in Sir Robert, as for example when he confides, prophetically as later events show, that Emma is more

appealing to him when she is ill than when she is in good health. Nevertheless, when Sir Robert's love for Emma transforms this witty man of reason into a man of feeling, his metamorphosis is so swift and so total that it strains the reader's credulity. For in spite of being somewhat like the religious conversion that Defoe's Roxana undergoes during a storm at sea, Sir Robert's conversion begins before he crosses the ocean, and, more important, is irreversible.

It is assumed here that the plethora of death bells and the too rapid succession of melodramatic and pathetic episodes that fill Volume II are unsuccessful as high art. But perhaps Pratt did not write Emma Corbett's final volume with conventional novelistic values--such as verisimilitude, credibility, consistency in characterization--in mind. If this is the case, it can perhaps best be analyzed according to other criteria. In view of Pratt's didactic intentions, perhaps it ought to be judged as an apologue. In Fiction and the Shape of Belief, Sheldon Sacks defines an apologue as a "fictional example of the truth of a formulable statement, or a series of such statements."¹⁷ Hence if we are to judge Volume II not by novelistic standards, but more narrowly, as an apologue, we must focus on what Pratt wished to exemplify.

It is illuminating to think of Volume II as a series of sermons on diverse popular themes, for

example, that wars are conducive to miseries, chief among which are the slaughter of each nation's youth, and that love exalts the nature of even the most noble men and women. But these are not typical sermons. A not quite first-rate novelist may well be an original sermon-writer. Within the didactic frame Pratt succeeds in sustaining the reader's sympathy for Sir Robert as he undergoes his conversion to sentimentality. As Sir Robert changes, so does his language; it becomes conventional, humorless, and didactic. These changes in Sir Robert are signs for the modern reader at least of his deterioration; they elicit the reader's compassion.

In Volume II Sir Robert's attitude and language shift with jolting suddenness--and then exhibit a cloying sameness. What follows is one of several letters in which he tells Emma's father of the suffering that the thought of Emma and Henry's impending wedding causes him:

The misery which is the consequence of a tenderness like mine, is compounded of such sweet ingredients, that it is not in the nature of the tender heart to wish it were removed. And yet, my friend, it is most intense.

(II, 187)

In Volume I Sir Robert dealt with painful or unpleasant feelings as he might have dealt with other challenges, primarily with levity and adaptive action. Only after his wit and energy prove inadequate defenses

against his unhappiness does he expose his heart to his friend. With a mixture of shame and satisfaction, Sir Robert records that upon one occasion, seeing Emma weep, he sat down and wept with her, though he guessed that her tears were for his rival Henry. On another occasion, though he complained that the peace of his soul was "about to take flight" (I, 181), he reflected that "we best love the wounds of elegant tenderness when they cut most deeply into the heart" (I, 181). Weeping with Emma revealed Sir Robert's sympathetic heart, but this last reflection suggests that although he makes fun of sensibility, he has begun to clasp the pain of his love for Emma in the manner of other men of feeling. He has come to regard his pain as a divine gift, "elegant" because it has a beauty that is in harmony with his own nature.

Such an inclination and habit of mind are suggested also by his characteristically sentimental tendency to enlarge on the theme of the charm of illness in the female sex. He writes of his reaction to Emma's illness: "The feebleness to which the tender frame of a woman is subject, are perhaps more seducing than her bloom. The healthy flower looks superior to protection . . . objects are beloved in proportion, not as they are strong, forcible, and defended, but as they are gentle, unresisting, and pathetic" (II, 6-7). Sir Robert's tendency to find Emma "perhaps more

seducing when she is ill than her bloom," in combination with his tendency to cherish the pain of his unrequited love for her foreshadow his metamorphosis into the full-blown man of feeling he becomes in Volume II.

But can I conquer my affection? No. It is not possible; it is not necessary. To extinguish bad passions, and to regulate good ones, are the two great points within the compass of reason. To covet any longer the person of Emma would be infamous. It is interdicted by law, by religion, and by God.

.
 But what then am I to do? Does reason bring with her no compensations--no equipoise of rewards for punishments so severe? She does, and MANY. Shall I not rank amongst those the delights of a friendship not less tender though less interested--in the secret-breathed prayer for one human being whose happiness is dearer to me than that of any other upon the earth--the generous sigh--the softening tear--the social smile-- . . . the smile of Emma--the assent of HEAVEN?

(II, 213-214)

Without comment Pratt allows Sir Robert's reverent praise of Emma to undercut his claim to disinterestedness. The thirteen dashes in the preceding passage are meant to delineate heightened emotion. We may regard them as bursts of self-censorship of the passions Sir Robert so vehemently denies.

Oh Mr. Corbett, we have glorious faculties . . . every difficulty of soul and body diminishes by earnest perseverance. . . . I, Corbett, have struggled--I cannot say how much or how long, but I can and do tell you, in the sincerity of my soul, that though I am not, nor perhaps shall EVER be again a happy man, I do not wish either the death of Henry,

or the alienation of his Emma's affection. . . . no sentiment of irregular desire invades my heart.

(II, 214-215)

Fervent in praise of Emma and of the "delights" of his friendship with her, his praise of reason indulges his newly acquired penchant for hyperbole and moralizing. Thus he solemnly asserts that "every difficulty of the soul and body diminishes by earnest perseverance." Finally, he speaks of his painful struggle to bring his passions under reason's sway.

As Sir Robert's discourse draws toward its conclusion, his tone and language change from the elevated and abstract to the informal and intimate. Vowing that he speaks "in the sincerity of my soul," he asserts that although perhaps he shall not "EVER be again a happy man," he does not wish Henry's death or "the alienation of his Emma's affection." Sir Robert follows his announcement of the disasters that he does not wish to befall Henry and Emma, with the superogatory statement that "no sentiment of irregular desire invades my heart." One wonders whether Pratt is having some ironic fun with Sir Robert, as he makes him simultaneously articulate and deny feelings that are completely at odds with what he wishes to believe of himself. The kind of insight and humor the baronet showed earlier when he admitted to Corbett that he quarreled with Emma's youth only because he feared she might think him

too old, seems to have disappeared. But if his metamorphosis has robbed Sir Robert of the ability to acknowledge his own angry, albeit perfectly human feelings, along with his capacity for lightness and wit, his struggles with his passions, his resignation to his fate, and his humanity continue to make him appealing and memorable. Sir Robert's goodness, no less than his idiosyncrasies, give him an appeal possessed by few sentimental characters, with the possible exceptions of Parson Adams and Uncle Toby. Perhaps Goldsmith's vicar, although a less anguished figure, comes closest to offering a parallel. At any rate, Sir Robert's portrait is so original and of such excellence that it may be placed in the most distinguished company.

IV.

Emma Corbett's subtitle, The Miseries of Civil War, reflects Pratt's interest in the problem of war. However, because Pratt knew that many of his countrymen held that an island such as England needed a standing army, and that professional soldiers, because they were superior to part-time soldiers, were needed to ensure the strength of such an army, there is a good deal of ambiguity in his treatment of war and militarism in EC. Yet his publication, two decades after EC appeared, of

"A Letter to the 'Tars' of England" and "A Letter to the British Soldiers" suggests that his interest in war and in military life was an abiding one.¹⁸

There appear to be several other possible reasons for Pratt's choice of war as a theme. A primary reason was probably his wish to present himself to his public as a man whose sensibilities were acutely responsive to suffering of any sort. Thus his concern with the sufferings caused by war might be regarded as of a piece with his expressed concern with the sufferings of slaves, of animals, and of the poor. Allegedly motivated by the overflow of powerful emotions, resulting from his profound sympathy for man and beast, his prose and his poetry are designed to reflect his concern with the helpless and the inarticulate.¹⁹ Moreover, besides his wish to keep the image of himself as a man of feeling before his public at all times, two other equally practical motives suggest themselves. A friend of Benjamin Franklin, Pratt would have been eager to demonstrate his sympathy for the American Revolution to the distinguished statesman whose friendship he had so assiduously sought.

Perhaps most important was Pratt's wish to treat themes of timely interest in order to be a popular writer. His The Pupil of Pleasure, or the New System, a work written to illustrate the possible ill effects of Chesterfield's advice, appeared in 1775, one

year after Lord Chesterfield's letters were published. Similarly, Emma Corbett was published in 1780, at the mid-point of the revolution, a time when Pratt could anticipate that a sentimental novel, which used what he saw as a civil war as its pivotal plot device, would engage the interest of his public, and sell books.

Moreover, the "Pamphlet War," at its height in 1775, was still being waged as men of talent and ability argued eloquently and passionately, some defending the British use of force in attempting to re-establish order in the colonies, others defending what they regarded as the colonists' fundamental rights as Englishmen.²⁰

In spite of the fact that Pratt had almost nothing to fear from taking the position that all wars, but especially civil wars, were evil, Emma Corbett treats war, or at least the military, somewhat as it treats sentimentality, that is ambiguously. The case against war is stated by Sir Robert, Charles Corbett, and Emma Corbett. Defense of the "military passion" (I, 192), is given to Emma's cousin, Caroline Arnold. Although Caroline has lost both her husband and her father in battle, she is staunchly patriotic, her loyalty to the military unshaken.

Sir Robert's views, and the moderation with which he expresses them, serve as a standard and a contrast against which Charles Corbett's violent diatribes

against war, and Emma's passionate outbursts on its horrors, are to be judged. In part because of his temperament and experience, in part because he has, both in Britain and America, property to care for and friends who are dear to him, Sir Robert is neutral. Moreover he has earned the right to speak of war because of his experience as a surgeon on the field of battle (I, 142-143). Emma and her father on the other hand, have powerful reasons for their passionate partisanship. Emma has a brother and a lover in America, her father, a son and property.

Sir Robert's opinions reflect not merely his experiences in battle, they also reflect knowledge of the intrigues and the political maneuvers of men in high places; he has insight into some of the real causes of war. In a letter to Corbett, he speaks of what he has observed in the course of his travels:

In passing through a variety of countries, and seeing them all, either engaging, preparing to engage, or healing the wounds of an engagement past, I began to think the passion for honourable death (i.e. cutting throats and lopping limbs, for subsistence or for glory, for pride or pique) . . . the constant practice . . . of . . . my fellow-creatures

(I, 139-140)

. . . In considering the causes of wars, . . . I have found them so wretchedly inadequate to the horrible effects. . . .

(I, 140)

Tens of thousands, my friend, have been sacrificed to the frown of a favourite, the whim of a prince, or the smile of a prostitute. The occasions are contemptible, but

the event is murder . . . What can a good-natured man do, but commiserate the abuse of power, and the madness of ambition?
(I, 141)

The reductive reference to "bickerings," and the juxtaposition of the images of "cutting throats and lopping limbs," words whose jaunty sound and rhythm are incongruous with their meaning, is intentional. Sir Robert's allusion to men butchered on a field of battle, like his statement that "tens of thousands" of young lives are sacrificed for "the frown of a favourite, the whim of a prince, or the smile of a prostitute," by placing the devastating effects of wars alongside their often trivial precipitating causes, indicates his clear-eyed perception of the realities of power and ambition. So also, when Sir Robert speaks of men fighting, "for glory, for pride or pique" the juxtaposition of "glory," "pride," and "pique" emphasizes the frequently absurd incongruity between some of war's causes and the fictions men tell themselves in order to delude themselves into believing that senseless slaughter is honorable.

Sir Robert writes that "There is no prospect of peace. On every brow there is defiance. In every eye flashes the bloody determination" (II, 146). Sir Robert's tone, the admiration implicit in his manner of referring to the "defiance" and "determination" of the

colonists, is very like that of Edmund Burke's famous Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol (1777) in which the statesman declared that although the British had spread devastation in America, the colonists were not subdued:

But America is not subdued. Not one unattacked village, which was originally adverse, throughout that vast continent, has yet submitted from love or terror. You have the ground you encamp on; and you have no more . . . You spread devastation, but you do not enlarge the sphere of authority.²¹

When he speaks of war, Sir Robert, like Burke, wishing to engage the reader's mind, in order to present his ideas as pure and objective expressions of universal truths, uses the language of abstraction. Corbett on the other hand, because he discourses on the subject of war with the intention of moving the reader's emotions, uses language that is highly metaphoric.

In a letter to Sir Robert, Corbett addresses the following apostrophe to the spirit of war:

Man of blood, come forward!--if thou art bold enough, stand forth!--meet the swoln eye of a father, whose house thou hast despoiled of all his little treasure!
(II, 132)

Corbett's successive images of a "man of blood," a father's "swoln eye," of his house "despoiled of all his little treasure," reveal both his pain and his rage.

He goes on to describe what he regards as the British cruelty towards the American colonies:

Nature herself lies bleeding on thy shore,
and there the inhuman mother has plunged the
dagger (with her own barbarous hand) into the
bowels of her child!--

But oh the deep and tremendous restitu-
tions are at hand; . . .

.
Yet, yet, my friend, a little while, . . .
Yet, yet a little while, and she shall find
an avenger. . . . Thrones and dominions shall
make her cause their own, and the fountains
of blood which have run from her exhausted
veins, shall be answered by a yet fuller
measure of the horrible effusion. Blood for
blood, and desolation for desolation! O, my
poor Edward!--my buried property!--my mas-
sacred America!

Corbett's tone is passionate; his image of the British as an inhuman mother who has plunged a dagger into the bowels of her own child, vivid and dramatic. But because he has been careful to embellish his passion with the Shakespearean and Biblical echoes of "yet, my friend, a little while," as well as with the Miltonic echoes of "thrones and dominions," by the time he laments the slaughter of his son and the massacre of America, in the same breath as his "buried property," his passion appears tainted with what, under the circumstances, must be regarded as sordid self-interest.

Can Pratt mean the reader to believe that Corbett is sincere in his bitter attack on England's war with her American colonies? Would it be accurate to say that Pratt is anti-militaristic? If so, he is typical of

many Englishmen of the time. According to George Rude, "American liberties were championed by merchants in London, Bristol and Liverpool, while English Nonconformists openly sympathised with their Calvinist brethren in New England."²²

Emma's views, like those her father has expressed, appear to echo those of Nonconformists. Writing to her cousin Caroline Arnold, she pictures war as a giant demon, wanton and insatiable:

Ah this dire daemon of battle!--this daemon,
 who, with giant footsteps, tramples upon the
 best and most beautiful affections of the
 soul--

.
 Behold, chained to his triumphal car, fear,
 despair, and all the family of pain; while
 the lover, the friend, the father, the widow,
 the orphan, and all the virtues, bleed in the
 procession.--Dreadful, dreadful retinue!

(I, 173-174)

.
 could [the heroes] behold the inconsolable
 wife sink upon her widowed bed, and the
 child, stretching forth its little hands in
 vain to greet a returning father--a father,
 left naked, mangled, and unburied, upon a
 foreign . . .--I am no politician, . . . I
 am a human being. I am a Christian. I am
 one who profess [sic] to adore a religion of
 peace--one too, who can never be persuaded
 that the human form divine--the express
 image of the Deity--is created thus fair, and
 thus amiable, to be cruelly sported away in
 the riots of ambition, pride, and folly.

(I, 173-77)

In spite of the somewhat facile sentimentality of the images, the "inconsolable wife sink[ing] upon her widowed bed," and the child with arms outstretched,

waiting for a father who will not return, Emma's apostrophe is passionate, eloquent, and perhaps most important for the eighteenth century reader, pious. Her words move the reader, in part because of her eloquence, in part because they illustrate the depth of feeling she is capable of at her best.

Consisting of ten pages composed primarily of apostrophes, Emma's letter to Caroline Arnold is actually a short essay. Near its end, Emma addresses an apostrophe to Henry. In it she earnestly entreats him to consider what he will feel "after the bloody affray, . . . should some helpless woman, attended by all her little orphans, demand, of thy victorious hand, the slaughtered husband and the slaughtered sire?" (I, 178). Evoking again the images of widow and orphan she evoked at the beginning of the letter, once again she suggests the pain a sensibility such as Henry's must feel should even his "fancy" suggest a group such as she has just described, "rushing through the ranks, and in piercing tones of agony exclaim . . . "restore, restore them to me'" (I, 178):

how would'st thou support it? Thou, Hammond,
whom the female sigh, the female tear, the
female shriek, would at any time penetrate
to the soul!--

(I, 178)

Emma's statement that Henry's sensibility is so exquisite that a "female sigh," much less the "piercing tones of agony" of a distraught widow "would . . . penetrate his soul," emphasizes, as Pratt wishes it to, the fact that Henry's responsiveness to suffering, especially to female suffering, is everything a sentimental hero's ought to be.

Notwithstanding Emma Corbett's subtitle, its theme is not alone the horror of war, but the exaltation of sentimental attitudes that result in generous actions, and of moral principles that are translated into heroic actions.

Pratt enriched the portrayal of Emma, her father, Sir Robert, and Henry, the novel's four most significant characters, by means of a series of subtle contrasts. Some of these contrasts affect characters whose complementary relationships with each other are marked by a symmetry that lends balance and support to the relationship as well as to the structure of the novel itself.

The passage that concludes the letter we are examining, Emma's conventional lament after her lover has gone away, suggests some of the symmetry and balance Pratt

has achieved in his portrayal of the lovers, and of their relationship:

I can derive no lasting serenity from the pious example of the resigned Louisa. I rage. I rave. I cannot bear it. Indeed I cannot! Hope, duty, religion, are insufficient. I shall be detected in the deepest agony of my sorrow.--The tears are deluging my paper.-- . . . how [shall I] disguise the horrors which press down the spirit of the most afflicted Emma?

(I, 179)

Emma says that "hope, duty, religion, are insufficient" to reconcile her to Henry's absence. She recognizes that in the face of difficulties, her passionate nature seeks expression in action, not in pious resignation. Her flight to America and her daring once there affirm this disposition towards action. Henry is also disposed towards action as his early letters to Emma's father show. Before he left England, he rejected Corbett's offer of Emma's hand, along with one half of Corbett's fortune because he was determined to make his own fortune in America. Faced with difficulties, Henry chooses to act rather than passively accept his "fortune" in either sense of the word.

The revelation of Emma's passionate nature in this letter foreshadows what Pratt wishes the reader to regard as her heroic flight to America. He also wishes the reader to recognize a certain symmetry in the characterizations of Emma and Henry, whom he has endowed with equal measures of sentiment, passion and virtue that they may be worthy of each other.

After Emma goes to America, she is Corbett's weak and panicky daughter no longer. Instead, she emerges as the hardy, independent and quickwitted heroine, who "exposed to all the dangers of a wild and unknown country--picking her food from the hedges" (II, 173), braves the American wilderness alone in search of her lover. An equally radical change transforms Henry, but in an opposite direction: The Henry Emma finds in America is no longer the spirited youth who maintained his own convictions in the face of Corbett's threats. The Henry of Volume II, wounded and weak, needs Emma's care and Sir Robert's friendship in order to survive for even the very short time he does live.

Yet although in one sense Emma and Henry have reversed roles, the balance of their relationship remains stable because each complements the other as neatly after the metamorphosis as before. Moreover, in spite of the fact that each changes in significant ways, in perhaps more significant ways each remains unchanged. Both share certain enduring, unchanging

virtues, such as the generosity of spirit they demonstrate by their readiness to forgive Corbett his unfeeling rejection of them, and the nobility of mind they demonstrate when each, unknown to the other, entreats Sir Robert to conceal from the other the fact that he is dying. The virtues Henry and Emma share are rewarded, not by the blessings of Providence, at least not during their earthly lives, but by the esthetic rewards of balance and symmetry which enrich their portraits with depth and significance.

V.

Having given what were almost certainly his own views on war to Sir Robert, who has experienced war's hideousness, Pratt gives to a woman the task of defending military life, and the character of British military men. Paradoxically, the woman he chooses to defend the military, Emma's cousin, Caroline Arnold, has lost both her father and her husband to war. In one of her two letters to Emma, Mrs. Arnold attempts to defend "the trade of arms" (I, 192), by sending her the "FRAGMENT of a little military history found amongst [her] father's papers" (I, 195). Called "The Carbines," the fragment is meant to serve as a sentimental exemplum, to teach Emma "that humanity and bravery are nearly allied, and that the tender husband and good

soldier often form the same character though they cannot always exert themselves in the same moment" (I, 195).

The narrator of "The Carbines," presumably Caroline Arnold's father, tells the story of Julius and Nestor Carbine, brothers who have been soldiers, but who are now too old and maimed for further service. The history is an account of the narrator's visit with the brothers in a domestic setting in which he is able to observe them in their roles as father, uncle and brother. Nestor, the elder brother, is a widower, and the father of a small daughter and six young sons, all of whom are present.

The narrative begins with a description of the brothers. One has lost a foot and an arm; the other has lost a leg, part of his left ear, and four fingers of one hand. The faces of both are badly disfigured, but the brothers are cheerful about their missing limbs and disfigured faces; they regard their mutilated bodies and faces as signs that they have done their duty on the field of battle.

The narrator describes a contest between Nestor and Julius as each tries to outdo the other by making more of his "unostentatious" wounds visible to the narrator:

I detected the flush of something like victory in the countenance of Julius, as he

threw open his chitterlin, [the frill down the breast of his shirt] and opened his shirt collar under pretence of too much heat: but Carbine the elder checked his brother's ambition by baring his right arm to his shoulder, (or rather begging me to bare it) and here discovering a masked battery of blows, which were a fair match for those in the breast of Julius.

(I, 205)

Pratt very prudently puts a tear in the fragment after the brothers' contest, but the reader may deduce the fictional narrator's amusement. The narrator's tone and manner make clear that he views the brothers' rivalry as an innocent obsession, to be regarded no more seriously than Uncle Toby's war games, but his respectful attitude towards Nestor Carbine's "wholly martial" (I, 209) education of his sons seems meant to be taken seriously.

The narrator describes how, in a room scarcely big enough to hold his pupils, the father teaches "the practical part of a soldier's discipline" (I, 208) to his six little sons, inflaming them with "noble fires." (I, 209): "One branch or other of the art military was the subject of every day. . . . At night they listened to the lecture, and their [miniature] swords were drawn forth to practice what they had heard in the morn. (I, 209)." The narrator's understated and unemotional language emphasizes the pathos of the scene more effectively than a deliberate attempt

to wring a tear from the reader by more dramatic means would have.

The Carbines' story would not be complete without including their romantic encounters. Pratt does this with a good deal of verve and imagination, albeit giving over all restraint and leading the reader into a veritable swamp of sentimentality.

Julius tells how he and Nestor returned from their first battle scarred enough to discover that the women who loved them "before we were worth loving" (I, 216) loved them no longer. Having been given up by the "jades," Nestor falls in love with Frances, "one of the prettiest girls in England" (I, 220). But Julius, "could never be prevailed upon [to marry] though an honest girl offered to fling [his] knapsack across her shoulder after the loss of [his] thigh" (I, 223).

Nursing her husband when he is sick with a fever, Frances herself dies. As Julius explains that because there was "only one bed of any size, the living and the dead lay together" (I, 225), pathos descends into bathos: Nestor turns to his little daughter, who has been "sobbing at the side of the bed, with her apron thrown over her eyes," and says "Come hither. Thou art like thy mother--kiss me" (I, 226).

Having kissed his little daughter, Nestor tries to stop Julius from relating any further details of Frances' death, crying out "Go no farther" (I,

227) but Julius continues his narration. Nestor again remonstrates: "Julius, GO NO FARTHER, I say, (cried Nestor) pressing his daughter close to his breast" (I, 226). Anticipating the portion of Julius's narrative yet to come, one of Nestor's sons says, "I wish my uncle would hold his tongue" (I, 227). But Uncle Julius goes right on to describe Nestor's behavior at his wife's burial:

He opened the closed lid, and peeped in . . . He cast a lingering look into the grave. He drew his hand gently over the coffin as the sexton was beginning to lower it. He kneeled down to see that it was put softly into the ground. He let it go, and said he was perfectly resigned; then came away, and then returned . . . and sought the grave again, wringing his hand, and declaring he was perfectly resigned all the time--
(I, 227)

Emma is meant to discover that the soldier, Nestor, is as devoted a husband, as tender a father, in short, as infected with domestic passion as any man of sentiment. Julius finishes his recitation by revealing his own reaction to his brother's grief: "In short, Sir, he--he--he did so many things upon that occasion, [tried to prevent the nails being driven into the coffin, was unwilling to leave either coffin or grave, kept returning when he did leave (226-227)] that surely, if a man has any love for a woman, he ought to be a bachelor" (I, 227-28). Julius' words, although he speaks them seriously, are both hilarious and

paradoxical. They are followed by the statement that "[The fragment is here defaced, and illegible for some pages]" (I, 228, brackets in text).

Several lines of asterisks are followed by a pathetic conclusion. The narrator puts some money into Nestor's hand, which he receives with a tear. The old soldier's little daughter, who has been holding her father's hand, takes out her handkerchief to wipe away her father's tear, but he asks her not to. At this point the narrator says that "the tear had verged off . . . It had got upon my little girl's face," (I, 230). Since Mrs. Arnold introduced the fragment by saying she believed that her father wrote it while still a young man, Pratt accomplishes two things by mentioning the narrator's little girl. First, the reader is flattered at being able to figure out that the Carbines' young visitor is the now adult Mrs. Arnold. Secondly, Caroline Arnold's inferred presence serves as a coherent, almost organic connection between the novel and its only interpolated tale.

Having noted Pratt's skill in integrating the fragment we are examining with the novel's structure, let us return to the tear which has travelled from Nestor's cheek to that of the narrator's little girl. Vanishing from her cheek, the "precious offering of sympathy" changes its residence a third time, and is found trembling on Captain Arnold's. His narration

concludes, "I blessed it, and," (I, 231). Here the fragment breaks off, and is concluded by several additional lines of asterisks. Reading "The Carbines" through to its tear-tracking conclusion, today's reader is likely to feel that in spite of Pratt's conscious intentions, two of the lessons his tour de force teaches are that the grotesquely disfigured Carbines are the physical manifestation of a spiritual disfigurement that is the consequence of their fanatical single-mindedness, and that in any case, sentimentality, whether it is a harmful or beneficial condition, is a highly contagious disease.

But some of Pratt's contemporaries appear to have regarded the pathetic portions of Emma Corbett as valuable in themselves. The Critical Review praised Emma Corbett for the "many passages written in a pathetic strain; and . . . the same vivacity, and that natural flow of imagination, which we have formerly admired in the several productions of this ingenious author."²³

In view of the relative length of "The Carbines," thirty-two pages, and the fact that it is

written in the most sentimental fashion--embellished with wrenchingly pathetic details, boasting rents and omissions after the manner of Tristram Shandy and The Man of Feeling--it nevertheless pleased the CR so much that the Critical's reviewer reprinted a lengthy portion of Emma Corbett's "fragment." Yet since The Critical Review praised the whole of Emma Corbett handsomely, it seems odd that the reviewer chose to reprint a part of "a digression," (P. 460) rather than a portion of the major narrative. One explanation that comes to mind is that the reviewer considered the extract characteristic of Emma Corbett as well as one of its strongest parts. Perhaps he wished to do Pratt a good turn by reprinting that portion of Emma Corbett that would appeal to readers seeking sentimental fare.²⁴ For although the interpolated fragment is skillfully integrated with the novel's plot, and thematically justified, Caroline Arnold's introduction of it as a "family relique" (I, 196) as well as its atmosphere and details, seem to have been designed to cater to the contemporary taste for pathos.

VI.

In Emma Corbett, Pratt, no less than Milton and Pope, intends to justify the ways of God to man. His spokesman, Sir Robert, declares that "the ways of

ALMIGHTY GOD, . . . are justifiable in every part of this pathetic story" (II, 249). Speaking through Sir Robert, Pratt, attempting to make certain that his readers understand the sentimental rhetoric with which Emma Corbett ends, launches an attack on "the vile herd of novellists [sic]" (II, 249) who injure the cause of virtue by teaching "erroneous notions of punishment and reward" (II, 249). Censuring the writers of modern romances who sacrifice truth in order to please their readers, he ridicules the shallow morality taught by such works.

Difficulty, in the beginning of a narrative, love, in the middle; and marriage, at the end, make up, almost invariably, the recipe of a modern romance: This is called rewarding virtue. A bad character or two, perhaps, drops off, and that is called punishing vice. False, foolish, conclusion!

Sir Robert asks his correspondent to compare such lessons with the lessons of life:

Look into life. Doth not heaven's blessed beam shine equally on the just and the unjust? Are all rewards so mechanically contrived? Hath virtue no joys of her own?-- joys which generous sorrow can only produce? Is the sacred struggle of a good man altogether afflictive?

(II, 250)

An example of Pratt's best didactic style, replete with contrasts and rhetorical flourishes, the passage compares the randomness of life's rewards and

punishments with the mechanical predictability of those contrived by modern romances.

With refreshing bluntness, reminiscent of his manner in Volume I rather than of his sentimentality in Volume II, but consistent with his character nevertheless, Sir Robert turns his correspondent's attention to life, and asks a series of rhetorical questions. Sir Robert's first question has dramatic force and intensity. The questions that follow it succeed in sustaining and heightening this intensity, so that the final sentence, which reflects Sir Robert's hard-won acceptance of God's will, has the dramatic force of a climax that has been carefully prepared for. Speaking of life's rewards and punishments, a complex subject at best, Sir Robert's sentences are relatively complex, his cadences dramatic and passionate, and his tone dignified. Moreover, his rhetorically effective variation of sentence lengths, and of pauses and stresses, enhances the force of his questions. On the other hand, in the earlier passage in which he describes the morality that passes for poetic justice in modern romances, the simple sentence structures, the almost off-hand rhythms, and colloquial tone, all contribute to his intent to disparage simplistic moralities.

Earlier, when he thought that Emma was about to die, Sir Robert asked despairingly, "What is there in this world that can render tolerable the existence of

such a wretch as Robert Raymond?" (II, 165). After Emma's death however, he gives his life meaning by dedicating himself to caring for Corbett's orphaned grandchildren, Emma's daughter and Edward's son. Having decided to give the orphans his generous friendship and unconditional and selfless love, Sir Robert has changed from a man who sentimentalized his misery to one who has perceived a higher purpose in life than his former romantic exaltation of Emma. Spokesman for Pratt at his most didactic, Sir Robert explains, "The vulgar effect of tender distress is dissipation or despair. Had I yielded to these, a poor old man would have wanted a friend: two lovely infants, a parent;" (II, 253). Again contrasting the reality of his life and his feelings, with the view by which he believes a writer of "modern romances" would be likely to misjudge both, Sir Robert continues, "The writer of a romance would paint me as a wretch without hope. . . . Attend you to the reality, my friend; and behold a man who wishes still to live; and who thinks himself rewarded" (II, 254).

EC's final letter belongs to Sir Robert. It begins, "I enter the metropolis no more" (II, 255). The metropolis is London, and the letter recalls Dr. Johnson's statement: "The man who is tired of London is tired of life." It also reflects a certain Rousseauvian distrust of urban life. Nevertheless Dr.

Johnson's quip is an acute assessment of a state of mind such as Sir Robert's, for the baronet is retreating from life, rather than retreating to the country in the hope of being healed by uncorrupted nature. Declaring that henceforth he will live only in the country, he discloses his premonition that he will soon die: "A few years only can be mine. They shall be engaged in reconciling my poor dear Corbett to life, on heaven's own terms, and preparing for age a peaceful pillow, for infancy a nursing cradle" (II, 155).

His resolution suggests that Sir Robert has come to regard himself as an agent meant to serve others, rather than as an actor in his own life. His certainty that he is soon to die suggests that his surgeon's eyes have already seen signs of his own decline. By foreshadowing Sir Robert's death, Pratt emphasizes the toll taken by the rigors, spiritual as well as physical, of Sir Robert's American sojourn, as well as lending additional gravity and seriousness to the final pages of the novel. Although he is convinced that his precious charges will not be in his care long, Sir Robert's final sentence voices his gratitude and triumphant resignation to God's will: "Berkeley, congratulate me! My children are both well. The bounty of the Almighty is upon me" (II, 255). Only the epitaph on Emma's tombstone follows Sir Robert's words. Thus Pratt concludes EC on a moralistic note. Duty,

friendship, care for the unfortunate and the helpless: these values, all of them noble, Emma Corbett affirms.

Perhaps one of the reasons why Pratt has given Sir Robert's letter an ending which, although resigned, is also inspiring, may have been his unwillingness to introduce a note of unmitigated despair so close to the story's conclusion.

Yet one wonders why Pratt bequeaths the children's care to a disagreeable and selfish old man, instead of choosing a more satisfying ending in which Sir Robert would bring up the infant pair. Several answers suggest themselves. Having given his principal spokesman several structurally and organically significant epistolary monologues on the subject of poetic justice, Pratt may have wished to prove the validity of his criticism of it. Thus, because Sir Robert's constancy to Emma would, in a novel obedient to the rules of poetic justice, be rewarded by his having little Emma in his care after her mother's death, Pratt, indicating his obedience to the laws which govern men, shows Sir Robert's future as being subject not to what he deserves but to the randomness of fate.

In addition to the case Pratt makes against poetic justice, given a world in which so many of the young men and women are killed by war, there may be other reasons to explain why Sir Robert, who is forty-three, has to be disposed of. Emma Corbett is,

after all, a sentimental novel. The reader expects that Sir Robert, who in Volume II has been transformed into a man of sentiment, must, in spite of all his criticism of sentimental lovers, prove that he is one. Thus, having lost the only woman he ever loved, and having had to bury her brother with his own hands, Sir Robert's sensibilities prove their exquisite responsiveness to the tragedies he has witnessed by gradually destroying his health and sapping his life.

But Pratt's decision to annihilate every one in Emma Corbett but the very old and the very young may also have had something to do with feelings he himself had towards his father that he was unable to resolve, except indirectly behind the mask fiction provided.²⁵ Pratt's father died six years before Pratt wrote Emma Corbett, disinheriting him. Although Pratt's subsequent lengthy and costly litigation failed to remedy the alleged injustice, it succeeded in denuding the estate of its assets.

In Pratt's world the old held sway over the young; they were, like Cronos, willing to destroy the young in order to extend their own reigns.

Emma, Edward, Henry, and Louisa, all virtuous young people, are struck down mercilessly. Pratt intends that their deaths shall validate Sir Robert's criticism of the false and foolish laws men call poetic justice.

But if the deaths of all of EC's young people were dictated in part by Pratt's vision of the world as generally dangerous to the young, especially the young who have matured enough to threaten to supplant the old, Emma's death is mandated not by any assumed Weltanschauung Pratt conceived of, but because it is organic to its author's didactic intentions.

On one hand Pratt must have felt that it was necessary to kill Emma off in part as a warning to his young female readers not to flout parental authority. For the fact is that Emma did leave her father's house alone and in a man's disguise; and no matter how severe the provocation, such adventurousness in a female must in the eighteenth century be punished. On the other hand, since Emma's flight from her home was precipitated by her father's pressure to marry a man she did not love, in spite of her willingness to remain single, just as Clarissa also was willing to remain single, her death may be Pratt's way of scolding parents who are not understanding enough of their sensitive offspring.

The epitaph on Emma's tombstone closes the book. It advises that none but the tenderhearted are worthy to stand beside Emma's grave.

Pass not--if Truth, and Fortitude, and Love,
 Can stay thy footsteps, or thy spirit move!

 If patience, perseverance, ardour, truth,

Blended with every charm of female youth:--
If these, and every virtue, every grace,
Want power to melt the soul upon thy face:
Then quickly pass--this hallowed spot forbear!
THE FEELING HEART ALONE SHOULD TARRY HERE.
(II, 258-59)

Although Pratt says he is "indebted" to an "elegant and tender friend" (II, 258) for Emma's epitaph, the reader familiar with Pratt's prose and poetry cannot doubt that Pratt himself, whose deepest vision is far from "elegant and tender," is the author of these highly sentimental verses.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹The History of the English Novel: V, The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance (London: Witherby, 1934), 16.

²The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, ed. George Watson, II (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971) 678, thus: "The sorrows of Werther: a new translation." 1809 (2nd edn), [1813?], Chiswick 1823."

³The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 (1932; rpt. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1961) p. 366.

⁴Hester Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind Addressed to a Young Lady (1774; rpt. Boston, Printed by Robt. Hodge for Willian Green, 1782?), p. 79.

⁵Henry Mackenzie, Julia de Roubigné, in Works (1777; rpt. Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1808), II.

⁶Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julie, ou, La Nouvelle Héloïse (1761; rpt. Paris: Libraire Garnier Frères, n.d.).

⁷Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, (1966), p. 7. Professor Day points out that one of the advantages which the epistolary method added to fictional technique is "the ability to color the whole narrative with subjectivity, personality, and intimacy, since the letter writer . . . tell[s] the story in his own characteristic way."

⁸Samuel Richardson, Clarissa, or, The History of a Young Lady in Works, with a Preface by Leslie Stephen (London: H. Sotheran, 1884) I, Let. xvi: Reporting to Anna Howe that her mother has praised her for being "dutiful, . . . prudent, and wise" Clarissa remarks wryly "in hope, no doubt, to make me so."

⁹Clarissa, V, Let. xii: Day, p. 8, refers to this passage.

¹⁰Josephine Grieder, "'Amiable Writer' or 'Wretch'? The Elusive Samuel Jackson Pratt," Bulletin of Research in the Humanities, 81, No. 4 (Winter 1978), 482.

¹¹See Joyce Hemlow, "Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books," PMLA, 65 (1950), 734. Miss Hemlow remarks that "the years 1760-1820 . . . might be called the age of courtesy books for women." The veneration (see p. 53 above) with which Emma regards, "every rule which reason has prescribed to render female conduct correctly amiable," were she a real woman, rather than a fictional creation, would very likely have owed much to such courtesy books as Dr. Gregory's much reprinted A Father's Legacy to his Daughters, ([17 ?] rpt. Boston: 1724), and James Fordyce's The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex, and the advantages to be derived by young men from the society of virtuous women. A Doctor of Divinity, Fordyce delivered this three part discourse in Monkwell Street Chapel, Jan. 1st, 1776. It was later published in Dublin, printed for S. Price et al, in 1776. So popular were Fordyce's sermons that in Pride and Prejudice Mr. Collins attempts to read some of them aloud to the Bennet sisters. Mrs. Chapone, (see fn. 4) must be included in any list of conduct books, for although Jane Austen treated Fordyce irreverently, Chapone was to be admired even by that defender of women's rights, Mary Wollstonecraft. Yet on the subject of decorum Mrs. Chapone is unequivocal. She states, "There is a profligacy of spirit in defying the rules of decorum" (p. 96). In addition, The Polite Academy, 8th ed. ([17 ?] rpt. London: Printed for R. Baldwin, and B. C. Collins in Salisbury [178?]) although it may conceivably have been published later than Emma Corbett, is nevertheless characteristic of the kind of moral instruction a young woman in Emma's position would have imbibed. Its tone is strict indeed as it advises its youthful reader that, "reverence is the proper attitude toward one's parents: You owe everything to your parents; and you owe your first station in life to them. Reverence them for that reason . . ." (p. 2). Part II, Chap. I "Of Behavior to Parents" states, "You may be sure, whatever your parents order you to do, is right; therefore do it with goodwill and readiness" (p. 14).

¹²Norman Rabkin, "'Clarissa': The Nature of Convention," ELH, 23 (1956), 206.

¹³See Tompkins, Chapter III, pp. 70-115, "Didacticism and Sensibility" for a discussion of the didactic function of the sentimental novel.

¹⁴Other examples of well-known good men might include Squire Allworthy and Dr. Primrose. Squire Allworthy does not seem to me to be as fully drawn as Sir Robert, and although Goldsmith's portrayal of Dr. Primrose has remarkable sweetness, (in spite of the fact that it engages the reader's affections and the account of his misfortunes reduced Fanny Burney to tears) it has not the persuasive reality that Pratt has succeeded in imparting to Sir Robert's portrait.

¹⁵Thus OED: "1647 Clarendon Hist. Rev. 1 sec. 50. "New Projects were every day set on foot for Money, which served only to offend, and incense the People." And of course there are Swift's later projectors in the "Academy of Lagado," all mad.

¹⁶See Henri Bergson, "Laughter," in Comedy, introd., Wylie Sypher (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), p. 105: "Any arrangement of acts and events is comic which gives us in a single combination, the illusion of life and the distinct impression of a mechanical arrangement." The ludicrous and almost comic quality which becomes apparent when one attempts to summarize Volume II's action-packed plot, seems partly the result of its tempo, partly the result of what Bergson, more than one hundred years after Emma Corbett was published, described as "something mechanical encrusted on the living" (p. 84).

¹⁷Sheldon Sacks, Fiction and the Shape of Belief: A Study of Henry Fielding (Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1964), p. 16.

¹⁸A Letter to the "Tars" of Old England (1797) went through six editions in a few weeks. A Letter to the British Soldiers (1797) was also well received.

¹⁹Human and animal suffering furnish the themes of much of Pratt's prose and poetry. The poems referred to below were published separately. His most popular poem, Sympathy, or a Sketch of the Social Passion, went through ten editions between 1781 and 1807. It is suffused with alternating examples of human suffering and human sympathy. His poem, The Triumph of Benevolence (1786) was occasioned by the design of erecting a monument in honor of the well-known philanthropist, John Howard. The poems which follow, like those already mentioned, are concerned with the unfortunate and the afflicted: Humanity, or the Rights of Nature (1788), Cottage Pictures, or the Poor (1801), Bread, or the Poor (1802), John and Dame, or the Loyal Cottagers (1803), and The Lower World (1810). To the list of poems by means of which Pratt sought to inspire his readers with sympathy

¹⁴ Other examples of well-known good men might include Squire Allworthy and Dr. Primrose. Squire Allworthy does not seem to me to be as fully drawn as Sir Robert, and although Goldsmith's portrayal of Dr. Primrose (in spite of the fact that it engages the reader's affections and the account of his misfortunes reduced Fanny Burney to tears) has remarkable sweetness, it has not the persuasive reality that Pratt has succeeded in imparting to Sir Robert's portrait.

¹⁵ Thus OED: "1647 Clarendon Hist. Rev. 1 sec. 50. "New Projects were every day set on foot for Money, which served only to offend, and incense the People." And of course there are Swift's later projectors in the "Academy of Lagado," all mad.

¹⁶ See Henri Bergson, "Laughter," in Comedy, introd., Wylie Sypher (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), p. 105: "Any arrangement of acts and events is comic which gives us in a single combination, the illusion of life and the distinct impression of a mechanical arrangement." The ludicrous and almost comic quality which becomes apparent when one attempts to summarize Volume II's action-packed plot, seems partly the result of its tempo, partly the result of what Bergson, more than one hundred years after EC was published, described as "something mechanical encrusted on the living" (p. 84).

¹⁷ Sheldon Sacks, Fiction and the Shape of Belief: A Study of Henry Fielding (Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1964), p. 16.

¹⁸ A Letter to the "Tars" of Old England (1797) went through six editions in a few weeks. A Letter to the British Soldiers (1797) was also well received.

¹⁹ Human and animal suffering furnish the themes of much of Pratt's prose and poetry. The poems referred to below were published separately. His most popular poem, Sympathy, or a Sketch of the Social Passion went to ten editions between 1781 and 1807. It is suffused with alternating examples of human suffering and human sympathy. His poem, The Triumph of Benevolence (1786) was occasioned by the design of erecting a monument in honor of the well-known philanthropist, John Howard. The poems which follow, like those already mentioned, are concerned with the unfortunate and the afflicted: Humanity, or the Rights of Nature (1788), Cottage Pictures, or the Poor (1801), Bread, or the Poor (1802), John and Dame, or the Loyal Cottagers (1803), and The Lower World (1810). To the list of poems by means of which Pratt sought to inspire his readers with sympathy

and compassion for man and beast, must be added the prose work Pity's Gift (1798). A collection of tales intended to excite the compassion of youth for animals, allegedly selected from Pratt's works by "a Lady." It went into its sixth edition by 1816. It was followed by a sequel called The Paternal Present (1802).

²⁰Some British Friends of the American Revolution: A Bicentennial Tribute. An exhibition of pamphlets and books printed in Great Britain between 1764 and 1785, from the collection of and with commentary by Charles F. Tannenbaum, at the New York Society Library, 1974, (n.p.: n.p., [1974]), n. pag.

²¹A letter . . . to John Farr and John Harris . . . Sheriffs of . . . [Bristol] on the affairs of America, London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1777, rpt. in The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke. First American, from the last London edition II (Boston: Published by John West, 75 Cornhill, and O. C. Greenleaf, 3, Court Street, David Carlisle, Printer, No. 5, Court Street, 1806-7), p. 97.

²²Europe in the Eighteenth Century (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 188.

²³Critical Review, 49 (1780), 460.

²⁴One of the most prolific writers of his age, Pratt was part of a literary establishment, although not the establishment dominated by Dr. Johnson. Actually, he appears to have been a member of two literary groups. For example, he did a great deal of reviewing for the Gentlemen's Magazine, and appears to have been accepted by a group in London whose literary labors were various but for the most part respected, even if its members were not accepted by Dr. Johnson's coterie. He was also a part of Lady Miller's Batheaston circle whose members wrote verses to compete for the Batheaston Vase. Included in the group were such respected men of letters as Richard Graves and Robert Potter, the translator of Aeschylus and Euripedes. See Ruth Aveline Hesselgrave, Lady Miller and the Batheaston Literary Circle (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1927) p. 66. See also Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill, revised by L. F. Powell (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1934), II, 336-37. When Boswell named a gentleman of Johnson's acquaintance who wrote for the Vase, Johnson said, "He was a blockhead for his pains."

I

In his second novel, The Pupil of Pleasure (1776), Samuel Jackson Pratt tries to show that the practice of what he considered the most reprehensible of Lord Chesterfield's precepts encourages deceit, and conceals the most destructive hypocrisy under a smiling aspect.¹ To expose the destructive potentialities of Chesterfield's epistolary recommendations, he has constructed a swiftly-paced novel which, although replete with explicit moralizing, as are his other fictions, also contains a good deal of wit, humor, and psychological penetration.² Published just after Liberal Opinions, The Pupil of Pleasure is much more tightly knit than its predecessor. With Shenstone Green and Emma Corbett it is among the more carefully plotted of Pratt's novels. The epistolary style of The Pupil of Pleasure is a particularly apt choice, producing an effect of great immediacy and swiftness of action.

The lurid tale of a young gentleman who uses the precepts he finds in the letters of Chesterfield to deceive men and seduce women, its principal letters by three

major correspondents to three epistolary confidants. Sedley, a rake who regards females as "a sex that was born for our amusement" (I, 194), confides his schemes to Thornton. Harriet Homespun, Sedley's first victim, writes her friend, Mrs. La Motte, of the handsome and elegant young man who has become her husband's friend and hers. Delia Delmore, daughter of Sir Henry Delmore and sister of Fanny Delmore Mortimer, the consumptive married woman who is Sedley's second victim, writes to Lady Lucy Saxby. A fourth correspondent, the Reverend Horace Homespun, writes to Doctor Diggory. At the end of the book there are also some letters from Sir Henry Delmore. Finally, for comic relief, and to enforce the moral that evil is contagious, that evil masters corrupt their servants, Pratt gives us the correspondence of Sedley's footman. When Sedley goes out, his footman reads the Letters his master treasures, and writes to his friend Timothy Trueman that he is having great amorous success with an innocent bath attendant whom he has marked out as "a pretty experiment, to bring my hand into play, as it were, before I ventured to Chesterfieldise" (II, 213-214).

As the footman dallies with the bath maid, Sedley's seduction of Harriet Homespun proceeds apace. Sedley's early letters describe in detail how he ingratiates himself with both Homespun and his wife. He lets them reveal themselves as much as possible so that he may accurately learn their temperaments before he "venture[s] to attack them."

He soon discovers that Homespun is a "grubber in books; his lady, a lover of fashions, gay, giddy, good-natured, unsuspecting, and uninformed" (I, 35). Harriet's letters to Mrs. La Motte meanwhile reveal her infatuation with Sedley so clearly that her confidant tries to remind her of Horace's solid virtues. Sedley writes to tell Thornton that "Harriet's [blood] is upon the boil," (I, 116); criminal conversation follows.

At this point the reader learns that Harriet is pregnant: "more than three parts gone with child" (I, 139). Although contemporary readers may well have found this detail shocking, Sedley describes the pregnant Harriet as "a most voluptuous banquet, [that] increases the appetite while she indulges it" (I, 131). Nonetheless, Harriet's sexual eagerness begins to bore him and his appetite for her is quickly sated; he seeks a conquest that will challenge his "talents" and add the spice of variety to his amours.

Whereas he had regarded Harriet as "a bewitching, illiterate, sweet piece of unpracticed Nature" (I, 115), he views Fanny Mortimer with some of the respect her birth and position merit. Sedley had met Fanny the previous year while she was as yet unmarried. When she arrives in Buxton, he is immediately smitten with her charms, charms that are especially attractive to him because they are very different from Harriet's. Sedley exults that Fanny is "such a contrast to the full-formed Harriet--so slim--so soft of spirit . . . [and so well born]" (II, 93). Sedley's

pleasure in Fanny's breeding is implicit in his praise of her father's nobility. His crude comparison of Fanny with Harriet (he regards them as objects only) emphasizes a ruthlessness that the unfolding plot illustrates. Determined to possess Fanny, Sedley sets about ingratiating himself with her father, Sir Henry Delmore. Managing to give the impression that he wants to marry Fanny's sister Delia, Sedley becomes a welcome visitor in the Delmore home. Disengaging himself from Harriet proves difficult, but he finally persuades her to return to home and husband.

On the way home, Harriet's coach overturns and she is fatally injured. But she lingers long enough to give birth to a baby boy, and to confess her sin to her husband, who has returned to Buxton to nurse her. The baby dies and Harriet, aware that she too is dying, refuses to yield up the "clay cold corse."

As Harriet and her babe are dying, Sedley, who knows about Harriet's injuries, is engaged in writing a progress report to Thornton about his campaign to possess Fanny. The letter is a jubilant one because he has just contrived to force Fanny to agree to a private interview. He is interrupted, however, by the sounds he hears outside:

'Sdeath! Thornton, the passing-bell tolls--Surely Harriet is not dead--No matter--I will not--Dare not enquire. I will command myself this once; and when this scheme is compleated I care not how soon I descend to Elysium and to Chesterfield.

(II, 123-124)

Sedley's fate is similar to what he has imagined it would be. His "scheme," the possession of Fanny, is complete when he has his interview with her. Undone by his harassment, Fanny faints upon Sedley's bosom, he rapes her, and retribution quickly follows.

It is night when Horace takes the coffined bodies of his wife and her child home for burial. Sedley meets the carriage, and overcome with sudden remorse, confesses his deeds to Horace. He offers Horace his sword so that he may avenge the wrongs inflicted on him. Horace refuses. Sedley dashes to the home of the Delmores, where Fanny is near death. He confesses his crimes and duels with Mortimer, Fanny's husband. He dies on Mortimer's sword. Mortimer is tried and acquitted for his part in the duel, and Fanny miraculously survives.

As I noted in my chapter on Emma Corbett, Ernest Baker described Pratt's prose fictions as "luscious" sentimental novels. The early editions of Pupil of Pleasure, printed before Pratt "corrected" his text, deserved this epithet. They contained graphic descriptions of its villain's lascivious encounters. The most striking aspect of The Pupil of Pleasure, however, is its language, particularly the rhetorical effectiveness of its sound, cadence and rhythm, as well as the variations in tone and diction used to suggest the implications of key passages.

Sedley, the novel's protagonist, writes the first letter. Addressed to his confidant Thornton, it opens with an

attack on Richardson and two of his characters, and then launches into an apostrophe addressed to Lord Chesterfield:

Richardson's a child, Grandison is a monster,
Lovelace a bungler . . .
O, Chesterfield! Chesterfield! Thou only thou,
knewest the science of joy, thou only had'st the
skill to cover the ruggedness of life with roses
. . . Deign then, immortal shade! to look with gen-
tle eye upon THY PUPIL: teach me to emulate thy
genius, to practice thy precepts, to hit with a
felicity like thine, the true spirit of dissimula-
tion . . . condescend to guide me (with all thy at-
tendant graces, assiduities, and elegant atten-
tions) into the bosom of voluptuousness, my Friend,
my Mentor, my Genius, and my God! (I, 2-3)

We note first that Pratt has italicized the word science: he wishes to make clear from the start that Chesterfield's advice comprises a system, and the reader who knows Pratt's Liberal Opinions knows that he views all systems with suspicion. Moreover, when Sedley dares to invoke Chesterfield's spirit as though it were God, Pratt is probably trying to persuade his churchgoing readers to condemn The Pupil of Pleasure's villain from the start, while simultaneously establishing that he himself is not of the devil's (Sedley's) party. At any rate, it is clear that Sedley is a man obsessed, hypnotized by his own sophistry.

Thornton in his first letter to Sedley wishes his friend joy of his "system," and after cautioning Sedley not to fall into the fault of imitation exhorts him to "Be thyself, and the deities of bliss throw objects in thy way" (I, 5). He adds a brief postscript: "Be explicit." The postscript suggests that Thornton's character is as prone to

lasciviousness and villany as Sedley's, and offers the author the added advantage of requiring just such descriptions as would sell books.

Pratt's irony is delightful as he lets Sedley explain his reasons for wishing to follow Chesterfield's precepts:

Let duller souls content themselves with vulgar happiness; with yielding beauty, entrapt simplicity, and the mere defloration of female youth--I cannot be circumscribed by such common animal sensations: no, James--give me delicacy, difficulty, refinement; give me innovation,--or take me from existence.

"To beat the beaten track--to taste the tasted,"
. . . Oh shocking! . . . insupportable! I am above it. I scorn it.

(I, 9)

Sedley's grandioseness about himself, here as elsewhere, reminds us of Lovelace at his most manic.

The proof of Sedley's grandioseness is not merely in his language, however; it is evident in his allusion to Garrick:

In a word then, Thornton, what our Garrick is to Shakespeare, I am resolved to be to Chesterfield,--the living comment upon the dead text. (I, 10)

More megalomania follows:

I have had, my dear Thornton, in the course of a few hours, a conquest superior to Alexander's . . . I have seen a learned husband detestable in the eyes of his wife, for the first time; and I find him enraptured with the very man by whom he is made ridiculous:

(I, 19)

Sedley considers his "conquest" superior to Alexander's, yet his conquest is only that he has misled an honest man who

does not suspect his duplicity. As readers, we recognize that for Sedley dissimulation is the essence of Chesterfield's system.

Rather as a consequence of self-aggrandizement than lust, Sedley tries to seduce two women concurrently. While he is scheming to ruin Harriet Homespun, he spies another possible prey. He describes Fanny Mortimer and her arrival at Buxton:

A post-chaise and four this instant stopt at the door of mine host, in which were three new visitants. The fore-glass was let down by a female hand, so exquisitely white, and so full of promise, that I was induced to examine the other parts of the person to which it belonged.

(I, 48)

One wonders what a hand "full of promise" looks like. At any rate, Thornton apparently knows, even if the reader doesn't, what a promising hand looks like, for after Sedley has added a description of Fanny Mortimer's "ankle" and "shape," Thornton declares that he is about to set off to join Sedley, presumably so that he may attempt to seduce Fanny himself, when Sedley writes back, "saddle not thy steed" (I, 51) for, as he explains, he plans to seduce both Fanny and Harriet. Sedley reveals his high spirits when in describing the apparently consumptive Fanny he writes that "like certain fruits, she is delicious in decay" (I, 68). The choice of a frail and ailing female as an object of seduction is a characteristically sentimental one, for it is calculated to elicit a benevolent response from other

significant characters.

One of the pivotal sentimental scenes in The Pupil of Pleasure focuses, however, not on the "delicate distressed" Fanny, but on her father, Sir Henry Delmore. The theme of benevolence, a major theme in the sentimental novel, functions in The Pupil of Pleasure as a counterpoint to that of infamy. As Sedley is the representative of licentiousness and vice, Sir Henry Delmore epitomizes benevolence and virtue. (The myth of the happy family, one which revolves around an ideally generous and noble father, was a favorite of Pratt's, and appears again in Shenstone Green and Family Secrets.)

Fanny's younger sister Delia describes Sir Henry:

[He] makes each of his children, in some sort, independent . . . he allots to each of us such a share of fortune in our own hands as is sufficient to display and shew-off the natural disposition . . . From kindness like this, . . . we are enabled to do nameless occasional little services for the unfortunate; and by such means, learn, early, to form ourselves into habits of sympathy and tenderness of heart.

(II, 14-15)

Sir Henry teaches benevolence to his children, and provides an atmosphere in which the "music of domestic concord" (II, 19) flourishes. Delia describes the atmosphere of her father's country retreat:

It is another happiness peculiar to the retreat of Sir Henry Delmore, that none of its residents are fired by the envy of opposition, or the meanness of jealousy: so far the reverse of this, that one is studious to compliment the other on some

excellence fresh acquired, or more perfected: some display of the heart, newly discovered, or some additional grace of person.

(II, 18-19)

As if to illustrate the perfection to which life in the country under the guidance of a noble father may attain, Pratt provides scenes of such exaggerated perfection of familial virtue, that it is hardly possible to read them today without amusement. Yet they are typical of family scenes in such novels as Mackenzie's Man of the World, and Pratt's later Family Secrets.

In one of these, for example, Sir Henry has requested his family's company. They gather, according to his instructions, in an idyllic bower of their garden. The husband and wife sit side by side, in attitudes of pensiveness and meditation, surrounded by their children. Sir Henry's smile of "ineffable benignity" promises a sublimely harmonious conference, one in which he reveals the secrets of his heart. Sir Henry's first disclosure concerns conscience, the inner man, yet even while he cautions his children generally against wearing a mask, he is worldly enough to admit that masks have their utility, provided they are used for "bewitching, the unprincipled into virtue." His next pronouncements concern the efficacy of social graces. Sir Henry admits the desirability and usefulness of elegance and dignity, but reminds his children to exert them "in the cause of truth." His final warning is against "the system of a well-bred, high-polished, elegant deceiver." Warning his children

to "dread" him whom "no eye can see . . . , no understanding detect . . . : no policy escape . . ." (II, 107), he brings the focus of the story back to Sedley.

Sir Henry's eloquence has turned several of Lord Chesterfield's maxims on their heads. Whereas in Sedley's hands these maxims are instruments of villainous duplicity, in Sir Henry's they become instruments for the exercise of social virtues. Thus does Sir Henry articulate one of Pratt's more questionable moral lessons, that duplicity is not evil if it becomes a means to a socially useful end.

Early editions of The Pupil of Pleasure were harshly criticized for exposing readers to such examples of vicious conduct as might tend to corrupt young readers, (pp. 12 ff.), Pratt therefore corrected the novel. Some of his corrections amounted only to more "dramatic" punctuation, such as replacing commas and semicolons with dashes, and adding extra dashes (Pratt never gives up the stop-dash-go style). The most interesting changes are the lascivious portions of the novel, which Pratt excised.

Pratt's most striking omission is Sedley's description of his rape of Fanny Mortimer after he has caused her to swoon on his breast. The first edition reads:

Yes, Thornton, she did fall upon my bosom; and I reaped the rewards of my insinuations and my address, in her arms. 'Tis true, she returned not the embrace. What of that? I was wrought up to the crisis, and her strugglings only answered the ends, and served as the sweet succedaneum of writhing the limbs in the transports of taste.

(II, 91)

The passage is as concretely visual as it is tasteless-- or perhaps one should say tasty; for it is both. The unsentimental speech, the phrase "reap the reward," together with the voluptuousness of "sweet succedaneum," serve to emphasize Sedley's explicitness when he describes Fanny's "strugglings" and "writhing limbs." In addition, the harsh, almost barbarous tone of the question, "What of that?" reduces Sedley to the level of a brute, a metamorphosis his description of the rape underscores.

Pratt's excision of this passage is an indication of his responsiveness to public opinion as it was reflected in the attitude of eighteenth century critics who were primarily concerned with a novel's morality. Although Pratt may have recognized that the early editions were dramatically stronger as the result of the shock of some of the original passages, it is likely that his desire to increase the sale of his work by expurgation overcame any principles of artistic integrity that might otherwise have hampered him.

The next change worthy of examination is also an omission: Sedley's justification for choosing married women as his victims. In the later edition, Pratt retained a sentence in which Sedley asserts, "It is beyond dispute, Chesterfieldism makes a man not more an ornamental than a supporting pillar to his country," but excised those which followed:³

How many puny striplings are there who cannot do the common rights of nuptial justice to the

unhappy creatures . . . We provide a successor, and create a being to inherit all the luxuries of life . . . Nay, even supposing the husband enabled to provide for himself: while our system dictates so inviolable a secrecy . . . His own offspring we cannot destroy; and ours will be considered as legitimate; he will have the credit, we shall have the pleasure.

(I, 153-154)

Sedley's contempt for the "puny striplings" married to the women he seduces proves to be unwarranted. Horace Homespun and Edward Mortimer are admirable figures, one a model of rectitude and charity, the other of courtesy. But contempt and ruthlessness may sometimes be consequences of Chesterfield's system. Sedley's fate is Pratt's warning of the devastation caused by the slavish following of a system that includes "the methodized practice of insincerity and the substitution of discretion for principle."⁴ Minds like Sedley's regarded these precepts as mandates for deceit, hypocrisy, and ruthlessness.

The Pupil of Pleasure is an example of what happens when an author hastily goes to press with a book whose purpose is to illustrate a timely thesis to the exclusion of all other artistic ends. The characters who inhabit the world of The Pupil of Pleasure embody Chesterfield's ideas and their antitheses as Pratt interpreted them, but they have little life of their own. The contrasts between the wicked and the virtuous, like similar contrasts in Family Secrets, exceed credibility. With the exception of the most melodramatic scenes, the texture of the novel is thin and insubstantial.

Moreover, the speed with which events take place--for example, the quick succession of deaths at the end of the story--cheapens the narrative. The Pupil of Pleasure illustrates the failure of art when artistic coherence and integrity are subordinated to alleged moral purpose.

The Scots Magazine, apparently of the opinion that a blueprint for immortality might serve as a means of moral instruction, catalogued The Pupil of Pleasure under the heading Religion; but some of Pratt's contemporaries disagreed with its editors. The Gentleman's Magazine printed a letter sent in by "a lady" who criticized Pratt's "injurious[ness]:"

Permit me, Sir, to ask you a serious question: Do you really think the cause of virtue is promoted by representations of vice? You have a warm and luxuriant imagination, a flowing and easy style, and your forte is in the display of scenes of voluptuousness. You dwell upon minute circumstances that heighten the descriptions, and give the utmost scope to the reader's imagination. Your scenes do not excite any hatred of vice; that is reserved for the after-reflections upon it, which I fear will not eradicate the former impressions.

The Pupil of Pleasure is the preceptor of voluptuousness. . . . Indeed, two thirds of the book are rather calculated to inspire vice than to correct it.⁵

Pratt took the adverse criticism very seriously. Not content merely with expunging some of the most lascivious portions of his novel, he published a calculated counter-piece to The Pupil of Pleasure, entitled The Tutor of Truth, in 1779. The book is very dull; it has not even one memorable or one whimsical character. Professor Tompkins

explains this dullness: "Melmoth's flamboyant pen did not lend itself readily to the portraiture of sobriety."⁶ Ernest Baker agrees with Professor Tompkins's appraisal: "The Tutor of Truth was a tame portrayal of one who cleaves to the opposite principle [to Sedley's licentiousness], rectitude and sobriety."⁷ I agree with their evaluations. The Tutor of Truth, Pratt's attempt to rescue his reputation as a moralist, is the least interesting of his novels. As such it is not worth further comment.

II

Travels for the Heart, published in 1777, was Pratt's third prose fiction. The author called it a "little book of running remarks," and it is that rather than a novel. In his lengthy preface, Pratt says,

I have here written travels, which I wholly dedicate to the heart. No one hath ever travelled in the same way, but the pathetic Yorick; and Yorick hath by no means exhausted the observations to be picked up in a tour through France.⁸

Pratt ends his preface by saying,

To obviate all objection that might arise from the notion of the idea of these volumes being borrowed, from the beautiful work called the sentimental Journey [sic], it is requested that the reader peruse the performance before he judges of it; and then he will find that the very PLAN of these Travels, and those of Yorick agree in no part so much, as that, they were both written to amuse the heart, and with a design to be printed. (I, xvi)

Despite Pratt's disclaimer, his little book is an imitation, albeit not without its own charms, of Sterne's little masterpiece. It imitates aspects of Tristram Shandy as well. Thus, just as it took two hundred pages for Tristram to be born, so it takes a full volume for the Traveler bound for France to get as far as Dover, the point of embarkation. Similarly, Pratt's apostrophe to Health recalls Sterne's apostrophe to Sleep.

There are many other similarities between Travels for the Heart and A Sentimental Journey. Travels for the Heart opens with the doctor's hand placed tenderly on the Traveler's wrist; in A Sentimental Journey, Yorick's wrist receives similar attentions from a lady. Again, in each of the books mention is made of characters in another book by the author: in A Sentimental Journey Sterne mentions Captain Shandy, and in Travels for the Heart Pratt mentions Lemuel (Liberal Opinions). In A Sentimental Journey the old soldier says that the advantage of travel is that it teaches "mutual toleration," which teaches us mutual love. In Travels for the Heart Pratt advises the Traveler to practice candour, good fellowship, and courtesy in order to encourage mutual love between travelers and those they meet on their journeys.

Chapter VII of Travels for the Heart contains proposals for a dictionary for the Heart, and explanations for certain important words as they are understood by the Heart, especially the words Honour, Society, and System. The idea of

the dictionary is typical of Sterne, as exemplified by Mr. Shandy's theories about Tristram's education. The focus on the importance of System in Travels for the Heart, Pratt's favorite hobby horse, tells us, however, that it was indeed written by Pratt and not by an imposter. In Travels for the Heart, as in some of his other works, Pratt makes use of themes and forms developed by his contemporaries, writers of greater stature, but he gives the work his own individual stamp, as for example his critical examination of systems.

III

Shenstone Green is the comic history of a utopian social experiment as told by Sir Benjamin Beauchamp, its benevolent creator. Less ambitious than any of Pratt's prose fictions, it is also less flawed.

Sir Benjamin Beauchamp, inspired by the poet Shenstone, has erected on his empty estate in Wales a model town inhabited by people chosen because of their distress and their desire for retirement; Beauchamp has made them financially independent. His eighteen year old daughter Matilda, as benevolent as her father, offers her inheritance to aid in bringing the plan to fruition.⁹

Standing in opposition to the enthusiastic voices of Beauchamp and his daughter are the voices of Sir Benjamin's cynical but faithful steward, Samuel Sarcasm, and his worldly but benevolent friend Seabrooke. These two counterbalance

the idealism of Sir Benjamin and his daughter. Sarcasm regards men as somewhat worse than they are generally thought to be, while Seabrooke views them as only a little better. Sir Benjamin of course sees men as intrinsically good.

Thanks to a great deal of help from the efficient steward, the village is at last complete. But Beauchamp soon discovers that the inhabitants, freed of economic necessity, become restless. They persuade their benefactor to allow first horse racing, then cock fighting, then theatricals, and following the advent of these activities, prostitutes make their appearance. Soon the inhabitants are engaged in dueling and betting, offering their pensions to pay their gambling debts. Sir Benjamin allows an "Academy of Dispute" to be erected, which, like the "Society of Systems" in Liberal Opinions, succeeds only in sowing discord among the villagers.

At last, Shenstone-Green is reduced to discord and chaos and Sir Benjamin realizes the failure of his theories. He converts "the Concert-Room into a Charity-House for poor Welch orphans, the Pantheon into a Free-School for boys, [and] the Theatre into an Alms-House for all old people past labour" (III, 178). Despite the philanthropic aspect of these changes, the village becomes an ordinary village, regulated by lawful government, rather than by harmonious self regulation. The narrative voice, not Sir Benjamin's, has the last word--it is a plea for established

institutions:

. . . good order amongst men can be expected only under the check of governments, where wealth and preferment depend on the industry and care of every single individual . . . where, in fine, there is a regular code of laws, which . . . provides equably reward and punishment to guard the privileges of one man from the violations of another."

(III, 190-191)

Less vicious than Sedley, the villain in the earlier The Pupil of Pleasure, less ideal than the most virtuous among the characters in the later Family Secrets, the inhabitants of Shenstone-Green are merely human. They require the restraint of social organization.

Shenstone Green, like The Pupil of Pleasure, is a thesis novel, and suffers from the author's singleminded dedication to his thesis. Thus although it makes its point that most men require social restraints, with some humor, its texture is frequently thin, its characters little more than stick figures. Charming and amusing as it is, its impact is slight because once again Pratt has put moral before artistic purpose.

IV

Pratt's last novel, Family Secrets, Literary & Domestic, published in 1797, numbered two thousand three hundred and fifty-two pages in the first edition. His longest novel, it is also his most didactic: Pratt had literary and

moral secrets to impart as well as domestic. Perhaps the most significant of these secrets concerns sentimentality, a continuing theme in the earlier novels. J. M. S. Tompkins said that the book "drips and reeks with sensibility; sensibility smokes round it like morning mist."¹⁰

In three neighboring houses, the Castle, the Manor House, and the Abbey, live three families: Sir Armine Fitzorton, with his wife and three sons; Mr. Clare and his daughter; and Sir Guise Stuart, his wife, his son Charles, and his daughter Caroline. The Fitzortons illustrate Pratt's interest in the ideal family, as had the Delmore family in The Pupil of Pleasure.

In the opening pages of Volume I of Family Secrets, Pratt presents Sir Armine Fitzorton and his sons. All three have different temperaments, one complementing another. Sir Armine's eldest son John, a philosopher, represents the voice of reason. James's temperament is poised "between the excess of his younger brother Henry's natural sensibility and John's artificial government of himself" (I, 10). The third brother, Henry, is characterized by his excessive sensibility (V, 232).

In this sprawling, unwieldy novel, Pratt is nevertheless systematic in his portrayal of the continuum between sensibility and pure reason, as illustrated by the Fitzorton brothers. The differences among John, James and Henry, Pratt tells us, "strengthened as they grew: Henry continued unsuspecting; John was more suspicious and reserved; James

preserved a medium betwixt implicit confidence and jealous caution" (I, 41). Although the brothers "conversed much"--for example, they engaged in innumerable debates about the relative merits of poetry and prose--they "agreed but little in opinion, yet seldom altercated" (I, 43, 29).

But if the brothers, because of their different temperaments, occasionally disagree, their father's character combines the tolerance and moderation of maturity with a felicitous recollection of his youthful fancies. In the course of the family's literary debates, the reader learns that Sir Armine wrote romances in his youth.

Sir Armine's defense of the novel, which predates Jane Austen's in Northanger Abbey by two decades, implicitly grants his sons permission to enjoy their own flights of fancy. Sir Armine reproves those who malign the novel: "'Affected ignorance' . . . 'or more affected learning, have fulminated against it, still does it remain a source of great delight, not seldom of as great utility'" (I, 362-363).

In his endeavor to inculcate in his sons freedom of thought and action as well as of imagination, Sir Armine tells them of his intention to grant them their independencies. Deeply moved, the sons join hands, bless their father, then kneel to receive his blessing. But the next day, while Sir Armine is taken up with settling the proposed independencies, John persuades James and Henry that "how generous soever it might be for a parent to offer, it was indecorous [sic] in a child to receive" (I, 36). In obedience to this

decision, the brothers make "a solemn surrender of their independencies" (I, 38).

While philosophy, sentiment, and filial piety reigns at the Castle, tyranny holds sway at the Abbey. Sir Guise's tyrannical treatment of his wife and daughter provides scenes of misery that are in shocking contrast to the harmony at the Castle. Sir Guise's brutality drives his wife, Lady Stuart, to her grave; after her death it forces their daughter, Caroline, to seek refuge in a nunnery.

The inner tranquility of the Fitzorton family can be disturbed by outward events, however, as Pratt shows. One afternoon, as Sir Armine, Mr. Clare, Clare's daughter Olivia, and Henry are on their way to visit a mansion recently left to Olivia by a distant relative, their coach is attacked by a party of armed and masked men. In the ensuing fracas, Sir Armine is injured by an assailant who is discovered to be Sir Guise. Sir Guise and his party are carried as prisoners to the next inn, along with Sir Armine, whose injury has brought on an attack of the gout. During his illness Sir Armine accidentally swallows poison. Anticipating death, he presses Henry to marry Olivia Clare, whose father has helped him greatly in repairing his financial losses.

Henry, however, reveals that he is deeply in love with Sir Guise's daughter Caroline, whom he has known since childhood. Sir Armine, like Emma Corbett's father, appeals to his child's filial feeling. He reminds Henry that his father and mother are "aged and infirm," and declares that

he would make "a willing sacrifice" of his own life for Henry's if it were his life alone that stood to be destroyed. He ends by enjoining Henry to "save your family" (II, 287).

Henry accedes to his father's wish. Relinquishing hopes of happiness on earth, he cries out "'Live! live, my father! Let me alone be the sacrifice!'" (II, 288). Henry's melodramatic words reveal his pain, as well as his passionate nature; they are appropriate to his character as Pratt has depicted it. Moreover, the reader familiar with Pratt's prose fiction should be accustomed to the occasional onslaught of this kind of highflown rhetoric. But if portions of Family Secrets are overblown and swampy, they are also deliciously exciting as my discussion of Mrs. Tempest illustrates.

Some time after Henry has consented to marry Olivia, his brother John reveals to Sir Armine that he loves Henry's bride-to-be, while Henry himself tells his father that Charles Stuart also loves Olivia. In the face of all this, Sir Armine remains unmoved. He insists that the wedding take place as planned.

Shortly before the wedding, Henry and Charles meet and try to comfort each other. Soon, however, their meeting turns into mutual commiseration, Pratt's way of showing that "theoretical and practical philosophy are somewhat different" (II, 295). Prompted by the sight of Caroline's little spaniel, Henry expresses his regret that he "ever came into the world." Charles, who has meanwhile caught a glimpse of

his beloved Olivia, responds with the wish that they "were both dead" (II, 300). Henry then gravely asks for Charles's opinion of suicide (III, 301). Charles's answer is strict:

'To speak of it professionally, I think it the worst sort of desertion, and flying one's country . . . To speak of it morally, I feel it to be sinful:--in sorrow, as in joy, such have been my sentiments. . . . Death would be a blessing: but could it be purchased by an action accursed?'
(II, 301)

Although his statement that "'Death would be a blessing'" reveals that Charles too has longed for death to release him from the pain of his unrequited love for Olivia, he nevertheless refuses to sentimentalize an action he considers wrong. Charles's words show that through both thought and feeling he has arrived at the view that suicide is a sin.

Henry, however, is obsessively drawn to the idea of suicide, in part as a result of his highly sentimental character and habits, which are exacerbated by his passion for Werter. The example of Henry's habits, the reverent way in which he hugs Werter to his bosom (IV, 180), affects Jane Atwood, a young woman debauched by Sir Guise, so strongly that she attempts suicide. Although Jane does not succeed in killing herself, her attempt to do so illustrates a point that Pratt undoubtedly wished to convey to his readers: the power of example as moral contagion.

Henry's romance with suicide continues after he and Olivia have been married for four or five years. Finding

that he cannot learn to love his wife, he decides to destroy himself. He writes a suicide note, in verse, which is found by John near a wooded area where the pistol Jane Atwood used in her suicide attempt had also been found. John reads the first two lines of the almost illegible paper: "Let cowards cling to life--to death I fly;/ 'Tis the great privilege of man to die" (IV, 190): Olivia, who is also at hand, cries: "'O heavens! surely it is an hand writing which I have seen before!'" She adds, looking at Henry, "and yet it cannot be, for he is safe. Blessed be heaven, he is safe!" (IV, 191-192).

Henry's fascination with suicide, a common characteristic of a man of sentiment, is countered by the disapproval of other characters; the resulting effect suggests that Pratt was ambivalent about sentimentality. John's description of Henry's character provides an example of this ambivalence: "'As a husband, as a father, [Henry] is irreproachable: but as a man, he has no character at all. It has evaporated in sighs and tears'" (V, 232).

Far from his being "irreproachable" as a husband and father, Henry's preoccupation with suicide shows a self-centered irresponsibility toward the welfare of his family. In a later scene, Henry, suddenly possessed by a "dire image of self-destruction," closes the windows of his room, locks and bolts his door and takes down a sword hanging over the chimney piece. As he is unsheathing it he perceives "a movement about the bed." He throws aside the curtains and

demands "furiously" who dares to interrupt him. His son answers:

'Only little John, papa' exclaimed a soft voice, 'Your own dear little John, who has crept into your bed just to get a kiss and a good night, from you and mamma--when you came home--as you all ran away from me, and left me to myself a whole--whole evening, just as if I had no mamma or pappa at all--which God forbid--for what would poor little John, or great John either, or even sister with all her beauty, do without them?'

(V, 387-388)

Bathetic dialogue--but the quality of little John's childish prattle is a vast improvement on the baby talk in Liberal Opinions. Moreover, little John, with that intuition often given in literature to innocents, gets his point across--what would become of the family were Henry to take his life? The question, a moral rather than a practical one, has never occurred to Henry. In spite of John's praise the portrait of Henry as husband and father is that of a man who cannot fulfill these roles responsibly because he is locked in the prison of his own melancholy. Only the accidental interruption of a child prevents his deserting his wife and family by destroying himself.

Along with many of the flaws that characterize an excessively sentimental nature, Henry enjoys a blessing uncommon among sentimental characters in literature: he has a brother who is so devoted to him that he is willing to go to any lengths to try to save Henry from himself. John hopes to counteract in Henry the effects of the "constitutional and

habitual intemperance in all his feelings." John even forces himself to read Werter in order to try to understand his brother's passion for what he calls "hogwash."

Despite Henry's emotionally labile nature, the warmth that characterized Sir Armine's relations with his wife and children, and the atmosphere of sunny domesticity that pervaded the Castle during Sir Armine's life, continue during Henry's. Although Henry does not love Olivia, Pratt portrays the pair in amiable and affectionate intercourse. Thus in a characteristic scene we see Henry writing a poem (the theme of which is love lost and regained) with Olivia at his side:

Henry was sitting at his desk with the pen still in his hand, Olivia leaning over, and suiting what he had written to her guitar, alternately running to another part of the library, to try it on her harp.
IV, 367)

Henry's composition is followed by a slight change suggested by Olivia:

Olivia, with diffident sweetness, proposed the adoption of an epithet in one of the verses, as more auspicious to sound, but feared the sense would be injured; the sound was her own, the sense Henry's; Henry substituted, and confessed the sense was much improved. To the bloom in Olivia's cheek on this compliment, there is no description.
(V, 368)

Pratt, like Johnson, loved company, and was himself apparently a genial companion. Social life is important in all of his novels, with the possible exception of Emma Corbett.

Family Secrets, which deals with family life directly, is thus concerned with what many people regard as the foundation of social life. But the novel is concerned with social life in a broader sphere as well. For example, when Olivia has cottages built for the families who work on her estate, she tells the builder that "all my cottagers must have a bedroom for a friend" (V, 70) and this neighborhood of cottages, "which were among the many good works of Henry and Olivia . . . received, either from their patron or patroness, a smiling visit almost every day" (V, 73). But the visits that Henry and Olivia make to their cottagers are less important in Family Secrets than the details of their daily lives which create the mood and atmosphere of their home.

In most eighteenth-century novels, children are introduced mainly to illustrate some moral lesson and to add a note of pathos. In Fielding's Amelia, when Amelia is shown dining with her children and forgoing wine to save sixpence, the scene illustrates her pathetic attempt to economy and contrasts it with her husband's profligacy. While his wife sups alone and frugally with her children, Captain Booth is gambling away the rent money. In Family Secrets, however, little John and his sister Caroline, the children of Henry and Olivia, frequently appear on the scene simply to play happily together. They enhance the atmosphere of domesticity rather than point a moral, with the single exception of the scene which little John interrupts one of his father's suicide attempts.

On several occasions, Pratt emphasizes the mutual benefits of affectionate intercourse between adult and child. For example, John, who is downcast at first, is restored to good spirits by little John. Olivia watches from her window as the man catches the boy up in his arms. The youth playfully struggles, and a mock battle ensues:

[T]he uncle going by retrograde steps, from the gravel path to the green swerd, the nephew considered him as a retreating foe, and the uncle, giving into fancy, suffered himself to be overtaken; but though he put himself into a posture of defense, he contrived to fall on receiving the first sportive blow. He then acknowledged himself completely vanquished, to the inexpressible delight of the little conqueror.

(V, 209)

Pratt seems to use the playful and affectionate interaction between John and his little nephew to illustrate the benefits that result from "social virtue." In that respect, the lesson of the scene, pointed out by Olivia, differs from the conventional moral lesson of many such scenes in contemporary fiction:

Olivia beheld this amicable contention, and trifling as it was in itself, she felt it to be full of importance, as it tended to restore her noble brother and friend to his wonted tranquillity.

(V, 209)

Olivia's words emphasize the value of virtues that make social intercourse tranquil and amiable rather than the sterner moral virtues. Life at the Abbey after the death of Sir Guise's wife and his daughter's subsequent departure for

a nunnery presents a striking contrast to the idyllic harmony of life at the Castle.

Deprived of the virtuous influences of the first Lady Guise Stuart and Caroline, Sir Guise gives himself up completely to riotous vice. He falls prey to the schemes of his gambling partners, the procurer Miles Valentine, and his partner, Mrs. Tempest. With the first Lady Guise Stuart out of the way, Mrs. Tempest becomes Sir Guise's second wife. She and Valentine lose no time in robbing the castle of everything of value; meanwhile they tyrannize over the cowardly Sir Guise as he had tyrannized over his wife and daughter. After the pair have denuded the castle and reduced Sir Guise to helpless indigence, they abandon him. Sick and penniless, Sir Guise leaves his home, a miserable but repentant sinner, tormented by the memory of his past misdeeds.

As a contrast to the viciousness of Sir Guise's social exchanges at the Abbey, and to the ideal virtue of the Fitzortons at the Castle, Pratt introduces Basil Partington, whose realistic views fall somewhere in between. Partington resembles Robert Raymond, Emma Corbett's generous antisentimentalist. He is also democratic, like Beauchamp in Shenstone Green; he allows gypsies to camp in his grounds, and gives them clothes and food. A whimsical old fellow, Partington is always part of a social group that includes several persons who are objects of his philanthropy. He treats his friends with rough affection and expresses his esteem for them in terms of mock abuse. Those he loves he

calls "arrant wretches" and "insufferable scoundrels." whereas to the objects of his contempt he is ceremoniously polite. The eccentric philanthropist of Family Secrets is an emphatically social being: he takes a bride and joins the other couples wed in the novel's final mass nuptials-- nevertheless, the gallows he erects in full view of the gypsies' camping ground identifies him as a wise, hence a cautious, benevolist.

Olivia, who has inspired the love of John Fitzorton and Charles Stuart, though not her husband's love, is an ideal wife as well as an ideal sentimental heroine. Beautiful, pure and self-effacing, she is also gay and witty. As her life is spotless, her death also is perfect, an ideal contrast to Sir Guise's grim demise. Here is Pratt at his most hyperbolic, commenting on the scene in which Olivia, who keeps her senses up to the last, has "yielded up her innocent life in her husband's arms:" "Never, perhaps, has there been since the beginning of time, a death more serene" (V, 540).

The cause of Olivia's death is significant. She dies because she has insisted on nursing her sick infant. But first she delivers a not-so-brief Rousseauistic lecture on the virtues of nursing one's own infant:

She argued, that the infant which drew its first and purest nourishment from the bosom of a stranger, was, in effect, but half its mother's chil: [sic] she hence deemed it a practice so unnatural, as to be but one remove from a sucking babe being turned out of doors by its mother,

without any nourishment at all . . . [as] for the transfer of their offspring to a hireling, she would have blushed with shame, or wept with grief, [were she guilty of such an action.]

(V, 532-533)

.

[Unfortunately, as Olivia nursed and caressed] her little Angelica with a mother's ardent sincerity-- . . . alas, she at the same time drew venom from its lips--Olivia was herself seized with a fever . . . and Olivia and her babe, the former almost as free from the tinge of the world as the latter, expired within a few hours of each other.

(V, 535)

Before she dies, Olivia, who has never discovered the secret of Henry's love for her girlhood friend, Caroline, bequeaths her to him so that [her] children may be blessed by Caroline's tender care:

'Ah! my Henry! tell her [Caroline], whom in the dawning life I loved, that with my last remains of breath I bless her-- . . . My spirit would not fly even to the regions of happiness, in perfect joy but for this, till I had bequeathed her to the father of my children--my dearest, dearest Henry.'

(V, 538)

Olivia's dying words are more than noble: they are very convenient for Henry. After a decent period of time, Henry goes to France and finds Caroline on the very day she is to take her vows. She renounces the conventual life, accepts Henry, whom she still loves, and goes back to the Castle with him. Henry and Caroline marry at last, one of the ten couples who are joined at the altar in the novel's grand finale.

Although the multiple weddings are in the traditional comedic spirit, the Henry-Caroline nuptials present a problem for the reflective reader. The problem is not that the union is pat and contrived, but that this marriage illustrates Pratt's apparently ambiguous view of sentimentality in general and sentiment as expressed in Family Secrets in particular.

On the abstract or theoretic level, Family Secrets regards sentimentality with humor and reason. Thus, Olivia's father, Mr. Clare, wryly suggests that Henry confine himself to one great action a month, and that during daylight (I, 316). Henry's brother prudently advises:

'Persons of our brother's vivacity should always have the pleasures of imagination in the check of more solid avocations . . . avocations which insist on a certain degree of daily attention. Men of genius should, if the con-mixture were practicable, be also men of business.'

(I, 344)

Although Henry never regulates his "heroism" or his imagination, but continues to indulge his emotions in unrestrained sentimentality, he nevertheless fares very well. He marries the woman whom John and Charles, both admirably strong and unsentimental characters, love, and he later marries the woman he loves. Olivia on the other hand is married to a melancholy man who does not love her, and she dies young as a consequence of a single lapse in which she carried her obedience to sentimental theory too far.

Henry not only wins all the prizes, he also enjoys a sexual adventure--albeit an unconsummated one--with the wicked but daring Mrs. Tempest. And Pratt excuses his escapade, insisting that the reader, for the sake of Henry's future virtue, excuse him as well.

That Henry's special sensibility receives special consideration and reward, in spite of Pratt's explicit attacks on sentimental excess, is apparent not only in the plot of Family Secrets but also in the language. When Olivia reflects on the "oblivion which the exercise of social virtue throws over selfish sorrow," she is speaking of John's regaining his natural evenness of temper as a result of frolicking with her son. Olivia's words are Pratt's words, and one wonders why John's sorrow is called selfish when Henry's suicidal spasms are considered merely an excess of feeling.

The discrepancy between what Pratt explicitly says about sensibility in Family Secrets and what its language and texture and the fate of its characters suggest may perhaps be regarded as a confusion of presentation.¹¹ It may also be Pratt's way of illustrating that the fate of a sentimental man may be very different from that of a sentimental woman. But more important, Pratt may be reminding the reader that the rain falls on the just and on the unjust, a lesson more profound than any of the fourteen points of morality appended to the novel's last chapter.¹²

Pratt presents another male-female contrast in his treatment of the deaths of Sir Guise Stuart and his second

wife. Sir Guise had died a beggar, crying out "'Receive O God the soul of a penitent!'" (V, 433) as he met his death. Mrs. Tempest meets her fate differently.

Some time after Mrs. Tempest has made off with Sir Guise's fortune, she joins a band of criminals. Henry and the reader next see her some time after the criminals have been captured and imprisoned in a dungeon. When Henry and his party go down into the dungeon to bring the prisoners to trial, they are assailed by a stench and sight beyond the compass of words. They witness a hellish scene presided over by Mrs. Tempest: "Uttering horrible execrations that reverberated through all the windings of the dungeon" (V, 506), Mrs. Tempest flings the dismembered limbs of her victims into a sulphurous pit. Undaunted by the arrival of her captors, she preserves a "sullen and savage kind of disdainful silence from the moment she was overpowered" (V, 530). Seeing Henry, "the pangs of desire agonized her heart, even while she meditated the murder of the object" (V, 525).

The text seems to suggest that the passionate lust of the proud and fiery Mrs. Tempest conforms to the tradition of Gothic horrors, but also appears to have some perverse fascination for Pratt. Since in his own life Pratt seems to have taken advantage of weak women such as his wife and daughter, he may have both feared and admired women of strength: this admiration is revealed in the narrator's comment that Mrs. Tempest "set the example of hardihood and disdain for difficulty to the rest [of the criminals]" (V, 526).

Thus the lesson Mrs. Tempest teaches may be different from the one Pratt seemingly intended. If we compare Sir Guise to Mrs. Tempest, we discover that Sir Guise, portrayed as a brutal, sadistic coward, disgusting even in his whining repentance, is no match for the daring, passionate, "female fiend" he married. In both, vice receives its just reward, but a further lesson seems to be that a wicked woman is more excitingly and splendidly wicked than a wicked man.

But if wicked women in Family Secrets are more wicked than wicked men, and virtuous women more virtuous than virtuous men, children are the most spotless beings conceivable. Even more than women, children represent Pratt's interest in the portrayal of the ideal and harmonious family. The children's scenes in Family Secrets show the wholesome effect children may have on the character and actions of the adult. As we have seen, in the absence of this wholesome influence, Sir Guise Stewart dies dishonored. At the end of the novel the children of Olivia and Henry go to live with the now retired General John Fitzorton. (Presumably Henry will raise a second family with Caroline.) At any rate, the focus at the end of the novel is on children. They seem essential to the love and harmony that is one of the domestic "secrets" found in Family Secrets.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹Courtney Melmoth, The Pupil of Pleasure: or, The New System Illustrated; The Adventures of a Man of Birth, Rank, Figure, Fortune, and Character, ardent in the Pursuit of Pleasure, much delighted with, attracted by, and formed upon the CHESTERFIELDIAN SYSTEM, Two Volumes Complete in One (Robert Bell, Phil., 1778), p. iii, hereafter cited in the text.

²See Tompkins, p. 81, n. 1 for mention of other novels of the day that were meant to expose the evil thought to be inherent in Chesterfield's system:

Chesterfield's Letters, sent to Susan Paulet, the Vicar's daughter, in Village Memoirs, helped to undermine her virtue. Lord Claremont and his son, in Mrs. Brooke's Excursion (1777), were recognized as 'formed on the detestable plan of Lord Chesterfield,' and there were apparently marks of his influence in Mrs. Cartwright's Generous Sister (1780). In Clara Reeve's Two Mentors (1783) Richard Munden plays the part, giving his ward a copy of the Letters, and sending him to Lady Belmour's ambiguous house to be polished, but his intentions are shattered on the invincible rectitude of young Savile.

³The Pupil of Pleasure in Two Volumes, A New Edition, Corrected. Written by Mr. Pratt. London (G. Robinson, and J. Bew, in Paternoster row, 1783), I, 233.

⁴Tompkins, pp. 80-81.

⁵Gentleman's Magazine, 47 (March 1777), 333.

⁶Tompkins, p. 83.

⁷Baker, V, 100.

⁸Travels for the Heart Written in France. In two volumes. (Dublin: 1777), I, xv-xvi, hereafter cited in the text.

⁹Shenstone-Green; or, The New Paradise Lost, Being a History of Human Nature. In three volumes. (London: Printed for R. Baldwin, 1780), I, 24, hereafter cited in the text.

¹⁰Tompkins, p. 110.

¹¹See Mark Schorer, The World We Imagine: Selected Essays (N.Y.: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1948), p. 12.

¹²Matthew 5:45: "He maketh the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." I am indebted to Professor Robert Adams Day for suggesting this quotation as a possible explanation of the apparent discrepancy between the implicit and explicit treatment of sentimentality in Family Secrets.

APPENDIX

Publications that include some previously published material and poems by friends along with new material

Gleanings in England (1799) 2 vols., (1801) 2nd edn., 3 vols., (1801-4) 3rd edn. Originally vol. 4 of Gleanings through Wales, Holland and Westphalia (1795-1800). It (Gleanings in England) is described by Charles Lamb as "a wretched assortment of vapid feelings" (Letters, ed. Ainger, i, 97).

Harvest Home: supplementary gleanings (1805), 3 vols. The first volume is composed of descriptions of Hampshire, Dorset, Birmingham; in the second, however, three of Pratt's plays are reprinted; the third consists of poems by himself and others.

A brief account of Leamington Spa Charity, with the Rides, Walks (1812), anon., enlarged as Local and literary account of Leamington . . . and the surrounding Country by Mr. Pratt (1814).

Late Poetry

Bread; or the Poor (1801), which became The Poor; or Bread (1802) 2nd edn., and then Cottage Pictures; or the Poor (1803).

John and Dame, or the Loyal Cottagers (1803),

The Contrast (1808), and

The Lower World (1810) written to help the passage of the bill which Lord Erskine had drawn up and offered to Parliament, for extending the protection of the law to the inferior animals. See also Hayre, p. 181.

Editions of poems published earlier

Sympathy; or a sketch of the social passion (1781), 5th edition 1805, 10th edition 1806, included Landscapes in verse, originally published anonymously in 1785, and Cottage Pictures (1803), referred to above, revised, corrected and enlarged.

Selections of sentimental prose taken from Pratt's earlier writings

Pity's Gift (1798) followed by a sequel called The Paternal Present (1802).

Selections of the poems of others

The Cabinet of Poetry (1808), and with the collaboration of his friend Dr. Mavor Classical English Poetry, for the use of schools (1801), (1807), (1813) 8th edn. (1823).

As noted above, in 1809 Pratt edited Specimens of the Poetry of Joseph Blackett, and two years later, following the young man's death, he published The Remains of Joseph Blackett. (Byron suggested, not altogether facetiously about Blackett's fate, that "poetry, patronage, and strong waters . . . /had/ been the death of him." Byron's Letters and Journals, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (London: Murray, 1973), II, 76.

Bibliography

Pratt's Writings

(The following list merely notes the date of publication of first editions.)

Prose Works:

Liberal Opinions or the History of Benignus. 6v. 1775-1777;
4v. 1783.

Observations on the Night Thoughts of Dr. Young. 1776.

The Pupil of Pleasure of The New System Illustrated. 2v.
1776.

Travels for the Heart. 2v. 1777.

The Sublime and Beautiful of Scripture. 2v. London, 1777.

An Apology for the Life and Writings of David Hume. 1777.

Shenstone Green or the New Paradise Lost. 3v. 1779.

The Tutor of Truth. 3v. 1779.

Emma Corbett or the Miseries of Civil War. 2v. 1780.

The Fair Circessian, a Tragedy. 1781.

The New Cosmetic or The Triumph of Beauty. A Comedy. 1790.

Gleanings through Wales, Holland, and Westphalia. 3v. 1795.

Family Secrets, Literary and Domestic. 5v. 1797.

Gleanings in England. 2v. 1801.

Gleanings in England. 3v. 1803.

Harvest Home (Supplementary Gleanings). 3v. 1805.

The Sorrows of Werther. A new translation. 1809.

A Brief Account of the Leamington Spa Charity. 1812.

Local and Literary Account of Leamington, Warwick, Stratford.
1814.

Joseph Andrews. Comic afterpiece, one performance, not printed.

Poetic Works:

The Tears of Genius, occasioned by the death of Dr. Goldsmith. 1774.

The Progress of Painting. 1775.

Garrick's Looking Glass or the Art of Rising on the Stage.
1776.

The Shadows of Shakespeare. A Monody occasioned by the Death of Mr. Garrick. Being a prize poem written for the vase at Bath-Easton. 1779.

Sympathy or a Sketch of the Social Passion. 1781.

Landscapes in Verse Taken in Spring. 1785.

Miscellanies. 4v. 1785.

The Triumph of Benevolence occasioned by the National Design of erecting a Monument to John Howard, Esq. 1786.

Humanity or the Rights of Nature. 1788.

Ode on His Majesty's Recovery. 1789.

Cottage Pictures or the Poor. 1801.

Bread, or the Poor. 1802.

John and Dame or the Loyal Cottagers. 1803.

The Contrast. 1808.

The Lower World. 1810.

Selections:

Pity's Gift. Selected by a Lady. 1798.

The Paternal Present, being a sequel to Pity's Gift. 1800.

Classical English Poetry. (Edited by W. Mavor and S. J. Pratt). 1801.

The Cabinet of Poetry. 6v. 1808.

Reviews of the Novels

Liberal Opinions

Critical Review, 39 (1775), 277-83.

Critical Review, 42 (1776), 443-47.

Gentleman's Magazine, 46 (1776), 522.

Monthly Review, 52 (1775), 468-72.

Monthly Review, 55 (1776), 319-20.

The Pupil of Pleasure

Critical Review, 42 (1776), 447-51.

Gentleman's Magazine, 46 (1776), 522.

Gentleman's Magazine, 47 (1777), 332-33.

The Tutor of Truth

Monthly Mirror, 15 (1803), 10.

Shenstone Green

London Magazine, 48 (1779), 134.

Monthly Review, 61 (1779), 73-74.

Emma Corbett

Critical Review, 49 (1780), 460-62.

London Magazine, 49 (1780),

Monthly Review, 63 (1780), 311.

Family Secrets

Monthly Mirror, 15 (1803), 11.

Primary Sources

- Addison, Joseph, Sir Richard Steele, et al. The Spectator.
Ed. Gregory Smith. 4 vols. London: Everyman, 1945.
- The Adventures of Lindamira. A Lady of Quality. Ed. William
Graves. 1702; rpt. New York: Garland, 1972.
- Ashmun, Margaret. The Singing Swan: An Account of Anna
Seward and her Acquaintance with Dr. Johnson, Boswell,
and Others Of Their Time. New Haven: Yale Univ.
Press, 1931.
- Austin, Jane. Emma. Ed. R. W. Chapman. London: Oxford
Univ. Press, 1971.
- Behn, Aphra. The Nun; or, The Perjur'd Beauty. Vol. V of
The Works of Aphra Behn. Ed. Montague Summers. London,
1915; rpt. New York: Arno, 1967.
- Biographia Dramatica; or a Companion to the Playhouse. Ed.
D. E. Baker to 1764; Isaac Reed to 1782; Stephen James
to 1811. London: Printed for Rivingtons, 1812. Vol.
II.
- Brooke, Frances. The History of Emily Montague. 1769; 4
vols. in 2, New York: Garland, 1975.
- Davys, Mary. Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady.
Ed. Josephine Grieder. 1725; rpt. New York: Garland,
1972.

- . The Reform'd Coquet. Ed. Josephine Grieder.
1724; rpt. New York: Garland, 1972.
- Fielding, Sarah. The Adventures of David Simple in Search
of a Faithful Friend. 1744; rpt. New York: Oxford
Press, 1969.
- Fielding, Henry. Tom Jones. Introd. George Sherburn.
New York: Modern Library, 1950.
- . The History of the Countess of Dellwyn. 1759;
rpt. 2 vols. in 1, New York: Garland, 1975.
- Franklin, Benjamin. Calendar of the Papers of Benjamin
Franklin, in the Library of the American Philosophical
Society. Ed. Isaac Minis Hays. 5 vols. Philadelphia,
1908.
- . The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin. Ed.
John Bigelow. 10 vols. New York: G. P. Putnam,
1887-1888.
- . The Writings of Benjamin Franklin. Ed. Albert
Henry Smyth. 10 vols. New York: Macmillan, 1906.
- Geldon, Charles. The Golden Spy. Introd. Malcolm J. Bosse.
1709; New York: Garland, 1972.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. The Sorrows of Young Werther
and Selected Writings. Trans. Catherine Hutter. New
York: Signet, 1962.

- Graves, Richard. The Spiritual Quixote; or the Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffrey Wildgoose. 3 vols. 1773; rpt. New York: Garland, 1975.
- Haywood, Eliza. The Agreeable Caledonian. 1728; rpt. New York: Garland, 1973.
- . The Mercenary lover: or, the Unfortunate Heiresses. 1726; Ed. Josephine Grieder. Rpt.; New York; Garland, 1972.
- Ireland, Joseph. Records of the New York Stage from 1750 to 1860. New York: T. H. Morrell, 1866. Vol. I.
- Johnson, Samuel. Lives of the English Poets. Ed. G. B. Hill. 3 vols. New York: Octagon, 1967.
- . Rasselas Poems and Selected Prose. Ed. Bertrand Bronson. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.
- Lennox, Charlotte. The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella. 1752; rpt. 2 vols. in 1, New York: Garland, 1975.
- . Sophia. 1762; rpt. 2 vols. in 1, New York: Garland, 1975.
- LeSage, Alain-Rene. The Adventures of Gil Blas of Santillane. Trans. Tobias Smollett. New York: E. P. Dutton, n.d.
- Locke, John. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894.
- . Treatise of Civil Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration. 1689-1690; rpt. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1937.

- Mackenzie, Henry. Julia de Roubigné. 1777; rpt. Edinburgh:
A. Constable, 1808.
- . The Man of Feeling. 1771; rpt. New York:
Garland, 1975.
- . The Man of the World. 1773; rpt. 2 vols. in 1,
New York: Garland, 1975.
- Nichols, John, ed. Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth
Century . . . London: Printed for the Author by
Nichols, son & Bentley, 1812-1816. Vol. IX.
- Parsons, Philip. Dialogues of the Dead with the Living.
London: Printed for N. Conant, 1779.
- The Perfidious P----. Introd. Malcolm J. Bosse. 1702;
rpt. New York: Garland, 1974.
- Piozzi, Hesther Lynch. Anecdotes of the Late Samuel
Johnson, L. L. D. . . . (Ed. Arthur Sherbo. 1786;
rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974.
- Polwhele, Richard. Traditions and Recollections; domestic,
clerical, and literary. London: John Nichols, 1826.
Vol. II.
- Rousseau, Jean Jacques. Emile, or Education. Trans. Barbara
Foxley. London: J. M. Dent, New York: E. P. Dutton,
1933.
- . Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse. Paris: Libraire
Garnier Frères, m. d.
- . Reveries of a Solitary Walker. Trans. Peter
France. New York: Penguin, 1979.

- Rowe, Elizabeth Singer. Friendship in Death: on Twenty letters from the Dead to the Living. Ed. Josephine Grieder. 1728; rpt. New York: Garland, 1973.
- St. Augustine. Confessions. Trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin. New York: Penguin, 1961.
- Smollett, Tobias George. The Adventures of Roderick Random. The Works of Tobias Smollett. Ed. George Saintsbury. 12 vols. Edinburgh: The Navarre Society, m. d. I.
- . The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker. New York: Signet, 1960.
- Sterne, Laurence. The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. Ed. S. H. Monk. New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1950.
- Taylor, John. Records of My Life. 2 vols. New York: Bull, 1833.

Secondary Sources

- "Addison." In Eight Essayists. Ed. A. S. Cairncross. London: Macmillan, 1938.
- Alter, Robert. Fielding and the Nature of the Novel. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.
- Auerbach, Erich. Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. Trans. Willard Trask. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1953.
- Baker, Ernest A. The History of the English Novel. Vol. V. London, 1934.

- Barnett, George L., ed. Eighteenth-Century British Novelists on the Novel. New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1968.
- Bate, Walter Jackson. From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England. 1946; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1961.
- . Prefaces to Criticism. New York: Doubleday, 1959.
- Bergson, Henri. "Laughter." In Comedy. Introd. Wylie Sypher. New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956, pp. 61-190.
- "Biographical Sketch of Mr. Pratt." Monthly Mirror, 15 (1803), 363-366; 16 (1803) 9-12 and 81-85.
- Black, Frank Gees. The Epistolary Novel in the Late Eighteenth Century. Eugene, Ore.: Univ. of Oregon Press, 1940.
- Blacket, John. "Joseph Blacket and his Links to Byron." London Quarterly Review, 5th Ser., 29 (1925), 26-40.
- Boswell, James. Life of Johnson. Ed. G. B. Hill. Oxford: Clarendon, 1934. Vol. II.
- Brayley, E. W. A Topographical and Historical Description of the County of Huntingdon. London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1808.
- Brissenden, R. F. Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

- Burke, Edmund. "A Letter . . . to the Sheriffs of Bristol . . ." In The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke. First American, from the last London edition. Boston: John West and O. C. Greenleaf, David Carlisle, Printer, 1806-7. Vol. II.
- Byron's Letters and Journals. Ed. Leslie A. Marchand. London: Murray, 1973. Vols. I & II.
- . The Works of Lord Byron. Poetry. Ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (1918; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1966. Vol. I.
- Chapone, Hester. Letters on the Improvement of the Mind Addressed to a Young Lady. 1774; rpt. Boston: Printed by Robt. Hodge for William Green, 1782.
- Chapman, Gerald Wester. Literary Criticism in England, 1660-1800. New York: Knopf, 1966.
- d'Arblay, Frances. The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame d'Arblay). 7 vols. Ed. Joyce Hemlow et al. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972.
- . Diary and Letters of Madame d'Arblay . . . Ed. by her niece. London: Colburn, 1854. Vol. I.
- Day, Robert Adams. Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1966.
- Elledge, Scott, ed. Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays. 2 vols. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1961.
- Elwin, Malcolm. Lord Byron's Wife. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963.

- Fish, Stanley. "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics." In Influx: Essays on Literary Influence. Ed. Ronald Primeau. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat, 1977.
- Fordyce, James. The Character & Conduct of the Female Sex, and the advantages to be derived by young men from the society of virtuous women. London: 1776.
- Foster, J. R. History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England. 1949; rpt. New York: Kraus Reprint, 1966.
- Grieder, Josephine. "'A Liable Writer' or 'Wretch'? The Elusive Samuel Jackson Pratt," Bulletin of Research in The Humanities, 81, No. 4 (1978), 464-484.
- Grossvogel, David. Limits of the Novel: Evolutions of a Form from Chaucer to Robbe-Grillet. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1968.
- Hayre, C. Ruth. "Samuel Jackson Pratt: Novelist and Poet 1747-1814." Diss. Univ. of Pennsylvania 1949.
- Heidler, Joseph Bunn. The History from 1700-1800 of Criticism of English Prose Fiction. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1928.
- Heilman, Robert Bechtold. America in English Fiction, 1760-1800. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1937.
- Henlow, Josephine. "Fanny Burney and the Courtesy Books." PMLA, 65 (1950), 734-761.
- Hesselgrave, Ruth Aveline. Lady Miller and the Bathaston Literary Circle. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1927.

- James, Henry. The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces.
 Introd. R. P. Blackmur. New York: Scribner, 1934.
- Josipovici, Gabriel. The World and the Book: A Study of
 Modern Fiction. Gt. Britain: Macmillan, 1971.
- Leavis, Q. D. Fiction and the Reading Public. Pa.:
 Folcroft, 1932.
- McKillop, A. D. The Early Masters of English Fiction.
 Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1965.
- . English Literature from Dryden to Burns. New
 York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948.
- Mayo, Robert P. The English Novel in the Magazines, 1740-
 1815. Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1962.
- "Memoirs of Samuel Jackson Pratt, Esq." Gentleman's Maga-
 zine, 84 (1814), 398-399.
- Mylne, Vivienne. The Eighteenth Century French Novel:
 Techniques of Illusion. New York: Barnes and Noble,
 1965.
- Page, Norman. Speech in the English Novel. London:
 Longman, 1973.
- Paulson, R. Satire & the Novel in Eighteenth Century
 England. Yale Univ. Press, 1967.
- The Polite Academy, or School of Behaviour for Young Gentle-
 men. 8th ed. London: Printed for R. Baldwin & B. C.
 Collins in Salisbury, 178-?.
- Rivers, David. Literary Memoirs of Living Authors in Great
 Britain. London: R. Faulder, 1798. Vol. II.

- Richetti, J. J. Popular Fiction Before Richardson, 1700-1739. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.
- Rabken, Norman. "'Clarissa': The Nature of Convention." ELH, 23 (1956),
- Rambler. 3 vols. Ed. W. J. Bate & A. Strauss (Works of Samuel Johnson Ser.: Nos. 3, 4, & 5), New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969.
- Richardson, Samuel. Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady in Works. Introd. Leslie Stephen. London: H. Sotheran, 1884.
- Rude, George. Europe in the Eighteenth Century. New York: Praeger, 1973.
- Sacks, Sheldon. Fiction and the Shape of Belief. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1964.
- Scholes, Robert, and Kellogg, Robert. The Nature of Narrative. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966.
- Schorer, Mark. "Fiction and the 'Analogical Matrix.'" In The World We Imagine. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968, pp. 24-45.
- . "Technique as Discovery." In The World We Imagine. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968, pp. 3-23.
- Shepperson, A. B. The Novel in Motley. New York: Octagon, 1967.
- Singer, Godfrey Frank. The Epistolary Novel. 1933; rpt. Russell & Russell, 1963.
- Steeves, Harrison. Before Jane Austen: The Shaping of the English Novel in The Eighteenth Century. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.

- Stevick, Philip. "Stylistic Energy in The Early Smollett."
Studies in Philology, 64 (1967), 712-719.
- Stromberg, Roland N. Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1954.
- Taine, H. A. History of English Literature. Trans. N. Van Laun. New York: William L. Allison, n. d. Vol. II.
- Taylor, John Tinnon. Early Opposition to the English Novel: The Popular Reaction from 1760 to 1830. New York: King's Crown Press, 1943.
- Tave, Stuart M. The Amiable Humorist: A Study in the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1960.
- Tompkins, J. M. S. The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800. London: Methuen, 1932.
- Van Ghent, Dorothy. The English Novel: Form and Function. 1953; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.
- Watt, Ian. The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding. 1957; rpt. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967.
- Williams, Ian, ed. Novel and Romance, 1700-1800: A Documentary Record. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970.
- Wimsatt, William K. Jr. and Brooks, Cleanth. Literary Criticism: A Short History. New York: Random House, 1967.

Wright, Walter Frances. Sensibility in English Prose Fiction, 1760-1814 A Reinterpretation. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois, 1937.