

Jane Austen and Eight Minor Contemporaries:

A Study in the Novel 1800-1820

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by
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AbstractJane Austen and Eight Minor Contemporaries : a study in the novel 1800-1820.

This study, which started from the observation that Jane Austen enjoyed only modest success in her day, discusses the novels of some of her highly popular contemporaries, in order to indicate the background against which her work was received. To extend knowledge of the fiction of the period, though popular novelists who have remained in critical esteem are alluded to whenever relevant, it gives chief attention, in individual chapters, to eight once celebrated authors who are now little read. Of these, six were chosen as having been greatly respected, as well as popular, in their day - namely Mary Brunton, Elizabeth Hamilton, Amelia Opie, Lady Morgan, Anna Maria Porter, and Jane Porter. The other two, Charlotte Dacre and Thomas Skinner Surr, were added on the criterion of popularity alone, in order that a range of different kinds of novel currently being written might be demonstrated. This includes the historical novel, the national novel, the novel of fashionable life, the gothic novel, the domestic novel, and the specifically Evangelical novel. The study reveals, however, that the Evangelical movement also influenced, in various ways, the work of novelists who would never have regarded themselves as Evangelical, and in this connection a central chapter aims to shed new light on Jane Austen's Mansfield Park by considering it in relation to such widely read Evangelical writings as those of Hannah More, William Wilberforce, and Thomas Gisborne.

Examination of the work of these minor contemporaries of Jane Austen makes clear what the public expected, what Jane Austen eschewed, and how far she shared certain attitudes of her age. It also reveals how these minor writers contributed to the development of the novel, in ways which were recognised and appreciated in their time. That their subsequent neglect has not been unmerited is evident; indeed, frequent reference to Jane Austen throughout the study serves to highlight their artistic weaknesses. Nevertheless, in indicating their small but positive contribution to the novel, this thesis attempts to give them their due.

Unless indicated in a footnote, all quotations from novels are from first editions, except as follows:

- Jane Austen - novels ed. R.W. Chapman (3rd edition) O.U.P.
 Jane Austen - Minor Works, ed. R.W. Chapman 1969 (1st edition 1954).
 Mary Brunton - Self-Control, 3rd edition of 1811 (1st edition 1811).
 Hannah More - Coelebs in Search of a Wife, 1830 edition (1st edition 1808).
 Amelia Opie - The Father and Daughter, 2nd edition of 1801 (1st edition 1801).
 Amelia Opie - Simple Tales, 2nd edition of 1806 (1st edition 1806).
 A.M. Porter - The Fast of St. Magdalen, 2nd edition of 1819 (1st edition 1818).
 Jane Porter - Thaddeus of Warsaw, 2nd edition of 1804 (1st edition 1803).

All references to Jane Austen's Letters are to the edition edited by R.W. Chapman (1964) O.U.P. (1st edition 1932).

Quotations from the non-fictional works of Hannah More are from the following editions:

<u>Stories for Persons in the Middle Ranks.</u>	}	
<u>Tales for the Common People.</u>		Works, Fisher,
<u>Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great.</u>		Fisher and
<u>An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World.</u>		Jackson, 1836
<u>Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education.</u>		Vols. I, II & III.
<u>Practical Piety</u> , 3rd edition of 1811 (1st edition 1811).		

Quotations from William Wilberforce's A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians are from the 16th edition, 1827 (1st edition 1797).

Quotations from Thomas Gisborne's An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex are from the edition of 1816 (1st edition 1796).

Abbreviations Used in Notes

<u>AJR</u>	<u>Anti Jacobin Review</u>
<u>Allibone</u>	<u>Samuel Austin Allibone, A Critical Dictionary of English Literature</u>
<u>AR</u>	<u>Augustan Review</u>
<u>AnR</u>	<u>Annual Review</u>
<u>BC</u>	<u>British Critic</u>
<u>BEM</u>	<u>Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine</u>
<u>BLM</u>	<u>British Lady's Magazine</u>
<u>BR</u>	<u>British Review</u>
<u>CR</u>	<u>Critical Review</u>
<u>Critical Heritage</u>	<u>B.C. Southam ed., Jane Austen, The Critical Heritage</u>
<u>DNB</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography</u>
<u>EM</u>	<u>Evangelical Magazine</u>
<u>Ed.R</u>	<u>Edinburgh Review</u>
<u>ER</u>	<u>Eclectic Review</u>
<u>FM</u>	<u>Fraser's Magazine</u>
<u>GM</u>	<u>Gentleman's Magazine</u>
<u>GR</u>	<u>General Review</u>
<u>Gl.M</u>	<u>Glasgow Magazine</u>
<u>LJ</u>	<u>Literary Journal</u>
<u>Lowndes</u>	<u>William Lowndes, The Bibliographer's Manual of English Literature</u>
<u>MM</u>	<u>Monthly Magazine</u>
<u>MLR</u>	<u>Monthly Literary Recreations</u>
<u>MP</u>	<u>Morning Post</u>
<u>MR</u>	<u>Monthly Review</u>
<u>New An.R</u>	<u>New Annual Review</u>
<u>NCBEL</u>	<u>New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature</u>
<u>NMM</u>	<u>New Monthly Magazine</u>

<u>NUC</u>	<u>National Union Catalogue</u>
<u>OR</u>	<u>Oxford Review</u>
<u>QR</u>	<u>Quarterly Review</u>
<u>SM</u>	<u>Scots Magazine</u>
<u>TLS</u>	<u>Times Literary Supplement</u>

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I

Introduction

Writing on "The Fiction of Reform" in March 1977, Raymond Williams noted that, though the period 1770-1830 was "a period of remarkable expansion in the novel", it is a period for which

..... Most maps show little more than the isolated peaks of Jane Austen and Walter Scott, and the similarly isolated but smaller features of Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Thomas Love Peacock

- and he raised the question of whether this apparent absence of definition in the development of the English novel was "a matter of the terrain or the cartography". It is, indeed, a very relevant question, for though exploration may reveal no further peaks and eminences it may, to continue Williams's analogy, reveal several important fertilising streams. These have, in fact already been quite well charted for the period 1770-1800, in works like Ernest Baker's History of the English Novel Vol. V (1934), Frank Gees Black's The Epistolary Novel in the Late Eighteenth Century (1940), James R. Foster's History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England (1949), Frederick R. Karl's A Reader's Guide to the Development of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century (1974); in studies of specialised aspects of the novel, like Edith Birkhead's The Tale of Terror (1921), Eino Railo's The Haunted Castle (1927), Montague Summers's The Gothic Quest (1938), Devendra P. Varma's The Gothic Flame (1957) and Robert Kiely's The Romantic Novel in England (1972); and above all in Joyce M.S. Tompkins's un superseded The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 (1932).²

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1. Raymond Williams, "The Fiction of Reform", TLS, March 25 1977, 330.
 2. Works like Ronald Paulson's Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth Century England (1967), R.F. Brissenden's Virtue in Distress (1974) and Eric Rothstein's Systems of Order and Enquiry in Later Eighteenth Century Fiction (1975) which deal chiefly with major figures are not included here.

There are, however, no really comparable studies of the first decades of the nineteenth century. One-volume works which attempt to deal with the development of the novel must obviously give attention to major figures: for example, George Saintsbury, in The English Novel (1913), made a valiant effort to give minor writers due recognition, but could devote only fifteen pages to the writers round Scott and Jane Austen, (rather oddly including these early nineteenth century writers in a chapter called "The Later Eighteenth Century Novel"), while Lionel Stevenson's The English Novel, A Panorama (1960) has room for only one chapter on the period 1800-1820 - a chapter which, as might be expected, is largely on Scott and Jane Austen.

More helpful are studies which devote a whole volume to a limited period; even so, for a variety of reasons there is not one which explores the minor novel of the first years of the nineteenth century in the way in which Dr. Tompkins explored the end of the eighteenth. The relevant volume of the Cambridge History of English Literature (1907-16), Volume XI, has only one chapter on minor novelists, and this covers a period of almost two hundred years.¹ Oliver Elton's Survey of English Literature 1780-1830 includes many kinds of writing besides novels, and therefore again has little to say of minor novelists. Mona Wilson in These Were Muses (1924) did devote a chapter to each of her nine subjects - but she ranged from the early eighteenth century, with only five nineteenth century writers - not all of whom were novelists.² Moreover, as she said in her preface, the book "was not intended for the student, but for the curious general reader." As a

1. There are scattered references in volumes XII, XIII, and XIV.

2. The writers discussed are Susannah Cent-livre, Charlotte Lennox, Frances Sheridan (mother of the playwright), Hester Chapone, Sydney Morgan, Jane Porter, Frances Trollope (mother of the novelist), Mary Ann Keltly and Sara Coleridge.

result there is usually little possibility of verifying the "facts" given about the authors or placing in context the quotations given from their works. Ernest Baker's volume on the period in his History of the English Novel is volume VI (1935), which has chapters only on Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Scott and "Other Scottish Novelists" - though some minor writers are mentioned incidentally, and others have brief mention in volumes V or VII. Amy Cruse's The Englishman and his Books in the Early Nineteenth Century (1930) is much fuller on minor writers, but, like Miss Wilson, Miss Cruse made no attempt to be scholarly and rarely gave the sources of her material. Bridget G. MacCarthy's The Later Women Novelists 1744-1818 (1947) is more specialised, but covers nearly eighty years and has little on minor writers between 1800 and 1818, while William Renwick's English Literature 1789-1815 (1963), though attempting to deal with only twenty-six years, covers, like some of the works mentioned earlier, poetry and drama as well as the novel, and in addition discusses works on such subjects as art, architecture and travel. Such overviews of a period are indispensable, but their scope precludes any attempt at a detailed assessment of minor novelists.

Harrison Steeves, in his Before Jane Austen (1965), though including very briefly a few of Jane Austen's contemporaries, specifically noted that he did not intend to consider writers "once accepted, even esteemed, but now consigned to the lower levels of inexcellence" (p. 319). Robert Utter and Gwendolyn Needham, on the other hand, in their Pamela's Daughters (1936) and E.M. McClelland in his unpublished thesis, The novel in relation to the dissemination of liberal ideas 1790-1820 (1951) do include minor novelists, but the first work ranges widely, surveying attitudes to women over two centuries, while the second, aiming to show the continuation of the dissemination of liberal ideas in a period usually regarded as reactionary, is extensive rather than intensive in coverage of authors and, though

interesting, leaves little impression of any individual one. Different again is Robert Colby's Fiction With a Purpose (1967) which has two chapters dealing with the period; his method is, in each chapter of his book, to take a novel by a major author and show how it relates to other novels of the time. The book is valuable and stimulating - but in two chapters the attention given to individual minor authors of 1800-1820 is necessarily quite slight. Vineta Colby's Yesterday's Woman (1974), which attempts to "explore and illuminate" the first half of the nineteenth century, is likewise informative - but concentrates on the period 1820-1840. Gary Kelly's English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805 (1976) is, in contrast to most of the other studies mentioned, intensive rather than extensive, concentrating on Robert Bage, Elizabeth Inchbald, Thomas Holcroft, and William Godwin, but, while discussing a few works written in the early nineteenth century,¹ concentrates on the 1790's.

Of studies which put Jane Austen at the centre of a discussion of writers of her time, Walter Pollock's Jane Austen: her Contemporaries and Herself (1899) concentrates on Maria Edgeworth, Fanny Burney and Susan Ferrier; Mona Wilson's Jane Austen and Some Contemporaries (1938) includes only three novelists, Charlotte Tonna, who did not begin to publish her popular religious fiction till the 1820's, and Mary Martha Butt and Anne Woodrooffe, whose first work came at the very end of the period under survey. Henrietta Ten Harmsel's Jane Austen: a Study in Fictional Conventions alludes chiefly to Jane Austen in relation to eighteenth century authors and conventions² - as does Frank Bradbrook's Jane Austen and her Predecessors (1967). Kenneth Moler's Jane Austen's Art of Allusion (1968) does certainly refer to many early nineteenth century popular authors, but precisely because

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1. e.g. Thomas Holcroft's Memoirs of Bryan Perdue (1805) and William Godwin's Fleetwood (1805) and Mandeville (1817).
 2. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to obtain a copy of Miss Ten Harmsel's book.

of his breadth of allusion, his references are, on the whole, tantalisingly brief. C.M. Kirkham's A Critical Study of Jane Austen in Relation to the Popular Literature of her Time, especially Drama (M.Lit. thesis, Bristol 1972) concentrates, as the title indicates, on drama; no novelist (other than Jane Austen) is considered in any detail, and of the twenty novels mentioned, eight are of the eighteenth century. Finally, Marilyn Butler's Jane Austen and the War of Ideas (1975) though carefully, and in a very enlightening way, putting Jane Austen's work in historical and literary context, aims at giving major attention to Jane Austen herself, and therefore cannot devote much time to any individual contemporary except Maria Edgeworth.

There seems a place, therefore, for a study in some detail, of a few of the novelists of the period 1800-1820, who, though now rarely read, were highly esteemed in their time. This seems especially important, since it was a period which not only witnessed the expansion of the novel to which Williams referred, but also the transformation of its reputation and respectability; for although, with hindsight, signs of new vigour can now be seen in the novel in the 1790's, its reputation at that time was at its nadir.

And this is not surprising; though the late eighteenth century had seen no marked increase in the numbers of well-educated people with standards of excellence in literature, it had seen a great increase in the numbers able to read.¹ There was thus a much larger reading public and one with a craving for fiction, The Quarterly Review noting in January 1814 that novels had "now become an important and very extensive branch of literature. In number they equal, in popularity they surpass, every other."² Novels were expensive, but the circulating libraries made them available to many of those who could not

1. Nevertheless, the reading public was not large. Frederick Karl (A Reader's Guide to the Development of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century, 34) estimates it to have been at most between two and five percent of a population of six to seven millions - and readers of books he estimates to have numbered only about 75,000.

2. QR 10 (January 1814) 301. See also GM 78 (October 1808) 882 and 914.

(or did not want to) afford to buy them.¹ The demands of this new reading public were served, to a great extent by poorly paid hack writers, many of them women, and as Mrs. Queenie D. Leavis has noted,

.... whereas the response of the reader of the 'fifties had been a complex one, it now became a simple response to the extremely unskilful and clumsy call for tears, pity, shudders, and so forth.²

Thus by 1800 the reputation of novels was so low that the Scots and Gentleman's magazines gave them scant attention,³ while in the following years The British Critic said that it was ceasing to review novels till it found something "truly worthy of report."⁴

It must, then, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, have taken some courage to admit oneself to be a novelist: Maria Edgeworth insisted in the Advertisement to her Belinda (1801) that it was not a novel but a moral tale, and when Jane Austen tried to publish her Susan in 1803 it was anonymously. Yet by 1810, Mrs. Barbauld, having commented on the circulating library novels felt able to declare:

.... notwithstanding the many paltry books of this kind published in the course of every year, it may be safely affirmed that we have more good writers in this walk living at the present time than at any period since the days of Richardson and Fielding. A very great proportion of these are ladies....⁵

Sir James Mackintosh suggested in 1811 that those who condemned all novels

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1. Possibly the most successful of these was the Minerva Press Library, run by William Lane of Leadenhall Street, London. (See Dorothy Blakey, The Minerva Press, 1939). There is a good short account of the libraries in John Tinnon Taylor's Early Opposition to the English Novel (1943) ch. II, which discusses their effects both on extending readership for the novel and on retarding its prestige. Amy Cruse, The Englishman and his Books in the Early Nineteenth Century, 94-107, discusses some famous customers of Lane's library, such as Mary Lamb, Leigh Hunt, and Macaulay.
 2. Queenie D. Leavis, Fiction and the Reading Public, 134.
 3. QD. Leavis, op. cit., 145.
 4. BC 18 (July-December 1801) 23. Cited by J.H. Alexander, Two Studies in Romantic Reviewing, I, 51.
 5. Letitia Barbauld, "On the Origin and Progress of Novel Writing", prefaced to volume one of The British Novelists, 56 (1820 edition).

indiscriminately missed much that was good.¹ John Dunlop, writing in 1814 noted of the novel that

.... this powerful instrument of virtue and happiness, after having been long despised, has gradually become more justly appreciated, and more highly valued.²

A critic writing for The Edinburgh Review said of novels in 1815

.... there are few works to which we oftener turn for profit or delight³

and in September 1816, even The Gentleman's Magazine, which, in the first years of the century had been one of the periodicals most fiercely opposed to the novel, declared

.... a good Novel is now and then an agreeable relaxation from severer studies.⁴

Francis Jeffrey in 1817 professed himself to be astonished by the talent to be found in novels, only fearing that their entertaining quality might

.... produce a disrelish for other kinds of reading which may be more necessary⁵

- and at last, by 1821 we find Richard Whately able to state:

.... The times seem to be past when an apology was requisite from reviewers for condescending to notice a novel⁶

- attributing the change to the kind of fiction being produced.

That a change had occurred within the first twenty years of the nineteenth century is beyond doubt. Recognising the fact, The Quarterly Review of September 1826 attributed it to Scott, as Fraser's Magazine was

1. Robert J. Mackintosh ed., Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh, II, 127-136 (2nd edition, 1836).

2. John Dunlop, The History of Fiction, I, xii.

3. Ed R 24 (February 1815) 320.

4. GM 86 (September 1816) 248.

5. Ed R 28 (March 1817) 193. There were still reviews deploring the state of the novel, such as that in BEM, 4, (January 1819), 394-6 which claimed that literature had lost touch with real life, but these were against the trend.

6. QR 24 (January 1821) 352. That a change in the attitude to and standard of the novel was generally recognised, is confirmed by Byron Gibson's History from 1800-1832 of English Criticism of Prose Fiction, 243.

also to do later¹. Such a view has remained current², credit also being given to Maria Edgeworth.³ It seems generally recognised, however, that little, if any, responsibility for the increased respectability of, and improvement in the quality of, the novel at this time can be given to Jane Austen, though she had, of course, her contemporary admirers. Francis Jeffrey was "kept up by [Emma] three nights," Murray referred to Northanger Abbey and Persuasion as "short but very clever", and the Marquis of Abercorn thought her novels next to those of Scott. Scott himself noted that her work had attracted an attention from the public "far superior to what is granted to the ephemeral productions which supply the regular demand of watering-places and circulating libraries", and Robert Southey wrote to a friend:

.... You mention Miss Austen; her novels are more true to nature, and have (for my sympathies) passages of finer feeling than any others of this age.⁴

Indeed, from the beginning she received modest praise from the review critics for her good sense, natural characterisation, easy dialogue, probability of incident, and humour. Nevertheless, her reception was very quiet compared with that of many of her contemporaries. There is no evidence that such literary figures of the period as Hazlitt or de Quincey read her work. Wordsworth did so - and found her lacking in imagination,

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1. QR 34 (September 1826) 377; FM 36 (September 1847) 345.
 2. e.g. See Walter Allen, The English Novel, 125; Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen-Forties, 15-16.
 3. e.g. by A. Walton Litz, Jane Austen, A Study of her Artistic Development, 54.
 4. Jeffrey quoted by Douglas Bush, Jane Austen, 137; Murray and the Marquis of Abercorn from Samuel Smiles, A Publisher and his Friends, Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray, II, 64 and 65, (1891 edition); Scott from QR XIV (October 1815) 188-201 in Critical Heritage, 59; Southey's letter of 8.4.1830 from Egerton Brydges' Autobiography, II, 269.

while Coleridge gave but lukewarm praise, finding her novels "in their way perfectly genuine and individual productions." (My underlining), Crabb Robinson did not read Pride and Prejudice and Emma till after Jane Austen's death, and though he praised the former, he found the latter "not interesting." As a result he did not bother to read Northanger Abbey and Persuasion till 1842. Moreover in 1821 her name was not well enough known for Richard Whately to spell it correctly.¹ Kathleen Tillotson has recorded the fact that there is no evidence that any of the major Victorian novelists but Trollope read her in their formative youth.²

The most concrete evidence, however, for her failure to achieve the popularity which she did, in fact, desire,³ lies in the small number of editions of her novels; before the 1833 Bentley edition there were only two of Sense and Sensibility, three of Pride and Prejudice, two of Mansfield Park, and one of Emma, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion. Since publishers tended to be cautious, editions - especially first editions, were usually small, averaging about 1,000 copies, and R.W. Chapman has estimated the total sales of her novels between 1811 and 1833 as 2,000 copies of Sense and Sensibility, 4,000 of Pride and Prejudice, 3,000 of Mansfield Park, 2,000 of Emma and 2,500 of Northanger Abbey and Persuasion.⁴ It is thus clear that even if she was read in borrowed copies, her audience was small compared with that of other novelists of the day. Leaving aside the figures for Scott and

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1. Edith Coleridge ed., Memoirs and Letters of Sara Coleridge, I, 75; note by H. Coleridge in S.T. Coleridge's Table Talk, 2nd edition, 1836, p 59 - entry for 3.5.1830; Edith Morley ed; Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers, I, 227, I, 282, II, 625; Richard Whately from QR 24 (January 1821) 352-76; in Critical Heritage, 95.
 2. Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen-Forties, 144.
 3. e.g. See Jane Austen's Letters, 327 and 419-20.
 4. Robert W. Chapman, Jane Austen, Facts and Problems, 157. His figures for Northanger Abbey and Persuasion differ from those of Jane Hodge (The Double Life of Jane Austen, 208) who gives only 1,750 copies, printed December 1817.

Maria Edgeworth, whose great popularity is generally known, by 1833 there had been at least ten English editions of Amelia Opie's The Father and Daughter (1801), thirteen of Jane Porter's Thaddeus of Warsaw (1803), six of Sydney Owenson's The Wild Irish Girl (1806),¹ thirteen of Thomas Skinner Surr's A Winter in London (1806) and five of Mary Brunton's Self-Control (1811). Of course, many of what are here called "editions" may just have been extra impressions; nevertheless, it is the quantity of copies required, compared with those of Jane Austen's novels which is significant. Thus, when it is said of Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility that it was "successful" and of Mansfield Park that it was "favourably received", it needs to be remembered that such "success" was very moderate compared with that of other novels of the time.² And it seems unlikely that her lack of success was due, to any great extent, to lack of efforts by her publishers.³ Even though it is thought that some publishers deliberately held back sales in order to induce an author to sell his copyright, had this been the case with Jane Austen, sales of Pride and Prejudice should have boomed when she sold the copyright to Egerton.⁴ It is far more likely that her publishers

1. According to Lady Morgan's own Book of the Boudoir, (I, 82) there were seven editions in the first two years.
2. Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and her Art, 35. See also David Cecil, A Portrait of Jane Austen, 167. Her contemporary standing is also evident from the fact that her total profits, including those coming to her heirs for the two posthumously published novels were just over £1,000. (See R.W. Chapman, Jane Austen, Facts and Problems, 156 and Jane Hodge op. cit. 207). Compare Maria Edgeworth's £2,100 for Patronage (1814), Lady Morgan's £1,200 for Florence Macarthy (1818) and Susan Ferrier's £1,000 for The Inheritance (1824).
3. Jane Hodge is one who attributes the small sales of Jane Austen's novels to lack of effort by her publishers, as well as to the high price of books. (See "Jane Austen and her Publishers", in Jane Austen, Bicentenary Essays, ed. John Halperin, 75 and 77. None of this is convincing in the light of the success of other novelists.
4. Interestingly it did have more editions than the others, but the difference is not significant.

were cautious because they knew that her novels would not greatly appeal.

Indeed, as Lord Ernle was to comment,

.... Her own generation scarcely knew her, and the Annual Register did not record her death.¹

For this reason Jane Austen cannot possibly have been directly responsible for the fact that the years after 1820 rapidly saw the novel becoming the dominant literary form in England, one capable of conveying a full range of human experience and emotion. But can it reasonably be thought that all the credit for the change can be given to Scott and Maria Edgeworth? As has been noted, there were favourable comments on the novel before Scott published Waverley, and he himself seems to have seen the change as having begun in the early years of the century, writing in 1815 of its having occurred "within the last fifteen or twenty years."²

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1. Rowland Prothero, Lord Ernle, The Light Reading of our Ancestors, 275. Her brother, in the biographical notice to Northanger Abbey and Persuasion acknowledged that her rewards had been very modest. For discussion of Jane Austen's contemporary reputation, see Robert W. Chapman, Jane Austen, Facts and Problems, (1948); Charles B. Hogan, "Jane Austen and her Early Public", Review of English Studies n.s. I (1950) 39-54; Joseph M. Duffy Junior, Jane Austen and the Nineteenth Century Critics of Fiction 1812-1913, (1954); Ian Watt, Introduction to Jane Austen ed. Ian Watt (1963); Brian C. Southam ed., Introduction to Jane Austen, The Critical Heritage, (1968); Robert A. Draffan, "Jane Austen and her Time", History Today (1970) 190-197; Jane Hodge, "Jane Austen and her Publishers" in Jane Austen, Bicentenary Essays, ed. John Halperin (1975). Hogan asserts that Jane Austen was very popular at the time that Mansfield Park was published, ignoring the facts that it was not reviewed and that Egerton did not produce a second edition; Duffy, while producing evidence which shows her popularity to have been limited, likewise asserts her contemporary popularity on the basis of the remarks of a few individuals and the few reviews. Southam (p 20) sees the novels as "relatively successful" in her lifetime. Watt, on the other hand, finds her position in the world of letters to have been relatively obscure (p. 3). Draffan argues firmly and convincingly that she was not popular. Jane Hodge, likewise, does not claim contemporary popularity.
 2. QR 14 (October 1815) 188-201. In Critical Heritage, quotation from p. 63.

It seems evident, therefore, that attention to the work of some novelists of the early nineteenth century other than Jane Austen, Scott and Maria Edgeworth may be rewarding. Scott, writing to Joanna Baillie in 1822 could not be sure that she would know who he meant by Jane Austen¹, but there were other novelists of the period whom it is highly unlikely that he would have found it necessary to ask if she knew - not novelists who owed their popularity merely to turning out what The Quarterly Review referred to as "sickening trash" for the circulating libraries,² but authors held in esteem by readers whose intellect can hardly be questioned. Therefore, since no-one today would deny the superior merits of Jane Austen, the questions arise, what was it about these contemporaries of hers which caused them to be so popular in their own day, and for what was it that they were respected by the more discerning? The first is merely a question of taste - but an answer to the second question might provide helpful information about the development of the novel. Were they seen as increasing its scope in various ways which were later taken up and developed by writers of more talent, with the result that their pioneer work, recognised by contemporary critics, has since been largely overlooked?³ The danger of this happening is always present, if the minor writers of an age are

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1. H.J.C. Grierson ed., The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, 1821-23, p 60. He said "By the way, did you know Miss Austen Authoress of some novels which have a great deal of nature in them?"
 2. QR 2 (November 1809) 319. Of these purely commercial writers, one might note as among the best Regina Roche (whose Children of the Abbey reached an 11th edition by 1832); Eliza Parsons, authoress of The Castle of Wolfenbach and The Mysterious Warning, both "Northanger Novels"; Catherine Cuthbertson and Mary Meeke (both great favourites of Macaulay); Francis Lathom, author of The Midnight Bell, also a Northanger novel; Anthony Holstein; and Mrs. A.M. Bennett, who was liked by Scott, Coleridge and M.R. Mitford.
 3. Compare the high praise of Scott and others for Mrs. Radcliffe's power of suspense - which seems much less impressive to twentieth century readers.

neglected, for, as Quentin Skinner has pointed out, it is often claimed that one well known writer must have been influenced by another well known writer merely because important characteristic elements of the work of the latter are found in the work of the former, when (apart from the possibility of the similarity's being merely by chance) it could be that, if other writers had been studied, a much closer connection may have been found. This, he points out, is almost bound to occur when only major writers are chosen for study. He has suggested, therefore, that, when a question arises, what is first needed, before any attempt is made to answer it, is as full a description as possible of all the relevant material: "The primary aim should not be to explain, but only in the fullest detail to describe."¹

As George Saintsbury noted, many years ago,

It is at last beginning to be recognised in principle, though it is still much too often forgotten in practice, that the minor work of a time is at least as important as the major in determining literary characteristics and tendencies.²

And if further justification be needed for a study of admittedly flawed and now very minor writers, Kathleen Tillotson provided it when she asserted that

....Minor popular novels ... show what expectations had been built up in the minds of readers and hence how far the great novelists could afford to defeat those expectations.³

This study began, therefore, some years before Raymond Williams posed the question noted at the beginning of this chapter, as an attempt to produce a slightly more detailed map of the first two decades of the

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1. "The Limits of Historical Explanations", Philosophy 41 (July 1966) 199-215. Quotation from 214. Skinner is writing of the history of ideas - but the point is surely the same, whether one is talking of ideas or techniques.
 2. George Saintsbury, The English Novel, 133.
 3. Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen-Forties, 4.

nineteenth century, in the hope that such description would not only contribute to a better understanding of the reasons for Jane Austen's comparative lack of popularity, but would also illuminate the change in the scope and status of the novel in that period. Eight novelists were chosen who were, in their time, of sufficient popularity and reputation to appear to have reflected public taste - and possibly to have had some influence on the novel and the novel-reading public. Evidence for popularity was based on the number of different novels each novelist published, the number of editions of individual works, and translations into French.¹ No author was chosen whose work, while still popular, had been wholly or largely written in the eighteenth century, nor any whose work is still familiar enough for its place in the history of the novel to be readily recognised, though it was intended to allude to such authors whenever apposite. Such exclusions still left a formidable list of popular novelists, but this was rapidly reduced by a consideration of more than ephemeral reputation: a survey of critical works covering the period 1820-1900 indicated, in fact, just six of these authors who were considered worthy of critical attention well into the nineteenth century - though it also revealed clearly the decline in their reputations and the rise of that of Jane Austen.² These are Mary Brunton, Elizabeth Hamilton, Sydney Morgan (née Owenson), Amelia Opie, Anna Maria Porter and Jane Porter.

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1. Marion Devonshire, The English Novel in France, 1830-1870 noted that one reason for the introduction of an English novel was its success in England. Included in her list of novelists are Mary Brunton, Lady Morgan, Mrs. Opie, Anna Maria Porter, and, surprisingly, Jane Austen, presumably because she had quite favourable reviews. She was not, however, well received in France.
 2. Appendix I gives a list of nineteenth century works in which they are discussed.

In addition, two further authors of the period were chosen for rather different reasons, namely Charlotte Dacre and Thomas Skinner Surr. The former, though quite popular in her day, was not generally critically esteemed then, nor during the nineteenth century. Nevertheless Shelley saw enough to admire in her to imitate her in his Zastrozzi and St. Irvyne (both inferior to their model) and the twentieth century, with a renewed interest in the gothic has begun to see qualities in her which escaped contemporary critics. Montague Summers wrote a brief monograph on her in 1928 and George Wilson Knight wrote the foreward to a recent reprint of one of her novels.¹ She, therefore, was included as providing a different kind of novel from the others. Thomas S. Surr, who meets only the criterion of contemporary popularity, was included partly because of the extraordinary extent of that popularity (his Winter in London had eight editions in 1806, the year of publication, and a ninth in 1807) but also because his work too, illustrates a different vein in the novel.

Aimed primarily at exploration and description, however, the study, of these authors began to make abundantly clear the effect upon six of them of the evangelical movement which was at its height of activity in these years. This effect, upon themes, style, tone and technique (which will be discussed in the following chapters) should not, in fact, be surprising, since the movement was a shaping force so great that in a comparatively short time it changed the way of life of the whole nation. The other major movement of the early nineteenth century, utilitarianism, did not really get under way till The Westminster Review was founded in 1824 and became an organ for disseminating the ideas of Bentham and his followers. AS

1. Shelley's debt to Charlotte Dacre will be discussed in Chapter XI. Montague Summers wrote of her as "Byron's 'Lovely Rosa'" in his Essays in Petto. G. Wilson Knight wrote the foreword to the 1974 Arno edition of her Zofloya.

William Renwick has said, Bentham was "a portent rather than a force" in this period.¹ The extent of the change wrought by the evangelicals, however, is clearly illustrated in the well known story of Scott's grand-aunt who, having asked him to send her copies of the novels of Aphra Behn, which she had enjoyed hearing read aloud in her youth, returned them, saying that now she was ashamed to read them even in private. This Scott attributed to "the gradual improvement of the national taste and delicacy."²

A reading of some of the work of the leading evangelicals thus became necessary to provide a background to, and to throw light on, the novelists chosen for study. It threw light not only on them, however, but to such an extent on Jane Austen's Mansfield Park that allusions to it became entirely inadequate, and a chapter had to be devoted to that novel. The study remains one of exploration and description: no author originally chosen was finally excluded because he or she did not seem to exemplify evangelical influence. However, evangelicalism features so largely in several of the chapters, that it seems appropriate in this introductory chapter to touch briefly on the movement and to explain how the term "evangelical" is being used in this study, especially since (as Jane Austen was to discover) at the time any two people might have understood different things by it.³

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Essentially what is meant here by evangelicalism is the whole movement towards the resurgence of a vital Christianity, which had begun in the Anglican Church in the late 1730's with the work of the Wesleys and

1. English Literature 1789-1815, 38.

2. John G. Lockhart, Life of Scott, III, ch 54, 512-513. It is, therefore, very surprising that Donald Low in his book on Regency Britain, That Sunny Dome decided to omit any discussion of the evangelical influence on the period.

3. Jane Austen's Letters, 420. Letter of 30.11.1814. The point will be discussed in Chapter IV.

Whitefield, and had eventually "invigorated every other religious community"¹ including Quakers, Baptists and Presbyterians. After John Wesley's death his followers broke away from the Church of England, but their activities had stimulated a movement for spiritual reform among some of those who clung more closely to Anglican practices - and it is they who are generally known as Evangelicals,² whereas Wesley's evangelicals are known as Methodists. In their own time, however, they were both referred to indiscriminately as methodists, Methodists, evangelicals, or Evangelicals, as were those in any other group which professed "vital" Christianity (their own name for it). Lady Morgan, for example, in her Book of the Boudoir³ (1829) referred to Elizabeth Fry the Quaker as a Methodist.

Yet while all the groups had much in common, they also had large differences, which the contemporary insistence on giving them the same name tended to hide. The followers of Wesley had been largely of the uneducated working class and had gained a reputation for unrestrained emotional behaviour at their meetings and religiosity in their discourse, both of which the middle and upper classes on the whole found offensive.⁴

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1. Gilbert Thomas, William Cowper and the Eighteenth Century, 146. Thus we can include the lively Amelia Opie, who was led by the deepening religious tone in society into becoming a Quaker. The Evangelical William Wilberforce was a close friend of the Quaker Joseph John Gurney, the two men having many ideas in common. In this study, "evangelical" will be used for the movement as a whole, "Evangelical" to refer specifically to Anglican evangelicals.
 2. David Spring calls these the second generation of the evangelical revival ("The Clapham Sect" in Victorian Studies, 5 (1961) 37). See also Frederick Gill, The Romantic Movement and Methodism, 21.
 3. Book of the Boudoir, II, 105. See also William Roberts, Memoirs of Hannah More, II, 429; Robert Southey, Letters from England, Letter LIII, p 324 (1951 edition); Maurice Quinlan, William Cowper, 52-53, Frederick Gill, The Romantic Movement and Methodism, 21.
 4. There is a very vivid description of this in Robert Southey, op. cit., Letter LIII pp 319-332.

The Anglican Evangelicals, however, were largely from a much higher social background and behaved very differently. Even Wesley had not approved of the emotional excesses of some of his converts, being, according to Egerton Brydges, "a man of talent and education, and rarely guilty of this loathsome fault"¹-and the cultured well-to-do group who formed the nucleus of the Anglican Evangelical movement were even more against what they referred to as "fanaticism". Hannah More, the leading female member of the movement, regarded herself as (and was) a moderate: "I do not vindicate enthusiasm, I dread it"² was a sentiment she re-iterated quite frequently, while one of her co-workers, Rowland Hill, made a point of trying to check over-exuberance throughout his series of religious tracts called Village Dialogues (1810), having one of his characters tell another he should go to hear a preacher who preached "good, sober, moral sermons; ... to run rambling after ... wild enthusiasts is too bad."³ The Evangelicals always firmly insisted on their differences from the Methodists.⁴ Nevertheless it was a stereotyped idea of the "fanatic", the "enthusiast", (like John Ruskin's mother, who turned her pictures to the wall on Sundays) which continued to attach itself to the term Evangelical (or evangelical) well into the

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1. Autobiography, II, 306. Wesley "often expressed his Anglican fears of the excesses of enthusiasm" (Richard Brantley, Wordsworth's "Natural Methodism", 5). Frederick Gill, The Romantic Movement and Methodism, 24 makes a similar assertion.
 2. William Roberts, op. cit., III, 138. See also H. More, Practical Piety, vii.
 3. Village Dialogues, quoted in Andrew Drummond, The Churches in English Fiction, II. Other leading Evangelicals included John Newton, William Wilberforce, Thomas Gisborne and Zachary Macaulay.
 4. See Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, §. Miss Mortimer in Mary Brunton's Discipline, (1814) I, XVII, 178-180 and Catherine Shirley in Amelia Opie's Valentine's Eve, (1816), I, IX, 227, both, while obviously Evangelical Christians stress their adherence to the established church.

nineteenth century, while, for reasons which are about to be discussed, many of the ideas of the Evangelicals became more and more accepted, resulting in the odd situation of writers being able at one moment to write disparagingly about Evangelicals and at another to propagate Evangelical ideas and attitudes.¹

In the 1780's however, the Anglican Evangelicals were a very small band (calculated at possibly less than one hundred in 1785).² Nevertheless they were very influential, and in 1787 were largely instrumental in persuading George III to publish a proclamation against vice which inaugurated their full scale attack on corruption in high life - on the manners and morals of what they called "the fashionable world" - in works like Hannah More's Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society (1788). Earlier campaigns of this kind had failed³ - but this time there was something to fix the nation firmly on a new course - the shock of the French Revolution.⁴

That the bloodshed, political upheaval and atheism which revolution had brought to France could be the fate of Britain was by no means beyond belief; there had been, and still was, unrest among the poor; there were those in England who proclaimed doctrines similar to those of the French - and were they to prevail, not only the government, but the Church might fall. Moreover, first reactions to the revolution in France were, from many sides, alarmingly favourable, and there sprang up, or were revived, many societies aimed at constitutional reform. Burke spoke for the conservatives when he wrote his Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790) but his views did

1. Cf. Lord David Cecil, A Portrait of Jane Austen, 18, who, noting that Evangelicals were mocked, says that mockery "did not, however, stop people gradually responding" to such a new influence.

2. Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, 2.

3. e.g. The Society for the Reformation of Manners 1692 - and another in 1757.

4. See Maurice Quinlan, Victorian Prelude, 67.

not go unchallenged. One of the earliest rejoinders was Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Men (1790) which she followed with her even more radical Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) a work rejecting the generally accepted idea that woman's role was to be submissive and pleasing, suggesting that girls should be taught with boys - and even hinting that women had a right to vote for members of parliament. Other arguments against Burke came from Sir James Mackintosh, in his Vindiciae Gallicae, and from Tom Paine in his Rights of Man (1791-2). Something of the atmosphere of the time can be gathered from the fact that for publishing The Rights of Man Paine was condemned to death for treason (though in his absence, since he had fled to France, warned of his imminent arrest, it is said, by the poet William Blake).

But even this savage sentence failed to stop the flow of radical writing: within weeks appeared another major work, William Godwin's Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Political Justice and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness, upon which, according to his contemporary, William Hazlitt, Godwin

.... blazed as a sun in the firmament of reputation; no one was more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after, and wherever liberty, truth, justice was the theme, his name was not far off.¹

Young intellectuals like Wordsworth and Coleridge for a time eagerly absorbed Godwin's system of ideas, which may perhaps be crudely summed up by saying that he claimed that by the exercise of reason men could eventually become perfect, laws and government be dispensed with, all restraints (including that of marriage) removed - and that all distinctions of wealth should be done away with, and all property owned in common. This, conservatives attacked bitterly, as "the new philosophy".

1. P.P. Howe ed., The Complete Works of William Hazlitt XI, p 16 (from The Spirit of the Age)

And with the "blazing" of Godwin's reputation, after 1793 there appeared a spate of novels specifically advocating or attacking his philosophy. However, following on the excesses of the French revolution, his reputation almost as quickly burned out. Wordsworth and Coleridge, for example, rejected his ideas within two or three years, and by the early years of the nineteenth century his direct influence was negligible.¹ Indirectly, however, it was strong, for the growing antagonism to, and fear of, ideas like his fostered the growth of evangelicalism, the religious movement which was to change the life of the nation and make its mark on literature.

In the years following Political Justice rumours of anarchy were rife - and included one related to an international plot aimed at the destruction of organised religions and governments throughout the world, a belief fostered by the production of two books. John Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy against all Religions and Governments of Europe (1797) and Abbé Barruel's Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du Jacobinisme (1797).² It was, as Hannah More said, a time of "alarm and peril"³ - a time in which the king's coach was attacked by a mob and the slogan "No King - No Parliament" written up in the streets of London.⁴ The Methodists had always been opposed to radicalism in politics (one of their contributions to order in a time of unrest being their transformation of violent and drunken miners into sober chapel-goers prepared to wait meekly for their reward in heaven), while of the leading Evangelicals, William Wilberforce mingled exhortations to piety

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1. That there continued to be dissemination of liberal ideas, including Godwinian ideas, is fully discussed in F.M. McClelland's thesis, The Novel in relation to the dissemination of liberal ideas 1790-1820, London, Royal Holloway College, 1951. Nevertheless the dominant tone was conservative.
 2. See Maurice Quinlan, op. cit., 90-91.
 3. H. More, Strictures on the Modern System of female education. Works III, 13. All references are to the edition in the collected Works of 1836.
 4. Brian Wilks, Jane Austen, 30.

with praises of the British class system,¹ and Hannah More, regarding the connection between impiety and Jacobinism as inseparable, urged the poor to do their duty in that state of life where God had placed and called them.² An answer to Tom Paine's Rights of Man (1791-2) and similar works was given in her Village Politics (1792) while the rich were urged to put their lives in order in such widely read treatises as her Thoughts on the importance of the manners of the great, (1788) which had seven editions in one year, her Estimate of the religion of the fashionable world (1791) which had five editions in two years, and Wilberforce's Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country Contrasted with Real Christianity (1797) which had had forty editions by 1824.

And the fear of revolution never really subsided throughout the first two decades of the nineteenth century. It was a time of great hardship for the majority of working class people, a situation not helped by the introduction of machines which exacerbated the unemployment problem, so that when, in 1812, the Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval was shot in the House of Commons, this, to many seemed a grim warning of more such violence to come. As Donald Low has said:

The information that Perceval's assassin was deranged, with no political motive for his action, was received sceptically by politicians who had been inclined ever since 1789 to suspect that one day the common people of Britain would follow the French example and seize power by violence.

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1. William Wilberforce, A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country Contrasted with Real Christianity, ch. VI, 250 using 16th edition 1827. (1st edition 1797).
 2. Noted by Ian Bradley in The Call to Seriousness, 148. Jacobinism and impiety are linked e.g. in Mrs. More's History of Mr. Fantom, where Fantom is corrupted by both Paine's Rights of Man and his Age of Reason (Works I, p. 2) David Spring in "The Clapham Sect" Victorian Studies, 5 (1961), 48, saw the movement as having two strains, one that was plainly conservative and supportive of the class structure, overlying a second, less visible strain of radical innovation, as in support of schools for the poor, and the abolition of slavery. Evangelicals favoured humanitarian reforms which did not alter the basic structure of society. Interestingly, Wilberforce, a leading Evangelical, regarded himself as an Independent, not a Tory. (See John Pollock's Wilberforce, 269).

So great was the fear of the establishment that there would be a popular rising, in fact, that at this time Wellington's army in Spain contained no more British soldiers than were being used in the Midlands to put down Luddites.¹ Nor were things any better by 1819, when what started as a peaceful 'workers' meeting at St. Peter's Fields, Manchester, ended in a cavalry attack in which about four hundred people were injured, and eleven died.

In such an atmosphere the numbers of all evangelical groups grew quickly. Opposed to everything that savoured of, or seemed to encourage revolution and vice, they did not neglect at first to attack the novel, which had already long been judged chiefly in relation to its moral effect rather than its artistic qualities. Now the charge of tending to deprave was made more often and more strongly, especially as novelists were currently seen not only to be filling women's heads with foolish romantic notions, but also to be disseminating revolutionary political ideas. Thus in 1799 Hannah More declared:

Novels, which chiefly used to be dangerous in one respect, are now become mischievous in a thousand. They are continually shifting their ground and enlarging their sphere, and are daily becoming vehicles of wider mischief.²

In 1800 The Evangelical Magazine rated "love of novels" on its "spiritual barometer" at only slightly above adultery,³ and all throughout the very early years of the nineteenth century we find novels regarded as major contributors to the degeneracy of the age, making young women incapable of appreciating and enjoying ordinary life.⁴

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1. Donald A. Low, That Sunny Dome: A Portrait of Regency Britain, 24 and 52.
 2. H. More, Strictures, Works III, 28.
 3. EM VIII (December 1800) 26.
 4. GM 78 (October 1808) 916; QR 1 (May 1809) 306 - and repeated ad nauseam. For a fuller survey of such attitudes to the novel, see W.F. Gallaway, "The Conservative Attitude Toward Fiction 1770-1830", PMLA (December 1940) 1041-1059, and John T. Taylor, Early Opposition to the English Novel: The Popular Reaction from 1760-1830 (1943).

Nevertheless, Wesley himself had not entirely rejected fiction as an aid to his work, having, in 1780 published an abridged version of Henry Brooke's Fool of Quality (1770) under the title of The History of Henry, Earl of Moreland in the belief that it would be useful in promoting "the religion of the heart".¹ It must, in fact, have been obvious that if the public was determined to read novels, those who wished to further the cause of religion and firm government could do worse than provide novels which supported them, especially as the radicals had not been averse to using fiction to propagate their ideas in such novels as Thomas Holcroft's Anna St. Ives (1792) and Hugh Trevor (1794-97), William Godwin's Caleb Williams (1794), Mary Hay's Memoirs of Emma Courtney (1796), Mrs. Inchbald's Nature and Art (1796), and Robert Bage's Hermsprong (1796). As Jane West said in 1802, of the passion for prose fiction:

.... while the enemies of our church and state continue to pour their poison into unwary ears through this channel, it behoves the friends of our establishments to convey an antidote by the same course.²

Because of the opprobrium attached to the term "Evangelical", however, she did not think of herself as one, nor did Elizabeth Hamilton, yet both, in writing novels which firmly proclaimed the value of "religious principle" engaged in active proselytising aimed at making religion a vital force.³ Others, like the Porter sisters, aided the cause by writing novels of "noble lives" in which religious principle was an essential part of the nobility; and finally, though there were still some assertions that the novel could not possibly be a force for good,⁴ in December 1808 Hannah More

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1. From Wesley's preface to his edition of the novel, quoted by Walter F. Wright, Sensibility in English Prose Fiction, 31. Wesley's version had its 4th edition in 1813 - published by the Methodist Book Room.
 2. Introduction to The Infidel Father (1802) quoted by Hazel Mews in Frail Vessels, 28. Jane West was a friend of the Evangelical Sarah Trimmer.
 3. While Elizabeth Hamilton was never Evangelical in the manner of Mary Brunton, there was a steady deepening of the religious element in her fiction between 1798-1808.
 4. e.g. GM 75 (October 1805) 911-914; GM 78 (October 1808) 882-5.

herself published Coelebs in Search of a Wife which, though its title page claimed that it comprehended "observations on domestic habits and manners, religion and morals", was, nevertheless, undeniably a novel.¹ Not only this, it was possibly the most popular novel of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, going through twelve editions in the first year - and, according to Ford K. Brown, having more editions and, during the lifetime of Wilberforce, bringing more profits even than Waverley.²

Nor was its success as surprising as most twentieth century readers seem to think; though Richard Whately regarded it as a "dramatic sermon",³ he, it must be remembered, was antagonistic to the Evangelicals. Maurice Quinlan reports that a Marianne Francis, a niece of Fanny Burney and "a rather intelligent person", wrote in February 1809, "I have read Coelebs with great delight"⁴ - but does not find it odd that she should say this about a book he has reported on so unfavourably. Cassandra Austen also evidently enjoyed it.⁵ There are, admittedly, long "instructive" conversations but the style is pleasant, and Coelebs and his loved one are by no means the prigs they are usually said to be. It is not generally noted, for instance, that Coeleb's proposal of marriage is more tenderly (while not theatrically) conveyed than those in most novels of the period, and is given the slightest touch of humour by the activities of a rather obtrusive small sister. Nor is it recorded that the "passionless" Coelebs is horrified to find that he must wait three months before he can marry his Lucilla. It seems significant too, in relation to Hannah More's effect on those who believed they did not like evangelicals, that even while complaining

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1. Mrs. More had already written a large number of short moral tales - a point to be touched on in Chapter II.
 2. Ford K. Brown, op. cit., 395.
 3. Critical Heritage, 95.
 4. Maurice Quinlan, Victorian Prelude, 156, 149.
 5. Jane Austen's Letters, 256. Letter of 24.1.1809.

of religion being brought into a novel at all, and while deriding this novel's lack of artistry, the Edinburgh Review critic had to admit that Mrs. More's views on religion were in no way outrageous, and could only get over this by suggesting that the novel would not therefore be very well received by her followers. He was forced, in fact, to concede her "genuine piety" and to say that "every man would like his wife and children to read Coelebs."¹ He was, of course, thinking of its moral effect; but the novel was, and is, readable - and proved to evangelicals of all sects what large doses of religious teaching the public was willing to accept if it were sweetened by some sort of story. Thus it mattered little that the critics by no means universally applauded it: The Monthly Magazine found methodism in religion like quackery in medicine², and the Edinburgh Review gave it as its opinion that familiar discussion of religious topics would lead to a lowering of respect for religion³. However, a Quarterly Review critic, in the same year, included, in his list of qualities needed by a writer of novels, the ability artfully to introduce moral and religious instruction⁴ and some time later, while mocking the religious tone of a different novel, The Critical Review was forced to agree that at least it was what the public wanted.⁵

Wanting to see this new weapon in the cause of the faith used to its best advantage, a Mr. James Stephen wrote to Mrs. More on January 26th 1809, praising highly the idea of using the novel for teaching religion, and suggesting that Coelebs had

....perhaps less of incident and plot than would be necessary to rival, in minds of little intellectual culture or refinement, the romantic stories of which they are so fond. You have gone as far, I doubt not, as was prudent at first in so new a line of religious effort; but if the experiment be as successful as I

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1. Ed R 14 (April 1809) 145-151.
 2. MM 27 (1809 supp. July 30) 633.
 3. ER 14 (April 1809) 150.
 4. QR 2 (November 1809) 315.
 5. CR s.3,24 (October 1811) 161.

believe it will prove, others, or you yourself perhaps, may be encouraged to venture further and give us as much of a novel as may consist with the maintenance of religious propriety in the good characters and right feeling in the reader.¹

Mrs. More, hurt and angered by the critics' reception of Coelebs, did not write another novel, but Mr. Stephens' wish was carried out by others like Mary Brunton, Letitia Hawkins and Amelia Opie.² As Robert Colby has so rightly said,

.... The shadow of the dedicated author of Coelebs hovers over virtually all of the serious fiction read by Jane Austen and her contemporaries

- but one must add also the shadow of others, like William Wilberforce, Thomas Gisborne and William Cowper, the leading poet of the Evangelicals.³
Cowper

.... helped to spread Evangelical doctrines...He was the one important poet associated with the revival, and because all sorts of people read his works, Evangelical principles got a hearing among many who otherwise would not have listened to them. The poet himself confessed that his chief purpose in writing was to reform and evangelise readers.

Wilberforce called him a "truly Christian poet"; Hannah More admired him, and made her Christian family in Coelebs have him as their favourite reading. He was also, as is well known, a favourite poet of Jane Austen.⁴

However, in saying that writers as different as, for example, Elizabeth Hamilton, Amelia Opie, Mary Brunton, Jane Porter and Thomas Skinner Surr wrote "under the shadow of" these figures, there is no suggestion that they thought as one on various religious matters, or were equally forthcoming

1. William Roberts, Memoirs of Hannah More, III, 294.

2. Mary Brunton, Self Control (1811), Discipline (1814); Letitia Hawkins, The Countess and Gertrude (1811), Rosanne (1814); Amelia Opie, Valentine's Eve (1816).

3. Quotation from Robert Colby, Fiction with a Purpose, 86. Soon after the publication of his Lyrical Ballads (1798) Wordsworth sent a complimentary copy to William Wilberforce, with a letter in which he praised his Practical View and claimed to be "a Fellow-labourer in the same Vineyard". (Quoted by Richard Brantley in Wordsworth's "Natural Methodism", 3.) Though Wordsworth later supported the Oxford movement, that, like Wilberforce's, was a "direct descendant of Wesley's revival". (Richard Brantley, op. cit., 4.)

4. Maurice Quinlan, Victorian Prelude, 53; W. Wilberforce, A Practical View, 204 (all references to the 1827 edition); W. Roberts, op. cit., II, 115; H. More, Coelebs ch. XXV, p 264 (1830 edition).

about their religious beliefs. Even among avowed evangelicals there were differences; for example, on such a central point as the need for conversion, Calvinist evangelicals tended to believe in the sudden conversion, whereas the Arminian Wesley

.... cared not whether it was sudden or gradual, dramatic or otherwise. For him the only proof of regeneration lay in a changed life.¹

They differed, too, in their degree of "enthusiasm" - a word which referred more to the content than to the manner of a person's speech.² And not only were the more well-to-do and educated Evangelicals on the whole more restrained than poorer and less educated evangelicals, they also tended to be more tolerant.³ All evangelicals took their religion seriously, all prided themselves on a high standard of moral behaviour, on regular church or chapel attendance, on Lord's day observance - but how far they made regular use of pious sentiments and biblical quotations, how far they approved or disapproved of dancing, concerts, the theatre or novels was a matter on which individuals differed. Thomas Gisborne, for example, a leading Evangelical, saw dancing as an innocent amusement, if properly supervised (i.e. not engaged in at public balls) and if not indulged in too often. He did not object to musical entertainments, except those held on Sundays - and while he did not believe there could be many contemporary stage productions which were fit to be seen, he did not condemn the theatre out of hand; not even insisting that "worthless characters" should be excluded, he asked "that the general effect of the piece should be unequivocally virtuous".⁴ (My underlining.) And though some Evangelicals continued to ban novels, we know that Hannah More and Wilberforce did not.⁵

1. Gilbert Thomas, William Cowper and the Eighteenth Century, 157

2. G. Thomas, op. cit., 139.

3. Maurice Quinlan, Victorian Prelude, 189. The evangelicalism of Wesley and Wilberforce could appeal to Wordsworth and Coleridge, whereas that of some of their followers could not. Even Dr. Johnson admired Wesley.

4. T. Gisborne, Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex, IX, 185; IX, 178 (1816 edition).

5. E.J. Jay (Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth Century Novel, Ph.D thesis, Oxford 1975, 312-370) finds the Evangelicals of the second quarter of the nineteenth century much more repressive than those of the early years.

Anne of Swansea, in fact, was even granted permission to dedicate an action-packed novel, Gonzalo de Baldivia (1817) to Wilberforce - and quite possibly other novelists were also favoured in the same way. Young Thomas Macaulay probably expressed the attitude of the more tolerant of the Evangelicals to novel reading when he wrote in The Christian Observer, in reply to attacks on novels, that only certain novels were bad and should be neglected. All others he divided into four classes, in rising order of value: the "harmless and entertaining" like Waverley; the novels of Fielding and Smollett which, despite the opening they gave to censure he regarded as highly instructive; moral novels like those of Maria Edgeworth; and "Religious novels which ought to be read" - here citing Hannah More's Coelebs.¹ Wilberforce especially enjoyed the novels of Scott - and as for Hannah More, those who knew her declared:

..... There was no trace of asceticism in her piety, no abnegation of enjoyment under the idea that to be cheerful and happy is to displease God. Her religion was practical. She relished many of the pleasures which the worldly consider chief and which the "rigidly righteous" ignore as sinful.²

Moreover, quite early in the nineteenth century, even the "High and dry" section of the Anglican church, moved by the Evangelicals, as the latter had been by the Methodists, began to adopt a more vital religion, until "an ardent inner life was as much a symptom of Christian orthodoxy in 1816 as it was suspect in 1796."³

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1. Christian Observer 15 (December 1816) 785-786.
 2. Andrew Drummond, The Churches in English Fiction, 7; Samuel C. Hall, A Book of Memories, 70. Cf. Frederick Gill, The Romantic Movement and Methodism, 23, who says that the movement was not "bigoted or narrow."
 3. Marilyn Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas, 290.

In an age so coloured, it is not surprising that the novels most highly regarded by the critics were those of the most clearly moral nature - and it was a rare critic who, like Mrs. Barbauld, dared to say that in reading a novel her "end and object" [was] entertainment.¹ Though, after Coelebs, it became difficult for any but the most puritanical to object to all novels, their moral tenor was a matter of great moment. Francis Jeffrey, for example, admitted that in his reviews he

.... more uniformly and earnestly than any preceding critic made the moral tendencies of the works under consideration a leading subject of discussion.²

"Moral" did not necessarily mean religious. Some critics continued to protest strongly against religion's being discussed openly in fiction, and part of The British Critic's approval of Jane Austen's Emma, in 1816, was that religion was not mentioned in it: " of fanatical novels and fanatical authoresses we are already sick "³ On the other hand, both The Quarterly Review and The Eclectic Review censured Maria Edgeworth, usually regarded as a highly moral writer, for her lack of reference to Christian principle.⁴

Religion apart, however, a novel had to have strict propriety not only in attitudes, but also in expression, if it were to be approved. This requirement is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the work of the Bowdler family on "purifying" Shakespeare's plays so that they, like novels, might be read in the home. Thomas Bowdler, who was a man "known and highly respected" by Hannah More, and a friend of Wilberforce⁵ made clear his intentions in the preface to the 1818 edition of the plays, namely to expurgate "whatever [was] unfit to be read aloud by a gentleman to a company of ladies" and

1. Letitia Barbauld, "On the Origin and Progress of Novel Writing" in Vol. 1 of The British Novelists p. 44.

2. Francis Jeffrey, Contributions to the Edinburgh Review, Preface.

3. BC ns. 6 (July 1816) 96-98. In Critical Heritage 71.

4. See QR 2 (August 1809) 148; ER 8 (June 1812) 608.

5. William Roberts, Memoirs of Hannah More IV, 213.

.... to render the plays of Shakspeare unsullied by any speech, or, if possible, by any word that can give pain to the most chaste, or offence to the most religious of his readers.

In particular, Bowdler commented on the fact that

.... The most Sacred Word in our language is omitted in a great number of instances in which it appeared as a mere expletive ... and it is changed into the word Heaven in a still greater number.¹

Devout Christians of any age, one would think, might baulk at the word God being used "as a mere expletive" - but for the Evangelicals this view of God as being "the most Sacred Word" in the language seems to have gone so far that they rarely used it even reverently; and because of the religious tenor of so many novels of the period, one of their striking features is the proliferation of circumlocutions aimed to allow the author or character to refer to God without actually using the word God itself - circumlocutions like "the Supreme Being" "the Searcher of Hearts" "the Father of Light and Mercy" which, found also in non-fictional writing, seem to have been part of evangelical language. Certainly, in justifying herself to a Quaker friend for allowing a new edition of her novels and tales to be published after she became a Quaker, Amelia Opie wrote that she was getting no money from the edition,

.... only the pleasure of knowing that all mention of the great name and other blemishes are to be expunged²

The Bowdlers certainly seem to have hit the mood of a large section of the reading public; only The British Critic protested against what had been done to the plays of England's greatest playwright in the 1807 Family Shakspeare, and by 1820 it had had at least four editions.³ In line with their efforts, The Quarterly Review suggested that novels, too, should be

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1. Preface to 1818 edition of The Family Shakspeare, pp x, viii, ix.
 2. Quoted by Jacobine Menzies-Wilson and H. Lloyd in Amelia, The Tale of a Plain Friend, 263.
 3. Thomas Bowdler himself, in the Preface to the 1818 edition referred to an 1803 edition, which, he said, he did not edit, and there was an edition in 1807. See Thomas Bowdler, A Letter to the Editor of the British Critic (1823) for his aims. The 1818 edition was followed by one in 1820.

censored - made "subject to the inspection of a strict literary police"¹. For a time, in fact, a good moral tone was often allowed to excuse any number of artistic flaws - while no amount of artistry could justify a novel without a moral purpose: "prose fictions which are not exemplifications of moral truth are detestable," said Sir Egerton Brydges, speaking for many - and he was not evangelical.²

However, towards the end of the first decade of the century there rose a growing demand for the morality while present, to be less obtrusive,³ and in the long run the effect on the novel of the evangelical movement was beneficial rather than otherwise. Not only did it encourage developments in range and in technique, as it is hoped to show, perhaps even more importantly it gave it a respectability which encouraged better writers to adopt the form, and critics, therefore, to give it more attention; for though, as Joseph Heidler has amply illustrated, verisimilitude, mixed characters, and unity of structure had certainly been asked for from time to time in the eighteenth century,⁴ there had been little serious criticism of the novel before 1814. John Dunlop whose History of Fiction appeared in that year wrote that as far as he knew, no writer previous to himself had provided such a full view of the subject of fiction, and his survey still has little to say about his own times. Writing twelve years later, John Gibson Lockhart, reviewing Scott's Lives of the Novelists commented that they threw

1. QR 2 (August 1809) 146.

2. Egerton Brydges, Autobiography II, 325. This attitude is immediately evident from reading reviews of the period. J.H. Alexander, Two Studies in Romantic Reviewing I, 72-74 also makes this point.

3. e.g. see Ed R 11 (January 1808) 460; QR 2 (November 1809) 314-19; QR 10 (January 1814) 307; Ed R 24 (February 1815) 321; Ed R 28 (August 1817) 392.

4. Joseph Heidler, The History from 1700-1800 of English Criticism of Prose Fiction.

.... a new and strong light upon a department of English literature, perhaps the most peculiar, certainly the most popular, and yet we cannot help thinking, among the least studied of all we possess.¹

Even so, however, it is possible, from reviews of individual novels, articles on the novel like Mrs. Inchbald's "To the Artist"², and prefaces like that to Sarah Green's Romance Readers and Romance Writers, (1810) to gain a fairly clear idea of what, besides morality, was required by the professional critic - and it is interesting to note that though Jane Austen could not please a large public, she could and did, in the main, please the reviewers. Skill in characterisation was highly regarded, for example, "probability" being a constant criterion³, and Jane Austen was almost invariably praised for this, as was Maria Edgeworth, whose characters were said to be "such men and women as we see and converse with every day of our lives."⁴ Conflicting with the demands for probability, however, was, with many critics, admiration of "the beau idéal" of character (the novel being seen in this way to refine sensibility)⁵ and the insistence that flawed characters should not be sympathetically portrayed.⁶ Maria Edgeworth bravely more than once transgressed this "rule" (not without censure)⁷ and writers like Amelia Opie and Mary Brunton dared (and with popular success) to go further, being prepared to show not only in a sympathetic light, but with an attempt to induce psychological understanding, women whose character would certainly have been regarded by most people at the time as "depraved".

Another demand from critics sated with gothic and sentimental romances was for probability of plot.⁸ It was not infrequently demanded that a

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1. John Dunlop, The History of Fiction (1814) I, xiv ; QR 34 (September 1826) 350. Cf. A. Walton Litz, Jane Austen, A Study of her Artistic Development 4 (1967 edition): "The era of serious attention to the art of fiction did not begin until near the end of Jane Austen's lifetime;.."
 2. In The Artist, I, June 13 1807, pp 9-19.
 3. e.g. see John Dunlop op. cit., III 394, and QR 1 (May 1809) 347.
 4. QR 2 (August 1809) 146.
 5. Ed R 28 (August 1817) 394. The Porter sisters were especially praised for this.
 6. e.g. QR 1 (May 1809) 311. See also J.H. Alexander, op. cit., I, 73.
 7. Ed R 22 (January 1814) 431.
 8. e.g. see John Dunlop, op. cit., III 394-5.

heroine's suffering should be made the result of her own errors, not of the actions of others,¹ and even authors of repute, like Fanny Burney, Godwin and Maria Edgeworth were taken to task for gross improbabilities of action² - the last mentioned being reminded that while "le vrai n'est pas toujours vraisemblable," the "vraisemblable" is "the only legitimate province of the novelist who aims at improving the understanding or touching the heart."³ However, some reviewers came to believe that a novel which was completely "romantic" was less dangerous than one which was like real life in detail but unlike it in incident, the general view seeming to be that

.... where the general strain of the fable is romantic and extravagant, a little excess in the marvellous does not startle or offend; but we feel it at once as a capital defect where the great charm of the work consists in the truth and accuracy of its representations.⁴

Little attention seems to have been paid by critics of the period to questions of narrative technique and point of view - a finding supported by Richard Stang's verdict that these matters were little discussed until the 1850's.⁵ There was, however, no little interest in structure, with constant pleas for unity of design, and disapproval of unconnected episodes, digressions, underplots and unnecessary characters. Jane Porter's Pastor's Fire-side, for example, was praised for being

.... neither incumbered with episodes, nor impeded by those complex underplots which enter into the elaborate, yet clumsy machinery of unskilful writers.⁶

1. QR 7 (June 1812) 331.

2. Fanny Burney's The Wanderer (1814) and Godwin's Fleetwood (1805) and Mandeville (1817) were published in the period.

3. QR 7 (June 1812) 329. (However QR 2 (August 1809) 146 had found in her work "no incredible adventures.")

4. Ed R 28 (August 1817) 396.

5. Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England 1850-1870, 92-3. Discussions of point of view can be found in Scott's essay on Swift (Ioan Williams ed., Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction, 155) and in Hazlitt's review of Fanny Burney's The Wanderer, Ed R 24 (February 1815) 332. One of the longest discussions of narrative technique seems to be in Jeffrey's review of Mrs. Barbauld's The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson (in his Contributions to the Edinburgh Review 1303-304) where he found her interest in the subject rather childish. He also discussed it in his review of Rob Roy, op. cit. 461.

6. GM 87 (February 1817) 145.

"The action ... must be one," "One interest should pervade the whole," "each circumstance should contribute to the catastrophe", "Doubtless the want of any one predominant interest ... is a grievous defect in a novel" were cries repeatedly heard, while of unnecessary characters we find such remarks as "Not one of the party contributes in the slightest degree to the progress or interest of the story."¹

Attention was usually given also to the language in which the novels were written. Attempts at letting the characters reveal themselves in natural dialogue were praised,² and an interest was shown in attempts to use regional dialects, though by no means all reviewers liked this. They were unanimous, however, in ridiculing excessive sensibility and inflated language such as that in the following letter from the Reverend H. Kett's Emily, A Moral Tale (1809) which was regarded by one reviewer as "pompous affectation":

.... Impel me not, I supplicate, to the abyss of desperation; emancipate me from the tortuosities of agonizing dubitation; nor drive me, O cogitation pre-eminently terrific, to seek on the ramification of a tree or in the voraginous profundity of a stream, the privation of my vitality.³

It is only in comparison with such writing that it is possible to understand how the often overblown language of the Porter sisters could be so frequently regarded as "simple". Nevertheless there was, on the whole, a considerable decrease in the kind of language of which the passage quoted above is an extreme example, and in the degree of sensibility felt permissible or credible⁴ - so that The Edinburgh Review of April 1806 gave the opinion that people had been "pretty well laughed out of" such excesses.⁵ The transition

1. Ed R 11 (January 1808) 461; SM 72 (April 1810) 279; J. Dunlop, op. cit., III, 378; T.M. Raysor ed., Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, 329; QR 4 (August 1810) 63.

2. QR 10 (January 1814) 307; QR 16 (January 1817) 431.

3. QR 2 (November 1809) 318.

4. This is not to reject the argument of Winfield Rogers that novels of sensibility were being written well into the nineteenth century. ("The Reaction Against Melodramatic Sentimentality in the English Novel 1796-1830", PMLA 49 (March 1934) 98-122).

5. Ed R 8 (April 1806) 207.

was eased, however, by the fact that the return to approval of "sense" and "realism" was by no means thought to be inimical to the cultivation of the feeling heart. In this connection J.H. Alexander has noted that the term "pathos" was used more frequently than any other in the reviewing of novels,¹ and a critic in The Edinburgh Review put forward the following view, which seems to have been widely held:

..... we are firmly persuaded that our hearts are practically softened by being made to sympathise even with imaginary sorrow; and cannot help thinking, that the first tears which a pathetic, powerful writer draws from a rude nature, are pledges of its permanent refinement.²

This cult of "pathos" was greatly encouraged by the lugubrious interest in and use of death bed scenes in the period. These, whether deaths of the good or the wicked, were regarded as being potentially highly edifying, and gave ample opportunity for religious discussion and comment.³ The ability to achieve pathos (something Jane Austen made no attempt to do)⁴ was in general highly regarded, though some professional critics were more discriminating, in this respect, than ordinary readers. One, for example, demanded "strokes of humour that enliven the heart", as well as "traits of feeling that melt" in his catalogue of requisites of a novelist,⁵ and the degree of regard extended to pathos unrelieved by humour varied with the individual critic. Maria Edgeworth was by some found to be lacking in feeling - and by others praised for her cheerfulness;⁶ one reviewer considered that a touch of humour

1. J.H. Alexander, op. cit., I, 69.

2. Ed R 28 (August 1817) 394.

3. As will be discussed in later chapters. Robert Mayo (The English Novel in the Magazines, 361) notes that "happy deaths" were among the basic ingredients of most Evangelical magazines of the period.

4. As was noted in a review of Emma: "Even of the sober pathos of domestic affliction there is very little for the sentimental reader". Champion 31, March 1816 pp 102-3. Quoted by William S. Ward, "Three Hitherto Unnoted Contemporary Reviews of Jane Austen", Nineteenth Century Fiction 26 (1971-2) 469-477.

5. QR 15 (April 1816) 126.

6. e.g. Ed R 28 (August 1817) 394; e.g. Ed R 14 (July 1809) 376.

might improve Jane Porter's work - while another referred to her as having the "tone of pathos which is real eloquence";¹ similarly though most reviewers regarded Mrs. Opie's great gift as being for pathos, she too was occasionally charged with being "too pathetic".²

In most respects, then, Jane Austen fulfilled the critics' demands³ - and while none lavished on her the term "genius" (one not infrequently used) she was regarded as talented and "respectable". But the demands of the public did not by any means equate with those of the critics. Though it was an age of ever growing propriety, it was also one "of anxiety from the crown to the hovel, from the cradle to the coffin,"⁴ when people wanted escape in novelty and entertainment. Much of the "entertainment" must have come from the far fetched plots of most novels, for though, as has been noted, the critics asked for probability, it is obvious from the plots of highly popular novels that the public still required more excitement than Jane Austen provided. As a reviewer sarcastically noted, novels had to be improbable, because what the public wanted were distresses, and the distresses of common life were chiefly to do with money worries, while its flushings and faintings arose "more from indigestion than from love."⁵ Similarly with characters:

1. SM 72 (April 1810) 283; GM 87 (February 1817) 145.

2. e.g. Ed R 8 (July 1806) 471.

3. The most comprehensive account of critical requirements in the period is to be found in Byron H. Gibson's History from 1800 to 1832 of English Criticism of Prose Fiction, an unpublished thesis of the University of Illinois 1931. It was not possible to obtain a copy before this chapter had been virtually completed, but fortunately the study confirms the findings noted throughout, though with much greater wealth of illustration.

4. T.M. Raysor, ed; Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, 335. (A note by Coleridge on the flyleaf of Peveril of the Peak).

5. GM 75 (October 1805) 912.

while the critics mostly paid at least lip service to credibility, the public continued to accept people "of extraordinary virtues and extravagant vices."¹

With a public making such requirements, it is not surprising that Jane Austen's subtle art, her apparent ordinariness, failed to make an impression. As with Wordsworth, the taste by which she was to be enjoyed had gradually to be created. Meanwhile, novelists like those to be discussed in the following chapters, greatly inferior to her in talent, yet greatly superior to the common run of novelists of the day, contributed in their own different ways to the scope and variety of the novel. In an attempt to indicate this, each has been given a separate chapter, with the exception of Lady Morgan, whose early work could not be ignored because of its place in the history of the novel, and yet who developed so remarkably that it became necessary to devote a second chapter to her. She and four others of the eight authors chosen continued to publish after 1820, but, in order to concentrate attention on a limited period, such work has merely been noted briefly in an appendix - as has most of the biographical material on each writer.

The order of the chapters is organic; though it would be possible to read each as a discrete monograph, each builds on, and assumes knowledge of, the chapters preceding it. Elizabeth Hamilton is discussed first, not as the oldest (though she was) but because her early work reveals more clearly than than of any of the others both an eighteenth century influence in style, and the anti-Godwinism which, though intense for a short period, ceased to be so evident in the novel quite early in the nineteenth century. Amelia Opie follows, as showing a different method of reaction to the ideas of Godwin.

Though not evangelical writers, both Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Opie were obviously affected by the evangelical movement, and discussion of its influence on their work prepares the way for a consideration of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park which, it is argued, was also affected much more strongly by

1. GM 75 (October 1805) 912.

that movement than is usually recognised. Mention of Jane Austen's work is by no means confined to one chapter, however; allusions are made to her throughout, where appropriate, and the conclusion will briefly sum up what, it is hoped, will have become obvious throughout - namely the reasons for her contemporary lack of popularity.

Mansfield Park was only very moderately successful; the following chapter, therefore, discusses the great success of Mary Brunton, a writer avowedly Evangelical, noting similarities and differences between her work and that of Jane Austen.

Up to this point, attention is focussed on exponents largely of the domestic novel; subsequent chapters look in turn at novelists who chose different genres - the historical romance, the novel of fashionable life, the national novel and the gothic novel. Here it becomes evident that in all but two of these writers, the Evangelical movement left its mark.

Not one of the novelists now to be discussed produced a novel which stands comparison with those of Jane Austen. Nevertheless, knowledge of their work contributes something to an understanding of the period in which they lived, of the development of the novel, and of the novels of Jane Austen herself; and in giving them the small share of recognition which is their due, it is possible to share something of the feeling of which Virginia Woolf wrote in her "Lives of the Obscure":¹

.... one likes romantically to feel oneself a deliverer, advancing with lights across the waste of years to the rescue of some stranded ghost ... Possibly they hear one coming. They shuffle, they preen, they bridle ... The divine relief of communication will soon again be theirs.

1. Virginia Woolf, "The Lives of the Obscure" in The Common Reader, 146-147.

II

Elizabeth Hamilton 1758-1816

One day in November 1813 Jane Austen wrote to tell her sister Cassandra that the second edition of her Sense and Sensibility was out:

.... Mary heard before she left home, that it was very much admired at Cheltenham, & that it was given to Miss Hamilton. It is pleasant to have such a respectable Writer named.¹

It is not surprising that she was pleased to have Elizabeth Hamilton's attention drawn to her work, for, according to Mrs. Elwood, "it was considered a distinction to be acquainted with her", her Monday "at homes" being attended "by all the principal literary characters of Edinburgh". And she was not only "respectable", she was popular, her last novel The Cottagers of Glenburnie (1808) being already in its fifth edition.²

Yet Mrs. Hamilton, though she regarded imagination as "the first of blessings",³ was not really a novelist - nor is it likely that she thought of herself as one. Possessed of a not inconsiderable wit, she was rather a moral essayist and educationist who, horrified by current events in France, had turned to fiction in the 1790's because of the apparently compelling need to gain as wide an audience as possible for her views, which were in many respects closely akin to those of the Evangelicals - though at that time, because of the generally held, and mistaken, belief that all Evangelicals were fanatical "enthusiasts", she would have objected very strongly to being associated with them. Even as late as 1808, she referred

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1. Jane Austen's Letters, 372. Letter of 6.11.1813
 2. Quotation from Anne K. Elwood, Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England, II, 120. So famous were her gatherings that a description of one appeared in Mary Butt's novel, Caroline Mordaunt; or, The Governess, (1835) - see Mona Wilson, Jane Austen and Some Contemporaries, pp 173-7. Glenburnie had a ninth edition in 1832, and was still in print at the end of the century. It was reprinted in 1974 by Garland Press.
 3. In A.K. Elwood, op. cit., 111. She seems to have had an eighteenth century view of the imagination, writing of it in Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education, (1801) as "that power of the mind which is exerted in forming new combinations of ideas". (Vol. II, Letter X, p 274 of 6th edition 1818).

to Methodists as "professors of evangelical righteousness".¹ Nevertheless it must chiefly have been the manner of some evangelicals to which she objected, for there seems no doubt that even in the 1790's she was in tune with many of their ideas. She kept, for example, a private journal to help her in the exercise of self-examination which she, like the Evangelicals, regarded as the basis of moral and religious improvement;² she wrote approvingly of Hannah More;³ and her first attempt at fiction,⁴ Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah (1796) was, in effect, a commentary on the religion of the fashionable world, as discussed by Mrs. More five years earlier. Significant, perhaps, too, in reflecting the seriousness of her aims, is the fact that, though the Rajah's letters are certainly fictitious, the collection can only tentatively be called a novel, since there is no plot, merely a device at the beginning for getting the Rajah interested in English religion, customs and attitudes, this being followed by his observations on these as he travels in England. The device, in fact, is

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1. In Glenburnie, ch. XVII p. 358. This, surely significantly, had been removed by the sixth edition of 1815.
 2. Elizabeth O. Benger, Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton I, 183. Of course not only Evangelicals did so; it had, for example, been a practice of Dr. Johnson. However, it was one of the "serious" habits (neglected by most of their contemporaries) which the Evangelicals encouraged.
 3. In her Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education, I, 133. Also, she claimed in the preface to Glenburnie that that work was inspired by Mrs. More's Cheap Repository Tracts.
 4. As a young girl, she had published in a provincial magazine a journal of a visit to the Highlands, and had written part of a historical novel about Lady Arabella Stewart (E.O. Benger, op. cit., 52-61). In December 1785 she had made a contribution to Lounger 46, intended to reveal how far people were judged by their social position.

similar to that used by Goldsmith in his Citizen of the World essays, of having an observer from an entirely different culture come to England to write about what he sees. And the observer himself, the humane and intellectually curious Rajah Zaarmilla, is the only character who comes to life; the rest are all types or models, glimpsed fleetingly as he travels from place to place.

Yet the book was successful.¹ Quite apart from its obvious kinship in ideas to those in the currently widely selling works of William Wilberforce and Hannah More, it came at a time when interest in India was high, the impeachment of Warren Hastings having been a cause célèbre between 1788 and 1795. Mrs. Hamilton's brother Charles had recently been home on extended leave from India, where he had lived since 1772,² so she was not without sound information about the country. And a flavour of India there is - but only a flavour; anyone turning to the book chiefly in the hope of learning about a foreign country would be sorely disappointed. Though there is a purely factual and fairly lengthy "Preliminary Dissertation on the History, Religion and Manner of the Hindoos", and the Rajah necessarily makes occasional comparisons throughout between English manners and customs and those of his own country, there is otherwise little about India in the book, which instead touches critically on as many aspects of English life as possible. The Rajah, for example, goes to a rout, which, he writes to a friend, is "a species of penance of which the pious Yogeas of Hindoostan never conceived an idea" (II, Letter XIII, 113); to the theatre, where he is struck by "a species of lunatics called Bucks" (II, Letter XIII, 124); to a prison - the dreadful conditions of which make him believe that there

1. It was in its fifth edition when Jane Austen wrote the letter quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

2. See Biographical Appendix.

must be "a supplementary code of Christian laws and Christian precepts, which in many respects must essentially differ from the old one" (II, Letter XIII, 158) - and to a church service where he invites a poor woman who is standing in the aisle into his pew, to the fury of his "Christian companions" (II, Letter XIII, 64-66).¹

Combined with this general satire on society, with its emphasis on the lack of real Christianity, is an attack on political radicalism - and especially on the theories of William Godwin, whose ideas Mrs. Hamilton gave to a group of "philosophers" whom the Rajah meets at a country house where he stays for a while. Typical of the satire on Godwinism is the fact that two of the leading lights in the group, Mr. Axiom and Mr. Puzzledorf, first appear at the trial of one of their servants who, because he has heard them deny the existence of crime and declare the injustice of property, has felt justified in robbing them. Though they assure him that in theory they were right, they give evidence against him, on the ground of its still being

.... a dark age where vulgar prejudices so far prevail
as to consider laws as necessary to the well being of
society (II, Letter XV, 197)

- and, knowing that he is probably to be hanged, they cheerfully leave him, saying:

".... be comforted, Timothy! The age of reason approaches."
(II, Letter XV, 197)

Like the other philosophers staying at Ardent Hall - men like Dr. Vapour and Dr. Sceptic - they are atheists, and though each has his own "system" they are all, to some extent, Godwinian: gratitude is a crime (II, Letter XV, 211) chastity a weakness (II, Letter XV, 213); no man should need to toil for another (II, Letter XV, 212); decay and disease can be prevented

1. Legal and penal reform were areas in which radicals and evangelicals overlapped in attitude. Evangelicals objected to pew rents, and abolished them in their churches.

by an effort of the mind (II, Letter XV, 215); and eventually people will be able to do without food and clothing. The limit of absurdity is reached when it is suggested to Mr. Vapour that women, at least, may find it difficult to do without food and clothing:

.... "Women!" repeated Mr. Vapour, with a contemptuous smile; "We shall not then be troubled with women. In the age of reason the world shall contain only a race of men!"
(II, Letter XV, 215)

- and absurdity turns to Swiftian horror when the philosophers attempt, by a species of conditioning, to turn sparrows into honey bees by putting them into a kind of hive - an experiment which ends in the death of hundreds of birds (II, Letter XVI, 226-237).

The long conversations of this band of types seem to provide a model for the Peacockian novel, and produce a form of fiction which Northrop Frye has usefully defined as Menippean satire or "anatomy":

.... The Menippean satire deals less with people as such than with mental attitudes its characterisation ... is stylised rather than naturalistic ... [it] presents people as mouthpieces of the ideas they represent. A constant theme in the tradition is the ridicule of the philosophus gloriosus ... [It] relies on the free play of intellectual fancy and the kind of humorous observation that produces caricature.¹

Among Menippean satirists he includes Rabelais, Voltaire, Swift, Sterne, Samuel Butler and Peacock, whose satire is the nearest in this group to that of Mrs. Hamilton. Hers, however, at times strikes a much grimmer note than that of Peacock, for she seems to have believed there to be an urgent need to provide an answer to republicanism and atheism. The Rajah, though his occasional misinterpretations of events are highly amusing, is no fool, and his view is, that of the many religions prevalent in England,

.... Christianity (as it is set forth in the Shaster [Scriptures]) has the smallest number of votaries; and ... is fast journeying to oblivion.
(II, Letter XV, 202)

1. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 309-310.

Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah was a great success - but this was no time for the moralist to relax. In the same year appeared several Godwinian novels, two of them clever enough to be highly dangerous - Robert Bage's Hermsprong and Mrs. Inchbald's Nature and Art. A third, Mary Hay's Memoirs of Emma Courtney was at least sensational, telling of a passionate woman who thought it no shame to declare her love. Exasperated, Mrs. Hamilton immediately began a new novel, containing a much fuller attack on "the new philosophy". Illness, however, delayed publication, and her Memoirs of Modern Philosophers did not appear till 1800, under the quickly exploded pseudonym of Geoffry Jarvis.¹ Its success was immediate; according to Mrs. Elwood:

.... Such was the popularity of this work, that she at once became distinguished and celebrated in the literary world ...²

By this time, Mrs. Hamilton had moved far enough towards the Evangelicals to allow one of her more admirable characters to say

" though I am far from being an advocate for enthusiasm, yet I think it must be confessed that the general sobriety of manners and orderly conduct of the lower classes in North Britain is a strong testimony in favour of their instructors."
(I, XVII, 225-226).

Claiming to be the manuscript of a young man who died in poverty, Memoirs of Modern Philosophers reveals the intimate association between the novel supporting the church and that supporting conservative politics by declaring itself to be championing

.... the cause of religion and virtue ... in opposition to the opinions generally known by the name of the New Philosophy.
(Introductory Letter p xiii)

1. Preface to 1804 edition, p vi. In the meanwhile the conservative attack had been maintained by others, e.g. by Isaac D'Israeli (Vaurien 1797) Charles Lloyd (Edmund Oliver, 1798) Jane West (A Tale of the Times, 1799) George Walker (The Vagabond, 1799).

2. A.K. Elwood, op. cit., II, 116.

- and this it does, quite often in highly amusing fashion, taking time also to aim shafts at the false picture of life given in the circulating library novel and ^{at} the danger of uncontrolled imagination. It is not, however, so satisfying as a complete work as was Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah, because there the Rajah's letters were, in fact, largely little moral essays, very eighteenth-century in flavour, and completely right in tone. Here, though Mrs. Hamilton without doubt attempts the novel, she mixes characters whose depiction is meant to be taken seriously with the "types" of the Menippean satire - and the combination is not successful. Moreover, though the plot is slight, the novel is padded out with moral disquisitions, with serious or humorous sketches of characters' lives and with extraneous incidents meant only to reinforce the didactic purpose. Jane Austen must have rejoiced at the sentiments and the humour, and shuddered at the lack of artistry.

The novel has three heroines, two of whom might be seen as crude essays in the character types which, with Jane Austen, were to develop into the living creations of Elinor and Marianne Dashwood. Like Elinor of whom we learn immediately that "her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them" (S & S, I, I, 6), Harriet Orwell has strong affections, but is able to "controul the feelings of her well-regulated mind" (II, I, 10). Self-control was a virtue so highly regarded by the Evangelicals that it was to provide the title of one of the most popular Evangelical novels of the period. According to Mrs. More:

.... those secret habits of self-control, those interior and unobtrusive virtues, which excite no astonishment, kindle no emulation and extort no praise, are at the same time the most difficult, and the most sublime

And according to Thomas Gisborne, "The true secret of happiness is to learn to place delight in the performance of duty." This, he called "the temper

of a genuine Christian."¹ When Harriet falls in love, therefore, her behaviour, like Elinor Dashwood's is exemplary. Though she wishes to marry Dr. Henry Sydney, as he has no means but what his profession brings him, she sadly, but without protest, accepts the advice of her aunt, that marriage must not be thought of in the circumstances. Reason must prevail:

.... In the struggle of contending passions, the heart that is determined to submit to no law but that of duty will ever come off victorious. (II, IV, 140)

This kind of advice featured quite frequently in novels of the early nineteenth century, and was most often given by characters obviously meant to be approved. In this case, Harriet's aunt is a saintly figure, who dies breathing the words

" Blessed be the name of that merciful God who from my earliest youth has been my hope and my stay and who is now about to be my portion for ever! Amen, amen."
(II, IV, 120)

Of this Mrs. Hamilton asked:

.... Who can read it, and not exclaim with the son of Balak, "let me die, the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (II, IV, 121)

The same kind of advice on marriage is given to Henry Sydney - and by a woman who is described in a way which makes it probable that she is a portrait of Elizabeth Hamilton herself. Quite independently, she tells him that he was wrong to propose marriage to Harriet when he had no money:

" pray, if she had listened to you, what would have been the consequence? Years may elapse before your profession enables you to maintain a wife in a style of common decency."
(II, XIV, 371)

Mrs. Hamilton then proceeds to prove the principle of Harriet and Henry by letting them have a short period of separation - though she soon afterwards rewards their bowing to duty and reason by providing the financial security they need to marry. This seems to have been the usual outcome of

1. Religion of the Fashionable World, ch. IV, Works, II, 333. Thomas Gisborne, Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex, IX, 219 (1816 edition).

lovers' self control in novels of the time and Jane Austen's are no exception; it is seen in Sense and Sensibility where Elinor Dashwood is given her Edward - but, more pertinently perhaps, it is seen in Persuasion where very similar advice to that given to Harriet Orwell has been given to Anne Elliot. Here it was not really (as is frequently held), Lady Russell who caused Anne's long years of unhappiness: Jane Austen makes it clear that within a year from the time when his first proposal of marriage was refused, Frederick Wentworth's circumstances had changed in such a way that he would have been readily accepted by Anne's family. It is he, who, failing to understand the power of the claims of duty, has pained Anne by staying away unnecessarily, as a result of his own hurt pride - and it is he who, in the course of the novel has to learn for himself how duty cannot be denied by a man or woman of integrity.

And just as Harriet Orwell's self-control and obedience to duty are firmly attributed to her education in religious principle, so, though it is not stressed, it is made clear that Anne Elliot's principle has a religious foundation. Though, unlike Harriet, she is not given a religious father with whom she can hold pious conversations, she is made to recommend to the bereaved Captain Benwick books which will "rouse and fortify the mind by the highest precepts, and the strongest examples of moral and religious endurances" (NA&P, III, XI, 101) and to think of William Walter Elliot that, though he now seems to judge properly, and as a man of principle,

.... there had been bad habits; ... Sunday-travelling had been a common thing; ... there had been a period of his life (and probably not a short one) when he had been, at least, careless on all serious matters; ... How could it it ever be ascertained that his mind was truly cleansed?
(NA&P, IV, V, 161)

Moreover, she distrusts the fact that from him there is "never any burst of feeling, any warmth of indignation or delight at the evil or good of

others" (NA&P, IV, V, 161). This is not merely the language of religion, it is the language of the Evangelicals. According to Hannah More, Sunday observance was "the Palladium of Christianity." "As this day is neglected or observed, Christianity will stand or fall" she said—and those who disliked the evangelicals tended to be highly irritated at their attitude to the keeping of Sundays. The use of the word "serious" to mean "religious" was another Evangelical trait: according to John Wesley it had been William Law's Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life which had sown the seed of Methodism and even though the Evangelicals dissociated themselves from the Methodists, the use of the word "serious" to mean "religious" became part of the Evangelical language, the first N.E.D. quotation for its use in this sense being from 1796, when the movement was gaining strength.¹

Jane Austen's attitude to the Evangelicals, and any possible effect of this on her novels will be discussed at greater length later. Certainly in her Sense and Sensibility she did not form the contrast between her two sisters on the basis of a difference in religious upbringing, as did Mrs. Hamilton in Memoirs of Modern Philosophers, where the second heroine, Julia Delmond, the "Marianne" character, lacks principle because she has been brought up by a father who believes that religion is "a very proper thing for the common people" but "quite beneath the notice of a gentleman" (I, XII, 125). With the best of intentions, therefore, he has taught his daughter to believe that only weak minds need religious superstition and a doctrine of rewards and punishments, (I, XII, 150). Her mother, rather

1. See Mary Jones, Hannah More, 106; Muriel Jaegar, Before Victoria, 17; Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, 492. "Serious" is frequently used in this sense in letters and novels of the period, and in Lady Morgan's Florence Macarthy, (1818) it is explained as "a technical term in a particular new light". (FM, I, I, 72)

like Jane Austen's Lady Bertram, is phlegmatic and unthinking. A nominal Christian, she confines her religious duties to Sundays, (I, XII, 149) and with the education of her daughter, she "never presumes to interfere." (I, XII, 147). Julia has been allowed to read the wrong kind of novels with the result that

.... imagination, wild and ungoverned imagination reigned
paramount in her breast ... Sentiment usurped the place of
judgment. (I, XII, 146-7)

Thus she would have been glad to agree with Marianne Dashwood that Elinor was wrong in thinking that "the pleasantness of an employment [did] not always evince its propriety" (S&S, I, XIII, 68). Marianne's behaviour, however, is credible - Julia's just escapes being absurd. Lacking religious principle, she has become easy prey to a group of "new philosophers", and her over-stimulated imagination has made her succumb readily to the far fetched stories of one of them, Vallaton, who, knowing quite well that he is the son of a woman who was hanged, persuades her that he is a foundling, whose noble parentage is attested by the rich clothes in which he was left. When he kisses her hand it is "in the same manner which [she] had so often seen described in her favourite novels" (II, IV, 105). Hoping to restore him to his parents, she "call[s] to her remembrance all the similar events in her most favourite novels ..." (I, XII, 115).

So far she might be a lesser Catherine Morland, as in all the early episodes in which she appears, she is treated with a teasing humour; for example, when she finds that a suitor has been proposed for her, since it is not Vallaton, she immediately chooses to regard herself as persecuted - though there is no question of her being coerced:

.... her fate was cruel, but it was not unexampled. From all that she had read, she had rather cause to esteem herself peculiarly fortunate in being so long exempted from the common misfortune of her sex. Few novels furnished an example of any young woman who had been permitted to attain her nineteenth year, without having been distressed by the addresses of a numberless train

of admirers ... Where was the female possessed of any tolerable share of beauty who had not been persecuted by a cruel, hard-hearted father?

(II, X, 265-266)

The third heroine, however, Bridget Botherim, is completely burlesqued, being portrayed in eighteenth century style as something of a grotesque: she waddles (I, VII, 31)¹, has a cast in her eye and a twist in her left shoulder (I, X, 99), is very short, and has a long, craggy neck, and shrivelled, parchment-like skin (I, XVI, 195). Frequently she is placed in farcical situations: at one stage she loses her wig in a filthy gutter, and on another occasion, in the middle of a soliloquy on love, she is surrounded by a drove of pigs. Not very intelligent, she has been spoiled by her mother; like Julia she has been allowed to read novels indiscriminately (one of the most hackneyed situations in the novel of the period)², and she has fallen victim to the same "new philosophers", a group of fools and scoundrels which includes Julia's lover Vallaton, a French adventuress, Emmeline (whom they call the Goddess of Reason) and two men with the obvious type names of Glib and Myope.

From these "philosophers" Bridget learns that if a woman loves, she should not hesitate to declare her feelings, and to pursue the object of her affections with all the energy in her being. (Energy was a favourite word of the philosophers, as will be noted later). This lesson she eagerly acts upon, her words and subsequent actions clearly revealing her to be a satirical portrait of one of Godwin's disciples, Mary Hays, whose

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1. The novel claims to start in the middle of chapter five, the first pages of the manuscript having been lost; thus, by page 26 we have reached chapter seven. Bridget's portrait is a reminder that this was the age of Gillray, Rowlandson and Cruikshank.
 2. e.g. See Charlotte Lennox's The Female Quixote, 1752 (which was still read); Eaton S. Barrett's The Heroine, 1813; Maria Edgeworth's Angelina ou l'Amie Inconnue, 1801. The kind of book regarded as dangerous was Goethe's Sorrows of Young Werther and Rousseau's Nouvelle Héloïse.

autobiographical novel Memoirs of Emma Courtney had recently created a sensation by apparently advocating such behaviour.¹ Unfortunately for him, however, Bridget's chosen love is Henry Sydney - and when he goes to London to try to improve his financial prospects so that he can marry Harriet, she follows him there.

Up to this point, the novel has been almost entirely humorous, shading in tone from quiet domestic humour to high farce. Now, however, the tone goes sadly awry, for Julia too, is in London, having been seduced by Vallaton, and her adventure is to end in tragedy, while Bridget, treated entirely as a figure of fun almost to the last, is merely to become a sadder and wiser young lady. Inconstancy of tone, in fact, is the novel's major weakness, excesses of sensibility being laughed at at one moment, while the language and sentiments of sensibility are used quite seriously at another. Bridget is being mocked when she effuses:

" Give me the wild extatic [sic] wanderings of imagination, the solemn sorrows of suffocating sensibility! Oh how I doat on the gloomy ravings of despair, or delicious description of the soul-melting sensations of fierce and ardent love"
(II, III, 80)

- but there are other episodes in which the use of such language has no satiric intent, as when Julia, abandoned by Vallaton, pregnant, and dying in a home for destitute women, is asked if she would like to see Harriet and says

"Harriet Orwell! ... ah! no, no, Harriet Orwell would now disdain to look on the poor forlorn Julia!"

"My Julia!.my dear Julia! my sweet friend!" cried Harriet, who had only waited for a signal to approach her, and clasping her in her arms imprinted an affectionate kiss on her pale cheek: "Never never will your friend Harriet forsake you!" Sighs and

1. Interestingly, though Emma is treated sympathetically, and though it was the passionate woman who was noted and remembered, the book actually declared itself to be a warning against such behaviour. See Joyce M.S. Tompkins, The Polite Marriage, 166.

tears choked her utterance; while Julia, with all
the strength she had left, strained her to her bosom.
(III, XII, 276)

Difficult though it is to understand how the sensible and witty Mrs. Hamilton could write in this way,¹ the fact is that the scene was well received, The British Critic, for example saying:

.... The catastrophe of Julia is tremendous, but
touched with a most judicious hand.²

Death-bed scenes were a popular legacy from the novel of sensibility, but they were also being seized on by the evangelicals because of their obvious potential for teaching or reinforcing a moral lesson. As Margaret Maison has said:

.... as for death, no Evangelical writer could resist
a good wallow in a deathbed scene.³

Julia's death gives a dire warning, in contrast to the "holy death" (noted earlier) of Harriet's aunt, Miss Sydney, which is accompanied by a footnote to say that it was drawn "from real life". Such scenes (fictitious parallels of those from real life found throughout the letters of Hannah More and her friends)⁴ became so popular that they were retained in the Victorian novel, even when there was no moral to be drawn. Here, however, one result of the frequent shifts from satire to such sentimentality is that there are occasions when it is very difficult to decide whether or not a humorous effect is intended. One such is at a moment of suspense about Julia, when the reactions of her father (given to tears and sensibility) and her mother (portrayed throughout as phlegmatic to a degree) are so different as to produce an effect of comic bathos:

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1. And the agony is piled on: Julia's behaviour has killed both of her parents; she herself is dying because she has taken poison - though it is killing her slowly enough to allow for extended conversations.
 2. BC (16 October 1800) 439.
 3. Margaret Maison, Search Your Soul, Eustace, 92. See also Ian Bradley, The Call to Seriousness, 187, and Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians, 457.
 4. William Roberts, Memoirs of Hannah More, passim - but see, e.g. II, 327-331.

" Where is my daughter? Why is she not returned?
Oh! I read it in your face - I have lost my child and
am forever miserable!"

Here the poor father sunk [sic] back in his chair in
speechless agony.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Delmond, laying down her knitting.
(I, XIX, 299-300)

Had this been Jane Austen, the passage could have come only from her Minor Works - and the reader would have had no doubt that she was laughing. Here, despite Mrs. Hamilton's very real sense of the ludicrous, one can only believe that she was writing in all seriousness.

Moreover, just as jarring as the mixture of the sentimental and the burlesqued is the juxtaposition of burlesqued passages with the overtly religious passages which Mrs. Hamilton in her role as propagator of Christian morality inserted as the raison d'être of the novel. Contrasted with the atheism of the philosophers and their converts is the Christianity of some of the other leading characters, as was noted earlier in relation to Harriet's aunt, and as is seen in the following passage in which Dr. Orwell, Harriet's father tries to win Bridgetina from her new philosophy:

"One philosopher, and one only has appeared who, superior to all prejudices, invariably treated the female sex as beings who were to be taught the performance of duty, not by arbitrary regulations confined to particular parts of conduct, but by the knowledge of principles which enlighten the understanding and improve the heart.

"And, pray, what was the name of this philosopher, sir?" said Bridgetina. "I wonder whether he is an acquaintance of Mr. Myope's, I never heard him speak of him."

"Very probably not," rejoined Dr. Orwell; his name was JESUS CHRIST". (I, XVI, 199)

In the same way his daughter Harriet tries to reclaim Julia, who has been told by the philosophers that there is "nothing so pernicious as fixed principle," (II, IV, 109) by telling her that:

" the contemplation of the immutability of the ALL PERFECT has a tendency to fix as well as to exalt our notions of virtue " (II, II, 50)¹

1. There is here the kind of circumlocution for God discussed in the introduction. They are found in most of the writers covered by this study.

By painful experience Julia learns whom she should have believed, and on her death bed preaches a lengthy sermon to Bridget, concluding:

" Tell Vallaton, then, that as a christian I forgive him, and pray to God to turn his heart. If mine had been fortified by principle, he never could have seduced it by his sophistry."

(III, XIV, 347)¹

And the novel supplies many other sermons, in various guises, such as that mentioned earlier, given by Harriet's aunt Martha on her death bed (II, IV, 116 et seq.) or that given by Harriet to Julia, just before her elopement, which runs into fifteen pages and partly takes the form of a debate upon "the wisdom and efficacy of repentance", (II, II, 52).²

This is far from Jane Austen - but far in manner, rather than in intention. In Sense and Sensibility Marianne, like Julia, acts foolishly, impetuously, unconventionally - and loves a man who is not worthy of her; and though Jane Austen avoids anything so dramatic as Marianne's seduction or death, nevertheless there is a sick-room scene after which, like Julia, Marianne recants her former behaviour and beliefs - and, what is more, does so in religious terms, speaking of atonement to her God, resolving to show that her spirit is humbled - and vowing to regulate her sorrow over Willoughby "by religion, by reason, by constant employment," (S & S, III, X, 347). Her self-condemnation is likely to seem excessive in modern eyes - for set against the cold and calculating behaviour of Mrs. Ferrars, Lucy Steele, and the John Dashwoods, she is admirable; but, by her wilfulness and her lack of self-control, she has deeply distressed her mother and sisters, and almost killed herself: as she says, had she died "it would have been self-destruction," (S & S, III, X, 345). Thus it is forgiveness from her

1. The "principle" referred to here, and in the expression "active principle", which is found frequently in works of the period, including Mansfield Park, is Christian principle. Cf. Sir Thomas Bertram (MP, III, XVII, 463) "principle, active principle, had been wanting".

2. Note also the heavy piety of the ending (III, 'Conclusion', 365-366).

God as well as from her family that she needs: in the novel sensibility has been judged and found wanting on the strongest of all grounds to many readers of the day - those of religion.

How far Jane Austen had been affected by the Evangelical movement by 1811, when Sense and Sensibility was published, it is difficult to say with any degree of certainty, for there are not here the reasonably clear links in thought and language which have been noted as appearing in Persuasion and which are clearest of all in Mansfield Park. However, it is possible that there is a deeper religious note even in the early novels than has usually been thought, for in a review in which Richard Whately found it to be a blemish in Maria Edgeworth's writing "that vice should be traced to every other source except the want of religious principle", he went on immediately to declare Jane Austen, by contrast, to be "evidently a Christian writer". Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, too, saw her as Christian writer, saying that though religious sentiments were not broadly displayed, her novels could not have been given their tone ("temper") "without a feeling of the spirit of Christianity"¹. Moreover, in her emphasis on good conduct springing from self-control, sincerity and true goodness of heart, Jane Austen was very much in tune with Mrs. More, who believed that Christianity revealed itself in Christian conduct and, in much of her work, aimed at inculcating a desirable code of behaviour. As Mary Jones has said:

.... It is characteristic of Hannah More's work as a moral reformer that the sins for which she reserved her sharpest condemnation were ... those ... of the spirit ... Her friends among the quality were decorous men and women in whose houses the grosser sins were not conspicuous, but with the sins of 'inconsideration' and 'carelessness' she found that 'even good kind people contrive to live on excellent terms'.²

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1. Critical Heritage, 94-5; BEM, ns. 2 (May 1818) 453-455 in Critical Heritage, 268.
 2. Mary Jones, Hannah More, 105.

"Inconsideration" and "carelessness" were "sins" which Jane Austen exemplified in Marianne and Emma; over the years, the novels in which they feature have surely done more to combat them than all Mrs. More's prosing, eagerly received though it was in its day, and the very fact that this is not always immediately seen is indicative of the quality of Jane Austen's art.

In Memoirs of Modern Philosophers, on the other hand, in which Mrs. Hamilton, whether she recognised it or not, had also in mind much the same ends as Mrs. More, none of the major characters is anything but a puppet created to serve a propagandist purpose - and while this is acceptable in the "Menippean satire" sequences, it is not in the others. In addition, the speech style tends to be stilted and unnatural. Typical, for instance, is that of Mrs. Fielding, Henry's patroness, and the founder of an asylum for destitute women, who at one point says:

"Come, let us hasten to this poor unfortunate ...
What say you, ladies, to my proposal?"
(III, XII, 273)

Worst of all, however, as has already been mentioned, is the jarring of tones. Mrs. Hamilton was an intelligent woman, and not only saw that her novel had faults, but apparently realised that they were inherent in the structure of the work, since she wrote to a friend:

.... I have at length got to the end of Bridgetina; but before I got there, had almost forgotten the beginning. I am now employed in examining it critically, and must candidly confess, that it does not now please me half so well as when it was first written; yet, without re-writing I see not how I can alter it: be so good as to favour me with your advice upon this subject.¹

Yet it is surprising that her artistry was so flawed, for she was obviously aware of contemporary weaknesses in technique, such as stereotyped features in the behaviour of heroes and heroines. For example,

1. E.O. Benger, op. cit., I, 130.

when Henry is ill, we are told that

.... (contrary to the usual practices of lovers in similar circumstances) he had not, during his delirium, once mentioned the name of Harriet
(III, VIII, 190)

- and Bridget (or Bridgetina as she prefers to be called) soliloquises "in the manner of all heroines," (I, XVIII, 247). She was also fully aware of how hackneyed were the phrases of the circulating library novel, letting Henry's sister say:

.... in the language of novelists, I shall resume my pen.
(II, XV, 376)

She mock-seriously discussed the possible ways open to her of introducing characters, spent part of the concluding chapter on an imaginary conversation on how a novel should be ended - and even gave a recipe which, with one or two simple variations, would produce a novel with no pains at all:

Note, for the benefit of Novel-writers - We here generously present the fair manufacturers in this line with a set of phrases which, if carefully mixed up with a handful of story, a pretty quantity of moonshine, an old house of any kind, so that it be in sufficient decay, and well tenanted with bats and owls, will make a couple of very neat volumes. Or should the sentimental be preferred to the descriptive, it is only leaving out the ghosts, bats, owls and moonlight, and the above phrases will season any tender tale to taste.
(III, IV, 103)

Such penetrating awareness of the weaknesses of fellow novelists did not prevent her from making artistic errors of her own; yet, when all has been said of the weaknesses of the work as a novel, it is not difficult to see why contemporary readers appreciated it. In the first place many of the digressions Mrs. Hamilton inserts are interesting in themselves, becoming, rather as are those of Fielding and Sterne, part of the very art of the work,¹ so that we find her quite blandly saying, "To return to our narrative" (e.g. I, IX, 57) or "But to return" (e.g. I, XI, 109) - a method

1. Unlike digressions to give "histories" of characters - some of whom are absolutely peripheral to the plot - e.g. I, XVIII, 1; I, XII, 118-151.

which is used also (often in the middle of a chapter) to shift the scene suddenly from one character to another, with a casualness which is disarming, as, for example, when she writes:

.... It is high time to return to Bridgetina, to whom,
as the ostensible heroine of these memoirs it is our
duty to attend. (III, XIV, 330)¹

Such direct addresses to the reader, are frequent - but Mrs. Hamilton's company is usually very pleasant:

.... Allons, then, my good reader, let us hasten to
the inn-door to be ready to receive her. [i.e. Bridgetina].
We are just in time; for here, at the Golden Cross, you
may behold her just alighted. (II, XI, 287)

Her narrative style, while occasionally careless,² is easy and familiar, having a flavour more of the eighteenth than of the nineteenth century - though that eighteenth century flavour is rarely as strong as in the following passage, when Henry is wondering whether Harriet will accept him for himself alone, without money:

.... "She will", said Hope. "No, no", said trembling
Apprehension, "you have no right to expect it." "Then
she is lost to you forever!" said Despondency.
(III, VII, 184)

And if the speech of the well-to-do characters is stilted, that of the others is usually quite natural. The uneducated Mrs. Botherim, for example, says to Bridget:

.... "I wish to goodness, Biddy that you would
talk in a way that a body could understand. When
you get into one of them there tanterums [sic] there
is no getting any good of you. I had as lieve be in
a room all by myself." (I, XVIII, 247)

But above all, the novel is readable because its shafts hit their targets in often hilarious fashion. Nor need readers be deeply soaked in the theories of Godwin in order to enjoy the fun; Mrs. Hamilton supplies enough information about them to make the satire perfectly comprehensible.

1. See also, e.g. I, XV, 181; I, XVIII, 248.

2. e.g. "She exulted in the honour of an annual visit from him which he regularly paid on his way to Buxton every summer" (I, VI, 13. It will be remembered that VI is only the second chapter of the novel).

"Philosophizing" itself is made to seem a ludicrous activity: the convert Bridgetina even takes her meals philosophically "at what time the energies of her stomach require[d] it" (III, I, 8) - but she is utterly incapable of doing anything. Favourite catchwords of the philosophers are "necessity" "general utility" - and especially "energy"; they expect a time to come when men will be sufficiently enlightened to cure all diseases by the exertion of their energies¹ - and even think energy can cure broken bones

"Energies are the only true doctors. Energies do all. Energies cheat the undertaker and make a man live forever. Never mind broken bones. All trifles to philosophers" (II, I, 25)

- which brings little comfort to Vallaton who has just been injured in a carriage accident.

Another favourite concept of the philosophers is "equality" which Bridgetina preaches with vigour: this Mrs. Hamilton counters with both seriousness and humour. Henry's father (who, like Henry's patroness, Mrs. Fielding, seems to speak for the authoress) believes

.... a perfect equality of conditions to be impracticable and absurd

- but sees as obvious

.... the advantage that would result to society from such a dissemination of the wealth of a country as should render the extremes of wealth and poverty unknown
(III, X, 238-239)

Harriet's father likewise feels that the very real hardships of the poor are caused by "luxury", the "superfluous riches" of some (I, XVI, 216). However, while kindness to the poor is stressed, there is no idea of egalitarianism, and the hypocrisy Mrs. Hamilton obviously saw in the egalitarianism of the new philosophers is brought out in a scene where Bridgetina, the advocate of equality, objects to Julia's father's devoted

1. Godwin did actually forecast this towards the end of Political Justice.

servant, old Quentin, sitting in the same room as herself, telling the astonished Julia, that though her philosophy preaches equality,

".... the age of reason is not yet far enough advanced for people to desire their servants to sit down in the same room with them." (II, VI, 188)

A similar deflation is given to the Godwinian idea that there is no such thing as crime. Vallaton, having, by underhand machinations deliberately sent to the guillotine an innocent man whom he has defrauded, argues thus with himself:

" I am but a machine in the hand of fate Nothing but what has happened could have happened. Everything that is, must inevitably be; and the causes of this old man's death were generated in the eternity that preceded his birth." (I, IX, 82)

Likewise, when he absconds with the funds of a committee which the philosophers have set up to form a Utopian community in Africa, Myope argues:¹

" Mr. Vallaton no doubt perceived a degree of fitness in appropriating those sums to himself which a man of more confined intellect might not have discovered." (III, XI, 262)

- though he has a sudden reversal of opinion when he finds that Vallaton has run off not only with the money, but with his mistress, Emmeline, the Goddess of Reason.

Another of the philosophers, Glib, is revealed also to be criminally minded, in an episode designed to show the absurdity of the theory that all property should be held in common, and that gratitude, therefore, is unnecessary. Accepting this doctrine wholeheartedly, Bridgetina objects to paying her lodging bill:

" Unnatural state of civilization!" cried Bridgetina ... "Odious and depraved society, where everything one eats or drinks or wears must necessarily be paid for." ... (III, V, 140)

1. CR no. 29 (July 1800), 311, identifies Myope as a caricature of Godwin himself. One remembers the scheme of Coleridge and Southey in 1794-5, to set up a Utopian community on the banks of the Susquehanna.

- and when she sees, on a shop in London, a sign saying "money lent", she assumes that the shop's owner, Mr. Poppem must be a philosopher, who will deem it a duty to give her what she needs. Poppem soon disabuses her of this idea, and Glib, who then pawns her watch for her, helps himself to five pounds of the proceeds while doing so, on the grounds of his own "necessity" (III, V, 149).

As might be expected with such "progressives", of course, a concept of duty such as that held by Jane Austen's Anne Elliot is regarded as utterly foolish; parental authority is seen as a "slavish and unnatural yoke" (II, II, 40) - and while Harriet Orwell's filial love is specifically noted, the pathetic Julia is persuaded

.... to set an example of moral rectitude, by throwing
off the ignoble chains of filial duty
(II, X, 282)

Bridgetina, in contrast to both of the other girls, needs little or no persuading, and her lapse from both duty and propriety is treated in highly burlesqued style, as she says to her horrified London landlady:

" I ... shall be much obliged to you for an
introduction to any heroine who has nobly sacrificed
the bauble - reputation. Pray, have you any
acquaintance in this line?" (III, I, 4)

Crude though such humour is, when compared with that in the novels of Jane Austen, nevertheless, Mrs. Hamilton's sense of the ridiculous (and her targets) have enough in common with Jane Austen's early writings to make it most probable that she, like many others, found Mrs. Hamilton here not only "respectable" but highly entertaining.¹

She was never again, however, to capture the lightness of touch of parts of Memoirs of Modern Philosophers for in 1801 with her Letters on

1. "The novelist shows his exuberance either by an exhaustive analysis of human relationships, as in Henry James, or of social phenomena, as in Tolstoy. The Menippean satirist, dealing with intellectual themes and attitudes, shows his exuberance in intellectual ways, by piling up an enormous mass of erudition about his theme or in overwhelming his pedantic targets with an avalanche of their own jargon." Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, 311.

the Elementary Principles of Education the schoolmistress took over.

These letters were, deservedly, popular,¹ outlining in simple prose her own eclectic version of the best of the modern ideas on education, based on a study of the development of the human mind, and stressing the importance both of the very early years and of religious education; and it was in order to gain an even wider audience for these ideas that she wrote her next work, Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina (1804). This normally classed as a novel, Mrs. Hamilton declared firmly not to be one, saying (rather oddly since she had already used fiction for didactic purposes and was to do so again) that fiction would not fully serve her end:

.... A work of imagination, in which the characters are of the author's own creation, and in which every event is at his disposal, may be so managed, as to be admirably calculated to promote the reception of a favourite theory, but can never be considered as confirmation of its truth. (Preface xi)

Her earliest biographer, Mrs. Benger, also firmly rejected any idea that Agrippina was a novel:

.... Agrippina is preposterously classed with novels; and an opinion has been commonly entertained that it is, in reality, a sort of biographical romance. No idea could be more unfounded. The author, directed by her learned friends, was indefatigable in collecting documents and procuring materials for an authentic work. Through the medium of translation, she had been conversant with the best historians, annalists, poets, and orators of ancient Rome; and she was guided by the most esteemed modern writers on the subject of antiquities, laws, and usages. When doubts or difficulties occurred, she communicated her scruples to the scholar or philosopher who was most competent to resolve them. Far from indulging in fictitious embellishments, she has not even attempted to fill up the chasm occasionally left in the narrative; and she was careful to substantiate every fact by reference to classical authority.²

1. New editions were called for in 1802, 1803, 1808, 1810, 1818, 1824, and even again in 1837.

2. E.O. Benger, op. cit., I, 161.

Nevertheless, from its first appearance, some readers and critics have regarded it as being an attempt at a historical novel. The Monthly Magazine, for example, said reprovingly:

.... We cannot approve of this mixing fact and fable; they are not likely to be separated by young persons; history ought not to be read in the disguise of a novel. Miss Hamilton, however, has preserved the character and costume of the times she represents ...¹

- while The Annual Review doubted "the expediency of composing historic [sic] novels."² Indeed Montague Summers even included it in his Gothic Bibliography (1940), though anyone less of a Gothic novelist than Mrs. Hamilton it would be difficult to imagine, the book's macabre train of treachery, poisoning, suicide and death by deliberate starvation all being vouched for in the annals of the period. Her sources were Velleius Paterculus, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion Cassius³, and of these Tacitus beyond doubt is her major source; indeed, in a letter asking for advice on reading for her book, she said

.... It was the perusal of Tacitus in Murphy's translation which first excited the idea in my mind.⁴

Thus, while volume one of Agrippina is largely a general background to the period, taken from several sources, all the skeleton and much of the flesh of volume two is taken directly from books 1-3 of Tacitus's Annals of Imperial Rome, and most of volume three from books 3-6 of this work. What Mrs. Hamilton seems to have done is to have extrapolated all the incidents involving Agrippina, and to have filled out the account from other classical sources where she is mentioned, using the resulting narrative as a text on which to make moral reflections. The words spoken by the characters are often either directly from or paraphrased from

1. MM Supplement (July 28 1805) 660.

2. An R III, 542.

3. All Roman historians of the first two centuries AD.

4. E.O. Benger, op. cit., II, 43-44.

Tacitus, and even certain scenes which might at first seem to have been adapted to suit an early nineteenth century sensibility are substantiated in the text, such as the following, in which Germanicus, Agrippina's husband, weeps on sending her away from him to safety. What the passage also illustrates, however, is the way in which concessions are made to fiction, for the following lines of Tacitus are elaborated into three pages for Agrippina:

.... Descended from Augustus, [Agrippina] insisted that the grand-daughter of that emperor had not so far degenerated as to shrink from danger. Germanicus continued to urge his request; he melted into tears; he clasped her in his arms; he embraced her infant son, and at length prevailed.¹

This becomes:

" I thank you, Germanicus, I thank our noble friends," cried Agrippina, indignantly, "for imagining that the descendant of Augustus, the daughter of Vipsanius Agrippa, has so far degenerated as to shrink from danger. By what part of my conduct have I deserved a treatment so injurious? In what instance have I departed from the character of a Roman matron, that I should thus be called on to desert my husband in the storm, and to provide for my own safety by dastardly and ignominious flight?"

"No", replied Germanicus mildly, "no, my love. It is not for your own sake, it is for mine that I conjure you to go. While you remain in this scene of tumult and disorder, I am truly miserable, nor can I answer for the consequence. To manage the unruly passions of the multitude, when once they have broken the bounds prescribed by authority, requires the utmost command of temper and of prudence. Should any insult be offered to you, these would instantly be lost. No longer master of myself, I could not avoid giving way to the fury of resentment, and by so doing might involve us both in ruin."

Agrippina remained inexorable. "You would have me go", said she to Germanicus reproachfully, "because you can bear with patience the disgrace of being thought unable to protect me. But in my eyes life is not so precious as to be preserved at the expense of honour; and rather would I with this hand put a period to my existence, than

1. Tacitus, The Annals of Imperial Rome, Book I, Section 40. The quotation is from Arthur Murphy's translation of The Works of Cornelius Tacitus, (Vol. I, p. 45) rather than from a modern translation, such as that by Michael Grant, as it is thus possible to see how Mrs. Hamilton used actual phrases from her source. The underlinings in the passage from Agrippina are mine.

hear it said, that the wife of Germanicus was obliged to seek a refuge with the barbarians."

At these words the prince caught Caligula in his arms, and pressing him to his bosom, melted into tears. Agrippina, overcome by this proof of tenderness, threw her arms round his neck, and gave way to those emotions which her high spirit could no longer suppress. "Yes", cried Germanicus, embracing her, "yes my Agrippina, it is on you that the lives, the safety of our offspring now depend. Let me adjure you by your love for this boy, by your regard for the unborn babe, whose fate is involved in your decision, to comply with my request. Had no insubordination prevailed, I should have wished you to have removed to the neighbouring city of the Ubii, before the period of your confinement; but as things now are, it would in your situation be madness to remain."

Agrippina, no longer able to resist entreaties urged with so much tenderness, assented to the proposal as an instance of duty and obedience.

(Vol. I, VIII, 244-247)

It was only in such elaborations, and in the addition (to which she admits in the Preface, pages xxxii-xxxiii) of one or two domestic scenes, which do not distort the facts of Agrippina's life in any way, but merely provide a social background gained from "the most authentic describers of ancient manners" (xxxiii), that Mrs. Hamilton departed from "fact". Nevertheless, slight as they are, these are concessions to fiction, and since Agrippina was regarded as a novel, and yet was so factually detailed, including lengthy notes on such matters as the function of the vestal virgins, gladiatorial shows and the Saturnalia, it must have encouraged the tendency to documentation and attempt at accuracy of detail which was to be one of the features of the novel of the period. Just as significantly while it must have seemed a historical novel very different from most which had gone before, namely one researched in a scholarly way,¹ it sprang not from an imaginative desire to create the past, but purely from the contemporary spirit of reform

1. Jane Porter's Thaddeus of Warsaw (1803) was regarded as historical, but it dealt with events which had happened in the very recent past. She and her sister were to provide carefully researched historical novels, but Agrippina, if it be regarded as a novel, pre-dates them.

in religious practice; interpolated comments on the action are frequent, and (in accordance with the reasons given for writing the book) the development of each of the major characters is related to his early education, even those who are said to have been brought up in the best way possible to the times being noted as labouring under the disadvantage of not having learned Christian principles. Yet this in itself contributed to historical accuracy, since, as was noted earlier, there is little tendency to credit the characters with early nineteenth century sensibilities and Agrippina, for instance is able to watch scenes in the arena without a qualm.

So full of Christian teaching is Agrippina, in fact, that in the year of its publication Mrs. Hamilton was granted a pension by George III, not for her services to literature, but "in consideration that her talents had ever been exerted in the cause of religion and virtue"¹ - a cause which was further promoted by her Letters to the Daughter of a Nobleman on the Formation of the Religious and Moral Principle (1806) in which Evangelical influence seems apparent in its stress on Sunday observance (II, Letter III), on the workings of Providence (II, Letters II and III), on humility (I, Letters XI; II, Letters II and XI), on self control (I, Letter I) and particularly on the need for the active Christian principle which was to play so important a part in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park:²

To have good principles is not merely to know our duty, and to be furnished with the best motives for performing it; but to have this knowledge and these motives converted into active habits of the mind, so that whenever we are called to judge or to act, we may instantly and involuntarily judge and act as they prescribe.

The difference between a good education and a bad one, in my opinion is, that in the course of the former the young mind is assisted in transforming the precepts of religion and virtue into those habits of thinking and acting, which are termed ruling principles; and that in the latter, no such assistance is afforded. (I, Letter II, pp 12-13)

1. A.K. Elwood, op. cit., II, 119.

2. The result of a period spent looking after the children of a widowed nobleman whose name neither she nor her biographer gave. It went into a second edition in the same year, and was reprinted in 1814.

By this time Mrs. Hamilton's reputation was such that The Critical Review began its account of her next novel, The Cottagers of Glenburnie by saying:

.... the name of Miss Elizabeth Hamilton would alone be sufficient to recommend the book before us

- and expressed itself as "highly delighted" with the "most excellent tale", while The Scots Magazine wrote that it had "excited an extraordinary sensation" in Edinburgh.¹ Fulfilling most of the requirements of the critics, in being "probable", "natural", and "moral," Glenburnie also pleased the public by having two comparatively new things to offer - an authentically described Scottish setting and a predominant concern with working class life, which had not, in the eighteenth century, been considered a fitting subject to be a major concern of a novel.²

Yet it is possible that Mrs. Hamilton was largely unaware of the scope or significance of her innovations, for Glenburnie became a full length novel almost by accident. What she originally planned to write was a series of short and simple moral tracts which, being merely for the improvement of the working people of her own country, would naturally be about Scotland and about the working class - and there was nothing unusual in the production of tracts dealing with working class characters. Following on the success of her Village Politics in 1792, Hannah More had been persuaded to go on to write further "improving" short works aimed to instil into the "lower orders" religious principle and allegiance to the status quo. According to her earliest biographers:

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1. CR s.3,15 (December 1808) 421, 427; SM 70 (September 1808) 678-679.
 2. Elizabeth Inchbald in her Nature and Art (1796) and Mrs. Opie in her Simple Tales (1806) had already portrayed humble life and the feelings of the poor - and no doubt others had also done so. However, pictures of common folk were still not common.

.... Being aware that sermons, catechisms and other articles of preceptive piety were abundantly furnished by the excellent institutions already formed, she preferred what was novel and striking to what was merely didactic. As the school of Paine had been labouring to undermine not only religious establishments but good government by the alluring vehicle of novels, stories and songs, she thought it right to fight them with their own weapons.¹

Thus, between 1795 and 1798 helped by friends and one of her sisters, she published large numbers of what were known as Cheap Repository Tracts, of which two million copies were sold in the first year.² Similar in size and appearance to the existing chap-books and ballads, they sold at one, two or three half pence each. Their scope as fiction, however, was at times increased by one story's having several parts: for example, though Tawney Rachel (a tale of a fortune teller) had only one part, Black Giles the Poacher, The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, The History of Hester Wilmot and The History of Idle Jack Brown had two parts - while The Two Wealthy Farmers had seven. These tracts opened up a new world of working class life to the middle classes who, though not the audience aimed at, bought them eagerly.³

After her initial success, the Religious Tract Society was founded in 1799, and others, like Rowland Hill with his Village Dialogues (1810) and Legh Richmond with his Annals of the Poor (1809-14) followed her example.

1. William Roberts, Memoirs of Hannah More, II, 425.

2. W. Roberts, op. cit., II, 426. Hannah More was not the first to produce tracts for the common people, but most earlier ones had not been meant to entertain. According to Maurice Quinlan (Victorian Prelude, 84-85) Mrs. Trimmer tried to be entertaining with her Family Magazine (1788-9) but did not exploit the idea as did Mrs. More. Quinlan says of her tracts "with the exception of the Bible, probably no publication of any sort had ever been so widely read" (op. cit., 83).

3. W. Roberts, op. cit., II, 457. She decided, therefore, in 1796, to print in future two editions of the same tract; "one of a handsome appearance for the rich, the other on coarser paper". She also seems to have begun to slant some of her tracts towards the more well-to-do, for, when some of them were published in book form in 1818, they were printed under the titles of Tales for the Common People and Stories for Persons of the Middle Classes.

This, in fact, is what Mrs. Hamilton, too, at first intended to do, as she admitted in her Preface to Glenburnie (p. vi). However, she changed her mind and decided, while using the same kind of material, to write a tale instead of a tract - for though many writers used the term "tale" for an ordinary three volume novel merely to differentiate it from the general run of novels by emphasising its moral purpose, it could be used to define something not too far removed from the longer tract - a didactic story, naturalistic in detail, usually not more than one volume long - and of which the essential interest was not love.¹

How far Mrs. Hamilton was aware of the implications for the novel of what she was doing in making Glenburnie a tale, it is difficult to say; but she was certainly aware of the ignorance of the English about the Scots, and had made Bridgetina's mother in Memoirs of Modern Philosophers ask the hero how he could think of trusting himself "among them there Scotch savages," adding, "I would not have wondered if they had murdered you." (I, XVII, 219-220). Since Smollett's attempt to introduce Scotland to English readers in Humphry Clinker (1770), little had been done in this line in fiction, for though several novels (like Mrs. Radcliffe's Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, 1789) had been vaguely set in Scotland, the action could have taken place anywhere. That Mrs. Hamilton realised the potential in conveying Scottish life to the English is evident in the fact that one long chapter of Memoirs of Modern Philosophers was devoted to the hero's

1. The last criterion was the essential difference as Elizabeth Missing Sewell saw it. (See Vineta Colby, Yesterday's Woman, 176). Many of Mrs. Opie's tales have a relationship between a man and a woman as a central part of the plot - but most often the important element is a moral issue of character or principle. Only very rarely, in her collections of tales, is any one tale more than a volume in length. See Chapter III, note 24 for a comment by Mrs. Opie on the tale as a form.

description of his recent tour of Scotland (I, XVII).¹ The picture given, however, seems for the most part clearly idealised - a prose version of Burns' Cotter's Saturday Night. Moreover, being merely recounted as something seen in the past, however, recent, it lacks immediacy and makes little impact. The Cottagers of Glenburnie, however, with its vivid and dramatically portrayed scenes of peasant life was very different, and with it Mrs. Hamilton was recognised as a regional novelist, The Edinburgh Review commenting:

.... We have not met with anything nearly so good as this since we read Castle Rackrent and the Popular Tales of Miss Edgeworth. This contains as admirable a picture of the Scottish [sic] peasantry as those do of the Irish²

Scott, writing later in the postscript to Waverley awarded Mrs. Hamilton the credit of being the first to describe Scottish life naturally. Recounting how he had wanted

.... in some distant degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits drawn by Miss Edgeworth

he told how he wrote Waverley - then laid it aside for several years, during which time appeared

.... Two works upon similar subjects by female authors whose genius is highly creditable to their country

One of these was Mrs. Anne Grant's Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland (1811), which is not a work of fiction, the other The Cottagers of Glenburnie; and while Scott noted that this was different from his own work in being confined to the rural habits of Scotland, he praised the portrayal

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1. That this tour has nothing to do with the plot is indicative of the digressive nature of the novel. Interestingly, while describing Scotland, he is made to comment, in a way rare at the time, on the effects of the Industrial Revolution - something Ivanka Kovačević (Fact into Fiction, 83) found only in Godwin and Peacock in fiction of the period (in Fleetwood and Headlong Hall, ch. 7). Mrs. Hamilton's concern was, in fact, usually with manners and morals rather than social injustice.
 2. Ed R 12 (July 1808) 401.

for its "striking and impressive fidelity."

The evangelical tract, then, can be seen to have had a great innovating influence on prose fiction of the period,¹ with its simple language, detailed naturalistic description, a new social scene, low life, and the possibility of a great variety of new subject matter - for the tracts were based on matters familiar to the folk for whom they were intended. Margaret Maison has suggested that

.... the longer type of Evangelical tract, known as the "tale," was in fact the forerunner of the Victorian religious novel²

- but it was the forerunner of other kinds of novel too, for while Glenburnie has a strong religious element, and an emphasis on order, discipline and the right kind of education, since Mrs. Hamilton also wanted to impress on Scottish housewives the virtues of soap and water and a regular household routine, it is the tale's naturalistic domestic details of daily life that are memorable.

It is often forgotten, however, that The Cottagers of Glenburnie is not just about low life. Knowing that she could expect to draw on a middle class audience (Preface vi) Mrs. Hamilton added to her story sections set in upper and middle class life by means of making the central figure, Mrs. Mason, a working class woman who has risen from being merely a servant to the rich, to the position of governess.³ Now retired, she is intending to visit relatives in Glenburnie when the tale begins, but on the way stops to visit relatives of one of her late employers, a family of the name of Stewart, who are in genteelly reduced circumstances. Here the situation is one only

1. Vineta Colby, who notes that Christopher Wordsworth found Mrs. More's tracts too "novelish and exciting", also believes that the tract was influential in shaping the English novel. See Yesterday's Woman, 155-8.

2. Margaret Maison, Search Your Soul, Eustace, 89.

3. In fact the original edition was too expensive for the working classes, and hope was expressed in Ed R 12 (July 1808) 410 that a cheaper edition would soon be available for them - as it was.

too familiar in novels of the period, involving two motherless girls, one a model of obedience, the other, Bell, entirely lacking in "fixed and solid principle" (XV, 322), since she has been over-indulged by her grandmother and further spoiled by a snobbish boarding school education which has caused her to value people for their social position rather than their intrinsic worth.¹ It is obvious that Bell's pride must take a fall; but the situation is not immediately developed, for in chapters two to five Mrs. Mason "tells her story", narrating, with irritating self righteousness, her whole history, from the childhood in which she learned Christian principle, to the present (II, III, IV, V) and discussing her views on the right and wrong kind of education by reference to rich people for whom she has worked. Thus it is not till chapter six that the poor relatives with whom she intends to stay, the unforgettable MacClartys are introduced. Her abortive attempts to reform their slovenly ways and discipline the children are then presented without interruption - after which, to conclude the novel, the reader is returned for two chapters to the Stewarts, to find that Bell, predictably, has made the fatal mistake of running away (without benefit of marriage) with one of her fine friends. The realism of the central section vanishes, as Mrs. Mason shows herself able to unmask the dashing Romeo as the son of the shoemaker in her home village - though the story takes a less expected turn when the "villain" (who has now married Bell) turns out to be less rogue than fool and to be really in love with his now very chastened bride. All that remains is for the last three chapters to wind up events by showing how Mrs. Mason, having directed her efforts to another family, with startling rapidity (indeed almost like a fairytale godmother waving a wand) converts the whole village (except for the MacClartys) to industry and

1. There is an ambivalence on this subject in much of the fiction of the period; men are to be judged by worth not rank - but class distinctions are firmly retained.

cleanliness. Much of this, the reader is asked to believe, is due to a new system of education introduced by Mrs. Mason with the aid of her protégé, William Morison, who is instructed in his duties by the vicar, in the penultimate chapter, which is appropriately entitled "Hints concerning the Duties of a Schoolmaster."¹

Praise for the work was immediate and universal - but it is regrettable that Mrs. Hamilton did not feel confident enough to focus entirely on her village community, for that she certainly saw it as the main concern of her tale, its epigraph clearly implies:

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure,
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.²

This was obviously what the reviewers liked, for while they gave due praise to the tale's good sense, The Critical Review rather incredibly commenting that

.... Miss Hamilton merits most transcendent praise for making the fictitious narrative of a novel subservient to the increase of cleanliness and industry³

-they found fault with the episodes set in upper and middle class life - which are just as full of "sense". The Annual Review thought Mrs. Mason's story dull, The Edinburgh Review noted the two subsidiary sections as weaknesses, while The Scots Magazine said of the two "underplots" as it called them:

.... Both these sketches have merit ... neither however possess [sic] the liveliness and originality of the scenes of which Mrs. MacClarty is the heroine, so that upon the whole, they break the unity of the work without materially adding to the value.⁴

1. However ludicrous this may seem, apparently Mrs. Hamilton had seen such a change actually made by Lord Woodhouselee on his estate just outside of Edinburgh. See David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, 214 and 296. Morison is spelled Morrison in later editions.

2. The punctuation is Mrs. Hamilton's. Legh Richmond took the title of his collection of tracts, Annals of the Poor, from Gray's poem.

3. CR s.3, 15 (December 1808) 430.

4. An R 7 (1808) 609; Ed R 12 (July 1808) 410; SM 70 (September 1808) 682.

And it is the MacClartys who are still interesting today. John Millar commented

.... That the McClarty[sic] household is, in the long run, redeemed from unnecessary dirt and squalor was probably to the writer the cardinal feature in the book; but it is in their unregenerate state that they awaken the interest of the modern reader.¹

- but in fact the MacClartys are not "redeemed" - and it is their refusal to be so that is one of the things that makes them so credible. For a while the daughters of the family do try Mrs. Mason's new-fangled methods - and even praise them - but the effort is too much, and they slip back into their old ways. Indeed, if Mrs. Hamilton originally intended to show the reformation of the MacClartys, for once she found life and probability too strong to be forced into a pedagogic pattern, and was therefore reduced, in the closing chapters, to bringing in a suitably docile and pasteboard couple to round off the novel satisfactorily by becoming her disciples in spreading the gospel of order, cleanliness and discipline in Glenburnie. It is the authenticity of the central section which is the book's greatest merit, and it would be a very sceptical reader who did not believe that Mrs. Hamilton was describing vividly exactly what she had seen. Here, for example, is Mrs. Mason arriving at her relative's home.

It must be confessed that the aspect of the dwelling where she was to fix her residence was by no means inviting. The walls were substantial; built, like the houses in the village, of stone and lime; but they were blackened by the mud which the cart wheels had spattered from the ruts in winter; and on one side of the door completely covered from view by the contents of a great dunghill. On the other, and directly under the window, was a squashy pool, formed by the dirty water thrown from the house, and in it about twenty young ducks were at this time daubling [sic] .

At the threshold of the door, room had been left for a paving stone, but it had never been laid; and consequently the place became hollow, to the great advantage of the younger ducklings, who always found in

1. John H. Millar, A Literary History of Scotland, 541.

it a plentiful supply of water, in which they could swim without danger. Happily Mr. Stewart was provided with boots, so that he could take a firm step in it, while he lifted Mrs. Mason and set her down in safety within the threshold. But there an unforeseen danger awaited her, for there the great whey pot had stood since morning, that the cheese had been made, [sic] and was at the present moment filled with chickens, who were busily picking at the bits of curd, which had hardened on the sides, and cruelly mocked their wishes. Over this Mr. Stewart and Mrs. Mason unfortunately stumbled. The pot was overturned, and the chickens, cackling with hideous din, flew about in all directions¹
(VI, pp 137-138)

As soon as she crosses the threshold and sees the squalor round her, Mrs. Mason puts all her energies into such matters as clearing out rubbish, washing bedclothes, scrubbing floors, cleaning windows and getting hairs out of butter - hardly matter for entertainment, one would think - yet human curiosity about the way other people live made this absorbing. And the family, too, are credible; although the length of the work does not allow for them to be developed in depth, nevertheless, an impression of most of them as individuals comes over strongly, sometimes in touches which, though brief, are vivid, as when the following is said of the youngest son Henry, who has to be chief mourner at his father's funeral because one brother is being held on a charge by the army, and the other is ill:

.... The poor child on whom the office of chief mourner thus devolved looked grave and sad; but he was rather bewildered than sorrowful; and in the midst of tears which he shed, felt an emotion of pleasure from the novelty of the scene. (XII, 250).

The two girls, Jean and Meg are lazy; Sandie, the eldest son is disobedient, headstrong but weak, while Robby, the second son is an ill-natured boor. The father is merely hardworking, far too tired to bother about whether or not his home is well run or to spend much time in curbing his children; yet his

1. Her picture of squalor may seem exaggerated, as it did to Allan Cunningham, Athenaeum, November 16 1833, 774. However Mary Brunton's pictures of Scottish peasants in Discipline seem to confirm the accuracy of Mrs. Hamilton's portrayal. There seem to have been a large number of printers' errors in the first edition which were corrected later - e.g., in the passage quoted, "that the cheese had been made" had to be corrected to "when the cheese had been made."

love for them is never left in doubt, nor (as is indicated by the provisions of his will) his desire to provide for them to the best of his limited ability. But it is his wife who is the most living creation, with her easy, slovenly cheerfulness. Her stubborn refusal to change her ways is perfectly understandable - as is her change from admiration to dislike of her meddling relative and her growing uneasiness at her presence:

.... Jealous of Mrs. Mason's superior sense, and at the same time conscious of the obligations she owed to her unwearied benevolence, she felt her presence as a burthen
(XIV, 279)

But as her character gradually unfolds, a mean and covetous side to her nature is seen; after the family's attitude has caused Mrs. Mason to leave, instead of being relieved, Mrs. MacClarty can only think that the Morisons, with whom Mrs. Mason now lives, will inherit her possessions:

" I wou'dna wonder that they got every farthing she has in the world. Scores o' fine silk goons, and grand petticoats and stockings ... Ay, ay, the Morisons will get it a', and a' her money forbye. They'll no be the fools to part wi' her that we ha' been; they're o'er cunning for that!"
(XIV, 291-292)

- and when she sees the inoffensive Morisons thriving, she rails at their "pride", blaming Mrs. Mason for being

.... so unnatural as to leave her own relations, "and to tak up wi' straingers, who were neither kith nor kin to her."
("Conclusion", 394)

Using chiefly these characters and the self righteous Mrs. Mason (who has an effect quite other than that her creator obviously intended, yet is believable in her very officiousness), with the addition of a "chorus" of villagers, Mrs. Hamilton evokes, in a comparatively short space, a way of life and death - schooling, butter making, the local fair, the lure of the army recruiters, a village funeral. Since Mrs. Mason obviously speaks for Mrs. Hamilton, there are few authorial intrusions into a narrative that is carried on with the aid of a great deal of dialogue, much of which is in Scots dialect, as in the following exchange between Mrs. MacClarty and her

daughter Jean. The mother is urging her children to hurry to school:

.... Are ye no awa yet, bairns! I never saw the like. Sic a fight to get ye to the schul. Nae wonder ye learn little when you're at it. Gae awa, like gude bairns, for there's nae schulin the morn, ye ken, it's the fair day."

Meg set off after some further parley; but Jean continued to catch flies at the window, taking no notice of her mother's exhortations, though again repeated in pretty nearly the same terms.

"Dear me!" said the mother, "What's the matter wi' the bairn? What for winna ye gang, when Meg's gane? Rin, and ye'll be after her or she wins to the end o' the loan."

"I'm no ga'an the day, " says Jean, turning away her face. "And what for are no ye ga'an, my dear?" says her mother - "Cause I hinna gotten my questions," replied Jean.

"O, but ye may gang for a' that," said her mother; "the maister will no be angry. Gang like a gude bairn."

"Na," said Jean, "but he will be angry; for I didno get it the last time either."

"And what for didna ye get it, my dear?" said Mrs. MacClarty in a soothing tone. "Cause 'twas unco kittle and I cou'd no be fash'd," replied the hopeful girl, catching as she spoke, another handful of flies.

(VIII, 166-167)

Such dialect The Scots Magazine praised highly, as "the purest colloquial Scots", and, contrary to the fears of the critic of the Edinburgh Review, its originality did not restrict the public for the book to the Scots.¹

Maria Edgeworth who knew and liked Mrs. Hamilton wrote of it to Mrs. Ruxton:

.... I hasten to send you the Cottagers of Glenburnie; which I hope you will like as well as we do. I think it will do a vast deal of good, and besides it is extremely interesting, which all good books are not; it has great powers, both comic and tragic.²

It is largely by taking into account such praise - which now seems grossly exaggerated - and remembering from whom it came, that one can hope to appreciate the impact which Glenburnie made in its day, for it has not,

1. SM 70 (September 1808) 679; Ed R (12 July 1808) 402.

2. Augustus J.K. Hare ed., The Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth, I, 160. Miss Edgeworth had met Mrs. Hamilton in 1803. They corresponded, and Mrs. Hamilton visited the Edgeworths in 1813.

of course, great powers, either comic or tragic. Emotions are roused by the running off of son Sandie to join the army, by his desertion, capture, and threatened execution, and by the fact that, in trying to buy his son out of the army, Mr. MacClarty is waylaid and beaten, and somehow contracts an unspecified infectious disease which for a time threatens the whole family and of which he eventually dies. The most this achieves, however, is a certain limited pathos, especially as his dying moments are used to allow him to make a lengthy and edifying admission of his failure to educate and discipline his children properly.¹

And this is not all the teaching his death is made to yield; it allows for Mrs. Mason to have a meditation on the essential equality of man, in the manner of Gray's Elegy (a stanza from which, it will be recalled, forms the epigraph to the novel). Mrs. Mason compares the humble ceremony in which the dead man is mourned by loving friends, to that of her late noble employer who had no one truly to mourn him, in a passage which is not only anti-jacobinical but definitely of an evangelical cast:²

.... Why then should those of lowly station envy the trappings of vanity that are but the boast of a moment, when by piety and virtue they may attain a distinction so much more lasting and glorious? To the humble and the lowly are the gates of Paradise thrown open. Nor is there any other path which leads to them but that which the gospel points out to all. In that path may the grace of God enable me to walk; so that my spirit may join the spirits of the sanctified - the innumerable host, that "out of every tribe, and nation, and language, shall meet together before the throne of the Eternal, to worship, and give praise, and honour and glory, to Him that liveth for ever and ever!"

(Ch. XII, 253-254)

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1. There are, in fact, as there are in all Elizabeth Hamilton's works, constant reminders about how children should be brought up, and how their natural energy should be channelled in useful ways. It says much for the peasant scenes that they succeed, on the whole, in spite of this.
 2. The chapter is called "The Doctrine of Liberty and Equality stripped of all seditious import". The idea that the poor are, in some ways, better off than the rich, is also found in Memoirs of Modern Philosophers, I, XVI, 209-213.

Containing such sound doctrine and a novel setting, it is little wonder that The Cottagers of Glenburnie was as popular in England as in Scotland:

" I canna be fashed" became a popular phrase; and the name of Mrs. M'Clarty [sic] was a passport to attention¹ in the polished circles of fashion, of elegance, and beauty.

However, despite the popularity of The Cottagers of Glenburnie, for the remaining eight years of her life, Mrs. Hamilton wrote no more fiction. Exercises in Religious Knowledge (1809) was meant to help young people to understand the catechism, rather than merely commit it to memory; A series of popular essays illustrative of principles essentially connected with the improvement of the understanding, the imagination and the heart (1813) developed, in more religious mood, her 1801 Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education, while her Hints addressed to the Patrons and Directors of Public Schools (1815) recommended to them the methods of Pestalozzi. By this time she had been in poor health for some years; and on 23rd July 1816 she died.

In her day she was admired by such eminent contemporaries as Maria Edgeworth,² Sir Walter Scott, and Jane Austen, - and by some ranked with Maria Edgeworth, or even as slightly superior to her because the morality of her novels was explicitly founded on Christian principles.³ Yet she left not a single novel which has stood the test of time. Miriam Allott has said:

In the end we recognized the true novelist by the strength with which his realisation of the actual world and of human individuality triumphs over his abstract speculations, ... his puritan concern with the utile.⁴

1. E.O. Benger, op. cit., I, 170.

2. Who, on her death, wrote of her as "original, agreeable and successful" - (Quoted by E.O. Benger, op. cit., I, 208). The attribution to her of originality by an eminent contemporary cannot be ignored.

3. QR 11 (July 1814) 355 (review of Waverley) ranked her with Maria Edgeworth, while ER 8 (June 1812) 612 (on Mrs. Brunton's Self Control) and NMM 13 (March 1820) 273 seem to have seen her as in some ways superior

4. Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel, 207.

By this criterion Mrs. Hamilton is no true novelist, for except for the Hindoo Rajah himself, and the MacClarty family, her characters and stories are entirely at the service of her theories. Thus her work was soon neglected, with the exception of Glenburnie. Of this, in 1833 Allan Cunningham, despite some deprecations, was able to say:

Elizabeth Hamilton, like Madame D'Arblay, paints the passing wants, the fleeting manners and changing condition of social life, but then her pictures are taken from the shepherd's hut and the husbandman's hovel and, amid much that is now past and gone, show not a little of a fixed and permanent nature.¹

In 1859 David Masson was still calling it "a genuine Scottish story";² but soon after this it became regarded as:

.... perhaps too distinctly a story written with a purpose
to take a high place in art.³

Nevertheless, Mrs. Hamilton's literary career is interesting not only in highlighting the achievement of Jane Austen, whose novels were produced from a very similar complex of ideas, but also because, in her last experiment in "using" the novel form, she, perhaps inadvertently, became both a pioneer Scottish regional novelist and a pioneer novelist of the working class.⁴ Although she was unable to portray her peasant characters with the sympathetic insight of some later novelists, by proving that fiction could be written about them which would be read with interest she, together with contemporaries like Amelia Opie, encouraged this important development in the novel.

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1. Allan Cunningham, "Biographical and Critical History of the Literature of last Fifty Years". Athenaeum (November 16 1833) 774.
 2. David Masson, British Novelists and their Styles, 182.
 3. Margaret Oliphant, The Literary History of England, III, 249.
 4. Though, as has been noted, not the first.

III

Amelia Opie 1769-1853

While, in the early years of the nineteenth century, Elizabeth Hamilton was combating Godwinism with satire, a younger contemporary was undertaking the same task in a rather different spirit, using very different methods. Unlike Mrs. Hamilton - indeed unlike the rest of the novelists who attacked Godwin - Amelia Opie¹ had at one time been a close friend of his, and of members of his circle, and believed, even when she disagreed with them, that they were neither fools nor villains, but idealists, however mistaken.

At one period, in fact, it is likely that she shared many of their views. Her father, Dr. James Alderson, was a member of a liberal intellectual group in Norwich which was campaigning for various reforms, including that of Parliament, when, in London in 1794, a group of men with aims akin to those of the Norwich group were arrested on charges of high treason. They included Thomas Hardy, Horne Tooke, and John Thelwall. Thomas Holcroft gave himself up, to be tried with them, but Godwin, who was not among those arrested, played his part in supporting them by writing a brilliant political pamphlet which played a large part in saving their lives. Amelia, who was in London at the time, on her annual visit to some friends called Boddington, attended the trials with anxiety, believing that if the result went against the accused, members of her father's circle—and even her father himself—would have to leave the country; and that her sympathies were with the "democrats" is evident from the fact that her father thought it prudent to destroy all the letters she sent home about the case.²

While in London the lovely Miss Alderson visited Godwin, whom she had met in 1793 in Norwich, and seems to have quickly become the toast of his

1. See Biographical Appendix. All references to Mrs. Opie's works are to first editions, except for The Father and Daughter (1801) and Simple Tales (1806) where in each case the second edition, of the same year as the first, has been used.

2. Cecilia L. Brightwell, Memorials of Amelia Opie, 52, 41.

circle, so that the following year found her reporting:

.... Mrs. Inchbald says, the report of the world is that Mr. Holcroft is in love with her, she with Mr. Godwin, Mr. Godwin with me and I am in love with Mr. Holcroft.¹

If this were true, nothing came of it: in 1797 Godwin married Mary Wollstonecraft, and in 1798 Amelia married the painter, John Opie. Contact with Godwin after this seems to have been slight² and the ideas on which she differed from him took on far more importance than the liberal and reforming views they had had in common; in fact, she was eventually to write two specifically anti-Godwinian novels.

Her chief method, however, was to counter him merely by attempting to inculcate the importance of values he had suggested were relatively unimportant - especially that of family affection, as the titles or subtitles of many of her stories indicate - The Father and Daughter, Adeline Mowbray; or, The Mother and Daughter, The Brother and Sister, The Mother and Son, and so on.³ In doing so, she tried to carry into prose the emotional quality of verse, though without much use of the kind of language which many other writers of the period (for example the Porter sisters, or Charlotte Dacre) tended to use for emotional effect. She even subtitled her first novel "A Tale in Prose" as though she were strongly connecting it with the verse tale - which is not at all strange, as she was also a popular writer of verse. Her Poems of 1802 reached a sixth edition by 1811, and on

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1. C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 60. She had been home to Norwich - this was a subsequent visit to London.
 2. Her friendship with Holcroft cooled after 1799 - though he sent her a farewell message just before his death in 1809. She remained friendly with Mrs. Inchbald, but did not see her often.
 3. Godwin wrote: "What magic is there in the pronoun [sic] "my" to overturn the decisions of everlasting truth? My wife or my mother may be a fool or a prostitute, malicious, lying, or deceitful. If they be, of what consequence is it that they are mine?" (Political Justice, Vol. I, p 112). He was, however, to change his mind about the importance of family affections.

at least one occasion she appeared in a collection of magazine verse with Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey.¹ Thus, just as Wordsworth had recently shown, in his Michael, the effect on a shepherd of the defection of his son, so she, in the story which first made her widely known,² chose to show the effect on a father, of the defection of his daughter. The Father and Daughter (1801), which she (as did Maria Edgeworth with Belinda) insisted was not a novel but a simple moral tale,³ tells the story of a "ruined" girl, Agnes Fitzhenry⁴. Seduced by the promise of a Scottish marriage, and having discovered the falseness of her lover, she returns to her father, only to find that grief has unbalanced his mind.⁵ The appeal to the emotions is constant throughout, from the first melodramatic lines:

The night was dark, - the wind blew keenly over the
frozen and rugged heath, when Agnes, pressing her
moaning child to her bosom, was travelling on foot to
her father's habitation. (p. 1)⁶

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1. See John Jordan, Why the Lyrical Ballads? 77.
 2. Her first novel, The Dangers of Coquetry, published anonymously in 1790 had apparently made little stir, though she herself liked it and reported to her friend, Mrs. Taylor that the dramatist, ~~Anna Moore~~, was so struck with it as to intend writing a play from it. (C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 85) Whether the play was actually written or not is unknown. The only known copy of the novel is in Harvard University Library. Oddly, it was published by William Lane, at his notorious Minerva Press.
 3. Preface (no pagination).
 4. The story of the betrayed or forsaken girl was so common in the period, that one must feel some doubt about the theory that in Wordsworth's poems on this theme he was working out his guilt over Annette Vallon.
 5. Madness brought on by grief was another literary cliché of the time. Wordsworth, for example, succumbed to it in poems like Ruth and The Mad Mother, and it is one of the many strengths of his Michael that its emotional effect is achieved without it.
 6. Only page references can be given, as there are no chapters. This tale's close relationship to magazine verse can be partly illustrated by a comparison of the opening lines with those of a poem called The Hermit's Tale, which is quoted by Robert Mayo in "The Contemporaneity of the Lyrical Ballads" in Wordsworth: Lyrical Ballads, Alun R. Jones and W. Tydeman eds., 103:

—'Tis night;
And o'er the wilds where storms the chilling blast,
My dreary journey lies.

Mrs. Opie had much tenderness for her faulty heroine - but to excuse or explain her conduct was not the purpose of the tale. Agnes had betrayed the trust of the father who loved her, and the results of this had first to be displayed, as they are, in no uncertain way, as through the cold darkness comes the sound of the clanking of chains, then the sight of an escaped madman, whom, to her horror, Agnes recognises as her father.¹

Following this, the major part of the story goes on to deal with the strength of Agnes's love, revealed in her efforts to get work in order to save money to be able to take her father from the lunatic asylum and care for him herself. She is not, however, allowed to live; after several years of being tenderly nursed, at last her father recovers his senses and recognises her with joy - only to die immediately afterwards, upon which Agnes, exhausted by tending him, and unable to bear the shock, dies too, and is buried with him.

Maudlin though all this now seems, in its day it was enthusiastically received. Mr. Hoare told Mrs. Opie that he "could not sleep all night" after reading it. Scott, if report be true, said that he had cried over the book "more than he ever cried over such things";² it went quickly through three editions, and by 1819 had reached its eighth. In 1809 the eminent composer Ferdinando Paer made it into an opera, in 1815 Mrs. Kemble used it as the basis of a play called Smiles and Tears, and in 1820 Thomas Moncrieff dramatised it as The Lear of Private Life.³ Even as late as 1837

1. Melodramatic, but little more so than, for example, the convenient appearance of the sailor's dying wife in Wordsworth's Guilt and Sorrow, of much the same period (1793-4). Coincidence, in fact, seems to have been a readily accepted convention.

2. C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 86 and 177.

3. Agnese di Fitzhenry (1809) by Ferdinando Paer (1771-1839) was first performed in London at the King's Theatre in 1817. Mrs. Kemble's Smiles and Tears, performed at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden December 12th 1815 is, incredibly, a comedy: the father is driven mad by his daughter's behaviour, but recovers. Hazlitt gave it a very harsh review. (See Complete Works of William Hazlitt ed. P.P. Howe, V, 266-268) The Lear of Private Life was first performed at the Royal Coburg Theatre, April 24th 1820, and copies of the play were still being printed in 1840.

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine was of the opinion that it would endure "till pity's self be dead".¹ What was admired about it was its impressive morality, its truth to nature, and above all its pathos. High sensibility was on its way out, but pathos was very definitely in - and was to remain a popular element in the novel all through the nineteenth century. However, though some of the passages in which Agnes tries to communicate with her deranged father are quite moving, and seem authentic, based as they are on Mrs. Opie's recollections of a patient she had seen in the Norwich Bedlam, which she had at one time visited regularly,² in much of the tale one feels that the situation is being deliberately manipulated to work on the reader's feelings.

This indirect attack on Godwinism was followed in January 1805 by a very direct one in a three volume novel, Adeline Mowbray which aimed to 'contravert Godwin's maxim that "the abolition of the present system of marriage appears to involve no evils."³ Adeline, we read, has had the misfortune to have been brought up by a mother who claims to hold with all the latest ideas, in order to appear smart and interesting. Thus, in her company, Adeline meets one of the foremost of the "new philosophers", Glenmurray, falls in love with him, and espouses his beliefs. So far, however, is this from being

1. BEM 41 (March 1837) 409.

2. She began going at the urging of her mother, who wanted to cure her of a fear of the mentally deranged.

3. Political Justice V. II, Book VIII, ch. 8 in A.E. Rodway, Godwin and the Age of Transition 181. Despite this, Godwin himself had married twice - Mary Wollstonecraft in 1797 and a Mrs. Clairmont in 1801. A subsidiary theme of this novel is once more a parent-child relationship, the subtitle being The Mother and Daughter.

.... the usual cautionary tale of the anti-jacobins,
with the full cast-list of emancipated female and
seductive philosopher¹

that the "philosopher", when faced with harsh reality, pleads with Adeline to marry him, realising how society will treat her if she does not. She, believing that he is sacrificing his principles for her sake, refuses to accept the sacrifice. However, on his death, finding herself a target for unprincipled men, and unable to maintain herself because of her reputation, she is driven to marry his cousin, Berrendale, though she is self-deceived enough to declare:

.... I became a wife after my idle declamations against marriage, from change of principle, on assurance of error, and not from interest, or necessity.

(III, IV, 147)

The marriage is a failure, whereas the liaison was not, but this is not meant as a reflection on marriage. Berrendale is weak, not wicked, and betrays Adeline because she can give him only cold respect, not love;² had she earlier married the man she loved, she would not have needed to make this marriage of convenience. By this time, however, Adeline has had Berrendale's child, and it is her sense of the responsibility of parenthood which at last makes her change her mind about the rightness of marriage; she now believes that it is only a few like herself and Glenmurray who are capable of constancy without marriage; the majority are given to love of change. She writes:

.... I am convinced that if the ties of marriage were dissolved, or it were no longer to be judged nefarious to act in contempt of them, unbridled licentiousness would soon be the general practice - What then, in such a state of society would be the fate of the children born in it?

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1. Marilyn Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas, 121. Mrs. Butler does, however, remark on the "real if wrong-headed idealism of the principals."
 2. Allene Gregory's comment that "in a few years Berrendale tires of her and deserts her" (The French Revolution and the English Novel, 209) fails completely to give enough credit to the subtlety of the characterisation and motivation.

Her present opinion, she declares, is that "marriage is a wise and ought to be a sacred institution." (III, VIII, 208-9)

Eventually she returns home to die (an event presumably necessary, as with Agnes, because Mrs. Opie did not know how to return her heroine to society), and one of the scenes of pathos for which Mrs. Opie was so celebrated¹ occurs, as she stands, with her child, looking longingly at her mother's home, but not daring to go in:

"Oh! what a pretty house and garden!" cried Editha, in the unformed accents of childhood; -"how I should like to live there!" This artless remark awakened a thousand mixed and overpowering feelings in the bosom of Adeline: and, after a pause of strong emotion she exclaimed, catching the little prattler to her heart, "You shall live there, my child! - yes, yes, you shall live there!"

"But when?" resumed Editha.

"When I am in my grave", answered Adeline.

"And when shall you be there?" replied the unconscious child, fondly caressing her: "pray mamma - pray be there soon!"

Adeline turned away, unable to answer her.

(III, VI, 165-166)

Such a scene must obviously have had a much stronger impact at a time when an erring daughter was only too likely to be disowned and when early deaths were much more common than they are today. Certainly Sir James Mackintosh found the novel "most affecting".² The reader's emotions have, however, as always with Mrs. Opie, been roused for a moral purpose, in this case to make more telling the message in Adeline's last letter to her mother, that she should bring up little Editha in such a way that she will be "slow to call the wisdom of ages contemptible prejudices." (III, XI, 270). The

1. Ed R 8 (July 1806) 465, regarded the second volume as "the most pathetic and the most natural in its pathos of any fictitious narrative in the language."

2. C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 90. Letter from Bombay, 30th September 1805. He went on to say that the novel "even cost [him] some tears."

message is clear¹ - and contemporaries regarded it as a "superior" novel, indicating "much acute observation of the human mind", written by a lady of "uncommon talents".²

This, needless to say, is a verdict which posterity has not been able to confirm. Sentimental in tone, it has nothing striking or vivid in its language, and the narrative is carried on in a "But to return to ... " fashion which here is invariably lumbering - unlike Mrs. Hamilton's Memoirs of Modern Philosophers where the technique (if so it can be called) is often used to quite amusing effect. Indeed, there is nothing in Mrs. Opie's writing, or her available correspondence of the period when she was writing fiction, to suggest that she ever considered it as an art, except for one interesting comment which reveals that writing without chapters, as she frequently did, was a deliberate choice.³ She did, however,

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1. Oddly, because of her early friendship with Godwin, Amelia Opie is sometimes included among the radical novelists, and George Saintsbury, in The English Novel p 173 saw Adeline Mowbray as infused with Godwinian theories. So little was she a revolutionary that she is not even mentioned in Gary Kelly's The English Jacobin Novel 1780-85. Just as far out in the other direction, however, was Ernest Baker, who said that in the novel Mrs. Opie "satirizes the female revolutionist, and ... paints just such another as Mary Wollstonecraft in the vein of travesty." (The History of the English Novel, (vol. V, p. 252).
 2. MR ns. 51 (November 1808) 320; GR 1 (January 1806) 27; CR s3,4 (February 1805) 219. The reviews praise its simplicity, its truth to nature and its characterisation, rather than its moral tendency, but there is no doubt that censure would have been severe had any "immoral" or "revolutionary" tendency been served. Adeline, in fact, is made to refer to her action in living with Glenmurray as her "crime" (III, II, 59). Cf. below, ch. IV p153.
 3. Discussing her early Dangers of Coquetry with her friend, Mrs. Taylor in 1801, she said that she would like to republish it, as she originally wrote it, without chapters. (C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., p 85) There is at least one reference to the art of the novel in her later letters: writing to M.R. Mitford (28/11/1838) about one of her tales which had been used in Finden's Tableaux, edited by Miss Mitford, she congratulated her on the skill with which she had compressed her story, suggesting that it was thereby improved. Nevertheless she went on, rightly, to comment on the weakness of having prose tales "fatally short," saying " ... in a tale, story is almost everything - and no story can be really good that is not long enough to allow of the reader's being interested in the fate of the actors." (Augustus G.K. L'Estrange, Friendships of Mary Russell Mitford, II, 40-41).

admittedly, because of her warm sympathy for her fellow men, at times provide quite penetrating insights into character and motivation, as in this novel, where Berrendale, who is usually now regarded as the villain of the piece, is so ordinary as to be attracted to his cousin's mistress for her cooking and nursing abilities rather than her physical charms, and, after marriage, to become irritatingly, yet not outrageously, mean with his money. Well understood and portrayed, too, are Adeline's friend, Dr. Norberry, and his wife, who nags, scolds, is mean-minded - yet does love him. And despite the hackneyed situations in which she is set, there is a warmth in the portrayal of the heroine which seems to come from the fact that she is almost certainly based on Mrs. Opie's friend, the remarkable and notorious Mary Wollstonecraft, who had married Godwin in 1797 and died in the same year, after giving birth to the daughter who was to be Mary Shelley.¹ From knowing her, Mrs. Opie knew that it was possible to behave in a way the world thought immoral - and yet to have the highest motives - and she succeeded in showing this.

But while characterisation was an aspect of the novel in which she showed some ability, her success in that line was only spasmodic, being the result of the observations of intelligent good-heartedness rather than conscious art, and it is for two other things that she deserves to be mentioned in any consideration of the development of the novel, namely for being one of the earliest writers of the tale of crime and the psychological thriller, and for providing, two years before the appearance of The Cottagers of Glenburnie, pictures of working class life, doing both primitively, but,

1. Mary Wollstonecraft lived with Gilbert Imlay in France from 1793-1795, and with Godwin for some time before they married. John Opie painted her - and Amelia knew her well enough for the older woman to refer to her as "My Dear Girl" and to explain to her her reasons for marrying Godwin. See C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 61-62.

because of her reputation, almost certainly influentially.¹

Her tales of crime reflect two aspects of her personality - her love of the dramatic and her tender heart; the former encouraged an interest in, almost amounting to an obsession with, trials, which she attended from girlhood till, as an old lady, she had to be carried into court², while the latter encouraged an interest, shared with her friend Elizabeth Fry, in prisoners and prison reform.³ Stolen wills, bigamous marriages, robberies and even murder, had, of course often formed parts of the plots of earlier fiction, but Mrs. Opie's stories were different, being based on long hours of listening to, or reading about, actual cases.

Three such stories appeared in her four volume collection of Simple Tales (1806):⁴ Love and Duty, dealing with a girl's effort to clear her dead father's name of a charge of robbery, Murder Will Out dealing with the

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1. Only "one of the earliest" - e.g. T.S. Surr had written a tale of crime, George Barnwell (1798) while in her Nature and Art (1796) Mrs. Inchbald had included an attempt at infanticide and a trial for forgery. Nevertheless, there cannot have been many such tales in the period: writing in 1862, Julia Kavanagh noted that crime in novels was then highly fashionable, and that this was a change. (English Women of Letters II, p. 197)
 2. See C.L. Brightwell op. cit., 23-25, 355-8, 385-6. In 1844 she actually began to write her "Reminiscences of the Judges' Courts" which, unfortunately, were never finished or published. Miss Brightwell quoted extracts from them.
 3. Godwin and his circle were also interested in prison reform - e.g. see Caleb Williams (1794) and Mrs. Inchbald's play Such Things Are (1786), based on the character of the prison reformer John Howard, and discussed in Allene Gregory's The French Revolution and the English Novel pp. 288-9.
 4. The tales in Mrs. Opie's collections cannot all be regarded as short stories and, therefore, irrelevant to a discussion of the development of the novel; some are certainly very brief, and quite closely related to the tract, but others are longer than, for instance, Mrs. Inchbald's Nature and Art, which is usually referred to as a novel. Some are a full volume in length, and one or two even longer than that. One reviewer, at least, referred to them as "novelettes". See MM 46 (September 1818) part II, 158.

problem of a man who suspects, but cannot be sure, that the woman he loves is a murderess, and The Robber, dealing with the way in which a man can be unjustly accused of a crime on circumstantial evidence. However, she was to make more successful attempts at the crime story in later collections, and it was two tales of humble life which were chosen by both the Edinburgh Review and The British Critic as the best in this collection, as indeed they are.¹ There were, as has already been noted, scenes from working class life in the tracts of the period, from which developed tales like Mrs. Hamilton's Cottagers of Glenburnie, but Mrs. Opie's tales, while they too may have developed from the tract, must also have been influenced by other factors, for in them the working class characters are treated as seriously as those in any of her tales of upper and middle class life, and without condescension.²

The Brother and Sister tells of the love of a village girl for a young French aristocrat whom she nursed when he was ill; and, by moving from the mind of the man to that of the girl, portrays a situation which is tragically understandable. The youth is fond of the girl, but his consciousness of his rank prevents him from ever considering marrying her, though she does not realise this. Thus, when, after he has been recalled to France, she finds herself pregnant, though upset, she is able to hide her condition, planning to bear the child in a nearby town and put it to nurse till she can present it to its father. Her plans, however, are thwarted, and when she hears that her lover is married, she gives birth to her baby in a gravel pit, kills it, and suffers the death penalty.³ Her brother, a sailor, vows to avenge her, and in a duel kills the Frenchman, who has returned to England as an émigré. The plot is simple, and except for the contrivance

1. Ed R 8 (July 1806) 467; BC 31 (May 1808) 567

2. In the circumstances, it is tempting to suspect an influence from Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads.

3. There were many infanticides in the period - see Ford K. Brown, Fathers of the Victorians p. 21.

which allows Ellen's brother to encounter her lover, is quite credible, while the didacticism, though evident, is, on the whole, muted.¹ It is, without doubt, meant to be a warning against seduction, but it is the psychology of the characters that is remembered: the mother, foolishly encouraging the Frenchman's attentions to her daughter, believing that he will marry her, and managing to find consolation in her sailor son's successful career, even after her daughter's tragedy; the brother, torn between love for his sister, and shame and anger at her behaviour; the girl, trying to be as practical as possible till all seems lost, and on the eve of her execution writing a last letter to her lover:

.... Various and mixed, no doubt, were the motives that prompted her to write, and some were kind and some were not so; but to forbear to write to him, circumstanced as she was, was impossible. (III, 219)

The importance of the portrayal of this family lies not in its artistry, which has many weaknesses, but in that such a family should have been chosen at all for serious and quite lengthy treatment.²

Slighter and with less well defined characters, is The Soldier's Return, which illustrates the distress of a village carpenter and his wife, when their son, Llewellyn, joins the army, having been driven to do so by the admiration for anyone in uniform, of Fanny, the sempstress he loves. The girl's horror, when she realises what she has done - that uniforms mean war - is convincing - as is her inability to remain faithful to her lover when he has gone, and especially when he is reported missing. Even her suicide, when he returns to find her a prostitute, is not sensational in its context, since she has been portrayed as young and foolish, not hard and

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1. None of her later stories is much better than this, though some were much better than other tales in the 1806 volume.
 2. By 1830 pictures of "low" life seem to have become quite common in the novel, since Ed R 51. (July 1830) 445 notes that some prefer such pictures, "under the notion, which we think erroneous, that they are thereby afforded a better insight into human character, and view mankind in a less artificial state."

immoral, and it is possible to believe that she is overwhelmed by shame. The "moral" here is not to be found in the fall of Fanny, but in the much wider theme of the pernicious effects of war on family life.¹

The remaining Simple Tales are, however, standard moral fables, with little merit except the occasional psychological insight. In almost all, the plots are too obviously manipulated to illustrate a moral point, and the narrative too frequently interrupted for intrusions to moralise, as in the following extract from The Fashionable Wife and Unfashionable Husband:

..... Alas! ... She who has once compromised so far with her conscience as to resist the pleadings of sincerity and be contented to be praised for actions which she never performed, has laid the foundation stone of future vice
(I, 133)

Even worse are the moments when the attempts to achieve pathos become sheer melodrama, as in The Death Bed, a very short tale, in which the demands of the plot leave no room for development of character. Here an adulterous wife, having sunk to the gutter and at the point of death, meets in the street her husband and daughter, and, on her death bed, is supposed to be comforted to know that, by being found, she has at least done good by serving as a dreadful warning to her daughter. This is Mrs. Opie at her very worst.

Nevertheless the critics chose, on the whole, to praise the good and ignore the bad, The London Literary Journal finding the tales "natural, simple and interesting."² Even Jeffrey in The Edinburgh Review praised her

1. What Wordsworth wrote to C.J. Fox about his Lyrical Ballads (with special reference to The Brothers and Michael) seems to apply to Mrs. Opie's aim in her tales of the poor; he hoped that they might "excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good hearts and ... in some small degree enlarge our feelings of reverence for our species, and our knowledge of human nature, by shewing that our best qualities are possessed by men whom we are too apt to consider, not with reference to the points in which they resemble us, but to those in which they manifestly differ from us." (The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787-1805 ed. E. de Selincourt. Letter of 14/1/1801).

2. LJ ns, 2 (August 1806) 159.

highly for her "truth to general nature" which, he said, was much more important than originality.¹ Noticeably, however, one finds the opinion beginning to be advanced that she is perhaps too pathetic² - and there was, in The Critical Review, at least one dissenting voice from the general approbation, since it expressed itself as amazed to find that The Edinburgh Review (which had a reputation for discriminating criticism) had praised Mrs. Opie's tales so highly.³

Shortly after the publication of Simple Tales, Mrs. Opie's husband died, and for three years she was in mourning, spending her time writing a memoir to be published with his Lectures on Painting and preparing a volume of poems for publication.⁴ Her reputation was now at its height, however, and though in 1810 she had published no fiction for four years, she was the "modern" novelist chosen by Mrs. Barbauld for special mention in her essay "On the Origin and Progress of Novel Writing", prefaced to Volume 1 of her edition of The British Novelists (1810)⁵, while in the same year, Mary Russell Mitford wrote of her:

.... I quite agree with you in your admiration of Miss Edgeworth. She and Miss Baillie and Mrs. Opie are three such women as have seldom adorned one age and one country. Of the three I think I had rather ... resemble Miss Baillie. Yet Mrs. Opie is certainly not the least accomplished of the trio.⁶

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1. Francis Jeffrey, Ed R 8 (July 1806) 465.
 2. e.g. Ed R 8 (July 1806) 470; BC 31 (May 1808) 567 and hinted at in MR ns. 53 (August 1807) 438.
 3. CR 53, 8 (August 1806) 443.
 4. The Warrior's Return and Other Poems (1808); Lectures on Painting (1809).
 5. Letitia Barbauld, in her essay "On the Origin and Progress of Novel Writing" (British Novelists I, 57) said that she did not intend to come right up to date, "otherwise a tribute ought to be paid to the peculiarly pathetic powers of Mrs. Opie."
 6. Letters of Mary Russell Mitford, ed. R. Brimley Johnson, 45. Letter of 10/9/1810.

Miss Mitford was to change her mind, however, and Mrs. Opie's next novel, the worst she ever wrote, must have had something to do with this. Temper (1812) involves a runaway marriage, a husband who denies the marriage to the extent of having the relevant page torn out of the marriage register, and a child of the marriage who, not knowing the name of her father, is saved only at the altar from marrying her own brother. Such an outline of the plot, however, gives an entirely misleading impression of the nature of the tale, which, far from being sensational, is utterly didactic and told with an absolute lack of artistry. Attention is constantly divided between the largely separate adventures of the hero and heroine, and further jerkiness is caused by the freedom with time: months and years pass - or the reader is taken back in time to learn the "history" of one of an innumerable cast of characters, many irrelevant to the plot, and only necessary to elaborate the theme of "temper", by which she seems to have meant a tendency of mind towards some particular defect which, unless corrected in youth, causes problems in later life. Even the hero and heroine, St. Aubyn and Emma, are unconvincing, and so full of conscious rectitude that one feels no more with, or for, them than for any other of the lifeless characters. Yet it seems obvious that it is very difficult to see them in the same light as did contemporary readers, for in a copy of the novel in Edinburgh University Library (catalogued Zb. 10-12) in faded ink and an outmoded but educated calligraphy is a date, February 10th 1812, and at the end of the novel, in the same ink and hand, the following note:

I think that St. Aubyn was the most charming creature possible and in every action gave proofs of his gratitude, kind feeling, want of revenge, sweet Temper and good principles which become every young Man.

As for The Gentleman's Magazine, it said firmly:

.... such attempts surely deserve more encouragement than can possibly be due to those who write fiction

for the mere purpose of amusing and entertaining the indolent adult.¹

Not all was praise, however: The Eclectic Review, carrying further the earlier charge of her being "too pathetic", referred to her as "sentimental", while The Monthly Review though admiring "the new and exemplary character of St. Aubyn" felt that she had treated her subject too didactically and regretted the introduction of "improbable circumstances".²

It is paradoxical, in fact, that many of Mrs. Opie's improbable stories really were Tales of Real Life³ (the title she gave in 1813 to her next collection of tales) - the stumbling block to their acceptance being that she not only often wrote of the kind of real life events which today tend to reach the more sensational Sunday newspapers, but also obviously elaborated on her source stories to make sure they provided useful lessons. Lady Anne and Lady Jane, for example, which Mary Russell Mitford thought better than Temper, remarking

.... She is always powerful in pathos. But why will she meddle with lords and ladies?⁴

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1. GM 82 (November 1812) 463-4. An additional reason for the novel's popularity may have been that amid much that is vapid or sensational in volume III, are authentic records of scenes which Amelia Opie saw on her trip to France in 1802, and which are also described in her letters (in C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 98 et seq.) These may have had an added appeal at a time when France was, and had been for some time, inaccessible to the English traveller.
 2. ER 8 (June 1812) 603; MR ns. 68 (June 1812) 217.
 3. In the introductory lines to his outstandingly popular tract, The Dairyman's Daughter (1809), Legh Richmond insisted that it was "from real life"; the claim seems to have been one frequently made in the period (e.g. see below p 114) and one doubts its truth at times. However, so fiercely was Amelia Opie opposed to lying in any form, that in her case one must assume it was true.
 4. Augustus G. L'Estrange, Life of Mary Russell Mitford I, 240-241, letter of 10/11/1813. Mrs. Opie did not often "meddle with lords and ladies".

- is, in fact, not vitiated by its high life setting, but by its overtly moral purpose and its sensational ending in which the spendthrift Jane is stabbed to death by a woman whose husband has killed himself because he has been ruined by Jane's refusal to pay his bills. A true story, perhaps - but, to use one of Mrs. Opie's own favourite expressions, "le vrai n'est pas toujours le vraisemblable."

It is thus perhaps unfortunate that she did not concentrate on the crime story, set in any walk of life, since it both muted her didacticism and made more acceptable the bizarre or violent incident of which she was so fond. Certainly the best of the tales in this collection, despite its title, is The Mysterious Stranger, which claims to be "A Tale Founded on Fact". Here a melodramatic story is given credibility by its manner of narration, which is unusually skilful for Mrs. Opie, who pretends that all she is doing is presenting the manuscript of one of the participants in the events described, and succeeds in taking on the personality of a rational, down to earth, middle-aged man. His shifting attitudes to "the mysterious stranger" carry conviction, and though the ending is a disappointment, there is yet no small amount of atmosphere and tension created.

The narrator, Moreton, tells how he agreed to accompany abroad his friend, Lord D, a widower, and how, while waiting to sail, they met a beautiful woman, by whom Lord D. was fascinated, but whom Moreton instinctively mistrusted; yet the language in which he describes her—her "graceful sweetness", the "soft and winning accents of her voice" (II, 165)—makes the reader uncertain as to whether his fears will be justified. This ambivalent feeling towards the heroine is maintained throughout, since the reader knows nothing about her but what Moreton tells him. He goes on to relate how, learning that she walked about her room during the

night, he used his medical training to look for signs of insanity in her; and though he reports that he found none, the suggestion lingers in the reader's mind. Yet at the same time, by making Moreton confess an attempt to impress the lady (whose name, they learn, is Rosabel Macdonald) with the information that his companion is a lord, Mrs. Opie makes her, in her quietly amused reaction, seem almost the superior in character of the two.

Rosabel was, apparently, a widow, and Lord D eventually proposed marriage to her. Moreton was uneasy - but this was nothing to his feelings when he discovered that her first husband had died suddenly. Suspecting that she might possibly have murdered him, he hoped desperately that the truth about her past would be revealed before any harm came to Lord D. Nevertheless, with an inconsistency which he himself cannot explain - but which makes him all the more human to the reader, when an opportunity arose to clear up the mystery, he rejected it. The occasion was the approach of some strangers one day, when he was out walking with Rosabel. Her great distress, and efforts to avoid being seen by them, made it clear to him that she must have recognised them. His obvious reaction would have been to make sure that the meeting took place - yet he found he could not stop himself from helping her to avoid detection. From this time, Moreton recounts, there was a warmer relationship between them. This, however, did not prevent him from probing, and he describes Rosabel's agitation whenever the subject of murder was brought up. Thus suspense is maintained till the ending - which is pure bathos: Rosabel unjustly suspecting her husband of infidelity had left him - and her marriage to Lord D was bigamous. Nevertheless, in this tale, Mrs. Opie

did, to a large extent, lose the moralist in the story-teller. Presumably there is a moral, to do with the harmful effects of jealousy - but it has not been apparent or suggested till the very last pages, and even then Mrs. Opie does not try to press it, merely ending:

Here the manuscript breaks off abruptly; but I have given it to the world as it is, and I shall leave my readers to draw their own moral from the story, a story which, as was stated on the first page of it, though certainly le vrai is not the vraisemblable.

(III, 297)

Up to this time, Mrs. Opie's fiction, while not lacking a religious note,¹ had purveyed a morality rather more secular than religious; though brought up as a Unitarian, she seems, before 1814, to have had "no very fixed opinions on religious subjects."² However, she was no more immune than were so many others to the influence of the evangelical movement; in 1814 she began to attend Quaker meetings, and soon after put her deepening religious concern into a novel, Valentine's Eve (1816), which was, beyond doubt, evangelical, in a way in which none of Mrs. Hamilton's could be said to be, though the targets of irreligion and jacobinism were the same for both. So obvious is the evangelical influence, in fact, that we find her writing to her friend William Hayley, of the sculptor Lemaistre, that he was

1. In Adeline Mowbray, for example, Adeline prays for comfort, and refers to "the Most High", "the Being", "the Great Searcher of Hearts."

2. C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 175.

.... shocked at my having condescended (think of that!)
to enlist under the banner of Mr. Wilberforce & Hannah
More!!!¹

Valentine's Eve was not so favourably reviewed as earlier works of Mrs. Opie had been, the harshest review by far being that in The British Lady's Magazine which objected strongly to religion being "obtruded" in a novel and dismissed the story as "very poor and deserv[ing] no analysis." The Monthly Review, more favourably, regarded it as an "interesting but unequal performance," while The Augustan Review said:

.... however much the present performance may fall short of our wishes, we shall be among the first to take up any other from the same author.²

Even so, its appeal to an easy sentimentality ensured it a second edition in the same year. The first scene, for example, is one in which a General Shirley, having collapsed in the street after hearing of the death in battle of his only son, whom he had disowned for marrying beneath him, is helped home by a strange girl. Something about her look and manner puzzles him, and, in agitation, he asks her name:

The stranger girl, awed and affected, sunk upon her knees; and while the general lifted up the dark and glossy ringlets that obscured her eyes and brow, she clasped her hands together and looked piteously and imploringly in his face. "Speak, speak," he rejoined: "Who are you?"

"I am the daughter of your son."

"I thought so," exclaimed Lord Shirley, in a tone of pleasure; while the general, after gazing intently on her one moment more, raised her in his arms, and, clasping her convulsively to his bosom, wept over her in speechless emotion:... (I, I, 18)

This is exactly the kind of writing Jane Austen had parodied so devastatingly years before in Love and Freindship:

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1. Povey MS 16, letter of 28/2/1816. Quoted by Margaret Macgregor in Amelia Alderson Opie, Worldling and Friend, 65. John Opie had painted Hannah More in 1786 (William Roberts, Memoirs of Hannah More, II, 37). Many of the Evangelical causes had long been dear to Mrs. Opie - e.g. the attack on slavery (see C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 189)
 2. BLM 4 (September 1816) 180-181; MR 79 (April 1816) 439; AR 2 (June 1816) 583.

.... following the Venerable Stranger into the Room he had been shewn to, I threw myself on my knees before him & besought him to acknowledge me as his Grand Child - He started, & after having attentively examined my features, raised me from the Ground & throwing his Grand-fatherly arms around my neck, exclaimed, "Acknowledge thee! Yes "1

Once accepted into her grandfather's family, Catherine reveals herself to be a very different kind of Christian from them, for they are largely lip-service Christians, members of the fashionable world, while she has been brought up by a pious mother to have active principle, to spend her Sundays in bible-reading and church-going rather than in pleasure parties, and to speak openly and freely of her faith. At first she does this in a very pious way, with frequent use of biblical quotations, as when she replies, on being praised for her patience in the face of her aunt's spitefulness:

" What glory is it, if, when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well and suffer for it ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God". (I, VIII, 193)

Paradoxically, this, which sounds so unnatural, is possibly one of the most natural aspects of the novel. Ford K. Brown has noted, in his major study of the Evangelical movement, that there was a special Evangelical language,² and it is found in other novels of the period, as well as in factual works such as Samuel Bamford's Passages in the life of a Radical, where we read how, when Bamford returned home after a lengthy absence, his father, who had been tricked into giving money to a man who had said he had helped him, cried:

"Never mind the money, 'My son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found!'"3

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1. "Love and Freindship", Letter 11th, in Jane Austen's Minor Works ed. R.W. Chapman.
 2. Ford K. Brown, op. cit., 396. Compare also Ian Bradley, The Call to Seriousness, 30: "Evangelicalism had its own special language in which terms such as "acceptable", "gracious", and, of course "serious" carried particular meaning."
 3. Henry Dunckley ed., Samuel Bamford's Passages in the Life of a Radical and Early Days, 224.

Such language was regarded as ridiculous and embarrassing by non-evangelicals even at the time, and Mrs. Opie makes this clear. Catherine's aunt is openly sarcastic, saying:

"....[we] shall be forced to get our Bibles by heart in order to be able to converse with you"

(I, X, 269)

- and even her cousin, Lord Shirley, who has fallen in love with her, fears that she is "righteous overmuch", (I, VI, 151) - so much so that he asks her grandfather to hint to her that she should quote scripture less frequently to avoid being thought peculiar by society (II, I, 6); for, says Mrs. Opie,

.... though respectable men and sincere believers, their religion was a thing which they were contented to know that they possessed, without bringing it into every-day use, like family jewels not fit for every day wear; its efficacy as a daily guide, as the impeller to good feelings and the restrainer of unkind ones, and as a purifier and regulator of the thoughts as well as actions, was never present to their minds; and any persons who should venture to make it evident that with them such an influence was perpetually present, they were consequently in the habit of styling methodists and fanatics.

(I, VI, 144)¹

Catherine accepts her grandfather's guidance - not because she fears being mocked herself, but because she feels that

.... the cause of religion itself suffers by any eccentricity, however harmless, in the conduct or manners of its professors.

(II, I, 9)

Thus her general conversation till almost the end of the novel becomes much less pious (and more acceptable to modern ears) though always much more so than that of Jane Austen's Christian heroine, Fanny Price.

To give the novel point, of course, Catherine's Christian principle must be put to the test - and this is what the reader is supposed to see, though it is difficult to grasp how it is tested, for she is always more

1. Jane Austen would have agreed entirely with the idea of religion as the best daily guide (the "active principle" of Mansfield Park) but it is most likely that she would have regarded one who talked easily and volubly about this as a "methodist and fanatic". Hannah More, however, even while saying that she hated "enthusiasm" deprecated unwillingness to talk openly of one's religious beliefs. (see Manners of the Great, Works II, 270 and Religion of the Fashionable World, Works II, 353).

acted upon than acting, and her religion seems to have little to do with her behaviour - something observed by The British Lady's Magazine, which commented on

.... the religious garb into which it has become fashionable to dress the patterns of the circulating libraries¹

Having married Lord Shirley at a fairly early stage in the novel, she has then to suffer being plotted against by rejected lovers of herself and her husband, who successfully make her appear to be an adultress.² She is eventually cleared, when Providence (that useful divinity which General Shirley believed had returned his grand-daughter to him in the first place) causes some letters of the conspirators accidentally to fall into the hands of one of her supporters:³ but by this time her husband has left her, and (in a tearful scene, at the end of which she falls insensible) her children have been removed from her supposedly unchaste presence:

.... Catherine now pressed both her children to her bosom; then, after a paroxysm of such anguish as none but a mother can conceive, she exclaimed, "Yes! Searcher and trier of hearts! even these, these dear ones, as it is thy will, I can resign!- and now, thy will be done!"
(III, IV, 99-100)

It is difficult to see what "principle" is being shown at work here, except a passive acceptance of events - and it is difficult to reject the suspicion that the desire to work up to Catherine's "holy death" played no small part in the contriving of the plot. Though she has previously been perfectly

1. BLM 4 (September 1816) 180.

2. For mentioning adultery she was reproved in the strongest terms by some of her Quaker friends (Povey MS 17, Letter to William Hayley, 3/5/1816, quoted by Margaret Macgregor, op. cit., 65-66).

3. Though Christians commonly believed in an active Deity, Evangelicals apparently put great stress on this (see Maurice Quinlan, Victorian Prelude 188, and Mary Jones, Hannah More, 200). Thus such Providential happenings were common in the Evangelical novel and in Evangelical thought, causing anti-Evangelicals to pour scorn on the idea of divine intervention in the affairs of a particular individual. See e.g. a lengthy article by Sydney Smith in Ed.R (Jan. 1808) 341-62. There is a scholarly discussion of this point in Elizabeth Jay's Ph.D thesis Anglican Evangelicalism and the Nineteenth Century Novel (Oxford 1975) ppl64-73. As the title suggests, Miss Jay's concern was specifically with Evangelicalism and the novel, therefore her background of the Evangelical movement forms a major part of her thesis. As she was dealing with the movement and with the novel throughout the nineteenth century, she did not touch on any of the minor authors with which this thesis is concerned, with the exception of Hannah More.

healthy, her grief leads automatically to her "decline" - and one is reminded of Sophia in Love and Freindship:

" I die a Martyr to my greif [sic] One fatal swoon has cost me my Life Beware of swoons Dear Laura A frenzy fit is not one quarter so pernicious; "1

Mrs. Opie's portrayal of the death of Catherine, however, has the curious effect of being, for the most part, so hackneyed that the twentieth century reader cannot but regard it with amusement - and then, suddenly and unexpectedly, trapping him, too, in a moment of emotion such as the book's first readers must have experienced. First we are regaled with an account of her taking the last sacrament with her husband, and insisting that he, as well as she, must forgive those who have wronged her, her logic being that if they hear they have been forgiven they may be drawn to God.² Catherine says of their communion:

...."This, my dear lord, ought to be considered as our second wedding feast; but of more value than the first, as I trust that it secures our eternal reunion 'where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.'"
(III, XI, 232)

The twist comes however, when Catherine is made to appear to have a sudden recovery - to be gay, and to believe, as does her husband, that she is going to be well - and then, suddenly and shockingly, quietly to slip into death. The same kind of technique was used at the end of Adeline Mowbray - and it is certainly effective.

Religion, melodrama and pathos were not the only popular ingredients of Valentine's Eve, however. It was published just after the end of the Napoleonic war, when there was a slump in some industries, at the same time as men were returning from armed service to find employment - and when social and political demands which had been kept down for well over a decade

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1. "Love and Freindship", Letter the 14th, Jane Austen's Minor Works, ed. R.W. Chapman, 102.
 2. Nevertheless, Mrs. Opie saw to it that they both came to horrifying ends, both being killed in squalid circumstances - Sophia while living as a prostitute.

were beginning to make themselves heard. It had, therefore, closely linked to its "Christian principle" theme, the same strong and explicit anti-jacobin element which had seemed so necessary at the end of the eighteenth century.¹ This is introduced through the Merle family, with whom Catherine had lived after the death of her mother, while her father was at sea. Mr. Merle, we are told was once a small tradesman, who, having ruined himself as a result of his own stupidity (by living above his means) blamed all his troubles on the government, and adopted the "new philosophy". Even while condemning this, however, Mrs. Opie is loyal to her old friends, its originators, saying that by doing so he joined the ranks of those

.... whom profligacy and poverty led to rally round that respectable standard, which was originally erected from the purest and most disinterested love of civil and religious liberty. (I, III, 54)²

All his wife has learned from him is to hate the government; but his daughter Lucy, beautiful, intelligent, and fiercely loyal both to her friend Catherine and to her ideals, has "imbibed the purest flame of liberty and the purest love of republicanism", (I, III, 55). Unfortunately, however, virtue and

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1. William Roberts, writing in 1834 of the political climate of the years immediately after the end of the war, said that the social unrest resulted in Hannah More's again being asked to produce tracts, as she had done twenty years earlier. (Memoirs of Hannah More III, 466)
 2. Bridget MacCarthy, The Later Women Novelists 1744-1818 p 211 rightly considers her novels to be anti-Revolutionary; nevertheless the statement needs some qualification. She was friendly with French émigrés in London, was an eager spectator of the visit of European royalty to London in 1814 and was horrified at the idea of revolution and bloodshed in England; but she believed that the ideals of many of the French revolutionaries had been good, she admired Bonaparte, and she believed that France had benefited from the change brought by the revolution. (See C.L. Brightwell op. cit., 48, 55, 149-68) - As late as 1829, on a visit to France, she wrote:

At sight of thee, O Tricolour,
I seem to feel youth's hours return;
The lov'd, the lost, those hours restore,
Again for freedom's cause I burn!

(C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 241)

republicanism have become identified with each other in her mind, so that she believes that "the privileged orders" have the monopoly of "every species of vice and every description of error" (I, III, 56). Thus she is suspicious of Catherine's aristocratic lover and his friends, just as he is at first suspicious of her and her possible influence on Catherine, in manners as well as in ideas. Catherine, however, assures him that there is a good reason for the difference between her manners and those of her friend - a reason which makes it impossible for her to change; her standard, she says is Christianity, which teaches forbearance as a prime duty, whereas Lucy's is republican virtue, a chief value of which is freedom of speech (I, X, 281).

As the novel progresses, Lucy and Lord Shirley learn to understand and admire each other as individuals, not as representatives of certain classes and philosophies; thus, asked on one occasion why she is laughing, Lucy replies:

..."I was laughing to think, my lord, how our mutual good qualities have annihilated our prejudices against each other;-you have forgotten my democratic principles in what you think my better feelings and motives of action, and I have forgotten in your merits and your kindness my dislike of lords and coronets."

(II, III, 110)

Her lesson is continued when she sees that her mother quickly forgets her democratic principles in the pride of being able to boast that a lord has visited her home - repeating "your lordship" so often "that his lordship was almost sick of his title," (II, VIII, 194). Moreover, on going to America to join her father, whom she has not seen for some time, and whom she has thought of as "a model of republican virtue", she finds him to be "a squalid, bloated, feeble being", (III, VI, 133). Even American society itself proves a disappointment, for she discovers that there is an aristocracy of wealth, as disgusting — or more so than the aristocracy of birth and that her mother is not considered to be "visitable" by the rich and powerful because she keeps a school, (III, VI, 135). Her conclusion is that though she still

thinks a republic in theory a very fine thing, she will be contented "to take England as it is, and to forgive its faults for the sake of its perfections." (III, VIII, 179). Further, she is drawn to base her principles for living on Christian, and no longer on republican grounds:

.... she had seen in the practice of many around her, but especially in the conduct of her parents, how little integrity was the result of mere moral axioms and political opinions; and she became convinced that human beings must have purer and higher motives of action, more effectual incentives to good, and more powerful restrainers from evil.
(III, VI, 148)

The tone of all these episodes is much pleasanter than that in many anti-jacobin novels, and there is nothing incredible in the progress of Lucy's change of view, but it is evident that opportunities are contrived for formal discussions on "democracy" and "republicanism". And Lucy's social status allows Mrs. Opie the chance to explore another subject closely allied to these, namely the rightness or otherwise of unequal marriages. On the surface, Mrs. Opie here, as on other issues, takes the conservative view: on Catherine's approaching marriage Lucy reflects that

.... Lady Shirley could not be to her what Catherine Shirley had been
(II, VIII, 191)

- and Amelia Opie says nothing to indicate that she is wrongly judging her own position. Then, when a peer, Lord Livesay finds himself falling in love with her, he too seems to see class as an insuperable barrier: "pride and prudence" seem to militate against a close relationship, (II, III, 97). This view is firmly backed by Lord Shirley, who has earlier declared himself to be "no friend to unequal marriages" (I, VI, 140) and who now, in words reminiscent of Darcy's advice to Bingley in Pride and Prejudice, says that while "a more deserving creature than Lucy Merle exists not, in one sense of the word," integrity forces him to warn his friend

".... that such an unequal match as this would in all probability turn out ill; for she has a vulgar vixenish mother, and still more vulgar relations."
(II, VI, 145-146)

He adds to his arguments against the marriage the embarrassment Lucy's jacobinical opinions might cause - but this he sees as a minor matter - a mere possibility - compared with the positive existence of her family.¹

Presumably to emphasise the truth of this point, Mrs. Opie has earlier introduced a lively scene in Vauxhall Gardens, where Lucy, in the company of the new friends she has made as a result of her relationship with Catherine, meets some of her "vulgar relations". She is said to have to summon all her energies and recollect all her principles "to enable her to bear with fortitude this trial of her humility," (II, II, 50) - and there seems to be no irony in this comment. Yet there is nothing shameful in what her relations say to her; they are merely simple, working-class people, eager to bring Lucy up to date with news about the family:

" there's mother, she has had the mumps very bad,
and her face swelled as big as two; and as to Bridget,
my dear - " (II, II, 50)

- at which Catherine's great-aunt runs off in horror. Lucy herself calls them her "vulgar relations" (II, II, 81) - and so, presumably, the reader is supposed to see them, and to appreciate Lord Livesey's problem. Even Catherine, the child of such a marriage, reprobates them, (I, VII, 164). Yet while one side of Mrs. Opie's mind conformed to the general attitude of her society, the other insisted that accident of birth was irrelevant. Though greatly modified, the democratic principles on which she had been raised obviously left her uneasy about the idea of judging a person's suitability for a marriage by his rank - and indeed, her own husband, though a celebrated painter, was the son of a carpenter, and had had little formal education. So, to balance the conservative propaganda in the novel, whether

1. Unlike Darcy in relation to Jane Bennet, Lord Shirley feels impelled in honour to tell Lucy what he has said about her to Livesey and she actually thanks him for doing so, saying that had Lord Livesey proposed to her she must have refused, because of her contempt for titles, (II, VI, 154).

consciously or not, she dwells on the fact that Catherine's mother, the daughter of a common lodging-house keeper proved an ideal wife to the son of a general, being

.... formed in person, mind and heart, in all the highest aristocracy of nature (I, X, 243)

- while Lucy, the tradesman's daughter is, in the end, allowed to marry her earl, with the full approval of Lord Shirley, who has moved from mere admiration of her character to a belief that she would grace any situation.

Unlike Mansfield Park, however, which explores similar questions in a fiction which is utterly unforced and credible, Valentine's Eve conveys its ideas with little art, and with characters who are almost all completely subordinated to its purpose. What ability Mrs. Opie had to realise character is here evidenced only in a relatively minor person, Catherine's aunt, Mrs. Baynton, a study in the Mrs. Norris genre, and little inferior to Jane Austen's creation. Mean, spiteful, snobbish, full of complaints, aware that she is generally disliked, and ready to blame anyone for this but herself, she is yet an excellent nurse, and surprisingly loud in Catherine's defence once she sees that she is no longer the threat she had earlier seemed to her position as housekeeper.

Mrs. Baynton's role in the novel is over relatively early, however, and Catherine, Lucy and Lord Shirley are little more than mouthpieces for ideas, while Lucy's parents, and her suitor Lord Livesay are pasteboard, the former existing only to explore democratic principles in action, the latter to allow the question of unequal marriages to be raised. Even less lifelike are Melvyn and Sophia, the rejected lovers who plot against Catherine, for they exist merely for the melodramatic plot, as does Lucy's brother, a thief and army deserter, whose existence Lucy and Catherine have sworn to Mrs. Merle not to divulge. Desperately in love with Catherine, he disguises himself in a red wig and false sideboards in order to see her, causing quite unnecessary complications in the plot.

And nothing could be more clumsy than Mrs. Opie's narrative technique. Her language, admittedly, is simple,¹ and she carries the action forward quite frequently by the use of brisk dialogue, untrammelled by "he said" or "she said", as in the following passage when Mrs. Baynton asks her brother disbelievingly if he really intends to let the "low" Lucy Merle eat with his family:

"To be sure, I do."

"What! when there is company?"

"Undoubtedly."

"What a want of proper pride!"

"No - what a proof of true pride! Mrs. Baynton, I am too proud to suppose the man or woman whom I think good enough to associate with me is not fit company for any guest of mine." (I, VII, 171-172)²

However, as has been noted, because of her dislike of writing in chapters, she had adopted the habit of jerking the reader from one character and episode to another with an ungainly "But to return to" and here, even though she uses chapters, the same phrase recurs. Moreover, the chapter divisions seem almost meaningless; chapter eight of volume two, for instance, begins with an account of the first day of Catherine's married life, then breaks into a long account of a past episode in her husband's life, including the "history" of a woman with whom he had been involved, the break being marked by an address from writer to reader, beginning -

I am now going to enter upon a very painful task
(II, VIII, 197)

- for Mrs. Opie never, at any point in her career, hesitated to intrude herself to expand a point, to explain or to moralise.

The high chorus of praise for her work which had lasted from the beginning of the century was now tempered. Few were as yet as scathing as Peacock, who

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1. So much so, that the occasional use of a word like "riveted" or "transported", so common in many other writers of the period, strikes one with a sense of shock.
 2. The influence of the theatre seems evident here. Occasionally in the period writers actually set out scenes in a novel as though they were scenes in a play: Hannah More did so occasionally in her tracts and in Coelebs, and T.S. Surr, as will be noted in Chapter 10, was one of the chief exponents of the practice.

in his Headlong Hall of 1815, taking clever advantage of the possibilities offered by her name, had satirised her as the sleep-inducing novelist Miss Philomela Poppyseed, but in 1818 The Monthly Magazine, while praising her latest collection of stories, New Tales, ventured to suggest that the "novelette" was the form best suited to her abilities, since she lacked the "requisite genius for the production of a superior novel in three or four volumes."¹ In fact even these "novelettes" are disappointing, for while, as always, there are occasional striking characters and scenes, there is not one which is entirely praiseworthy. In Valentine's Eve she had written at one point:

.... I am weary of detailing the progress of ruin which is visible in the career of spoiled children; tempers uncorrected; passions unrestrained; and selfishness, the parent of callousness of heart, universally triumphant!
(II, VIII, 198)

• but this is what she largely continued to do, to the weariness of the reader. Six of the nine New Tales are little more than moral exempla. Mrs. Arlington, for instance, is intended to show that a happy family life is more to be desired than riches; White Lies to demonstrate the troubles which might be caused by even the mildest lie, and A Tale Of Trials to demonstrate the beauty of filial devotion. Most of her characters are again mere mouth-pieces for ideas, as are all in The Quaker and the Young Man of the World. Others are idealised, as well she knew, for she wrote of the hero of The Welcome Home:

.... Alas! I fear I am painting a very unnatural character for a general officer just returned from India! But I must have my own way, and paint such a man as he ought to think and feel, not, perhaps, as he would.

(New Tales IV, 349)

Yet at times there are convincing human beings in these unconvincing stories, one such being Mary Ann in Mrs. Arlington, who must be one of the most

1. MM 46 (September 1818) part II, 158.

delightful children in the Regency novel.¹ At eight years old she much prefers to be in her simple vicarage home than in the fashionable society life to which her family aspires, for the very understandable reasons she gives, that she has to go to bed anyway, when parties are held - and she misses her rabbits and her pet dog, Nelly. At Mrs. Arlington's splendid home, she wonders, rather plaintively, if they will remember her; she thinks that Nelly might, but adds

" I dare say the rabbits will not."

- to which Mrs. Arlington replies, perfectly seriously:

" If they do not, they will be very glad to see you, however, if you give them some cabbage leaves."
(Vol. I, 102)

Mary Ann's sense of priorities does more to carry the point Mrs. Opie wants to make than all of the contrived moralising in the tale.

Even Mary Ann does not make Mrs. Arlington a well written "novelette", however, and it is not surprising to find that Tom Moore wrote in his diary in February 1819:

.... Began one of Mrs. Opie's New Tales to Bessy in the evening, but found it impracticable ... Began another of Mrs. Opie's Tales ... something better, but dull enough.²

However, if he went on reading, he must eventually have felt rewarded, for three of the tales An Odd-Tempered Man, Henry Woodville and The Ruffian Boy, while open to censure on several counts, are much better than the others.

An Odd-Tempered Man is a study in neurotic psychology, in which the story is told by the hero himself. Calmly (so calmly that it comes as a shock at the end to find that his wife is dead) he tells how, loving his wife, Caroline, deeply, he was unable to convince himself that he was equally loved in return, and thus, through a strange kind of pride, refused to show her any love,

1. A period in which children had not yet begun to feature much in fiction for adults.

2. John Russell ed., Memoirs, Journal and Correspondence of Thomas Moore, II, 269.

eventually breaking her spirit so that she died from lack of desire to live. The story is still told for a moral purpose, the narrator ending by saying that if his tale affects only one person, his purpose will be fulfilled -

.... and should departed souls be allowed to witness what is passing on earth, the gentle spirit of Caroline will be soothed by the consciousness that I have not suffered and she has not died in vain
(IV, 122)

- but the understanding of such a state of mind, not perhaps unusual in life, but unusual in fiction up to that time, is remarkable, and the tone is nearer to pathos than to sentimentality.

The only other tales of any merit, in this collection, Henry Woodville and The Ruffian Boy, are both crime stories and both based on real cases. The former, though set in the nineteenth century, is based on a case of 1684, and centres on a wrongful arrest. The hero, as a result of circumstantial evidence, is accused of murder, and a strangely modern air pervades the tale as, in opposition to all public opinion, his lawyer believes in his innocence and sifts through the evidence with him, looking for flaws in the prosecution's case. Meanwhile the murdered man's family are giving their version of the affair to their lawyer - and Henry's employer is trying to get the trial delayed. When it does occur, the trial is given in detail - but it is not verbose, dramatically including details of witnesses' testimony, speeches to the jury, the jury's deliberation, their verdict, the prisoner's being asked if he wishes to speak, and the judge's summing up and verdict - all things familiar to readers of modern crime fiction, but rare at the time when Mrs. Opie was writing.

At this point, unfortunately, there comes one of the major blemishes in the story, with a most improbable account of why and how Henry's jailer helps him to escape - but the escape at least provides an opportunity for a portrayal of Henry as a man on the run. By far the best part of this is his first escape to London; once his employer has enabled him to find a hiding -

place in the country, a love interest takes over, and there is a melodramatic account of the finding of the real murderer. As with so many of Mrs. Opie's tales, what is good seems to be there almost by accident. What is noticeable however, is that in this, as in almost all of the stories of crime except the early The Robber, copy-book morality tends to fade.

Thus in The Ruffian Boy, too, there is no oppressive didacticism, though the story does touch on the need for prison reform. This is yet another kind of "thriller", where interest is focused on the psychology of a family haunted by the determination of a criminal to kill one of its members. The bare bones of the original case are given soberly in a footnote, (IV, 293). Apparently in Brussels, twenty years earlier, a rejected youth, in a state of intoxication had attempted to kill the girl who had rejected him, but killed her companion in error, for which, because of his youth, he was sentenced to twenty years imprisonment, rather than to death. Mrs. Opie chose to concentrate her tale on the youth's actions after his release from prison - something she had, perforce, to imagine, since at the time of writing (if the tale was, indeed based on fact) he had not yet been released. The reader is allowed to share the terror of the heroine, Ethelind, as she hears of the end of the sentence of Gerald, who had gone to prison vowing to her "Je te retrouverai un jour" (IV, 154) - but this tension is broken as Mrs. Opie takes the opportunity to moralise, both by making Ethelind reflect on the uselessness of imprisonment, if it is to be used merely as punishment, with no attempt at reform, and by the addition of a lengthy footnote on the subject, (IV, 162-164). The lesson completed, the story is taken up again at the point when Gerald begins his attempts on Ethelind's life, being thwarted once by her guard dog, which he later kills, and on a second occasion by the mother of the girl for whose murder he was imprisoned, who dies of shock. The family move, hoping to keep their whereabouts secret from him. Windows are barred. Twice they feel safe, having heard that he has been arrested - but once the information is a trick,

to catch them off guard, and the second time his confinement is brief, since he escapes. Eventually however, he is caught and executed - and a thrill of horror is derived from that fact that Ethelind, after the long war of nerves, will not believe that he is really dead until her husband takes her to the prison and makes her touch the corpse.

It is largely the family's reactions to their situation that are given in this tale, and the effects of the pursuit on Ethelind's mind. Geraldine is rarely seen, yet there is always an awareness of his existence, and the bitter man with his "bright and terrible eyes", (IV, 167) becomes real, and even moving. "Unfortunate circumstances made Geraldine what he was" (IV, 248); he desires to harm no one but Ethelind on whom he blames the ruin of his life, and he is full of remorse for having killed her friend and her friend's mother. The tale is meant to convey a lesson - but the "lesson" is rather conveyed by the action than by overt statement.

Unfortunately, however, as Mrs. Opie became more deeply involved with the Quakers (an involvement which was soon to lead to her giving up fiction altogether) her stories became more and more moral tracts. Thus The Monthly Review said of her next work, Tales of the Heart (1820)

.... We know that she has talents; and we must therefore earnestly entreat that in the next publication she will not excite a suspicion that they are impaired and blunted.¹

Of the seven tales in this collection, only two are worthy of mention, Love, Mystery, and Superstition and A Woman's Love, and a Wife's Duty, the first merely as being a most unusual excursion for Mrs. Opie into a tale with a gothic flavour. Telling of the illicit love of a monk and a nun, in a story set against a background of storm, bleak scenery and a crumbling mansion, it is so novelettish that it is possible that for once she was merely enjoying herself by playing with a tale of this kind.² A Woman's Love, and a Wife's

1. MR n.s. 92 (August 1820) 38.7

2. It could, presumably, have been a serious attempt at a protest against the rigours of the catholic religion, as well as a warning against filial disobedience, since both man and woman entered conventual life against parental wishes.

Duty, however, despite its unfortunate title, is of a very different quality, and its heroine, Helen Pendarves has been considered to be Mrs. Opie's masterpiece.¹ Certainly it holds the interest, for the most part, has characterisation as subtle as is found anywhere in her work, has the astringency of some irony, which is rare with her, and, for perhaps the only time in her tales, the reader is fooled as to the moral which is being conveyed.

A lengthy story (almost two volumes long), it is divided into two parts, and is told by the heroine. In the first part, A Woman's Love, she tells how she came to marry her cousin Seymour, despite her mother's objections to him on grounds of his lack of stability of character. Pleasant and intelligent but spoiled, Helen sees through her mother's sentimental posing and is easily able to manage her. Seymour too, is pleasant, and there seems no reason to doubt his promises to change his wild ways. In part two, however, A Wife's Duty, in which Helen tells of her married life, we learn that Seymour has not changed at all, though she has matured to the extent of being able to pay his debts for him and even to forgive his adulteries. At last in 1793 he leaves her, to follow to France a Frenchwoman who has been expelled from England. Knowing that he will be in great danger, Helen follows him, in case he needs help - and it is now that the story comes to life, for events in Paris at the time are recounted with the vividness of a spectator, though Mrs. Opie did not, in fact, see Paris till eight years after the events she describes took place. Helen tells how she opened a cake shop in a street frequented by members of the National Convention - and the atmosphere of fear is quite powerfully evoked. This section might, in fact, seem melodramatic, but is saved by Helen's down to earth reporting. For example one day Herbert and Danton come in, and she writes:

.... I looked at them, and was mortified to find that
Danton was so pleasant-looking. (III, 310)

1. By Oliver Elton, Survey of English Literature 1780-1830 I, 185.

Again, when a man who appears to be a Government official comes into the shop making enquiries, she is alarmed at first - but soon calms herself, remarking drily

....[He] was too much taken up in laying down the law
for the benefit of the human race, to remember an
individual. (III, 314)

Many events of the times are detailed: she is saddened to hear that Herbert and Danton have been guillotined; Robespierre calls at her shop; she is out one day and hears the thud of the guillotine as Princess Elizabeth is executed. Amid all this, Helen learns that her husband has been arrested, and she contrives to get into his prison to see him. To her surprise he receives her coldly, and she writes

.... for the first time in my life, indignation and a
sense of injury were stronger than my fond woman's
feeling;.... (III, 338)

It is at this point that the reader's expectations are jolted. Everything in the story so far has suggested that Helen is being presented as a model of wifely duty - a model almost too good to be true. But this is not so. Helen had thought she was behaving well, but she learns the truth now from her husband:

.... my parading kindness, my intruding virtue were
offensive. I had humbled him: I had obliged him too
much: I had towered over him in the superiority of my
character; and instead of attaching, I had alienated
him. This was human nature ——— I saw it, I owned
it now, but I was not prepared for it...
(III, 340)

The shock reduces Helen to tears, and Mrs. Opie knew enough of human nature to realise the effect that this would have on a husband who had, in his fashion, loved her. It is illustrative, however, of the weakness of her ability to convey the emotions she so rightly understood, that Seymour's access of tenderness should be presented as artificially as in a stage tableau:

.... He now approached me, and, sinking on one knee,
took my hand and kissed it; then held it to his heart.
(III, 342)

On leaving the prison Helen begins to think about her motives for following her husband to France, and to suspect that she had indulged in the chance to glory in her own goodness. Introspection, however, is balanced with action, as she arranges Seymour's escape. He is recaptured when he insists on returning to make sure that she is safe - but again freed on the downfall of Robespierre on 28th July. However, Helen is now shocked to find herself wondering if she really wants her irresponsible husband back after all - and is saved from having to make a decision only when he is mortally wounded by the husband of his French mistress. This is sensational - but Helen's thoughts as she sits by him as he is dying are only too credible:

.... I saw before me, not the erring husband - the being who had blighted my youth by anxiety, and wounded all the dearest feelings of my soul; but the playfellow of my childhood, the idolized object of my youthful heart and the husband of my virgin affections! (III, 392-393)

Eventually Helen marries a worthy man who has long loved her and of whom her mother had approved - and again one sees Mrs. Opie's real understanding of sometimes perverse human emotions, marred because she can only express them in clichés. Declaring that she was never so happy with Seymour as she is now with the husband of her mother's choice, she yet ends by exclaiming:

.... object of my earliest and my fondest love! never, no never have I forgotten thee! nor can I ever forget! But, like one of the shades of Ossian, thou comest over my soul, brightly arrayed in the beams of thy loveliness; but all around thee is dark with mists and storms!

(III, 394)

She wrote only one more novel, Madeline (1822).¹ By this time, though her tales continued to be published well into the nineteenth century (and especially in America), her reputation had passed its peak, and Miss Mitford, who wrote so admiringly of her in 1810 could say:

1. Most of the work noted in the NCBEL as published after 1822, which is not moral tales for children, is merely reprints of stories from her earlier collections of tales.

.... One knows the usual ingredients of her tales just as one knows the component parts of a plum-pudding. So much common sense (for the flour); so much vulgarity (for the suet); so much love (for the sugar); so many songs (for the plums); so much wit (for the spices); so much fine binding morality (for the eggs); and so much mere mawkishness and insipidity (for the milk and water wherewith the said pudding is mixed up).¹

Yet Mrs. Opie's writing had changed little over the years, apart from some slight modification of her "pathos" and a deepening of the religious tone. What seems to have occurred, was a change in public taste and critical standards, so that the overwhelming praise of 1801 for The Father and Daughter turns to complaints of her "gratuitous or fantastical sorrows", relating

.... to children turning house-breakers and murdering their parents by mistake ... to ruffian boys ... to mad fathers pursuing their daughters over heaths at midnight²

The high tide of her popularity, then, was between 1801 and 1818; she pleased the generation that received Jane Austen's novels so tepidly. Julia Kavanagh, commenting that she had "no invention, no style, no art," believed that it was partly due to her very lack of "the highest literary qualities" that she owed her popularity, for, lacking deep thought and strength of language she had "easy and prompt access to every mind."³ Yet it must not be forgotten that Scott included her, in his essay on Charlotte Smith, with Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Susan Ferrier, Jane Austen, Mrs. Radcliffe and Clara Reeve, as one of the "highly-talented women" whom he thought had distinguished themselves in the writing of fiction;⁴ Maria Edgeworth made one

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1. Augustus G. L'Estrange, Life of Mary Russell Mitford, II, 148, letter of 12.4.1822. There are gross exaggerations here. Mrs. Opie rarely used "songs" or poems in her tales (there are probably more in Madeline (1822) than in any of her earlier stories); many have no conventional love interest; as for vulgarity, it is difficult to know quite what Miss Mitford meant by it; perhaps she meant what Mme. de Staël seems to have meant when she called Jane Austen "vulgaire" (see Critical Heritage, 116) - i.e. "commonplace" - though many of the incidents in Mrs. Opie's novels are far from this.
 2. NMM 13 (June 1820) 634.
 3. Julia Kavanagh, English Women of Letters, 290.
 4. Scott also included Mrs. Inchbald, Mary Shelley, and Mrs. A.M. Bennet.

of her characters in Patronage (1814) list her with Miss Burney and Mrs. Inchbald as one of the novelists worthy of being read;¹ and Southey spoke of her as

.... admired for her talents by those who knew her only in her writings, and esteemed for her worth by those who were acquainted with her in the relations of private life;²

What her contemporaries admired was her capacity for evoking feeling for the characters about whom she wrote, and for extending sensibility to an understanding of human nature in all walks of life. Sydney Smith's "Tenderness is your forte, and carelessness your fault"³ seems to have been generally acknowledged. Noting her weakness in delineating society and her improbability of plot, The Edinburgh Review said

.... The passions were her province, and her forte lay in the exhibition of their workings;⁴

- and while considering even then (in 1830) that her talents were more limited than Jane Austen's, in this one respect Mrs. Opie was deemed superior. A declared moralist, while others used wit, satire, common sense, to serve their ends, Mrs. Opie made her appeal directly to the feelings. And often

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1. Ioan Williams, Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction 190. Patronage I, ch. 5.
 2. Robert Southey, Sir Thomas More; or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society, II Colloquy XIII 322.
 3. C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 129.
 4. Ed R 51 (July 1830) 450 (from a review of Mrs. Gore's Women as They Are). Compare Charlotte Bronte's comment on Jane Austen: "the Passions are perfectly unknown to her." (Critical Heritage, 128). Compare also the following: "As a novelist, Mrs. Opie is a woman of first-rate genius; all she does flows from the heart, and where she depicts the heart in its delicate and morbid feelings she has scarcely any equal and never a superior". (Anna Eliza Bray, Autobiography (1883), quoted by Charles Moulton in The Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors V, 743).

she succeeded. Not only Scott confessed to weeping over her work; the sculptor David is said to have admitted that she made him "cry his eyes out", as did Miss Sedgewick.¹

It is unlikely, however, that even the best of her tales would have that effect today; and even in her own time pathos was seen not only as "her grace" but also as "her fault",² for she tended too often to try to move from the touching to the harrowing - and in this was rarely successful. Adding nothing to the art of the novel, she merely helped, in a small way, to extend its range.³

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1. C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 237; Catherine Hamilton, Women Writers, their Works and Ways, 189.
 2. Julia Kavanagh, English Women of Letters, 296. Mrs. Inchbald, the contemporary who seems to have been most like her in tone, on the whole avoided this fault.
 3. It may be worth noting, that in a period when the historical romance was popular, she did attempt one historical tale, "A Tale of Trials", (New Tales 1818) set in plague-stricken London in the reign of Charles II; the historical background, however, has really no bearing on the theme, which is that of filial duty. "Love, Mystery, and Superstition" (in Tales of the Heart 1820) though set in the 1690's makes no attempt whatsoever to be historical.

IV

Jane Austen 1775-1817

While it may be readily accepted that the work of Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Opie was affected in both content and style by the evangelical movement, to many the idea of Jane Austen's being at all seriously affected by it (as was briefly suggested in Chapter two) may seem untenable. Laurence Lerner, for example, finds that "Jane Austen the novelist did not believe in God, because God is totally absent from her work", and Gilbert Ryle, while not doubting her genuine piety, finds her ethic in her writing "secular as opposed to religious".¹ Nevertheless Richard Whatley's view, quoted earlier, that she was "evidently a Christian writer" - albeit one whose religion was purposely kept unobtrusive so as, in the long run, to be more effective - is certainly not without its twentieth century supporters,² who realise that while her upbringing would have made her reticent in speaking openly of spiritual matters, there is no reason to doubt the assertions of family and friends that she was always "thoroughly religious and devout",³ and believe

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1. L. Lerner, The Truth Tellers, 23; Gilbert Ryle, "Jane Austen and the Moralists" in Brian Southam ed., Critical Essays on Jane Austen, 117.
 2. R. Whatley, QR 24 (January 1821) 352-76 in Critical Heritage, quotation p. 95. Among twentieth century supporters of Whatley's view, apart from such well known judgments as those of Lionel Trilling, Queenie Leavis, Robert Colby, Alistair Duckworth, Angus Wilson and David Cecil, one might cite Alexander Porteous, "The Beast in the Park", Melbourne Critical Review 7 (1964) 66-77; A.F. Walls, "Miss Austen's Theological Reading", Anglican Theological Review 47 (1965) 49-58; M. Watts, "God and Jane Austen", New Blackfriars 53 (1972) 15-22; Peter Garside and Elizabeth McDonald, "Evangelicalism and Mansfield Park", Trivium 10 (1975) 34-50.
 3. Biographical Notice to the posthumous novels in Critical Heritage 77. A friend is said to have spoken of her "deepest and strongest convictions" (in Mary A. Austen-Leigh, Personal Aspects of Jane Austen, 85). But according to James Austen-Leigh (Memoir of Jane Austen, 100) her religion was a subject "on which she was more inclined to think and to act than to talk".

that this can be sensed, at least in her last three novels. Dr. Chapman, moreover, while regretting the loss of letters which might have made clearer her religious views, stated it as his opinion that even in the surviving letters her language on religious matters "is not the language of apathy."¹

If this view is accepted, then it is obvious that she must have seen the truth in the charges of spiritual torpor - and worse - which the evangelicals brought against many in the church;² the religiosity found in some Evangelicals must always have been anathema to her - but it is likely that the devout Christianity of others came to be admired. Avrom Fleishman suggests that she "was open to the moral reformism of the movement, yet contemptuous of its indecorous enthusiasm".³ Certainly the idea of being "born again", a leading Evangelical doctrine, appears nowhere in her work, and as late as 1816 she was writing, "We do not much like Mr. Cooper's new Sermons; - they are fuller of Regeneration & Conversion than ever - with the addition of his zeal in the cause of the Bible Society."⁴ However, as was noted in the introduction to this study, many leading Evangelicals were far more tolerant and much less "enthusiastic" than some of their followers - and, therefore, much more likely to have gained the attention of Jane Austen. There is, at any rate in her last novels, as Mrs. Leavis has pointed out, "the language of a religious change of heart."⁵

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1. Robert Chapman, Jane Austen, Facts and Problems, 115.
 2. e.g. W.E. Russell remembered from his childhood an Anglican clergyman dropping the chalice because he was too drunk to hold it. Cited by Ian Bradley in The Call to Seriousness, 59.
 3. Avrom Fleishman, A Reading of Mansfield Park, 88. And it is impossible of course, to conceive of Jane Austen's being even remotely attracted by methodist evangelicalism.
 4. Jane Austen's Letters, 467.
 5. Queenie D. Leavis, A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings II, Scrutiny X (1941-42), 276. See also Mrs. Leavis's letters, TLS, 5.2.1944, p. 67, and 19.2.1944, p. 91. There is, of course, a religious note in Sense and Sensibility, as was discussed in chapter II.

Those who accept that Jane Austen ever considered Evangelical ideas at all sympathetically, however, on the whole tend to see this occurring only towards the end of her life - whereas it is very possible that she had been open to their ideas for some years before that. According to her brother, her favourite moral writer in verse was the Evangelical Cowper¹ - and she was certainly enough in tune with Evangelical thought by 1805 to find herself, to her surprise, enjoying the writing of Thomas Gisborne, who has been called the ethical philosopher of the influential Clapham group of Evangelicals.² It is as though at this time she had a fixed idea of the Evangelical in her mind, a stereotype she disliked - and was surprised to find her expectations upset on reading an Evangelical work, for she wrote to Cassandra:

.... I am glad you recommended 'Gisborne,' for having begun,
I am pleased with it, and I had quite determined not to read
it.³

Even in a letter to Cassandra of 1809 in which she specifically claimed not to like the Evangelicals, there is a curiously teasing note in what she said. Cassandra had obviously been recommending another book, Hannah More's novel, Coelebs in Search of a Wife, and Jane wrote:

.... You have by no means raised my curiosity after Caleb
[sic]; - my disinclination for it before was affected, but
now it is real; I do not like the Evangelicals. - Of course
I shall be delighted, when I read it, like other people,
but till I do I dislike it.⁴

Here there seems to have been the same first reluctance as with Gisborne.

On reading Coelebs, however, she must have been pleased to find it offering

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1. For the importance of Cowper to Jane Austen, see John Halperin, "The Worlds of Emma: Jane Austen and Cowper" in Jane Austen, Bicentenary Essays, ed. John Halperin, 197-205.
 2. By David Spring in 'The Clapham Sect', Victorian Studies 5, no. 1, p 46. Gisborne was the author of An Enquiry into the Duties of Man in the Higher and Middle Classes of Society (1794, 6th edition 1811) and An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (1797, 11th edition 1816). Hannah More dedicated her Christian Morals (1813) to him. Some of his views were noted in the introductory chapter to this study, page 28.
 3. Jane Austen's Letters 169. Letter of 30.8.1805.
 4. Jane Austen's Letters 256. Letter of 24.1.1809.

sensible, kindly education and deep family affection as a model to replace the kind of education that was the preparation for the round of fashionable life. Some time after the novel appeared, she made an alteration to one of her unpublished early stories, Catherine, making Catherine's aunt, in rebuking her behaviour, say, "I bought you Blair's Sermons and Coelebs in Search of a Wife ... " (MW 232). This was possibly - indeed probably - meant to raise a smile, especially as Catherine's aunt is something of a female Mr. Woodhouse, and slightly caricatured. Nevertheless it is significant that she is presented as having far better values than the Stanley family, who provide Catherine with the ideas of the fashionable world.

At any rate, by 1811 all reluctance to read Hannah More seems to have gone, for we find her, just about the time she was beginning Mansfield Park writing, without sarcasm, to Cassandra, that she had just been visiting a family who were "all reading with delight Mrs. H. More's recent publication."¹ This must almost certainly have been her Practical Piety (1811) a work so successful that it reached its tenth edition by 1814 - the year in which Jane Austen had changed so far as to write advising her niece not to be prejudiced against a suitor because of his Evangelical tendencies:

.... I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be Evangelicals, & am at least persuaded that they who are so from Reason and Feeling must be happiest & safest.²

One sees the basis of her distrust of Evangelicalism here; it laid great stress on feeling, and Jane Austen must have suspected that many "converts" were won over by the emotional atmosphere still common to evangelical revival meetings today. At least some Evangelicals, she has come to believe, have become so from reason as well as feeling - and this she trusts and approves.

1. Jane Austen's Letters 287. Letter of 31.5.1811. Mansfield Park was begun cc February 1811 and finished soon after June 1813 (see R.W. Chapman, Jane Austen, Facts and Problems 178).

2. Jane Austen's Letters, 410. Letter of 18.11.1814.

It is obvious that Fanny, seeing only the embarrassing Evangelical stereotype, could not understand how her aunt could possibly have come to hold such views, and that she must have written asking for an explanation, for in her next letter we find Jane writing, most significantly,

..... I cannot suppose we differ in our ideas of the Christian Religion ... We only afix a different meaning to the word Evangelical.¹

At almost the same time, in two undated letters to Anna Lefroy, she expressed pleasure at the "serious" content of two novels, saying to Anna of the novel she was writing:

..... I ... am ... particularly struck with your serious conversations ... They are very good throughout.

- and of the novelist Laetitia Hawkins, that her "great excellence is on serious subjects."²

Nevertheless it is not suggested that Jane Austen at any time became Evangelical, any more than did Elizabeth Hamilton, but merely that she was more than a little affected by the movement. And it seems important to remember, in this connection, that it is generally recognised that by the early nineteenth century the Evangelical movement was also affecting the high church, resulting, by 1825 in its being "difficult to distinguish between an ardent churchman and an Evangelical."³ It seems, for example, that it can only have been in accordance with the stricter ideas on propriety of the Evangelicals that Jane Austen decided to remove a reference to a natural daughter in chapter thirteen of Sense and Sensibility, when she was preparing the second edition, which came out in November 1813⁴ - though the fact that

1. Jane Austen's Letters 420. Letter of 30.11.1814.

2. Jane Austen's Letters 421, 422. Letters probably of December 1814. Of course Jane Austen also continued to use the word "serious" in its "non technical" sense also.

3. Maurice Quinlan, Victorian Prelude 118. The leaders of the high church movement, one of whom was Wordsworth's brother Christopher, were known as "the Clapton sect."

4. See Critical Heritage, 5.

in Emma (1815) no secret is made of Harriet Smith's illegitimacy suggests that she soon saw the foolishness of such prudery.

That Mansfield Park is a religious novel has, of course, long been widely accepted. What has not, perhaps, been so clear, is just how closely it reflects Evangelical thought on many issues, since though the characters talk about the profession and duties of a clergyman and about the value of religious principle (referred to as "principle" or "active principle"), there is no intimate and personal confession of faith or doubt on the part of any of them, no mention of sin and grace, repentance and redemption, God and the soul - and there is no trace of the pieties or Biblical quotation so common to the intenser Evangelicals. Another reason, however, why its great concern with contemporary issues of religion is not recognised is that the modern reader is not normally alive to the works, or at least to the ideas, to which Jane Austen refers, ideas which were common currency among the Evangelicals and those who came in contact with their works (and it needs to be remembered that the sales of the works of the Clapham group were phenomenal). It has repeatedly been suggested that major influences on her thought were eighteenth century moralists like Shaftesbury and Dr. Johnson.¹ Mansfield Park has been seen as "a monument to the neo-classic age then passing" and its heroine as "the champion of an eighteenth century ideal."² Joseph M. Duffy while seeing the influence of the Evangelicals on the novel's mood, sees its ideal as of the eighteenth century, saying "the novel reads as though an eighteenth-century

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1. e.g. see Frank Bradbrook, Jane Austen and her Predecessors, pp 12, 14; C.S. Lewis "A Note on Jane Austen" in Jane Austen ed. Ian Watt, 28; Stuart Tave, Some Words of Jane Austen 179; R.F. Brissenden, "Mansfield Park", in Jane Austen, Bicentenary Essays, ed. John Halperin, 168; D. Devlin, Jane Austen and Education, passim; Gilbert Ryle, "Jane Austen and the Moralists", in Critical Essays on Jane Austen, ed. Brian Southam, passim.
 2. Ann Banfield "The Moral Landscape of Mansfield Park", Nineteenth Century Fiction 26 (1971-2) p. 1; Janet Burroway, "The Irony of the Insufferable Prig", Critical Quarterly 9 (1967) 129.

deist ... were telling a moralistic fairy tale" and "Here is the old eighteenth century religion still" (without giving any evidence for this).¹ Denis Donoghue, even while referring to Jane Austen's letter in praise of the Evangelicals, (cited above) fails to take the step which would look for associations with their thought, and says of the letter:

This is close to the spirit of Mansfield Park, a novel which dramatises many of the leading moral issues from Shaftesbury to Adam Smith, Cowper and Johnson.²

Christopher Gillie, too, sees her work as "suspended between the background influences of Johnson and Cowper" - perhaps because of her brother's comment in his biographical note to her posthumous novels that these were her favourite moral writers.³

And there is no reason to think she was not influenced by the deeply religious Johnson, by Shaftesbury, and by the other eighteenth century moralists usually cited; but equally it seems reasonable to posit that a well-read and still quite young woman with a lively mind would also be deeply - and even more urgently - concerned with more current writing, and that Mansfield Park is a novel of the nineteenth, not of the eighteenth century. Yet Avrom Fleishman, who certainly recognises an Evangelical influence still sees this as much less strong than it is, believing that

.... Her Evangelicalism expresses itself not in moralising but by suggesting the need for clerical reform.⁴

Evangelical attitudes, it is hoped to show, are seen in far more than this: as Marilyn Butler has said:

.... there can be no doubt that many of the central themes of the book have been modified by the spirit of Evangelicalism.⁵

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1. Joseph Duffy Jr., "Moral Integrity and Moral Anarchy in Mansfield Park", ELH 23 (1956) 71-91. Ref. to 73, 86, 91.
 2. Denis Donoghue, "A View of Mansfield Park", in Critical Essays on Jane Austen, ed. Brian Southam, 44.
 3. Christopher Gillie, A Preface to Jane Austen, 53.
 4. Avrom Fleishman, A Reading of Mansfield Park, 18
 5. Marilyn Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas 242-243.

Even Mrs. Butler, however, adds that "to over-rate the extent to which Evangelicalism is really felt in Mansfield Park is to obscure what is older and broader in the book." Yet the fact is that Hannah More, Wilberforce, and all their group were actually themselves building on what was "older and broader."

It is suggested here, then, that without the Evangelical movement it is very unlikely that the Mansfield Park we know would have been written; but that such is its artistry, that it is only by studying it in conjunction with some of the religious writings of the period that it becomes obvious how single mindedly, and without the distraction of incidents inserted merely to maintain suspense or excitement, Jane Austen transmuted into fiction many of the leading tenets of the Evangelicals. Moreover, such a reading helps to resolve some of the problems connected with the novel which, as Robert Draffan has remarked, "continues to provoke very widely differing opinions."¹ Apart from arguments concerned with the portrayal of Henry and Mary Crawford, the kind of misapprehension which can arise from the novel's not being viewed as a highly topical work in its day can be seen, for example, in Barbara Collins's "Jane Austen's Victorian Novel", in which not only is surprise expressed at Jane Austen's taking Maria Bertram's adultery so seriously (a frequently made comment, which will be discussed later) but also the suggestion is made that Jane Austen "fell in love with" Henry Crawford (another common fallacy) and that her purpose in writing the novel was "entertainment rather than instruction".² For this reason it is proposed to use some of the leading Evangelical treatises to indicate how closely Mansfield Park reflects Evangelical thought - though there obviously can be no suggestion that Jane Austen was directly influenced by any one of them.

1. Robert Draffan, "Mansfield Park, Jane Austen's Bleak House," Essays in Criticism 19 (1969) 371-384. Quotation from 371.

2. In Nineteenth Century Fiction 4 (1949) 175-85. Ref. to 183, 185. It is, of course, a tribute to Jane Austen's "exquisite art" that it can even be thought that the chief purpose of the novel was to entertain.

As must be clear, merely from the titles of some of these works (Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society, An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World, A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country Contrasted with Real Christianity, Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education with a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune), Evangelicalism saw a danger to a church and state already weakened by its lack of spirituality, of corruption by the values of fashionable worldly society with its materialism, irreligion, gambling, smart assertiveness and sexual licence. According to Maurice Quinlan, before the reforms brought about by the Evangelicals, "manners and morals were unusually corrupt" - and we have Mary Augusta Austen-Leigh's testimony that, though Jane Austen did not like to dwell on vice and sin, some of the aspects of fashionable life that she saw around her "impressed themselves so deeply on her soul that her spirit could not rest until she had entered a protest, through the medium of her own dramatic art against these forms of evil."¹

It does not seem inappropriate, therefore, to see Jane Austen using Mansfield Park itself as a symbol of church and state, the opening paragraph fixing, with stunning pointedness, the materialistic values to which it is succumbing:

About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park in the county of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and

1. Maurice Quinlan, Victorian Prelude 12; Mary A. Austen-Leigh, Personal Aspects of Jane Austen 84-85.

consequences of an handsome house and large income. All Huntingdon exclaimed on the greatness of the match, and her uncle, the lawyer, himself, allowed her to be at least three thousand pounds short of any equitable claim to it

In such a society, according to Mrs. More

.... religion, if taught at all, is rather taught incidentally, as a thing of subordinate value, than as the leading principle of human actions, the great animating spring of human conduct.¹

This is just what has happened at Mansfield Park; Sir Thomas Bertram, though sincerely believing himself to be maintaining Christian values has been careless, his wife indolent - with the result that their children have been:

.... instructed theoretically in their religion, but never required to bring it into daily practice.

(III, XVII, 463)

Thus it has never become "vigorous and active principle" the Evangelicals thought it should be.² All but one, Edmund (who, for some reason never explained, has developed differently from the rest),³ are interested chiefly in things of the fashionable world. The elder son, Tom, is a spendthrift, while the two girls, Maria and Julia aim chiefly to "be distinguished

1. H. More, An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World, ch. III, Works II, 314.

2. See W. Wilberforce, A Practical View ch. IV Sect. II p. 104. Cf. Jane Austen to her niece Fanny, 13.3.1817: "The most astonishing part of your Character is, that with so much Imagination, so much flight of Mind, such unbounded Fancies, you should have such excellent Judgement in what you do! - Religious Principle I fancy must explain it." (Jane Austen's Letters, 486)

3. The lack of any explanation for this is surely one of the few weaknesses in the novel. Robert Liddell (The Novels of Jane Austen, 85) suggests that he may have come under religious influence at Oxford, but if he did, that was some years after Fanny came to Mansfield Park. Moreover, there is no evidence for this in the text: there is a reference to the length of chapel prayers (I, IX, 88) - but attendance at chapel was compulsory in the period. In this respect Mrs. Opie did better, in providing the heroine of her Valentine's Eve with a devout mother - something the Portsmouth episodes in the novel show that Fanny clearly had not

for elegance and accomplishments" (III, XVII, 463) - the "useless arts" of the Evangelicals. Mrs. More made her hero's mother tell him

" I call education, not that which smothers a woman with accomplishments, but that which tends to consolidate a firm and regular system of character.¹

Coelebs would, then, have approved of Fanny Price, who, brought to live at Mansfield Park as an act of charity, amazes Julia and Maria not so much by not being able to play and draw as by, incredibly, not even wanting to do so. This they find "so odd and so stupid", (I, II, 19).²

Fanny, indeed, must have been born to be a Christian of attitudes pleasing to the Evangelicals, for her parents were even less likely than Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram to ensure the religious education of their children.³ Once at Mansfield, however, it is presumably from her cousin Edmund, a budding clergyman, that she learns the active principle which guides her life and enables her to withstand the invasion of the forces of irreligion which comes to the Park in the persons of the rich and fashionable Mary and Henry Crawford. Gay, and genuinely ever ready to please, they become immediately popular; but their upbringing in London by a libertine uncle, "a man of vicious conduct", (I, IV, 41) has left them without respect

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1. Coelebs ch. II, p. 10 (1830 edition).
 2. "Accomplishments" apart, Mrs. More would have found the more formal education given to Julia and Maria just as odd and stupid, with its numerous rote-learned lists. This she strongly inveighed against in her Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (1799). See, e.g. - ch. VIII, Works III, 119 (1836 edition).
 3. Unable to solve the problem of the origin of Fanny's goodness, Alistair Duckworth has suggested that we must see her as "the representative of Jane Austen's own fundamental commitment to an inherited culture ... to a social order founded in religion which the country house can in fact embody, but which, more importantly, it can be made aesthetically to represent (The Improvement of the Estate, 73).

for religion - and such people were regarded by the Evangelicals as much more dangerous than the obviously depraved. According to Mrs. More

.... one of the most infallible arts by which the inexperienced are engaged on the side of irreligion, is that popular air of candour, good-nature, and toleration, which it so invariably puts on¹

- while Wilberforce stressed that without religion, amiable qualities

.... are radically defective and corrupt: they are a body without a soul; they want the vital actuating principle, or rather they are animated and actuated by a false principle²

- and the Crawfords' lack of principle (in Evangelical terms) is almost at once evidenced, by Mary in her flippant attitude to religion, and by Henry in his immediate determination to capture the interest of the two Bertram girls:

.... He did not want them to die of love; but with sense and temper which ought to have made him judge and feel better, he allowed himself great latitude on such points.
(I, V, 45)

In late twentieth century society, which is largely non-church-going and agnostic, and in which women have achieved a large measure of independence and sexual equality, it is likely that there will seem little wrong with the behaviour of the Crawfords; though the novel is enjoyed and admired, there is often a feeling that Jane Austen somehow erred in her portrait of them: that she made them too attractive, and in order to end the novel as she wished, had to "betray" them. Lord David Cecil, for example, has said that Jane Austen only achieved the ending she originally intended for the novel "at the cost of making Henry act in a manner wholly inconsistent with the rest of his character," while Mrs. Leavis thinks that Jane Austen was unfair to Mary because, *Mansfield Park* developed from Lady Susan and "Lady Susan's

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1. H. More, Religion of the Fashionable World, Works II, 326. (All references to 1836 edition).
 2. W. Wilberforce, A Practical View, ch. IV, Sect. IV, 166. (All references to 1827 edition).

culpability is carried over to her successor."¹ It must be remembered, however, that Jane Austen was writing in a very different age from ours; the Crawfords are as charming as she meant them to be, and, from the beginning, as irreligious and unprincipled as she meant them to be - something which, with her usual economy, she brings out chiefly in a few focal sequences that, amazingly, seem to convey all the complexity of the full current of life.

The first of these is a visit to Sotherton, the home of Mr. Rushworth, the dull-witted man whose money has secured him the hand of the beautiful Maria Bertram.² Determined to follow the craze for wholesale "improvements" to properties, Rushworth wants the advice of Henry Crawford, who admits to being "excessively" fond of such matters (I, VI, 61), and it is therefore decided to make the occasion of Henry's visit one for a general pleasure party, though neither Edmund nor Fanny are keen on radical improvements. Fanny, who loves tradition, thinks of Cowper, and mourns that an avenue of trees may be cut down, while Edmund, with a Burkean dislike of sudden and complete change and a sense of man's debt to past and future, says:

" I do not wish to influence Mr. Rushworth ... but had I a place to new fashion, I should not put myself into the hands of an improver. I would rather have an inferior degree of beauty, of my own choice, and acquired progressively." (I, VI, 56)

- a view typical of Evangelical thought - a kind of progressive conservatism.³

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1. Lord David Cecil, Jane Austen (1935) p 19; Q.D. Leavis "A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings", Scrutiny X, (1941-2) p 280.
 2. Charles Coelebs (XXVI, 273) is amazed that parents can part from a beloved daughter "to a man of whose principles they have any doubt, and of whose mind they have a mean opinion".
 3. Cf. Hannah More, Strictures, Works III, 23 and contrast Godwin's censure of governments which, among other abuses "prompt us to seek the public welfare not in alteration and improvement, but in a timid reverence for the decisions of our ancestors." (Quoted Alistair Duckworth, op. cit., 47. Duckworth's book deals more fully with this point).

The idea of improvements, however, is largely discussed before the visit;¹ the visit itself, absolutely natural, with its desultory chats, its meal, its tour of house and grounds, its heat, its flirtations, its strained tempers, not only allows for a scene which both symbolises the underlying desires of Maria Bertram and Henry Crawford, and foreshadows their subsequent conduct,² but also allows for a conflict of opinion on two matters of great importance for the Evangelicals - the role of the clergyman and the question of family prayers.³ Regarding the latter, Hannah More had said:

.... It were well, both for the advantage of master and servant, that the latter should have the doctrines of the gospel frequently impressed on his heart⁴

So thought Fanny:

" A whole family assembling regularly for the purpose of prayer, is fine!"

- but not the worldly Mary:

"Very fine indeed!" said Miss Crawford, laughing. "It must do the heads of the family a great deal of good to force all the poor housemaids and footmen to leave business and pleasure, and say their prayers here twice a day, while they are inventing excuses themselves for staying away."

"That is hardly Fanny's idea of a family assembling, said Edmund. If the master and mistress do not attend themselves, there must be more harm than good in the custom."
(I, IX, 86-87)

Mary's view, however, when she hears that the last owner of Sotherton had left off the custom of family prayers is flippant:

"Every generation has its improvements."
(I, IX, 86)

Such jesting on religious subjects was anathema to the Evangelicals:

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1. Improvements are also discussed later, with reference to Edmund's vicarage at Thornton Lacy (Vol. II, ch. VII).
 2. i.e. the much discussed scene in which Henry helps Maria to by-pass a gate which is locked and to which her fiancé has the key, (I, X)
 3. "At the centre of life in all Evangelical households stood the institution of family prayers." Ian Bradley, The Call to Seriousness, p. 179.
 4. H. More, Religion of the Fashionable World, Works, Vol. II ch. IV, p.339.

.... The infidel appears good-humoured from his very levity; but the Christian cannot jest on subjects which involve his everlasting salvation.¹

Readers of statements like this would have been in no doubt as to the light in which they were expected to view Mary Crawford. And Mary, utterly unwitting that Edmund is about to take orders, rattles on about how boring family prayers must have been, and how the servants must have had

" heads full of something very different - especially if the poor chaplain were not worth looking at - and, in those days, I fancy, parsons were very inferior even to what they are now." (I, IX, 87)

This, and her later "a clergyman is nothing," (I, IX, 92) indicate clearly the way in which the reputation of the clergyman had fallen and the real need for reform. It makes Fanny "too angry for speech" but Edmund is becoming so attracted to Mary that he can only say gently:

" Your lively mind can hardly be serious even on serious subjects." (I, IX, 87)²

Almost immediately after this, she learns, from a chance remark from Julia Bertram, that Edmund is to be a clergyman - and her embarrassment at her faux pas makes her drop the subject of the clergy. This skilfully prevents the conversation from becoming too obviously doctrinaire - but it also makes it quite natural for her, when walking later with Edmund, to bring up the subject again, as she expresses her inability to understand his

1. H. More, op. cit., Works, Vol. II p. 326.

2. Cf. Miss Sparkes in Coelebs XXXII 341-3, whose characteristics are very similar to those of Mary. On one of his daughters finding Miss Sparkes agreeable, "with all her faults", Mr. Stanley (father of Coeleb's loved, Lucilla) says: "I grant that she is amusing ... but do not allow her to be quite agreeable ... she sometimes treats serious things with no small levity, and though she would not originally say a very bad word, yet she makes no scruple of repeating, with great glee, profane stories told by others. Besides, she possesses the dangerous art of exciting an improper idea without using an improper word ... She has, however, many good qualities, is generous and compassionate"etc. Jane Austen's art lies in bringing such a character fully to life.

wanting to take up a profession for which there is so little respect. This gives Edmund an opportunity to put forward his ideas on what a clergyman should be, as opposed to hers, on what a clergyman is - and the discussion is one central to the novel; for though doubts have been raised about the fact that Jane Austen was referring to Mansfield Park, when she wrote, after discussing the publication of Pride and Prejudice,

.... Now I will try to write of something else, & it shall be a complete change of subject - ordination -¹

- nevertheless there is a great deal in it about ordination. Edmund is to be the new kind of clergyman who will play a vital role in influencing the morals of his parishioners, not the kind who is seen only when he is preaching.² Having said that the clergy influence manners, he goes on to explain what he means, in a passage which seems to provide a key to appreciating the essential seriousness underlying Jane Austen's comedies:

" The manners I speak of, might rather be called conduct, perhaps, the result of good principles; the effect, in short, of those doctrines which it is their duty to teach and recommend; and it will, I believe, be every where found, that as the clergy are, or are not what they ought to be, so are the rest of the nation."
(I, IX, 93)

David Lodge has noted that we have reflected in this passage a significant change in the semantic history of the word "manners" when its meaning was shifting from "morals" to "polite behaviour" - but there also seems a definite connection being made here between behaviour and principles, the one being

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1. Jane Austen's Letters 298, letter of 29.1. 1813. The argument is that Jane Austen was changing her subject within the letter, not referring to the subject of a new novel - and that she was, perhaps, thanking her sister for making enquiries for her with regard to ordination, to help her with one aspect of her current novel, MP. See C.E. Edge, "Mansfield Park and Ordination," Nineteenth Century Fiction XVI (December 1961) 269-274, and TLS, correspondence column, 19.12.68; 2.1.69; 9.1.69; 16.1.69; 30.1.69.
 2. Nevertheless C.L. Branton, "The Ordinations in Jane Austen's Novels", Nineteenth Century Fiction 10, (September 1955) 156-9 has shown that Edmund himself is ordained without first becoming a deacon, and that the ordinations occur at uncanonical times. A. Fleischman op. cit., 20 thinks that she is here exposing current practice.

the outward sign of the other.¹ Too often Jane Austen has been regarded as writing of relatively trivial matters, "merely" of desirable or undesirable conduct. Here, however, she makes it clear that for Edmund (as we know it was for Hannah More and Wilberforce) the only real and sure spring of good conduct is religious principle - and while one cannot absolutely assume that she herself believed this, it is more than likely that she did.

Mary, however, is not convinced of the need for men like Edmund to try to influence public conduct; the subject is changed, and, in this complex dance of personalities and views, she leads Edmund from Fanny to walk in the wood, while attention is focused on her brother's dalliance with Maria Bertram. It is not forgotten, however, and on a later day she returns to it, giving her view of the clergyman, which, she says, is "the general opinion", and quoting her brother in law, Dr. Grant, as her living example:

" A clergyman has nothing to do but to be slovenly and selfish - read the newspaper, watch the weather, and quarrel with his wife. His curate does all the work, and the business of his own life is to dine."

(I, XI, 110)

Edmund cannot attempt to defend him, for Dr. Grant exemplifies the kind of clergyman the Evangelicals were doing all in their power to replace and at least Mary's scorn shows that she sees such behaviour as despicable - unlike her brother, who is pleased to envisage Edmund as, like Dr. Grant, doing well out of his church living:

1. David Lodge, The Language of Fiction 99. Cf. H. More's Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society (1788) and Wilberforce's 1787 journal entry (quoted by R.W. Harris in Romanticism and the Social Order, 128): "God almighty has placed before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners."

" Seven hundred a year is a fine thing for a younger brother; and as of course he will still live at home, it will all be for his menus plaisirs; and a sermon at Christmas and Easter, I suppose, will be the sum total of sacrifice." (II, V, 226)

He finds, however, when he tries to rent Edmund's vicarage, that Edmund actually intends to live in his parish. This refusal to be an absentee vicar is thoroughly approved of by his father, who says:

" His going, though only eight miles, will be an unwelcome contraction of our family circle; but I should have been deeply mortified, if any son of mine could reconcile himself to doing less ... a parish has wants and claims which can be known only by a clergyman constantly resident, and which no proxy can be capable of satisfying to the same extent. Edmund might, in the common phrase, do the duty of Thornton, that is, he might read prayers and preach, without giving up Mansfield Park; he might ride over, every Sunday, to a house nominally inhabited, and go through divine service; he might be the clergyman of Thornton Lacey every seventh day, for three or four hours, if that would content him. But it will not. He knows that human nature needs more lessons than a weekly sermon can convey, and that if he does not live among his parishioners and prove himself by constant attention their well-wisher and friend, he does very little either for their good or his own." (II, VII, 247-8)

All this is much to the vexation of Mary Crawford, who, obviously toying with the possibility of marrying Edmund even if he does become a clergyman, has been trying, in envisaging the vicarage at Thornton Lacey:

.... to shut out the church, sink the clergyman, and see only the respectable, elegant, modernized, and occasional residence of a man of independent fortune (II, VII, 248)

- in fact to turn Edmund into much the same kind of clergyman she has earlier despised.

And throughout the novel attention constantly flickers to and from this question of the role of the clergyman, revealing always the enormous gap in attitude between Edmund and Fanny and the Crawfords; even when Henry, trying to impress Fanny by being "serious on a serious subject" considers the delivery of prayers and sermons, it is clear that in his mind he sees a parson cutting a striking figure in a fashionable pulpit, and is not concerned with the content of what would be said at all

(III, III, 341) - unlike Hannah More's ideal clergyman, whose

.... whole performance is distinguished by a grave and majestic simplicity; as far removed from the careless reader of a common story as from the declamation of an actor. His hearers leave the church, not so much in raptures with the preacher, as affected with the truths he has delivered.¹

Yet it is not the Crawfords, but another member of fashionable society, the Honourable John Yates, younger son of a Lord, who brings about the first crisis by which Fanny's principle is to be tested, since it is his enthusiasm for amateur theatricals which causes Tom Bertram to set in motion the production of a play at Mansfield Park. Yates is an insensitive fool, having "not much to recommend him beyond habits of fashion and expense, and being the younger son of a lord with a tolerable independence" (I, XIII, 121). It is not Yates himself, however, but the ethos for which he stands which is being deplored, and in choosing the production of a play as a means of illustrating the conflict of value systems between the "vital Christians" and the fashionable world, Jane Austen gave herself the chance economically to bring to life a number of issues of prime concern to the Evangelicals: the dangers of play-acting, the importance of filial duty, and, in the content of the play chosen, the immoral and jacobin ideas put forward in some fashionable theatre productions.

Explanations as to why the play is regarded as "an evil" (I, XVI, 156)

1. Coelebs XV 135; again we see how Mrs. More tells, rather than, as does Jane Austen, shows. (The speaker again is Mr. Stanley). Crawford's idea of himself fits that of the popular preacher described by Southey in his Letters from England, Letter XIX, 106-7. A. Duckworth, op. cit., 69, notes a similar description in Cowper's The Task II, 326-573.

have been numerous,¹ but are surely simple and threefold, the first and most important being that all involved (except the "outsider", Yates) are well aware that the head of the household, Sir Thomas Bertram, would have objected had he been at home - "he would never wish his grown up daughters to be acting plays," (I, XIII, 127). Only Edmund and Fanny will admit this (I, XVI, 153), but that Tom Bertram and the Crawfords do know it is obvious from their behaviour when Sir Thomas unexpectedly returns. They all feel "some degree of self condemnation" (II, I, 175); Tom tries to play down the extent of their activities (II, I, 181) and the Crawfords laugh at Yates naïveté in thinking that Sir Thomas might possibly like to see Lovers Vows (I, II, 177). Much as she would like to see a play (I, XIV, 131) - indeed, much as she enjoys helping with rehearsals when the play cannot be stopped (I, XVIII, 165), Fanny cannot approve it, because of her attitude to Sir Thomas, and also from her own feeling of its impropriety; thus Edmund can later say to Sir Thomas,

" Fanny is the only one who has judged rightly
throughout, who has been consistent."
(II, II, 187)

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1. e.g. Marvin Mudrick, Jane Austen, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 158; "to play someone else is to degrade oneself". Lionel Trilling saw acting as dangerous "to the integrity of the real self" - though he later did give the objection as lying in "a sin ... being committed against the absent father. ("Mansfield Park" in Jane Austen ed. Ian Watt, 132, 136.) Tony Tanner likewise has seen the objection as being that acting allows one to "explore and experiment with other selves" ("Jane Austen and the Quiet Thing" in Brian Southam ed., Critical Essays on Jane Austen, 153) - a view shared by A. Duckworth, op. cit., 55; M. Butler, op. cit., 232, in contrast, says that "The impropriety lies in the fact that they are not acting, but are finding an indirect means to gratify desires which are illicit and should have been contained." An entirely different (and surely incorrect) view, however, is given by Robert Draffan in "Mansfield Park, Jane Austen's Bleak House", Essays in Criticism 19 (1969) 371-84; Draffan does not seem to see Jane Austen as censuring the acting at all. He feels that the play is such an attraction to the inhabitants of Mansfield Park because it affords them the liberty of coming alive, and such a failure because their shackled and stunted upbringing has not rendered them capable of coping with this extension of experience. This is the kind of interpretation only possible by considering the novel out of its historical context.

Consistent here, of course, does not mean merely "constant to the same principles" but constant to the right principles - and the term seems to have been regularly used in this way. For the Evangelicals "jacobinism", irreligion and filial disobedience formed an unholy trinity, filial disobedience being specifically linked by Mrs. More with "the cry for the rights of man". "In no age has the paternal authority been so contemptuously treated," she said¹ - and the proper foundation of filial duty was believed to be religious principle.² By refusing to be swayed from what she knew Sir Thomas would wish to have done, Fanny has proved that her principles are "principles of the heart and not merely opinions of the understanding" - the kind of fixed principles which, said Mrs. More, would always "be followed by a consistent course of action."³ As for Edmund himself, it is difficult to accept his confession of inconsistency, since his given reason for joining in the acting (that he wishes to prevent the greater impropriety of letting a stranger join in) seems valid enough. It may be, however, that here Jane Austen is subtly indicating that Edmund knew that his given reason was not his only reason - and that by implicating himself with the others, in the apology to his father, he was, in fact, unburdening his conscience: "... an habitual attention to the motives should be carefully substituted in ... young hearts, in the place of too much anxiety about the event of actions," said Mrs. More.⁴

It is the lack of respect for parental authority primarily, then, for which the group is at fault, whatever the activity may have been: nevertheless, that the activity should have been a play is also significant. Many critics have found it strange that Jane Austen should have apparently seen harm in

1. See H. More, Religion of the Fashionable World, Works II, 313; Strictures, Works III, 101.

2. Mary Brunton, Discipline II, XIII, 66.

3. H. More Manners of the Great, Works II, 278.

4. H. More, Strictures, Works III, 107.

private theatricals, when they had been an activity indulged in by her own family. That, however, was before the turn of the century. The craze for acting had begun in the 1770's, and reached a climax in the 1780's - after which, possibly due to the influence of the Evangelicals, it petered out. By the time Jane Austen was writing Mansfield Park it was regarded as a rakish aristocratic pursuit, and was not only condemned by the more puritanical, but even "not done" by the less puritanical.¹ In 1805 (as was noted earlier) Jane Austen had read, and approved of, Thomas Gisborne, whose Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex had discussed plays and acting. It seems obvious that she could not have liked his book so much had he, in bigoted fashion, condemned all plays as unfit to be seen or read, for she continued going to the theatre herself; in fact, as David Spring has shown, it was only extremists among the Evangelicals who insisted on shunning all worldly amusements.² Typical of the "moderate" Evangelical seems to be Laura, the heroine of Mary Brunton's Self Control (1811) who, on being asked, after seeing Mrs. Siddons in The Gamester whether she would like to go to the theatre every night, replies:

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1. See Sibyl Rosenfeld, "Jane Austen and Private Theatricals," Essays and Studies 1962, 40-51.
 2. David Spring, "Aristocracy, Social Structure and Religion in the Early Victorian Period," Victorian Studies 6, 1962-3, 263-80. Ref. to 269. According to Frederick Gill, The Romantic Movement and Methodism 97, though Wesley objected to the impious quality of contemporary stage entertainments, "It does not follow that Wesley himself opposed all plays." Gisborne did not even ask "that worthless characters should be excluded", merely "that the general effect of the piece should be unequivocally virtuous" (Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (1816 edition) IX, 178.) He did not, however, seem to believe that this was the case with most contemporary productions. For Jane Austen's visits to the theatre, see, e.g. Jane Austen's Letters, 385.

"No" ... "Once or twice a year would be quite sufficient for me. It occupies my thoughts too much for a mere amusement."
(I, XIII, 226)

Thus Edmund is allowed to approve of the professional theatre (I, XIII, 12¹/₄). Gisborne did, however, condemn private theatricals, largely on the grounds that they were "almost certain to prove ... particularly injurious to the female performers" by encouraging vanity and destroying diffidence¹ - as indeed is seen to be the case at Mansfield Park. The possibility, raised some years ago by Ellen Jordan, that Jane Austen herself had taken the part of Sheridan's Mrs. Candour, at a party held only about two years before she began Mansfield Park, was immediately countered by Claire Lamont, who pointed out that in taking the part of Mrs. Candour Jane Austen seems merely to have been playing a game in which she could make up her own words - something very different from the set, highly emotional scenes which the actors in Lovers Vows would have had to play.² And, in addition, attitudes on such matters seem to have changed so relatively quickly in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, that two years could have seen a great difference in Jane Austen's views on amateur acting.

Then, thirdly, to make the misdemeanour of the young people of Mansfield Park even more heinous, the actual play chosen by them was by Kotzebue - a writer who was notorious. German literature had not been at all well known in England till the late eighteenth century, but from 1790-1800 it was remarkably popular. Most of it, however, was sensational or sentimental, of the Sturm und Drang variety - and when the political and religious climate in England became more conservative, such literature "came to be regarded as synonymous with all that was revolutionary in politics and free thinking in philosophy,"³ and was bitterly attacked, one of its fiercest opponents, as

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1. Thomas Gisborne, Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex IX, 183 (11th edition 1816).
 2. TLS for 23.6.72 p. 719, and for 7.7.72 p. 777.
 3. V. Stockley, German Literature as Known in England, 9.

might be expected, being the Anti-Jacobin Review. Nevertheless Kotzebue's plays continued to be produced - and in all, between 1790-1810 there were about one hundred and seventy different English editions of his various works.¹

Ironically, Kotzebue was regarded in Germany as (and was) highly reactionary, not revolutionary. His career was political as well as literary: he held high office in the Russian foreign service between 1795-95, in 1813 was made Russian consul-general in Prussia, and in 1817 was appointed political representative of the Tsar in Weimar. In 1818 he founded a reactionary weekly, Literarisches Wochenblatt, which laughed at the aspirations of young Germans towards democracy and nationalism - and in 1819 he was assassinated by a young law student, Karl Ludwig Sand, a defender of the Burschenschaft movement who shared the common belief that he was a spy for the Tsar. It is, therefore, strange, to say the least, to find him, in Lovers' Vows, apparently setting at nought the idea of class distinctions, since in it, it is suggested not only that a poor peasant woman is more virtuous than an aristocrat, but also that it is fitting for a poor tutor to marry the aristocrat's daughter. The explanation seems to lie in the fact that he was "a thoroughly practical man who wrote for the market" and that the play was not written as an attempt to promote any philosophy. If this is so, then Avrom Fleishman's statement that Lovers' Vows "is Continental political radicalism expressed in the conventions of sentimental comedy" might be better reversed, to declare that it is commercial sentimental comedy using continental political radical ideas to give it increased notoriety - and success.²

1. See E.M. White, "A Critical Theory of Mansfield Park," Studies in English Literature 7 (1967) 659-677.

2. Joseph Gostwick and Robert Harrison, Outlines of German Literature, 361; A. Fleishman, op. cit., 27. J.G. Robertson, A History of German Literature, 326-7, comments that Goethe, who managed the Ducal theatre in Weimar between 1791-1817 had, in choosing plays, to lower his standards to satisfy "the taste of the public on whose support the theatre depended" - and presumably Kotzebue, who wrote for money ("the higher forms of poetry he held in cynical contempt") wrote whatever would satisfy that taste.

Nevertheless it was received in England as a radical play; and apart from being appalled at the play's apparent suggestion of the overthrow of class barriers, those who regarded themselves as watchdogs of public morality were horrified by the idea it presents in the character of Amelia, that a woman in love should be prepared to speak of her love, without waiting for her lover to woo her first - and even more by the suggestion of the essential purity of the "dishonoured" woman, seen in the character of Agatha. The hero of the play, in fact, is a love child, Lovers' Vows being the softened title given to it by its translator, Mrs. Inchbald, one of the Godwin circle. (Kotzebue called it Das Kind der Liebe). One can, therefore, easily understand Marilyn Butler's assertion that the message of the play is "the goodness of man, the legitimacy of his claims to equality, and the sanctity of his instincts as a guide to conduct"¹ - for though these do not seem to have been Kotzebue's real views, they are those conveyed by the play.

Thus we find that John Styles, a popular Evangelistic preacher had declared of Kotzebue in 1806 in his Essays on the Stage:

.... The works of Congreve and Dryden are absolutely pure when compared with the vile, disgusting offspring of the profligate Kotzebue

- and Mrs. More used his play The Stranger to illustrate her belief that such works were being deliberately encouraged by enemies of the government and of the country to undermine the moral fibre of English women, because of the latter's well known influence in society.² Such attitudes are seen in Mansfield Park in Fanny:

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1. Marilyn Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas, 233. The text of the play is included as an appendix to R.W. Chapman's edition of Mansfield Park.
 2. Styles is cited by Maurice Quinlan, Victorian Prelude, 226; Mrs. More, Strictures, Works III, 35-38. See W. Reitzel, "Mansfield Park and Lovers' Vows", Review of English Studies 9 (1933) 451-456, for an account of the hostile reception of the play in Cobbett's The Porcupine.

.... Agatha and Amelia appeared to her in their different ways so totally improper for home representation - the situation of one, and the language of the other, so unfit to be expressed by any woman of modesty

(I, XIV, 137)

Because of the play's popularity, Jane Austen could rely on most of her readers knowing its story, even if they had not all seen it - and her use of it allowed for a much more subtle attack on revolutionary ideas than that made by way of the mechanically contrived discussions in Mrs. Opie's Valentine's Eve. The play is all for the overthrow of established order - and while today the values it offers might well be received favourably, to an England at war with revolutionary France, its values could seem only dangerously disruptive. And the disruptive forces present in English society, forces which have led the Mansfield group to ignore known parental wishes and to choose such a play, are seen at work among the group as they rehearse. Henry shows his lack of principle by flirting with the engaged Maria, while Mary shows hers by seeing this, and finding it merely amusing. Some of the servants are made dissatisfied with their lot; the floor of a room is spoiled. Moreover, it is clearly indicated that no small expense is entailed in purchasing materials for curtains, costumes and scenery. As Mrs. More had said:

.... In no age have simple, and natural, and youthful pleasures so early lost their power over the mind; nor was ever one great secret of virtue and happiness, the secret of being cheaply pleased, so little understood ... real and unadulterated pleasures occur perpetually to him who cultivates a taste for truth and nature and science and virtue.¹

Fanny, however, does know how to be cheaply pleased, saying of the night sky:

" Here's harmony! ... Here's repose! Here's what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry can only attempt to describe."

(I, XI, 113)

This love of nature has been encouraged in her by Edmund, but, significantly, on this occasion he is drawn from it by the attraction of Mary Crawford and her accomplished playing and singing.

1. H. More, Religion of the Fashionable World, Works II, 313.

That this particular contrast between the two girls is deliberate is evidenced by its being introduced again on a later occasion in a scene in the shrubbery at Mansfield Parsonage. Mary is utterly indifferent to the plant life around her, while Fanny enthuses:

" How beautiful, how welcome, how wonderful the
evergreen!"
(II, IV, 209)

Because of the admittedly stilted quality of the language in both of these passages, Kenneth Moler, who has also noted resemblances between the ideas of Jane Austen and Mrs. More, sees her as treating Fanny rather ironically here, and there are many who share his view, some even seeing Fanny and Edmund as treated ironically throughout.¹ This, however, is difficult to accept; the creator of Catherine Morland and Elizabeth Bennet must have known how dull "her" Fanny would seem to many readers, and it is highly unlikely that she would have wanted to disadvantage her further by laughing at her - unless in the very kindly way she laughed at the young Catherine in Northanger Abbey. Such enthusiasm for nature was, apparently, common among Evangelicals - but despite Jane Austen's own deep love of natural beauty (which, it is said, she thought would be one of the joys of heaven)² she was not accustomed to enthusing about it - and was evidently not able to get quite the tone she required for Fanny.

By this time Edmund has become deeply caught in the toils of the lovely, lively Mary, which allows Fanny to exhibit the Christian virtue of self-control in trying to overcome her own feeling for him, though the task

1. Kenneth Moler, Jane Austen's Art of Allusion, 148. See also Frank Bradbrook, Jane Austen and her Predecessors, (1967) 106-107; R.A. Cox, Mansfield Park (1970) 67; G. Brenner, "Mansfield Park; Reading for Improvement," Studies in the Novel, 7 (1975) 24-32; Mark Kinkad Weekes, "This Old Maid", Nineteenth Century Fiction, 30, December 1975, 399-419. Robert Colby, however, looking at the novel in its literary context, and believing that "Miss Austen shared Miss More's ethical views" (85) does not see Fanny treated ironically. (Fiction With a Purpose, 76).

2. Reported by Lord David Cecil, A Portrait of Jane Austen, 49.

is painfully difficult.¹ And it is obvious that it is largely this strong but hidden love which upholds her when her principle is again tested by an offer of marriage from Henry Crawford whom she does not love, but who can make her rich and respected, who does all he can to please her, including obtaining a promotion for her beloved brother William, and whose suit is urged by all around her. That even Edmund should support him is dramatically very successful in making her trial all the more moving; but from the ideological point of view it also served to indicate the way in which the most upright can be deceived or have their values eroded; though he does not wish Fanny to marry without love, if she can return Henry's affection, he, by this time, sees the marriage as "most advantageous and desirable", (III, IV, 346). This possible effect on the clergyman of a worldly friend was one the Evangelicals warned of:

.... when he witnesses so much kindness and urbanity in his manners ... he may even be tempted to suspect that he himself may be wrong; to accuse himself of being a little too austere in his habits, and hard in his judgement of a man so amiable.²

Fanny, however, is never blinded. Knowing that Henry has "no principle to supply as a duty what the heart [is] deficient in", (III, II, 329) she sees his wooing of her as "entirely of a piece with what she had seen before," (II, XIII, 301) in his flirtation with Julia and Maria;³ and though she is, to some extent, wrong, for, according to his own lights he is, this time, really in love, she is right in her opinion of the unlikelihood of any feeling being permanent with him. She rightly thinks him

.... unsteady - easily swayed by the whim of the moment
- easily tempted - easily put aside.

(III, III, 343)

1. e.g. II, IX, 265.

2. H. More, Practical Piety, II, XVI, 86.

3. In Coelebs, Lucilla Stanley is given just such a charming, rich and intelligent suitor, whom she refuses because she does not trust his principles, nor believe they can be changed.

Of him and his like, Wilberforce had written that their amiable qualities, lacking the support of Christian principle,

.... are apt to evaporate in barren sensibilities, and transitory sympathies, and indolent wishes, and unproductive declarations.¹.

So we see, in the short period covered by the main part of the novel, Henry's enthusiasm for being an actor, a preacher, a sailor:

.... He longed to have been at sea ... The wish was rather eager than lasting. (II, VI, 236)

This instability, coupled with an attitude to marriage (shared by his sister) which the Evangelicals would have regarded as utterly unprincipled, makes it obvious that Jane Austen could never have considered him for Fanny; Mary, in discussing his possible marriage to Fanny, bases her chances of happiness on the fact that:

" even when you ceased to love, she would find in you the liberality and good-breeding of a gentleman." (II, III, 296)

- He would be generous and would not flaunt his mistresses in public; in their world that was honourable. Fanny realises only too clearly, as Mary, hoping to persuade her to marry Henry, chatters to her at length about marriage,² how utterly different their attitudes and values are and thinks of her afterwards in Evangelical language as having

..... a mind led astray and bewildered, and without any suspicion of being so; darkened, yet fancying itself light . (III, VI, 367)

And it is Mary's fault that Henry meets Maria Rushworth again, for, while not anticipating the adultery (or certainly not its discovery), she finds Maria's frustrated passion for Henry amusing³ - while he, though still sending messages of unalterable affection to Fanny, succumbs to Maria because of lack of principle.

1. W. Wilberforce, A Practical View ch. 10, Section IV, 159.

2. See vol. III, ch. V.

3. e.g. I, XVIII, 169; III, IX, 393.

.... the temptation of immediate pleasure was too strong
for a mind unused to make any sacrifice to right
(III, XVII, 467)

In various ways, then, throughout the novel, Mary and Henry Crawford's attitudes exemplify those of the "fashionable world", deplored by the Evangelicals - and the ending does not find a sudden and unacceptable hardening in Jane Austen's attitude to them, as so many have suggested.¹ The adultery of Henry and Maria is not unprepared for; though it is only in retrospect that one sees the full significance of the moment at the beginning of the novel when they force their way out of the enclosed "wilderness" at Sotherton, it has been anticipated in the lack of control of a lively and beautiful girl married to a man whose stupidity she despises, and fascinated by a man who, likewise spoilt and lacking self control, is being repulsed by the woman he wants to marry. The only rather surprising thing is that, in the circumstances, Henry Crawford should not have taken more care not to be found out.

Even if this is accepted, however, there are critics who are completely unable to accept the credibility of Edmund's rejection of the woman he loves, merely for referring to the adultery of her brother and his sister as "folly": for example Marvin Mudrick asks

.... Why does Jane Austen resort to such grotesque
makeshift to tidy up her plot?

Margaret Llewelyn thinks Fanny's response to the adultery "over-dramatic" - and not that of Jane Austen; Norman Page has said that Fanny's language in response to the situation "may seem to many readers excessive" (without indicating whether his own view is different); and, similarly, Avrom Fleishman has found her reaction, her shock and shudderings of horror, "curious, even

1. e.g. Lord David Cecil, Jane Austen, 19; M. Mudrick, op. cit., 169; R. Liddell, op. cit., 68. Even such a sympathetic critic as Alistair Duckworth sees "a certain artistic failure" here (op. cit., 37). Robert Chapman argues, however, that Jane Austen would have realised it if she had been inconsistent, and would not have published (Jane Austen, Facts and Problems, 195).

allowing for her moral rigidity".¹ We read:

.... The evening passed, without a pause of misery, the night was totally sleepless. She passed only from feelings of sickness to shudderings of horror; and from hot fits of fever to cold. The event was so shocking, that there were moments even when her heart revolted from it as impossible - when she thought it could not be ... it was too horrible - a confusion of guilt, too gross a complication of evil, for human nature, not in a state of utter barbarism, to be capable of!
(III, XV, 441)

This is one of the episodes which have caused charges of dishonesty to be laid against Jane Austen, since she herself, in some of her letters, appears to have taken a flippant attitude towards adultery.² Yet as early as 1808 we find her referring thus to the elopement of an acquaintance with Lord Sackville:

- This is a sad story about Mrs. Povlett. I should not have suspected her of such a thing - She staid the Sacrament I remember, the last time that you & I did.³

It is, therefore, likely, that had the adultery been committed in her own family, she would have been little less distraught than she pictured Fanny as being. However, even if, by 1814, she herself had not gone as far as to regard adultery as a "dreadful crime" (III, XVI, 457) a "horrible evil" or a "sin of the first magnitude" (III, XV, 440), this was one view of the day, and in her portrait of conflicting ideologies she quite legitimately gave it to the characters who represent the Evangelical point of view. To them adultery was an "atrocious deed", a "vice"; as Mrs. More put it:

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1. M. Mudrick, op. cit., 165. Margaret Llewelyn, Jane Austen, A Character Study, 46; Norman Page, The Language of Jane Austen, 38; A. Fleishman, op. cit., 65. Laurence Lerner, too, (The Truth Tellers, 159) writes of "the hollowness of Edmund's thetoric", in his discussion of the adultery.
 2. Reginald Farrer: "Mansfield Park is vitiated throughout by a radical dishonesty" - "Jane Austen's Gran Rifiuto" in Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield Park: a Casebook, ed. Brian Southam, 209; Kingsley Amis, "What Became of Jane Austen?" in Jane Austen ed. Ian Watt 142.
 3. Jane Austen's Letters, 196. Letter of 20.6. 1808.

It is, perhaps, one of the most alarming symptoms of the degeneracy of morals in the present day, that the distinctions of right and wrong are almost swept away in polite conversation. The most grave offences are often named with cool indifference; the most shameful profligacy with affected tenderness and indulgent toleration. The substitution of the word gallantry for that crime which stabs domestic happiness and conjugal virtue, is one of the most dangerous of all the modern abuses of language. Atrocious deeds should never be called by gentle names. This must surely contribute, more than any thing, to diminish the horror of vice in the rising generation.

And later she grew more urgent, saying:

.... on YOUR exerting your influence ... may, in no small degree, depend whether this corruption shall still continue to be resisted. For the abhorrence [for it] ... will too probably diminish[.] While you resolutely persevere in making a stand against the encroachments of this crime, suffer not your firmness to be shaken by that affectation of charity which is growing into a general substitute for principle.¹

And just as Mrs. More insisted that

.... the mischief arises not from our living in the world, but from the world living in us;²

- so Edmund, who has earlier said of Mary:

" I have no jealousy of any individual. It is the influence of the fashionable world altogether that I am jealous of" (III, XIII, 421)

- now cries of her:

"This is what the world does." (III, XVI, 455)

Thus, disillusioned, he gives up any thought of marrying her, telling Fanny that he left her with the hopes that she might soon learn

" the most valuable knowledge we could any of us acquire - the knowledge of ourselves and of our duty" (III, XVI, 459)

This coming to self-knowledge has long been recognised as having a central place in Jane Austen's novels, especially in relation to her heroines. In fact, in noting this, Walter Allen commented, "indeed, goodness in [Jane Austen's] world may almost be equated with the capacity for self-knowledge"³

1. H. More, Manners of the Great, Works II, 265; Strictures, Works III, 40-41
2. H. More, Manners of the Great, Works II, 275.
3. Walter Allen, The English Novel, 115.

What he did not go on to suggest, however, is that the term had, for her, religious connotations. For her, self-knowledge came from self-examination. She prayed

.... Incline us oh God! to think humbly of ourselves, to be severe only in the examination of our own conduct

- and Mrs. More wrote of this self-examination:

.... This distinguishing faculty of self-inspection ...
[t]his inward eye, this power of introversion is given us for a continual watch upon the soul ... It is only by scrutinising the heart that we can know it. It is only by knowing the heart that we can reform the life.¹

Transmuting this into fiction, she created in Coelebs a character called Lady Melbury, who longs to mend her ways, and is told "Commune with your own heart - and in your chamber - and be still." She does so - and declares later, "I have begun to get acquainted with my own heart" (XLVIII, 549, 551) - a sentiment expressed, though more naturally, by heroines in Jane Austen's novels. What the Crawfords lack (and what the Bertram children with the exception of Edmund lack, too) is the knowledge of their own weaknesses that religious humility and principle would have led them to search for. Mary is witty, good humoured, even good hearted - but Mudrick errs in finding her "very like Elizabeth Bennet"² for she is also irreligious and vulgar, referring to her brother as a "horrible flirt" (I, IV, 43) and to the financial side of Maria

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1. Jane Austen, Minor Works, 456; H. More, Practical Piety, I, XII, 250, 261.
 2. Marvin Mudrick, Jane Austen, Irony as Defense and Discovery, 169. It is just possible, however, that, as Mudrick also suggests (179), she was "attacking much of herself in the image of Mary Crawford" - a theory shared by Q.D. Leavis, who sees her as, in Mary, castigating what she now viewed as faults in her earlier self. ("A Critical Theory of Jane Austen's Writings", Scrutiny X (1941-2) 278. Of one thing we can surely be certain that Mary is not based on the Austens' cousin Eliza (see e.g. Q.D. Leavis, op. cit.; A. Walton Litz, op. cit., 117; R. Liddell, op. cit., 56-8). As Eliza had recently died, it is unthinkable that Jane Austen should have been so heartless as to do this, especially as Eliza had been married to her brother Henry, who read the novel before publication. In refutation of the theory, see R.W. Chapman, Jane Austen, Facts and Problems 129; Brian C. Southam, Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts 140-145; Brian C. Southam, "Mrs. Leavis and Miss Austen, the Critical Theory Reconsidered," Nineteenth Century Fiction 17 (1962-3) 21-32.

Bertram's marriage as her having "got her pennyworth for her penny", (III, IX, 394). One of her earliest witticisms is a very dubious pun about the "Rears and Vices" she saw when living with her uncle, (I, VI, 60) and in even worse taste is her comment that if Tom Bertram should die there would "be two poor young men less in the world" (III, XIV, 434), referring to the fact that Edmund will become his father's heir. There is a cheapness, too, in her last outburst to Edmund after he has made it clear to her that their relationship must come to an end as a result of her reaction to her brother's adultery:

" A pretty good lecture upon my word. Was it part of your last sermon? At this rate you will soon reform every body at Mansfield and Thornton Lacey; and when I hear of you next, it may be as a celebrated preacher in some great society of Methodists, or as a missionary into foreign parts." (III, XVI, 458)¹

Yet the vulgarity here has a note far more of pain than of spite in it; for it is one of the excellencies of this fine novel that one can understand, appreciate and sympathise with Mary and Henry, even if one cannot approve. Mary really cannot comprehend anyone regarding her attitude to adultery as so appallingly shocking,² and indeed, so fairly are she and her brother treated that they can be and often are, approved of, and even preferred to Fanny and Edmund, by our more permissive society.

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1. "Methodist" was often used for "Evangelical" ("evangelical") by opponents of the movement, as was noted earlier. p.17 . . See also Ed.R January 1808, 341.
 2. This, of course, is only one example of the way in which the novel, while concerned with a topical issue, rises above its topicality to illustrate perennial issues, such as the difficulty of understanding another's values. Since this chapter has been concerned to show the topicality of Mansfield Park, and to illustrate the fact that not only minor writers were affected by the evangelical movement, it has not been possible to consider such wider and more important aspects of the novel - which have, however, been ably dealt with in many other studies.

Mansfield Park is shaken - but it survives, and the final pages of the novel work towards establishing the new harmony which can be hoped for, since lessons have been learned. Maria is not to return, in accordance with the maxim that

.... To restore a criminal to public society, is perhaps to tempt her to repeat her crime, or to deaden her repentance for having committed it ...¹

Tom, the spendthrift son, has been thoroughly chastened (albeit rather by a serious illness than by any religious influence); Julia, who eloped with Yates, is likewise only too anxious to be received back into the family, with a husband ready to be guided by Sir Thomas. The influence of the mercenary minded and spiteful Mrs. Norris has been removed, since she has chosen exile with her beloved Maria; Susan of the tribe of Fanny has come, with new blood of the right kind; Edmund eventually learns to love Fanny and marries her; and, out of all the pain and bitterness, Sir Thomas has learned how far he has been to blame. In his daughter's education

.... principle, active principle, had been wanting ... they had never been properly taught to govern their inclinations and tempers, by that sense of duty which can alone suffice. They had been instructed theoretically in their religion but never required to bring it into daily practice. To be distinguished for elegance and accomplishments - the authorised object of their youth - could have had no useful influence that way, no moral effect on the mind. He had meant them to be good, but his cares had been directed to the understanding and manners² not the disposition; and of the necessity of self-denial and humility he feared they had never heard from any lips that could profit them.
(III, XVII, 463)

Such stress, in the closing pages of the novel, on active principle, self-control, duty and humility, together with the Evangelical language in which Edmund refers to Fanny's escape from marriage with Henry as a "merciful

1. H. More Strictures, Works III, ch. I, p. 41.

2. Here "manners" obviously has the implication of a surface veneer of polite behaviour - not the manners or conduct talked of by Edmund.

appointment of Providence" (III, XVI, 455) and Jane Austen herself, referring to the temporal fate of Henry Crawford, refuses "to look forward to a juster appointment hereafter", (III, XVII, 468) makes it apparent why she appears to dispose of the romance of Edmund and Fanny in a rather offhand way, merely assuring her readers that in time:

.... Edmund did cease to care about Miss Crawford, and became as anxious to marry Fanny, as Fanny herself could desire.
(III, XVII, 470)

Many readers have found this unsatisfactory - Robert Liddell has even regarded the ending as "slovenly";¹ but not only is it not slovenly, it does perfectly what is required, reducing the importance of individual figures in a novel which, when set in its historical context, seems clearly to be using living beings to enact a conflict of value systems, and not to be largely about "the education of a human being as a total person," or "the connection between fraternal and conjugal ties," or even (though this is much nearer) about "the difficulty of preserving true moral consciousness amid the selfish manoeuvring and jostling of society."² It is about the erosion of Christian values and moral principles in English society, and the need for the struggle to preserve them. But Fanny and Edmund are not of the eighteenth century and contrasted with the other Bertram children and the Crawfords who have moved with the times;³ it is the

1. R. Liddell, op. cit., 88.

2. Joseph Wiesenfarth, The Errand of Form, 107; G. Ryle, "Jane Austen and the Moralists" in Critical Essays on Jane Austen ed. B. Southam, 112; T. Tanner "Jane Austen and 'The Quiet Thing'" in B. Southam ed., op. cit., 157.

3. Lionel Trilling, "Mansfield Park" in Ian Watt ed., Jane Austen, 133, and E. White, "A Critical Theory of Mansfield Park" in Studies in Literature 7 (1967) 671, are only two of the many others who see the Crawfords as more "modern" than Edmund and Fanny. However, together with a new humanitarianism, there was much that was a revival of an old moral seriousness in the Evangelicals, and it is this "new old-fashionedness" that Fanny has espoused. David Monaghan ("Mansfield Park and Evangelicalism", Nineteenth Century Fiction September 1978, 215-230) finding little evidence of Evangelical influence on the novel has said that Jane Austen would have seen the Evangelicals as a danger to the old order she cherished - but this is entirely to ignore her tentative "I am by no means convinced that we ought not all to be Evangelicals." (Jane Austen's Letters, 410).

Crawfords, surely, who belong to a rakish society which is gradually but inexorably being superseded by a society whose ethos (or at least whose ostensible ethos) is that of Fanny and Edmund - and the young Victoria; the novel plays out, in the lives of two sets of people, the actual triumph of "seriousness".¹

That this is so, helps to explain why Fanny is so widely disliked, even by people who admire the novel, Reginald Farrar's view of her as "the most terrible incarnation we have of the prig-pharisee"² having been echoed throughout the twentieth century. She is the Christian heroine - and her irritating humility was an essential aspect of that role:

.... though the passive and self-denying virtues are not high in the esteem of mere good sort of people, yet they are peculiarly the evangelical virtues

and

.... self-abasement ... is inseparable from true Christianity³

wrote Hannah More, while Wilberforce said, almost identically,

.... Humility is indeed the vital principle of Christianity⁴

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1. Avrom Fleishman, op. cit., 21 sees it as a criticism of Edmund and his father that at the end of the novel Edmund becomes a pluralist, when he takes on the living of Mansfield Park, "as ... in the absence of a textual statement to the contrary, it may be understood that Thornton Lacy is retained." However, it is surely more cogent to argue that, in the absence of a statement to the contrary, and in the presence of an explicit statement in favour of a resident clergyman (II, VII, 247-8), Thornton Lacey is given up.
 2. Reginald Farrer "Jane Austen's Gran Rifiuto" in B.C. Southam ed. Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, and Mansfield Park 211. Such unfavourable judgments are common - e.g. see Lionel Trilling's "Mansfield Park" and Kingsley Amis's "What became of Jane Austen?" both in Ian Watt ed., op. cit., 128 and 142. Opinions on Fanny seem to have been divided even in 1814 - presumably then according to how far the reader had been touched with Evangelicalism - see Critical Heritage, 48-53.
 3. H. More, Manners of the Great, Works II, 277; Religion of the Fashionable World, Works II, 323. The predominating virtues of the heroine of Coelebs are said to be sincerity and humility (XXX, 307).
 4. W. Wilberforce, A Practical View, ch. VIII, section I, 281.

- though Fanny's seems to have sprung at least as much from the way in which she has been used to being regarded in the Bertram household as from any Christian principle.¹

Her enjoyment of ill health also, it has been suggested, was given to her as part of the tradition of the Christian heroine² - though if this be so, it is interesting to note that both Mrs. Opie and Mary Brunton, in patently Evangelical novels, did not follow it. Catherine Shirley, for example, never, till her final illness, seeks sympathy on the grounds of ill health:

.... blooming like the morning from early rising and exercise, her hat in her hand and her fine dark hair floating down her shoulders, Catherine ran into the room with eager and perturbed haste to excuse her not being home to breakfast. (Valentine's Eve, I, IX, 223)

- nor are Mary Brunton's heroines at all fragile.

The strength of the antagonism to her does not, however, come from her "creep mouse" quality or from her cultivation of delicate health. These may irritate, but it is her apparently deplorable censoriousness which makes her seem so unpleasant, especially as this is not contained in her thoughts, but comes out in critical discussions about people who are not present to defend themselves - people who themselves, when seen in private conversation, never indulge in such behaviour.³ Typical is the following exchange about Mary Crawford, between Fanny and Edmund:

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1. e.g. Sir Thomas says of her and his children, "they cannot be equals" (I, I, 11) while Mrs. Norris goes so far as to tell her that wherever she is, she "must always be the lowest and last." (II, V, 221).
 2. Lionel Trilling, "Mansfield Park" in Jane Austen, ed. Ian Watt, 129; J.I.M. Stewart, "Tradition and Miss Austen" in Critical Essays on Jane Austen, ed. Brian Southam, 133, expresses the same view.
 3. Here again Mrs. Opie's heroine appears more attractive, refusing to talk about the failings of others: "Hush!" said Catherine; it is better not to dwell on the faults of others, because by so doing we make it all the more difficult to bear with them." (Valentine's Eve, I, IX, 239).

" was there nothing in her conversation that struck you Fanny, as not quite right?"

"Oh! yes, she ought not to have spoken of her uncle as she did. I was quite astonished. An uncle with whom she has been living so many years, and who, whatever his faults may be, is so very fond of her brother, treating him, they say, quite like a son. I could not have believed it!"

"I thought you would be struck. It was very wrong - very indecorous."

"And very ungrateful I think."

(I, VII, 63)

Jane Austen had too fine an ear not to realise how this would sound, and as she obviously did not want her readers to dislike Fanny—"My Fanny" as she called her (III, XVII, 461)—it can only be that she discovered that the concept of this novel demanded the partial sacrifice of the likeability of her heroine. For she had, indeed, given herself an almost insuperable problem; whereas the opponents of the Christian heroine in Valentine's Eve were quite undoubtedly villainous, Fanny's fight is against people who not only appear kind and charming, but who for the most part are so, and whose dangerous lack of principle is, therefore, hidden from all but the spiritually alert. Mary is "almost purely governed" by good feelings (I, XV, 147) while Henry is "good nature itself" (I, VI, 59). They are, in Evangelical eyes, potentially good people, "Spoilt, spoilt! - " (III, XVI, 455).¹ Jane Austen puts her reader in the position of anyone making the acquaintance of the Crawfords - and, as has been noted, many readers have been, and still are, attracted by them. Jane's own brother Henry, while still part-way through the novel admired Henry "as a clever, pleasant man",² while Richard Brimley Johnson wrote in his introduction to the Everyman edition of the novel that:

1. Lady Melbury in Coelebs is a Mary Crawford type, "one of those admired but pitiful characters who, sent by Providence as an example to their sex, degrade themselves into a warning. Warm-hearted, feeling, liberal on the one hand; on the other ... extravagantly addicted to dissipation and expense..." (XII, 101). Of her it is said "That fine creature ... was made for nobler purposes ... I grieve to compare what she is with what she might have been," (XII, 104).

2. Jane Austen's Letters, 378. Letter of 2.3.1814.

.... Miss Austen cannot resist developing his graceful culture and wit beyond what is becoming a villain, falling a little in love with him herself. Till at last she is driven ... in deference to the plot and for his sister's discomforture, to drag him back, clumsily and hastily, into the mire: without regard to the inconsistency of the result.¹

Even had Jane Austen not been, as she surely was, on the side of Edmund and Fanny, in a novel presenting a conflict of values it was essential for the reader to see the Crawfords both as the world in general saw them, and through the shocked eyes of contemporary Evangelicals, who would be on the alert for their "corruption". Fanny thinks of Mary, "Oh! what a corrupted mind!" (II, V, 225); and Edmund too, though much later, since he has been blinded by a sexual attraction towards her, speaks of her "corrupted, vitiated mind". (III, XVI, 456).

This does not sound pleasant, and though, fortunately, the lasting prestige of Mansfield Park does not depend on our liking Fanny,² in its day its comparative lack of success may have had something to do with its unattractive heroine. The Prince Regent liked it, and as a result gave Jane Austen permission to dedicate any future work to him - but more readers seem to have been of the opinion of a Mrs. Augusta Bramstone who, having finished the first volume, flattered herself that she had got through the worst.³

And it is not difficult to imagine why, for, leaving aside the question of the attractiveness of the heroine, to the general reader of the day, the plot of a novel like Valentine's Eve must have seemed much more "interesting" than that of Mansfield Park: Fanny Price is merely invited to live with rich relatives as an act of charity not at all uncommon at the time, whereas Catherine Shirley is "adopted" in highly dramatic circumstances;⁴ similarly

1. 1941 edition, p. ix.

2. The novel is surely not about Fanny as an individual in the way, e.g. that Persuasion is about Anne Elliot.

3. Critical Heritage, 49.

4. See above, p. 101.

Fanny has her principles tested in circumstances far different from the "exciting" plotting of Valentine's Eve. Fanny suffers, no doubt, but her suffering is mental and shortlived; unlike Catherine, no one deliberately tries to hurt her. The same is true of the anti-jacobin element; instead of overt discussions on the dangers or weaknesses of republicanism, the propaganda is subtly inserted by means of the choice of a play, by the contrast of Fanny's and Edmund's love of stability and tradition with the Crawford's love of change and "improvements"¹ and in the contrast between the chaos and disorder at Portsmouth, where there is no regulation and discipline and the elegance and harmony and order of Mansfield Park.

.... she could think of nothing but Mansfield, its beloved inmates, its happy ways. Every thing where she now was was in full contrast to it. The elegance, propriety, regularity, harmony - and perhaps, above all, the peace and tranquillity of Mansfield, were brought to her remembrance every hour of the day, by the prevalence of every thing opposite to them here.
(III, VIII, 391)

Such subtlety was too rare to be widely appreciated at a time when even a novelist like Mary Brunton, who, unlike Elizabeth Hamilton or Amelia Opie, did consciously try to improve her artistry, deemed it necessary, in the service of the Evangelical cause, to send the heroine of her first novel over the Niagara Falls, and of her second to a lunatic asylum. Both these novels were highly successful, whereas Mansfield Park was not considered worthy of a single review. Its publisher, Thomas Egerton, seems to have had doubts about it from the beginning, since despite the fact that it was published at Jane Austen's own expense, its first edition was comparatively modest - possibly only 1,250 copies.² Even so, these took from May to November to sell³,

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1. Jane Austen's belief in tradition was such that, as a girl she wrote: "Every ancient custom ought to be sacred unless it is prejudicial to happiness" - Mary A. Austen Leigh, Personal Aspects of Jane Austen, 28. This does not mean, however, that she was not receptive to new ideas also.
 2. Robert W. Chapman, Jane Austen, Facts and Problems, 154, 156, 157.
 3. Jane Austen's Letters, 411. Letter of 18.11.1814.

and Egerton was, therefore, disinclined to bother with a second edition. When eventually John Murray published one in 1816, he printed only 1,750 copies, and those on profit sharing terms.¹ The result was a loss for Jane Austen (which almost wiped out the profit made from Emma) - and the sale, of many of the copies at reduced prices as "remainders" in 1821.²

Time has at least compensated Jane Austen, and the once-popular Mary Brunton is now unread; yet because of this, ironically, Jane Austen is now credited with innovations which were not entirely her own. For example, the importance which the evangelicals placed on self-examination led to the development of the portrayal of internal conflict - something which is seen in Jane Austen's Fanny:

.... she had begun to feel undecided as to what she ought to do; and as she walked round the room her doubts were increasing. Was she right in refusing what was so warmly asked, so strongly wished for? ... Was it not ill-nature - selfishness - and a fear of exposing herself? ... It would be so horrible to her to act, that she was inclined to suspect the truth and purity of her own scruples
(I, XVI, 152-3)

As a result Mrs. Leavis has found the really new aspect of the art of Mansfield Park "the attempt to work out a psychological analysis of feeling".³ But Jane Austen was not alone in this (even if she was the best). It is obviously impossible to tell how many other novelists of the period were working towards such psychological characterisation - but Mary Brunton, at least, was attempting it before Jane Austen's first novel was published, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

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1. Jane Hodge, The Double Life of Jane Austen, 208; R.W. Chapman, Jane Austen, Facts and Problems, 156.
 2. J.A. Hodge, op. cit., 178, 208. The reception of Mansfield Park is distorted by such comments as "the book was greatly liked" (D. Harding, "The Priggishness of Mansfield Park" in Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield Park, A Casebook, ed. B. Southam, 213) or "greatly admired in its own day" (L. Trilling, "Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen", in Emma, David Lodge ed., 151) or "among the most popular novels" of its decade (R. Colby, Fiction with a Purpose, 6).
 3. Q.D. Leavis, "The First Modern Novel in England" in Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice and Mansfield Park, A Casebook, B. Southam ed., 239.

V

Mary Brunton 1778-1818

To turn from Jane Austen to Mary Brunton,¹ a Scottish minister's wife, is to turn to one who, in her day, knew nothing but success. Spurred by the popularity of Hannah More's Coelebs, she decided to write a religious novel of her own. Called Self-Control, it caused such a sensation in Edinburgh in 1811, when it was published anonymously, that the first edition was sold out in a month,² and The Scots Magazine said of it

.... we do not recollect, even among the most popular productions of the present day, any one, the appearance of which excited a more immediate and general interest throughout this metropolis.³

It had two further editions in the same year, achieved the curious honour of being published in two parts "in epitome" in The Glasgow Magazine for March - April 1811⁴ and reached a fourth edition by 1812.

Yet though sales were high, the novel met with abuse as well as praise, for, in contrast to the slightly later Mansfield Park, which was Evangelical in ideas rather than in tone, this was definitely Evangelical in tone, trying to influence by moving the feelings and using pious language. And though, as The Eclectic Review pointed out, Mary Brunton was not actually "leading the way"⁵ in using the novel to propagate Christian teaching, her claim that the path she had chosen was almost exclusively her own⁶ was only slightly exaggerated, so that she had to meet with the anger of those who still objected strongly to a novel's being used for such a purpose. The Critical Review referred scathingly to its "methodistical palavering" and "Evangelical cant" and accused the authoress of being

1. See Biographical Appendix.

2. Alexander Brunton, Memoir of Mary Brunton, prefaced to the 1832 edition of Discipline, 23. The Memoir was first published with Emmeline in 1819.

3. SM 73 (March 1811) 203.

4. Robert D. Mayo, The English Novel in the Magazines 1740-1815, 586.

5. ER 8 (June 1812) 612.

6. A. Brunton, op. cit., 41. Letter to her brother, 27.10.1815.

.... determined to take advantage of the prevailing taste of the times, and make her pot boil ... with the help of the Bible¹

- while even the reasonably tolerant British Review still, at this time, thought it

.... a sort of profanation to introduce religion among the tumults and agitations of love adventures.²

All this at least made sure that the novel was well talked about, the British Critic noting that

..... parties have been formed respecting it; some extolling it to the skies, and others depressing it below its real merits.³

Similarly, Mary Russell Mitford, in a letter to Sir William Elford, told of a dispute about the book between two gentlemen,

.... one of whom said it ought to be burnt by the common hangman, and the other that it ought to be written in letters of gold.⁴

Yet it has several striking similarities with Mansfield Park which was, three years later, to create so little stir. First, just as a specific aim of Self-Control was "to show the power of the religious principle in bestowing self-command,"⁵ so this was obviously one of Jane Austen's unstated aims. Fanny Price's self-command and its Christian basis have already been discussed - and the following passage, commenting on Julia Bertram's feelings at Sotherton, when she finds herself trapped with the older generation, is a reminder of the way in which the belief in the need for religious principle pervades Mansfield Park. Of Julia we read:

.... The politeness which she had been brought up to practice as a duty, made it impossible for her to escape; while the want of that higher species of self-command;

1. CR, s.3, 24 (October 1811) 161 and 168.

2. BR, 2 (December 1811) 453.

3. BC, 38 (September 1811) 213.

4. Augustus G.K. L'Estrange, The Life of Mary Russell Mitford, I, 148.

5. A. Brunton, op. cit., 22.

that just consideration of others, that knowledge of her own heart, that principle of right which had not formed any essential part of her education, made her miserable under it.
(MP I, IX, 91)

Again, just as in Mansfield Park Fanny Price is exhorted on all sides to marry Henry Crawford, whom she believes to lack principle, so Laura, the heroine of Self-Control, "a pious Christian" (I, I, 10) is exhorted to marry Colonel Hargrave, a "handsome man of fashion"¹ (I, VI, 87) whom she knows to lack principle, the second aim of the novel being

.... to bear testimony against a maxim as immoral as indelicate, that a reformed rake makes the best husband²

And there are other correspondences; quite early in the novel Laura is orphaned, and has to seek the protection of a rich aunt, Lady Pelham, who supports Hargrave's suit, just as Sir Thomas and Lady Bertram support that of Henry Crawford. Frustrated in his desire for Laura, Hargrave seduces a married woman who, like Maria Rushworth, had made a loveless marriage - and thus finally and absolutely loses any chance of gaining the woman he really wants; for Laura, like Fanny, regards adultery as a "crime ... black in its nature" (II, XXII, 221). Moreover, just as Fanny's aunt Norris believes

.... Had Fanny accepted Mr. Crawford, this could not have happened
(MP III, XVI, 448)

- so Laura's aunt Pelham says:

" Hargrave would have bid farewell to all his indiscretions if you would have married him."
(III, XXX, 179)³

Here the resemblance ceases, however, for, unlike Mansfield Park, with its series of utterly natural happenings, Self-Control is full of dramatic events. First Laura's lover attempts to seduce her. Then she is left penniless on the death of her father, and faces real deprivation. When she is taken in by her aunt, the latter, who moves in a fashionable circle, proves to be utterly unprincipled (providing, with Hargrave, the values of

1. Mary Brunton does not use the phrase "the fashionable world", but refers to men and women "of fashion" quite frequently.

2. A. Brunton, op. cit., 22.

3. All quotations from Self-Control are from the third edition of 1811.

the fashionable world, as do the Crawfords in Mansfield Park). Even when she knows that Hargrave has just abandoned his pregnant mistress, she refuses to "throw away the society of an agreeable man, to gratify the whims of a parcel of narrow minded bigots" (II, XXIV, 283). She indulges, therefore, in underhand schemes to aid Hargrave, who, becoming desperate when he fears Laura to be about to marry another man, has her kidnapped and taken to Canada, his idea being that once she has lost her reputation she will be glad to marry her despoiler. With great resourcefulness, however, she escapes - in the process being swept over rapids in a canoe. In justice to Mrs. Brunton, it must be pointed out that this last episode, which takes up only three chapters of the novel, is by far the most incredible in the book; nevertheless even at the time there were complaints of improbability, and Mary Brunton admitted this, saying:

.... Had these censures been pointed at the lessons which the tale was intended to convey, the Author would have felt it her duty, as well as her earnest desire, to remove them.

This not being the case, she claimed only to have made some changes in language

.... either where the expression was faulty, or where it has been said to bear a meaning which it was not intended to convey. A few sentences have been omitted¹

The changes were, in fact, slight enough to be made in time for the second edition, which followed rapidly on the first. And complaints on the grounds of probability of incident were not, on the whole, couched in extremely strong terms, those reviews which really disliked the Evangelical novel tending to concentrate on what they saw as improbabilities in the character of the heroine. More seemed to have agreed with the reviewer for the British Critic, who said:

.... many of the situations ... are interesting, and though some of them are improbable ... they are not beyond the verge of possibility.²

1. Advertisement to the third edition, v and vi; BC (September 1811) 213 (on the second edition).

2. BC 38 (September 1811) 213. See also ER 8 (June 1812) 613-614.

Such lack of truth to life in incident, combined with overt teaching, would, however, have been enough to condemn the novel for posterity, even had it not also been marred, as it is, by such lack of skill in handling the important dialogues between the heroine and her lover. Some of the conversation of minor characters is very well executed¹ but Colonel Hargrave talks like a character in a Victorian melodrama,² and Laura like a character in a religious tract. Even though one recognises that it was as natural for many Evangelicals of the period to talk openly about their religious beliefs as it was for some other Christians to regard their religion as intensely private, there is something very wrong with the religiosity of Self-Control, which seems to stem from the fact that the heroine is allowed to assert her piety in the wrong sorts of situations. The following, for example, is a passage from the scene in which she tells Hargrave that his conduct has made it impossible for her to see him again:

" Oh, Hargrave," she cried, clasping her hands as in supplication, "have pity on yourself - have pity on me - forsake the fatal path on which you have entered, that, though for ever torn from you here, I may meet you in a better world."
(I, II, 35)

In Mary Brunton's next novel, Discipline, it is much easier to accept the scenes where the flawed young heroine is gently urged, at appropriate times, by both her elderly female companion and the man, much older than herself, who loves her, to take strength and principle from the religion by which they both guide their lives; but Laura's constant references to God and heaven, as she talks to her pleading suitor, sound only priggish.

Yet this is unfortunate, for it is far from being the effect that Mary Brunton was endeavouring to produce, the clumsiness of the dialogue (combined with the improbability of incident) distracting attention from the one merit of the novel, - the quite penetrating analysis of the heroine's conflicting

1. e.g. see I, VII, 102-110; I, VI, 80; III, XXVII, 55; III, XXXIV, 289-292.

2. e.g. see II, XVI, especially pp 15 and 20.

emotions. According to her husband, and as her journals reveal, "The study of character in real life was a favourite pursuit with her."¹ Thus there is some good characterisation, even of less central characters, like Laura's father, or her aunt, Lady Pelham. The former, once a handsome soldier, is now something of a clinging and at times peevish hypochondriac - who yet obviously loves his daughter; the latter is selfish and bad tempered - yet completely able to deceive herself about her own nature. Such characters reveal themselves dramatically - but there are also fairly frequent brief authorial comments which reveal how much the authoress understood of the motives underlying people's behaviour, as when we read on one occasion that Lady Pelham "had gone too far to retract, and was too much in the wrong to recant her error" - this being followed by a perceptive insight into the angry and twisted workings of her mind (II, XXVI, 22).

And this is even more true of the principal characters. Although Laura and Hargrave speak unnaturally, and are put into unnatural situations, Laura is portrayed with some complexity, while Hargrave is at least credible, being presented as weak and unprincipled rather than evil - though unlike Jane Austen with Henry Crawford, Mary Brunton had not the tact to refrain from making him act like a real villain (and not merely an adulterer) in the closing chapters. When he accidentally sees Laura for the first time some weeks after she has dismissed him, "surprise and joy illuminate his fine countenance" (II, XVI, 8) and "his eyes sparkle with love and hope" (II, XVI, 14). He feels "a love of virtue, sincere though transient" when he thinks of her (II, XVIII, 99); though he attacks her new lover, the attack is unpremeditated, and he is horrified at what he has done (III, XXXI, 200); and when he thinks (wrongly) that he has caused Laura's death, he kills himself (III, XXXIV, 293). As he is thus no cold blooded seducer, intent on debauching Laura and then abandoning her, but one who loves her according to his own understanding of

1. A. Brunton, op. cit., 52.

love, and as, in addition, he is "dashing" and attractive, the fact that Laura should ever have fallen in love with him is perfectly understandable. Moreover, had she been socially a good match, Hargrave would have behaved towards her with perfect propriety, and the problem on which the novel hinges would never have arisen. But Laura has no money to bring to a marriage and in the eyes of the fashionable world, Hargrave would be a fool to marry her. Thus, since he has grown up as the spoiled child of a rich widow, without discipline or principle (a much used situation) he finds it quite acceptable to try to make her his mistress instead of his wife. The reader is let into his thoughts, so that there can be no doubt about his intentions - just as Laura's love for and confidence in him are made evident;

.... Her arm rested on his with confiding pressure, and for a moment Hargrave faltered in his purpose. The next, he imagined that he had gone too far to recede; and clasping her to his breast with all the vehemence of passion, he urged his suit in language yet more unequivocal. No words can express her feelings, when, the veil thus rudely torn from her eyes, she saw her pure, her magnanimous Hargrave ... degraded to a sensualist - a seducer.

(I, I, 17-18)

The style is hackneyed, but Laura's emotions are understandable. The situation of the innocent girl shocked by amorous advances from a man she did not love was a stock one in the novel, as were her reactions, and the situation of the innocent girl actually seduced by the man she loved was almost as common; but much less common was that of the way in which a girl in love coped with her heart in order to resist the proposals (for Hargrave after this actually does propose marriage) of a man she loved, once she knew him to be unprincipled.¹

Contemporary readers may have been less sophisticated in their requirements of artistry than they were later to become, but the more thoughtful of them were not likely to have become involved enough in the novel to discuss it with interest, as they did, had its characters been as unbelievable as some modern accounts suggest. According to one,

1. The example of Clarissa and Lovelace springs to mind here.

.... Laura Montreville, convinced, at the age of seventeen, by a slight caress that Villiers Hargrave is, at heart, libidinous, refuses his offer of marriage for fear of possible infidelity after the ceremony.¹

Mary Brunton had, in fact, made it perfectly clear that it was no "slight caress" to which Laura objected, and there was no doubt^{about} this point in the minds of contemporaries.² The above account goes on to say that when Hargrave begs for another chance,

.... She lays down specific conditions and insists that his conduct shall be judged by "wise" and "sober-minded" and "pious" inspectors.³

The fact is that Laura is shown wanting to accept Hargrave, but afraid to trust his promises of reform; so when he himself pleads to be accepted if for two years his conduct is such as to bear the closest scrutiny, all she does is gladly to repeat his own words:

"If for two years," said she, her youthful countenance brightening with delight, "your conduct be such as you describe - if it will bear the inspection of the wise, of the sober minded, of the pious, - as my father's friend, as my own friend, will I welcome you."

(I, V, 77)

The same condition is made by Cornelia in Jane Porter's The Pastor's Fire-side (1817), when she accepts the formerly dissolute but apparently reformed Duke of Wharton, whom she loves dearly, though the time she sets is one year;⁴ and to mock the attitude of the heroines in such circumstances seems to be to ignore the situation of women in the period. To those who asserted that the whole situation was incredible because a respectable woman could not possibly have continued to love a man who had once tried to seduce her, Mary Brunton, with her knowledge of the human heart replied:

.... All I say is, that I wish all the affections of virtuous persons were so very obedient to reason.⁵

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1. E.M. McClelland, The Novel in Relation to the Dissemination of Liberal Ideas, Ph.D. thesis, Royal Holloway College, London, 327. 1790-1820
 2. See BC 38 (September 1811) 214 and CR s.3, 24 (October 1811) 163.
 3. E.M. McClelland, op. cit., 327.
 4. J. Porter, The Pastor's Fire-side, IV, XXVI, 484-485. The use of "inspection" and "inspectors" in this way seems to have been common in Evangelical parlance.
 5. A. Brunton, op. cit., 25.

Nevertheless she believed that it was a foolish woman indeed who would risk marrying a man who, even before marriage, gave signs of lacking integrity.

Obviously The Critical Review (which, as was noted earlier, was completely biased against the novel because of its religious strain) did not take such matters into account when it regarded Laura as unforgiving, unfilial (since her father wished her to marry Hargrave) and coquettish (since she did not dismiss him altogether).¹ Mary Brunton had clearly considered the possibility of imperceptive readers making such charges, and in respect of the first two had taken pains to negate them. In order to demonstrate that Laura's was not a naturally unforgiving nature, she placed her in a situation of hearing her aunt saying of a daughter who had married against her wishes:

" if, as a Christian, I forgive, I never, never, can forget it."

Of this, the reader is told that Laura,

.... not quite understanding this kind of Christian forgiveness was silent, because she did not know what to say.
(II, XIX, 138)

In addition, to counter any charges of lack of filial duty, Mary Brunton made it clear that, far from urging his daughter to marry Hargrave, Laura's father, had he known the truth, would have felt bound to call him out - and that it was Laura's concern for her father's safety which was her primary reason for not confiding in him, thus increasing her own problem.

The charge of unpleasant coyness, of coldly teasing coquettishness, however, was one which she did not try to refute by inserting specific incidents for it is made as a result of an unsympathetic reading of what she was trying to do. It is, indeed, just in the contrast between Laura's words and conscious behaviour as a practising Christian, and her private and confused thoughts, her mental conflicts, and her sometimes unconscious behaviour as a woman in love, that the subtlety of the characterisation lies - and the fact that this is a religious novel may have played no small part in

1. CR, s.3, 24 (October 1811) 163-8.

this. Kathleen Tillotson, writing of the religious novels of the 1840's, points out that such novels

.... enforced, and perhaps even initiated, the growing tendency to introspection in the novel. They are not a backwater, but a tributary of the main stream. I have said that the heroes of novels-with-a-purpose do at least think; the heroes and heroines of the religious novels think ¹ in a special way - they analyse their own states of mind ...

Commenting that such introspection was a "note" of the thirties and forties, she goes on to say that its most obvious non-literary manifestation "is the habit (not confined to Evangelicals) of careful self-examination." This was something Mary Brunton practised herself, and something Laura does as a matter of routine. After Hargrave's unwanted advances, for instance,

.... She endeavoured to call to mind every part of her behaviour to [him], lest her own conduct might have seemed to countenance his presumption. But in vain. She could not recollect a word, a look, even a thought, which might have encouraged his profligacy ... Satisfied of the purity of her conduct, she next proceeded to examine its prudence; but here she found little reason for self-gratulation. Her conscience, indeed, completely acquitted her of levity or forwardness, but its charges of imprudence she could not so easily parry. Why had she admitted a preference for a man whose moral character was so little known to her? (I, III, 42)

And this quite primitive technique is used far more skilfully later in the novel to show Laura deceiving herself. In the following passage, for example, she is pondering on her own reactions, after a scene in which she has told De Courcy, another man who loves her, that the most she can offer him is friendship:

.... She remembered every word that De Courcy had uttered; remembered the very tone, look and gesture with which they were spoken. She recollected, too, all that she had said in reply; but she could by no means unravel the confused effects of the scene upon her own mind. She certainly pitied her lover to a very painful degree. "Poor De Courcy!" said she, accompanying the half-whisper with a heavy sigh. But having, in the course of half an hour's rumination, repeated this soliloquy about twenty times, she began to recollect that De Courcy had borne his disappointment with considerable philosophy, and had appeared to derive no small comfort from the prospect of an intercourse of mere friendship.

This fortunate recollection, however, not immediately relieving her, she endeavoured to account for her depression by laying hold of a vague idea which was floating in her mind, that she had not, on this occasion, acted as she ought

1: Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen-Forties, 131-132.

Was it generous, was it even honourable, to increase the difficulties of his self conquest by admitting him to the intimacies of friendship? (III, XXVIII, 68-69)

The fact, of course, is that Laura is depressed because De Courcy appears to have been so easily discouraged. Professor Tillotson, in her discussion (referred to above) of the role of self-examination in the novel, went on to note that, in inferior artists, such analysis often conflicts with the narrative interest. Mary Brunton's novels are obvious predecessors of the religious novels of the 1840's offering (though one would never regard Mary Brunton as a "superior" artist) self-analysis which does not conflict with the narrative interest, but is tied to it.

Thus, though all that Mary Brunton was trying to do at this stage in her career, was to show that the way of Christian principle was not an easy one, but that with self-control it could be followed, in this one respect her religious purpose aided rather than hindered her as a novelist. Laura wrestles with her own desires - and at times her feelings lead her to wish for consequences her principles tell her to reject. She tells her father .
" I marry no one who is not in heart and life a Christian" (II, XVII, 61)
- and when he suggests the double standard - that the world is more indulgent to the peccadilloes of man than of woman—she replies

" when I took upon me the honoured name of Christian, by that very act I became bound that the opinion of the world should not regulate my principles, nor its customs guide my practice." (II, XVII, 63)

However it is made quite clear that her inclination has been "nobly sacrificed to virtue" (I, XII, 187). Though she conscientiously destroys all the things which remind her of Hargrave, she weeps as she does it (I, III, 45); though she tells herself she is determined to reject him, after a visit she is anxious to get home:

.... She longed, with a feeling which could not be called hope, though it far exceeded curiosity, to know whether Hargrave had called or written during her absence; and the moment the chaise stopped she flew to the table where the letters were deposited to wait their return.

There is no letter, and instead of being relieved, bitter tears come to her eyes:

" I am easily relinquished," thought she.
(I, IV, 64)

She finds herself looking and listening for his coming, and tells herself she is glad when he does not come - again with tears in her eyes (I, V, 67). She writes to a friend, indirectly seeking news of him, but is "half tempted to destroy the letter" (I, VIII, 65). Then, when there does seem a chance that he will call, having firmly decided to see him only to tell him to call no more, she proceeds,

.... with all the consistency of her sex to adorn her person with a care she had never before bestowed on it.
(I, XII, 191)

This is not unpleasant coquetry: it is perfectly clear that she is still in love with Hargrave and wants him to continue to think of her, hoping that eventually she will feel confident enough in him to accept him. Though her principles tell her not to see him, she wants to see him - and wants to believe he still wants to see her. Thus, on this occasion when, after all, he does not come, she is distressed:

.... she had once herself resigned him, but to be herself resigned without effort was more than she could endure.
(I, XI, III)

When she believes that he has reformed, she romantically, day-dreams of their future life together, thinking "No time shall change the love I bear thee" (I, XVII, 182) - and when she eventually agrees to an occasional meeting, her reason for insisting on others always being present on such occasions is more honest than priggish: it is

" because I might not always be able to listen to reason and duty rather than to you."
(II, XVII, 42)

She even finds herself wondering whether she should relax her principles and dutifully marry Hargrave to please her father - till self-examination reveals to her that she is only finding a reason to do what she herself

would like to do (II, XVII, 68). And when she is left destitute, on her father's death, the temptation to marry becomes even stronger:

.... One path indeed invited her steps, a path bright with visions of rapture, warm with the sunshine of love and pleasure; but the flaming sword of Heaven guarded the entrance; and as often as her thoughts reverted that way, the struggle was renewed which forces the choice from the pleasing to the right. (II, XIX, 125)

This mental struggle continues for two thirds of the novel, and ends only when she learns that Hargrave, since his proposal to her, has become the father of an illegitimate child. Even then, her first impulse is a very human and not very Christian one, to blame the woman and not him - though she quickly sees this to be unjust (II, XX, 166). The conflict within Laura is the essence of the portrayal, and it is difficult to understand a reading of the novel which sees her as "dazzled momentarily" by Hargrave, or as a heroine of the type who "suffer at the hands of others but seem to have no difficulty with themselves."¹ It is likewise impossible, despite the similarities noted earlier between Self-Control and Mansfield Park, to accept Robert Colby's suggestion that Self-Control "anticipates ... Fanny's love problem" in Mansfield Park.² Fanny, like Laura, does withstand external pressures on her to marry - but for her this is comparatively easy, since she does not love Henry Crawford. Laura's position is infinitely more difficult.

Thus, even to the end, her confused state continues. As was noted earlier, she has a second suitor, De Courcy, a rather colourless stereotype, only too obviously meant to be the antithesis of Hargrave. Having been brought up by a pious mother, he is "a Christian from the heart" (I, XI, 181), leads family prayers (II, XXII, 203-204) and refuses a challenge to a duel (III, XXX, 179). Not surprisingly, then, both Lady Pelham and Hargrave refer

1. Robert Colby, Fiction with a Purpose, 95.

2. R. Colby, op. cit., 88.

to him as a "methodist". For long Laura is so wrapped up in her feelings for Hargrave that she does not understand that she is transferring her affections to De Courcy, so that when she wonders whether he has conquered his feelings for her, "I hope he has" she says, and then repeats it -

" I hope he has; - as if by repeating it she would have ascertained that it was her real sentiment.
(III, XXX, 147)

Always it is the pull of her own feelings which is shown to be far more difficult to handle than any of the rather contrived occurrences which befall her.

All this is illustrated, moreover, without her being made a heroine of extreme sensibility:

.... So far was she ... from thinking that sensibility was bestowed merely for an ornament (an opinion which many fair ladies appear to entertain), that the expression of it was always, with her, an occasion of shame.
(I, X, 165)¹

Her goodbye to her home village of Glenalbert is, admittedly, in the style which Jane Austen teasingly mocks in Marianne Dashwood's goodbye to Norland,² and she is rather given to fainting in times of stress; but faintings in Mary Brunton's novels tend to be very unromantic affairs, accompanied by heavy nosebleedings.³ She sings, but without skill; she sketches, but when she tries to sell her work, no one thinks it good enough to buy till De Courcy begins to buy it secretly, only after he has learned the identity of the artist. This incident is an instance of the "quiet and unobtrusive humour" which John Millar noted as characteristic of her otherwise undistinguished style.⁴ Having first rejected a sketch, on learning that it was drawn by Laura, he looks at it again:

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1. By the time she wrote Discipline (1814) and Emmeline (1819) she found no need to dwell on her heroine's freedom from false or excessive sensibility.
 2. Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility I, V, 23.
 3. e.g. Self-Control, I, II, 22; Discipline II, XX, 273.
 4. John Millar, op. cit., 541.

.... and on this second inspection was so fortunate as to discover that it bore the stamp of great genius - an opinion in which, we believe, he would have been joined by any young man of four and twenty who had seen the artist.
(I, X, 158)

Laura herself is given a sense of humour¹ and a sharp line in repartee. When for instance a bothersome and unwelcome admirer complains that she did not appear, on an occasion when he had given up another appointment in order to see her, adding:

"I should not have minded it much, if you had but come at last, - though the Countess is the prettiest creature in London - curse me if she isn't - the present company always excepted..."

Laura tartly replies:

"Do you mean the exception for me, or for yourself?"
(I, IX, 145)

On another occasion, when a man tricks her into getting into his carriage, and uses the situation to make love to her she merely calmly orders him to let her out, and when he does not do so, seizes the reins, thus slowing down the horses, jumps out, and walks back to town (I, XIII, 233-6); and on yet another, on being informed that De Courcy is the father of an illegitimate child, instead of swooning, she gets herself ready and goes and asks the child's relatives who its father really is (III, XXX). When she is upset, like Elinor Dashwood she takes great care to hide her feelings, though it is made absolutely clear here, as it is not in Sense and Sensibility, that this heroine's strength comes from trusting in Providence and snatching a few moments by herself to pray; and again like Elinor, she takes care not to nurse her unhappiness, hastening "to exert herself in some of her ordinary employments" and avoiding going to places which might remind her of Hargrave (I, III, 46).²

1. e.g. II, XXIV, 279.

2. Cf. also Mansfield Park III, XV, 443; "There is nothing like employment, active, indispensable employment, for relieving sorrow."

In this way, Mary Brunton, in one character in her novel, attempts a depth of psychological portrayal which must, one feels, have had some influence at the time. We see into Hargrave's mind, into De Courcy's, Lady Pelham's and Laura's father's - but above all, and constantly, into Laura's; with her, Mary Brunton even attempts the unobtrusive movement from authorial narration to the character's thoughts, which Jane Austen was later to do so well:

To borrow money on her father's half pay was an expedient which Laura had always rejected, as calculated to load their scanty income with a burden which it could neither shake off nor bear. But even to this expedient she could now no longer have recourse; for Montreville had assured her that, in his present state of health, it would be impossible to mortgage his annuity for a single guinea.

She might raise a small supply by stripping her beloved Glenalbert of some of its little luxuries and comforts; but long before this revolting business could be transacted, she must be absolutely penniless[sic]. Nor did she dare, without consulting her father, to give orders for dismantling his home. And how should she inform him of the necessity for such a sacrifice? (I, XV, 286)

And there are other things, also, to commend in Self-Control. The language is restrained indeed for the period, and the style as was noted earlier, is enlivened by a humour (often ironic) so unobtrusive that it is only too easy to miss it. Occasionally there is a tart remark which belies the impression of great mildness Mary Brunton usually gives, as when she says of Hargrave:

.... He was perfectly sincere in his honourable proposals to Laura. He might have been less so, had any others possessed a chance of success. (II, XVIII, 101)

At other times sage generalisations are slipped into the narrative without any irritating pomposity, as when we read in explanation of Laura's father's annoyance with her for rejecting his attempt to persuade her to marry Hargrave:

.... the consciousness of having acted wrong, without the resolution to repair the fault, is what no temper can stand. (I, XIII, 214)

Moreover, there is some natural description which is quite evocative for the period. Here, for example, is Laura in her canoe on a Canadian river:

.... No breeze moaned through the impervious woods. No ripple broke the stream. The dark shadows trembled for a moment in its bosom, as the little bark stole by, and then reposed again. No trace appeared of human presence. The fox peeping from the brushwood, the wild duck sailing stately in the stream, saw the unwonted stranger without alarm, untaught as yet to flee from the destroyer.
(III, XXXIII, 267)

She sleeps and wakes to a murmuring sound which rapidly increases in strength:

.... She looked up ... The dark woods still bent over her. But they no longer touched the margin of the stream. They stretched their giant arms from the summit of a precipice. Their image was no more reflected unbroken. The grey rocks which supported them but half lent their colours to the rippling water. The wild duck, no longer tempting the stream, flew screaming over its bed. Each object hastened on with fearful rapidity, and the murmuring sound was now a deafening roar. (III, XXXIII, 269-70)

The whole episode, of course, is incredible - yet of its kind it is quite exciting, and it is rather sad that it has been that most generally chosen for caustic criticism. G. Armour Craig¹, for example, reads it in a way which a knowledge of the author's journals and letters makes utterly unsupportable, seeing Laura's swoon over the waterfall as disguising "a sexuality most horridly hidden and repressed", while Robert Colby's interpretation unfortunately rests on a complete misreading. According to him, in Canada, Laura

.... falls among savages, but not noble ones. Even this unnerving experience confirms her faith in a wise Providence, for, as the pious farmer who rescues her observes, had she not been strapped to the canoe by the Indians, the force of the rapids would have hurled her to her death.

On the contrary, melodramatic though the incident is, it is meant to show Laura's courage and presence of mind. She bravely takes to the river herself, to avoid imminent rape - and is saved because she lashes herself to the canoe as she approaches the rapids.

1. See G. Armour Craig, "Jane Austen's Emma" in In Defense of Reading, ed. Reuben Brower and R. Poirier 254, and R. Colby, op. cit., 320.

The novel then, is a combination of the interesting and promising with the clumsy, the sanctimonious, and the melodramatic - and it is this second set of qualities which most impress the modern reader, irritating him to a point where any merit in the novel tends to be overlooked.¹

They must have irritated Jane Austen, too, for she referred to Self-Control as:

.... an excellently-meant, elegantly-written Work, without anything of Nature or Probability in it.²

Yet at the time she wrote this, in 1813, she was reading the book not for the first time, but for the second time, at least: "I am looking over Self-Control again," she wrote - and one wonders why, since her perception of the absurd was far too keen for her to have missed the absurdities of the plot on a first reading - though she may well have appreciated the approach to the characterisation of Laura. But there is another possibility. It is known that she tried, without success, to get a copy of the novel when it first came out in 1811.³ At this time she was just starting on Mansfield Park, her own "serious" novel, and it seems more than likely that her interest in getting a copy of Self-Control was not merely that of an inveterate novel reader for a new novel, but a professional wish to compare her own proposed treatment of religion with that of this new and highly successful novelist. If this was so, there can be little doubt that she was comfortably reassured that she could do much better than this - and her re-reading of the novel in 1813, just after she had finished Mansfield Park⁴ may have been merely to

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1. e.g. the clumsy way in which people have kept not only letters which have been sent to them, but also copies of their replies - both of which can be conveniently shown to others - or the melodramatic way in which Hargrave is given to striking his forehead with his hand (e.g. II, XVI, 20).
 2. Jane Austen's Letters, 344. Letter of 11.10.1813.
 3. Jane Austen's Letters, 278. Letter of 30.4.1811.
 4. R.W. Chapman, Jane Austen, Facts and Problems, 81. Considering Jane Austen's known ability to burlesque other writers, it seems even possible that the points (noted earlier) where the novels correspond resulted from a deliberate effort not, in this case, to parody, but to surpass Mary Brunton, using her rival's frame of reference.

satisfy herself that she had done what she set out to do. Mansfield Park, however, made a very small impact in its day compared with Self-Control, and that Jane Austen felt no little chagrin at this is obvious from a letter of 1814 to Anna Lefroy who, it would seem, had passed on to her some adverse comment from a Mr. Creed. This particular comment was not on Mansfield Park specifically, but the reception of this, her latest novel, was in her mind, and she was in the process of collecting opinions on it. On this occasion she replied to her friend, in irritation:

..... I will redeem my credit with him, by writing a close Imitation of 'Self-control' as soon as I can¹

This, of course, being mere sarcasm, her next novel, Emma, was nothing like Self-Control. Ironically, however, and by a strange freak of chance, it was, in many ways, like an incomparably superior version of Mary Brunton's second novel, Discipline, which had been published in December 1814.² Freak of chance it must have been, rather than (as might have been the case with Self-Control and Mansfield Park) any attempt to show clearly her superiority by treating a similar theme in a different way, for Emma was almost finished when Discipline appeared;³ and ironic it certainly was, for Jane Austen had much earlier expressed, in relation to Mary Brunton, a whimsical fear of another author publishing, before her, a novel on the very lines on which she herself was working:

- We have tried to get Self-controul, but in vain, -
I should like to know what her Estimate is - but am
always half afraid of finding a clever novel too
clever - & of finding my own story and my own people
all forestalled.⁴

1. Jane Austen's Letters, 423. Letter of November or December 1814.

2. A. Brunton, op. cit., 33.

3. Emma was begun January 21st 1814, and finished on March 29th 1815 (R.W. Chapman, Jane Austen, Facts and Problems, 81). Discipline was published December 1814.

4. Jane Austen's Letters, 278. Letter of 30.4.1811.

Discipline, in fact, which on the surface (with its riches-to-rags-to-riches plot, its surprise element, a section set in the Scottish Highlands and its pious tones) seems utterly different from anything that Jane Austen ever wrote, does to some extent anticipate her story and her people, and a consideration of the similarities and differences between the two novels seems to illustrate clearly just how far Jane Austen was in the mainstream of the novel of her day, and equally how far she was ahead of her contemporaries in artistry.

Interestingly, in her correspondence, Mrs. Brunton discarded the rather daunting title she had chosen for her novel, and seems always to have referred to it as "Ellen". Ellen, like Emma, is a faulty heroine, Mary Brunton having decided that she did not want to write about another character as good as Laura, who, though she had weaknesses, kept them only as thoughts, and never acted badly.¹ Ellen is bright, rich, good looking (I, II, 43) and led by her parents to believe in her own importance (I, I, 12) just as Emma, "handsome, clever, and rich" has "rather too much her own way" (I, I, 5). After her mother's death, Ellen's father, a self-made man who wants to make his daughter a lady of fashion, sends her to a school where she meets members of the aristocracy and those who aspire to the fashionable life. There accomplishments are taught, but Ellen learns to pay only lip-service to religion (I, II, 42). After this, she returns home and is supplied with a governess-companion, Miss Mortimer, who affects no authority, seeming "anxious to be useful, but afraid to be officious" - (I, III, 49) just as Emma has had a governess, "the mildness

1. A. Brunton, op. cit., 16.

of [whose] temper had hardly allowed her to impose any restraint" (I, I, 5).

Thus, though fundamentally good natured, Ellen, like Emma, grows up rather careless of the feelings of others, and full of her own importance - a complete contrast to the Christian heroine of Self-Control, of whom it could be said "In real modesty and humility she improved every day; for it was the study of her life to improve in them" (II, XXIII, 239). Ellen's father, however, has a friend, a Mr. Maitland, solid, sober, responsible, in his thirties (like George Knightley) who, despite his fondness for her is not afraid of telling her when he disapproves of her conduct. On one occasion, for example, when she has been particularly foolish, he says:

" Let me speak plainly to you. Allow me for once the privilege of a friend. You cannot have one more sincere than myself " (II, XII, 30-31)

When he has finished speaking, Ellen at first tries to argue with him - then is overcome by "tears of mortification" (II, XII, 32). In a similar way, Mr. Knightley reproves Emma:

"Emma, I must once more speak to you as I have been used to do: a privilege rather endured than allowed, perhaps, but I must still use it. I cannot see you acting wrong, without a remonstrance." (III, VIII, 374)

Emma blushes, then tries to laugh her way out of the situation, but as soon as she leaves him, feels "mortification, and deep concern" (III, VII, 376). And, just as Emma, while continuing to act in a way of which Mr. Knightley disapproves, yet is acutely conscious of his disapproval, and disturbed by it, so is Ellen with regard to Mr. Maitland (e.g. I, IV, 84-85) - and both feel well rewarded by a glance of approbation (Discipline II, XII, 11; Emma III, IX, 385) when they do something of which their mentor approves.

Ellen grows to respect Mr. Maitland, but for most of the novel has no more idea that she is falling in love with him than Emma has of being in love with George Knightley. Emma regards their relationship as a family one - almost a "brother and sister" relationship (III, II, 331), while Ellen says

of Mr. Maitland

" I should as soon have dreamt of marrying my father"
(II, XII, 20)

In fact she seems not to be very interested in the idea of marriage at all, saying

" I hate to hear of people being married."
(II, XVII, 162)

- just as Emma claims to "have very little intention of ever marrying at all" (I, X, 84). However, to amuse herself, just as Emma flirts with Frank Churchill, she flirts with Lord Frederick de Burgh, who, we are told, is "a man of fashion" (I, IV, 83).

Ellen's self-will, like Emma's places her in awkward situations, and even leads her into acts of unkindness, her target being her governess companion, Miss Mortimer, whom she sees rather as Emma sees Miss Bates, saying that she

"has no wit and ... has never been pretty."
(I, IV, 79)

Her "cruelty" takes the form of hiding various possessions of Miss Mortimer, and making caricatures of her in her church pew (I, III, 50). Yet like Emma she seems to be unaware of her faults.¹ Thus, just as Emma, after all her manoeuvring, can say without ironic intent to Jane Fairfax:

" if you knew how much I love every thing that is
decided and open!" (III, XVII, 460)

- so Ellen can claim to detest pride (I, XI, 283) and yet, in a situation in which she is reduced to begging shelter from a poor laundress, can snobbishly introduce her even more destitute friend Juliet, the cast-off mistress of Lord Glendower, as "Lady Glendower" (III, XXVI, 135).

1. Emma does, of course, admit that she is conceited (I, XII, 99) but while she says so she is in a jocular mood, and one feels that she did not really believe it.

Ellen has two other faults. Firstly, like Emma, she has a vivid imagination which is not controlled by her reason, which is "in a deep sleep", (I, IV, 88). This trait, however, is not one which is used to much effect. Unlike Jane Austen, who contrives to use Emma's similar fault in the interests of comedy, Mary Brunton merely shows Ellen's imagination at work feeding her other fault, vanity - an unpleasant trait of which Emma, as Jane Austen states specifically, is free. Ellen's imagination allows her to picture her coming out

.... in a world which her imagination peopled with
admiring friends. (I, II, 43)

Even in moments of remorse, her original remorse can be forgotten, as her imagination carries her to scenes which further pander to her vanity. On one such occasion, deciding to behave better, she resolves to work for the poor:

.... I would find out some poor but amiable family, who had perhaps seen better days. I would assist and comfort them; and confining myself to a simple neatness in my dress, would expend upon them the liberal allowance of my indulgent father. I was presently transported by fancy to a scene of elegant distress, and theatrical gratitude, common enough in her airy regions, but exceedingly scarce upon the face of this vulgar earth. The idea was delightful. (I, XI, 273-74)

In just such a way, Emma, remorseful at hurting Harriet, in the episode with Mr. Elton, suddenly finds herself yet again forgetting her remorse in the pleasure of planning another ideal match for her (I, XVI, 137) - though again her fancies do not involve flattering her own self-esteem.

By the end of the novel Ellen has greatly changed, but Mary Brunton, with, one cannot help but feel, a teasing smile, leaves her with still a trace of her old vanity, allowing her heroine-narrator, her trials over and marriage in sight, to say of her lover:

.... I was very glad ... when I handed him his tea, that my hand and arm were quite as beautiful as ever.
(III, XXX, 264)

There is no doubt that this remark is not inserted to remind the reader of Ellen's beauty - it is there as a reminder that human nature is never perfect. Here one strongly feels Mary Brunton speaking through her narrator, Ellen - just as one does at certain other times such as when Ellen writes:

.... the tumult of feeling, indeed, unavoidably subsided;
but it was into a calm—frozen, stern and cheerless as
the long night - calm of a polar sea
(II, XV, 114)

- or begins a chapter with the startling statement:

Marriage is like sin; if we often allow it to be presented
to our view, we learn to look without starting.
(I, V, 96)¹

This use of a first person narrator is one of the methods Mary Brunton employs to maintain sympathy for her flawed heroine, since the reader is constantly aware of her motivation, and of her remorse as well as of her wrongdoing. She also, as Jane Austen does with Emma, is careful to illustrate Ellen's good qualities; she is sincere (I, VI, 121) and her "warm affections" are noted (e.g. I, V, 110) and illustrated, as on one occasion when, having tormented Miss Mortimer, she realises how upset the latter is:

.... before I knew what I was doing, I had locked her
hand in mine, and had inquired, "what was the matter
with my good friend?" (I, V, 104)

Like Emma's, her repentances are, at first, short, but, because the reader is constantly in her consciousness, he is aware that, even while behaving badly she is conscious of this, and not in the least comfortable in her mind.

A major situation of this kind concerns an invitation to a ball, to which Ellen is determined to go, in spite of the disapproval of both Miss Mortimer and Mr. Maitland. At this time she has entered fashionable life, and has herself become "the fashion" (I, IV, 91), the ball in question being

1. Cf. Jane Austen's similar manner of occasionally beginning a chapter with a shock aphorism - e.g. "Human nature is so well disposed towards those who are in interesting situations, that a young person, who either marries or dies, is sure of being kindly spoken of" (Emma II, IV, 181).

a masquerade to be given by a titled lady of dubious moral character - and one who refuses "to make Sunday a day of penance" (I, VII, 157). This is in obvious moral contrast to the behaviour of Ellen's two mentors, who have "animated virtue" (I, VI, 141) cultivate family prayer (I, III, 48; II, XVI, 138) and avoid even travelling on Sundays whenever possible (II, XII, 11). Ellen feels their disapproval of her going to the masquerade, struggles with her conscience, and decides to stay at home; but, as, at this time, she is guided only by feeling, and not by principle (I, VIII, 190) her dressmaker's bringing her ball dress is enough immediately to make her forget her good intentions. After many more fluctuations, she eventually does go- and regrets it, since she does not know how to cope with the giddy society she finds there. She puts herself into a compromising situation, and returns home full of "tormenting thoughts" and good intentions - only to become quickly immersed in a new scheme, to make Mr. Maitland fall in love with her, merely to flatter her vanity (I, IX, 234-235).

As with Emma, Ellen's need is for self-knowledge. Just as for Emma

.... To understand, thoroughly understand her own heart,
was the first endeavour (III, XI, 412)

so, Ellen relates,

.... By degrees, something of my real self was opened
to my sight. (II, XVI, 135)

But by the time that Ellen's eyes are opened, she seems to have lost Maitland, as a result of her behaviour. He tells her that he is leaving for the West Indies to work for the slaves there, (a typically Evangelical interest) since his campaign in Parliament has failed. As he says this, Ellen records:

.... I started, as if a dart had pierced me
(II, XII, 44)

- just as, when Emma fears she has lost Mr. Knightley,

.... It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow,
that Mr. Knightley must marry no-one but herself!
(III, XI, 408)

However, in both novels all turns out well. In each the unexpected change in the heroine's love prospects is heralded by a change in the weather. In Emma, just before the proposal of marriage from Mr. Knightley,

.... the wind changed into a softer quarter; the clouds were carried off; the sun appeared; it was summer again ... Never had the exquisite sight, smell, sensation of nature, tranquil, warm, and brilliant after a storm, been more attractive to her. (III, XII, 424)

The parallel situation in Discipline begins thus:

Spring came; and never, since the first spring adorned Eden, did the season appear so lovely! So soft were its colours, so balmy its breeze, so pure, so peaceful its moonlight ... I shall never forget the delightful coolness of a shower that dimpled the calm lake, as Graham and I sheltered by an old fantastic fir-tree.. No sound was heard but the hush of raindrops, and now and then the distant wailing of the water fowl. (III, XXX, 267-68)

Both writers distance the actual proposal.¹ Jane Austen writes:

.... What did she say? - Just what she ought, of course. A lady always does. - She said enough to show that there need not be despair - and to invite him to say more himself. (III, XIII, 431)

Ellen narrates her proposal as follows:

But hold! I will not tell what he said. If Henry Graham [i.e. Mr. Maitland] for once spoke nonsense, it would ill become me to record it. Nor will I relate my answer, because in truth, I know not what it was. But Graham understood it to mean that I was no longer the arrogant girl whose understanding, dazzled by prosperity was blind to his merit (III, XXX, 284)

And while of Emma we at last read:

.... What had she to wish for? Nothing, but to grow more worthy of him, whose intentions and judgement had been ever so superior to her own. Nothing, but that the lessons of her past folly might teach her humility and circumspection in future (III, XVIII, 475)

- Ellen writes that she is now

.... a humbled creature, thankful to find in his sound mind and steady principle, a support for her acknowledged weakness. (III, XXX, 274)

1. The technique seems to have been quite common in the time. Even Mrs. Opie, while quite ready to wallow in scenes of anguish, and showing no embarrassment at introducing religion, turned away from love scenes, e.g. saying in Valentine's Eve II, V, 137 " why detail a love scene" - and using the same formula in other stories.

There is much, then, that is similar in the basic situation of the two novels: a good hearted but faulty heroine learns self-knowledge and self-control, not easily, but in a series of mistakes, mental struggles, remorse and relapses. Thus one cannot agree that Jane Austen's most obvious contribution to the art of rounded portraiture in the novel

.... is the conception of a heroine with serious defects. Earlier heroines, like Clarissa, had made tragic errors, but in circumstances of extreme pressure. They do not lose thereby their ideal quality. But Emma's errors are caused by ordinary, uncomely faults: lack of consideration for others, a conceited opinion of her own judgement. She is the first of the distinguished line of great faulty heroines in English fiction.¹

Jane Austen's Emma may indeed be the first of the distinguished line of such heroines - but Jane Austen was certainly not the first to conceive of using such a heroine.

The difference between the two novels are, however, far more striking than the similarities, one of the major reasons for this (questions of degree of native ability apart) being seen in the writers' respective views about the novel as a form, wherein there are some similarities and two major differences. For Jane Austen a novel was a work

.... in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language.²

Mrs. Brunton, in a warm defence of the novel at the time when she had just completed Discipline wrote:

.... Why should an epic or tragedy be supposed to hold such an exalted place in composition, while a novel is almost a nickname for a book? Does not a novel admit of as noble sentiments - as lively description - as natural character - as perfect unity of action? ... I protest, I think a fiction containing a just representation of human beings and of their actions - a connected, interesting and probable story, conducting to a useful and impressive moral lesson - might be one of the greatest efforts of human genius.³

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1. Douglas Jefferson, Jane Austen's Emma, 59. The heroine of Amelia Opie's Temper (1812) is also faulty.
 2. Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, I, V, 38.
 3. A. Brunton, op. cit., 37. (Letter to Mrs. Izett, 15.8.1814).

Mary Brunton, one notes, does not comment on the language of the novel - but her definition contains an oppressive insistence on "a useful and impressive moral lesson." Yet she had become very aware of the lack of artistry in a too overt didacticism. She herself had been one of the severest critics of Self-Control, writing to her brother:

.... Even I think Self-Control in print a far worse performance than Self-Control in manuscript.¹

Shortly after writing it, one of her main regrets was that the plot lacked unity:

.... The incidents were inserted as they happened to occur to my mind, and were joined in the best way I could to those that went before and after.²

Before beginning Discipline however, she realised that the novel suffered from too much "unity" of another kind, that which made everything work too obviously to a moral end, and this she resolved to avoid in her new novel, saying in her preface:

.... Though that constant attention to unity of design may be relaxed in the present work, which perhaps encumbered the former by forcing every character to serve either as illustration or contrast, it is hoped that the main purpose is never entirely forsaken.³

The didacticism is, in fact, much less strident than it had been in Self-Control, but the moral purpose is still too obvious: the subtlety of Jane Austen in this respect was beyond her.

The same is true of her handling of the plot. She had discussed the improbabilities in Self-Control with Joanna Baillie,⁴ and, still dwelling

1. A. Brunton, op. cit., 35 (Letter to her brother, 9.9.1815).

2. A. Brunton, op. cit., 22 and 25. Thus there are such unnecessary episodes as that of Laura's efforts to effect a reconciliation between Lady Pelham and her daughter, a sketch of the Dawkins family, with whom Laura lodges for a time, and an account of the love affair of the hero's sister - all of which have little, if anything, to do with plot or theme.

3. Preface to Discipline, vi.

4. A. Brunton, op. cit., 22-23.

on the subject, she wrote to her brother, just before Discipline was finished, that she had a very different heroine:

.... No fear of the falls of Niagara! Ellen is too common-place a person for such achievements.¹

Despite her good intentions, however, while Jane Austen had the courage to situate her heroine in a country village, never remove her from it, and never place her in a more dramatic situation than any of her readers might have encountered any day,² Mary Brunton, just as she could not quite let go of the idea of the "moral lesson", was unable to imagine holding her audience without resort to trials and tribulations which, while by no means incredible, are fortunately out of the ken of most people, and to the use of improbable coincidences in order to underline her moral points and to enable her story to come to a happy conclusion. Thus the plot of Discipline includes the following devices, of varying degrees of sensationalism:

1. a masked ball (discussed above, p. 189) at which Lord Frederick de Burgh attempts to abduct Ellen - an attempt from which she is saved by a mysterious stranger. (This is a striking example of the contrast between Emma and Discipline. As a result of foolishness and self-will, both Emma and Ellen are mortified by receiving unwelcome proposals - but Emma's is from the vicar, after a party which all her family had attended - a far cry from a society ball, an abduction attempt, and a masked stranger uttering warnings);
2. a sequence in which, in a temper with her father, and in pique at the slights of Lord Frederick's sister, Ellen agrees to elope with him - but in which coincidentally, on the very day planned for the elopement, Ellen's father goes bankrupt - and in which, even more coincidentally, Lord Frederick hears of this just in time to allow him to jilt her;

1. A Brunton, op. cit., 35.

2. Douglas Jefferson, op. cit., 10, sees in this the essence of Jane Austen's originality.

3. the suicide of Ellen's father, which causes "long and dangerous faintings" (II, XV, 95) - and leaves her in dire poverty;
4. the sudden reversal in attitude to her of her best friend, Juliet.
(Like Emma, Ellen has a friend who is not a good influence on her, but whereas poor Harriet Smith's only fault is a too easy submissiveness to Emma's managing ways, Ellen's friend Juliet is the typical "false friend" of the romances of the period);
5. Ellen's adventures as she tries to make a living as a governess. Here Mary Brunton gives rein to what must have been the latent fear of Jane Fairfax. Though the marital relationship of Ellen's employers is, in fact, very well portrayed, (e.g. in III, XXIII) Ellen's behaviour is incredible, as is that of her mistress to her. Though supposed to be downtrodden, Ellen lectures Mrs. Boswell on her conduct with an arrogance which would not be tolerated in the last quarter of the twentieth century (e.g. III, XXIII, 45-47). Her mistress, however, has her revenge by dispatching her to a lunatic asylum when, as a result of visiting the poor, she contracts smallpox (III, XXIV), the authenticity of the asylum scenes being vouched for in a footnote;¹
6. a coincidental meeting with her old friend Juliet - in very different circumstances from their last meeting, when Juliet abandoned her as being the daughter of a bankrupt. Now Juliet, who has eloped, has been deserted, left with a child and no marriage certificate, and is starving and dying of consumption. The use of this situation, meant not only to give Ellen a chance to show her goodness by caring for Juliet, but also to underline what she might have become had she continued in her old ways, is a painfully obvious device, especially when compared with the subtle juxtaposition of Emma and Mrs. Elton to make a similar point.

1. This is in the 1832 edition p. 383, and did not appear in the first edition. It vouches for the accuracy of the scenes as conditions were twenty years before, thus setting the novel in the 1790's.

7. Ellen's being accidentally "found" and taken up by a family called Graham - which turns out to be the family of Mr. Maitland, who had changed his name on going to live with his mother's family.

There are other events of this kind - but these will perhaps serve to indicate the kind of "interest" which some readers found so lacking in Jane Austen.

A third major difference between Emma and Discipline is in the narrative technique. In Self-Control Mary Brunton had shown that she was capable of letting her readers into the thoughts of her heroine while retaining control herself as narrator. Here, however, as was noted earlier, presumably as part of her technique for keeping sympathy with Ellen, she let Ellen tell her own story - and met the usual problem which this technique involves, in that everything that is good about the heroine has to be told by herself. The reader knows that she is beautiful only because she notes what others say of her, and there is something very unattractive about the way she relates how everyone admires her and repeats conversations in which her beauty is mentioned (e.g. II, XIX, 247). She is, of course, supposed to be vain, but these are occasions when her vanity is not meant to be in evidence. Similarly, when she is a governess, the ecstatic praises of her employer, Mr. Boswell, on her attentions to his sick child (III, XXIII, 52) are too fulsome to be happily recorded by the recipient. Fortunately Ellen is more inclined to dwell on her faults than her virtues, and though her reformation comes half way through the novel, she is shown still struggling with the curse of her pride and vanity till the very end.

Lastly, a fourth marked difference in the treatment of the theme shared by Emma and Discipline is in the fact that Mary Brunton, believing that

.... all the annals of mankind cannot furnish an instance of a permanent improvement in human character effected through any other principle than that to which she has ascribed the reformation of Ellen Percy¹

1. Preface to Discipline, vii-viii.

- again gave her novel a highly pious cast, whereas in Emma there is no obvious religious note. Yet it is surely unlikely that a writer who laid so great a stress on religious principle in a novel of 1814 would ignore it entirely in 1815. Emma, in fact, is careless and thoughtless rather than positively without active principle. As a result, George Knightley is able to say, when she has seen the error of her ways, that he is sure she would eventually have corrected herself, even without his advice (III, XVII, 462). Moreover, when, on one occasion she laughingly says to him, "Does my vain spirit ever tell me I am wrong?", he replies:

"Not your vain spirit, but your serious spirit. - If one leads you wrong, I am sure the other tells you of it."
(III, II, 330)

As with Marianne Dashwood, Emma's faults seem to be being considered in religious terms; expressions like she "did not repent", she "could not repent" "transgression", "true contrition" are used frequently, while even her neglect of her piano practice is given a liturgical flavour - "She did most heartily grieve over the idleness of her childhood" - (II, IX, 231). W.J. Harvey, some years ago, noted "the unobtrusive but insistent use of a religious vocabulary" in the novel, but did not develop the point, noted it only briefly in parenthesis.¹ And unobtrusive it certainly is - so much so that The British Critic praised the novel for not mentioning religion, saying "of fanatical novels and fanatical authoresses, we are already sick."²

Discipline, however, with its stated aims of showing "the necessity and progress of religious principle"³ has such an obtrusive religious content that even Mary Brunton's brother suggested that she had gone too far. Her reply was firm: she told him that while she realised that there was too much religion, perhaps, for good taste, she could not bate one iota:

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1. W.J. Harvey, "The Plot of Emma" in David Lodge ed., Jane Austen: Emma, 233.
 2. BC 6 (July 1816) 98. In Critical Heritage 71.
 3. Preface to Discipline, vi.

.... For the great purpose of the book is to procure admission for the religion of a sound mind and of the Bible, where it cannot find access in any other form.¹

She herself felt that she was losing readers (and money) by writing as she did, and The British Critic, which found the novel "not without some slight tinge of fanaticism" would have agreed with her.² But she did not care - and it is, in fact, likely that the religious element gained her more readers than it lost her; moreover, though to modern readers the pious sentiments may be embarrassing, in comparison with the rather glib references to God and Providence in some other novels of the period, they sound sincere, and an honest attempt to convey Evangelical thought and speech. Ellen has almost to learn a new culture, when she moves from being merely a church-going, lip-service Christian to being what the Evangelicals of the day would have thought of as a truly devout Christian. Her first reaction to Miss Mortimer's piety is to laugh at it, and call her a Methodist, as being one of the harshest terms of reproach she can think of (I, III, 48) - though Miss Mortimer later makes it clear that, while tolerant of other modes of worship, she is a steadfast daughter of the established church, (II, XVII, 178-80).³ In her troubles, Ellen learns to turn to religion for strength and solace, helped by assisting at two "holy deaths" - Miss Mortimer's (II, XVII, 196-99) and that of one of the tenants of the Graham's Scottish estate (III, XXIX, 242-48) - and by witnessing the dreadful fear of death of the non-religious Juliet (III, XXVII). On hearing that she cannot live, Juliet gives way to "the most pitiable anguish" (III, XXVI, 165) while in complete contrast, the dying Miss Mortimer, told that it would do her good to get out into the sunshine replies:

1. A. Brunton, op. cit., 39 (Letter of April 21st, 1815).

2. BC n.s. 4 (December 1815) 672.

3. Cf. Amelia Opie's Valentine's Eve, in which the heroine is accused of being a Methodist, and Mrs. Opie takes pains to point out that she is an orthodox Anglican.

"Ay, he is shining brightly ... And a better sun too is gladdening all earth and heaven; but I, confined in a low cottage, see only the faint reflection of his brightness. But I know that He is shining gloriously", continued she, the flush of rapture mounting to her face, "and I shall yet see Him, and rejoice!" (II, XII, 8).

The only actual "sermon" is in a letter of advice from Miss Mortimer to Ellen, but there are frequent passages like the following, which, perhaps because they are mingled with events of such improbability, unavoidably give the novel an air of religiosity:

.... While I saw the truths of religion affect the vigorous mind of Maitland - while I saw them triumph in a feebler soul over pain, and loneliness and fear, - how could I remain wholly insensible to their power? - Whilst I listened to these Christians, how could I suppress a wish that their comforts might one day be mine? "Pray for me", I whispered to Miss Mortimer, half-desirous, half-afraid to extend my petition to Maitland, "pray for me, that, when I am sick and dying, your God may bless me, as he now blesses you." (II, XII, 14)

At first such moods are transient:

.... My religious humour vanished with the scene by which it was excited (II, XII, 15)

- but eventually she succeeds in emulating her Christian friends, and in all times of stress is found commending herself to God - as when she and Juliet are destitute, and prayer providentially provides a lodging (III, XXVI, 133).

What Mary Brunton was trying to do, with all this, was to trace the steps by which Ellen learned "active principle" - and, since no one would attempt to rank her as a novelist with Jane Austen, it seems only just to give her credit where this is due. Robert Colby has noted of her, for example, that though she "had a sound enough idea of the Christian Heroine," unlike her, "Jane Austen could show how such a character is formed."¹ On the contrary, however, one of the problems of Mansfield Park (the novel to which he refers) is why Fanny (and Edmund) should have developed so much

1. Robert Colby, op. cit., 95.

better than Tom, Maria and Julia Bertram - since Fanny's subordinate position could just as easily have made her mean-minded. And even with Emma, where the heroine's learning process certainly is traced, it is possible to agree with Wayne Booth that while Jane Austen "goes relatively deeply morally" she "scarcely skins the surface psychologically".¹ This is not in any way to belittle Jane Austen's achievement, for in all her novels she portrays not just a heroine (as does Mary Brunton) and not chiefly a society (as does Lady Morgan) but a heroine in a society.² Nevertheless, despite Mary Brunton's weaknesses as a novelist, there is that which commands respect in the effort, at a time when this was relatively new, to produce complex psychological characterisation; and though her work is often linked to that of Hannah More (whose Coelebs she had read)³ she was, in fact, in her psychological approach to character and her comparatively sparing use of "instructional conversation" doing something very different and in the long run much more influential.

It is very likely, however, that she was not even aware of any originality in the portrayal of her heroine. What she had intended to be new in this novel (apart from the continuing novelty of the religious basis) was her portrayal of Highland life and scenery. In her husband's words:

.... A part of the book from which she herself received very great pleasure in the composition, and from which she anticipated with most confidence its popularity, was the sketch of Highland manners in the third volume. She had been delighted with the pictures of Irish character which Miss Edgeworth has drawn so skilfully. The little which she had seen of the Highlands convinced her that materials for a similar attempt might be found there of not inferior interest. She was anxious in her enquiries; and eager in giving form to the information which she gained.⁴

1. Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, 163.

2. Cf. Marilyn Butler (Jane Austen and the War of Ideas 228) who says of Mansfield Park that there Jane Austen "gives her external world a solidity and scale which eventually belittles individual characters."

3. In the Advertisement to the third edition, vi, she acknowledged that Hargrave's list of things he will do to show his reformation (Self Control I, VI, 88-89) was a borrowing from Coelebs, calling it "a work of great and deserved celebrity."

4. A. Brunton, op. cit., 30.

Mary Brunton realised that Mrs. Hamilton had written of Scottish village life in her Cottagers of Glenburnie (1808) but thought this to be different from her venture, since it was about a part of Scotland

.... where Highland peculiarities [had] yielded to constant intercourse with strangers.¹

However, when she had almost finished her novel, Waverley was published. Guessing that Scott² was the author, and recognising that its portrayal of the Highlands was so much better than her own, she felt she must excise her Highlands sequence. Her husband was much more astute:

.... I endeavoured to convince her that the bias which Waverley would give to the public taste might rather prove favourable to her plan; that public curiosity would be roused by what the great master had done; that the sketches of a different observer, finished in a very different style, and taken from entirely a different point of view, would only be the more attractive, because attention had previously been directed to their subject.³

The sequence is indeed individual, and not at all like Waverley, interesting in its own way, and written with warmth and apparent understanding. She had already noted the great ignorance about Scotland in an amusing chapter in Self-Control when the married daughter of Laura's London landlady expresses surprise to find that she comes from the Highlands:

"Mercy upon me," cried she, "can you make [out] that outlandish spluttering so that them savages can know what you says? ... And do them there wild men make you wear them little red and green petticoats?"
(I, XIII, 221) .

Ellen herself, when she reaches the Highlands with the Grahams, at first expects the people she meets there to be "savages" (III, XXIX, 242) though she has, to some extent, been prepared for this not to be so, by her accidental meeting in Edinburgh with one of the Graham tenants, Cecil Graham.

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1. Preface to Discipline, viii.
 2. A. Brunton, op. cit., 38.
 3. A. Brunton, op. cit., 33.

Conversations with Cecil quite naturally extend the actual portrait of the Highlands, and indicate clearly differences in attitudes and customs. Ellen meets Cecil, for instance, at a "rouping" (II, XX, 258-63) when all her few possessions are being sold, and finds that the one that she most regrets losing is her winding sheet. By making Ellen purchase this for her, Mary Brunton not only shows her generosity, but provides her with a friend who tells her tales of cattle stealing (II, XXI, 286-93), marriage customs (III, XXII, 21-23), Highland pride, Highland honour, and Highland loyalty. A note of authenticity is supplied by Cecil's use of dialect and Gaelic words, copious explanatory notes being provided for the English reader. Later, when Ellen herself goes to the Highlands, there is a vivid description of a Scottish inn (III, XXVIII, 198-203) of Glen Eredine, where the Grahams live (III, XXVIII, 212-15), of the lives and homes of the tenants (e.g. III, XXIX, 240-41), and of festivities like a harvest party (III, XXIX, 226-7).

It would be disproportionate to make too much of this, for the Highlands scenes make up less than one eighth of the novel, and not one third, as Lucien Leclaire has maintained.¹ Nevertheless, coming at a time of what Mrs. Elwood called "Scotch fever"² there can be little doubt that they added to the novel's success. The British Review later confirmed that

.... Such sketches were at the time a totally new feature in works of fiction³

- a point supported by Maria Edgeworth's comment about Waverley:

.... the novelty of the Highland world which it discovered to our view powerfully excites curiosity and interest it is all new to us⁴

and though The Anti-Jacobin Review, which liked Discipline as a whole, found the descriptions of Highland manners "tiresome", this was a minority view.

1. Lucien Leclaire, Le roman régionaliste dans les Îles Britanniques, 26.

2. Anne K. Elwood, Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England II, 220.

3. BR 14 (November 1819) 489.

4. Augustus J. Hare ed., Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth, I, 227.

The Monthly Review picked them out for special mention, and The British Critic found them "original" and believed that they could not fail to interest.¹

Discipline was as popular as Self-Control, many probably sharing Susan Ferrier's view of it as

.... one of the very few novels ... fit for family use?²

Mrs. Hamilton wrote of it:

.... Let no one say that imagination does not operate on this side the Tweed! What do you think of "Discipline"? - of "Waverley"? - of "Guy Mannering"? Are they not all excellent in their way?³

For four years, however, Mary Brunton published no other novel. Yet this was possibly because she now looked on herself more seriously as a novelist. Certainly during this period she wrote:

.... An author can no more invent who is not "i' the vein," than a painter could draw a straight line whose hand was in the tremor of an ague fit. To tell me I am idle is only Pharaoh's call for bricks without straw.⁴

In these years she became even more concerned with the craft of novel writing, in a letter of January 17th, 1818, for instance, discussing with her friend, Mrs. Balfour aspects of the art of Defoe and Scott. At this time she was collecting material for a novel which was to have a very Scottish flavour, and asked Mrs. Balfour to save for her any

.... anecdote - superstition - proverb - or provincial expression, which at all marks the peculiarities of character, or the state of society in our country.⁵

However, it was not a carefully documented novel set in Scotland which she left unfinished when she died, eleven months later, but one further illustrating her ability to put herself into the minds and situations of

1. AJR 48 (January 1815) 30; MR n.s. 78 (December 1815) 400; BC n.s. 4 (December 1815) 673.

2. Cited by Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and her Art, 52.

3. Edith O. Benger, Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton, II, 186.

4. A. Brunton, op. cit., 34.

5. A. Brunton, op. cit., 44.

others, in which, though the setting is well indicated, the geographical placing of the characters is unimportant.

This fragment of a novel, which she called Emmeline, illustrates clearly how far she had matured as an artist since Self-Control.¹ Though it still has an explicit aim, this time to show

.... how little chance there is of happiness when the divorced wife marries her seducer²

- she was now working without stridently calling religion to her aid³ and without having recourse to a single melodramatic or even slightly improbable incident.⁴ The theme of the foolish woman seduced from virtue was common enough - but Emmeline, whose portrayal The British Critic regarded as "quite new in fiction"⁵ is not frivolous, foolish, basically immoral or infected (like Amelia Opie's Adeline Mowbray) with "progressive" ideas. Nor is her seducer any kind of a villain. A man with a deep sense of responsibility to those who need his protection, de Clifford (names were not a strong point with Mrs. Brunton!) loves Emmeline with "fond and fervent love" (I, 6) as she does him. But, starting on the day of their marriage, Mary Brunton quietly but inexorably lays bare the erosion of his very real love for her, as he gradually realises how his whole domestic and social life has been affected by his action. One who regards himself as an honourable man, he has to contend with feelings of guilt towards Emmeline's deceived husband - exacerbated when the latter, a perfectly respectable man, but one Emmeline could not love, returns (by letter, since he never appears in person) both the dowry he received when he married Emmeline, and the money he received in

1. BC n.s. 13 (February 1820) in an extremely favourable review of Emmeline commented (p. 167) on the difference in achievement between this and her first work.

2. A. Brunton, op. cit., 41.

3. The characters go to church, but the occasion is treated in its social rather than its religious aspect. Thus the effect is more like that used by Jane Austen in Emma; the technique of self-examination, and the portrayal of internal conflict remain, while the openly religious content disappears.

4. BC n.s. 13 (February 1820) quoted extracts from the novel, saying "The first praise of all these extracts is that they exhibit a portrait of what, in such cases, is the unaffected truth" (172) and praising the novel for "the absence of heightened colouring."

5. BC n.s. 13 (February 1820) 168.

damages on the occasion of the divorce. Emmeline is, from the first, gnawed by regrets for her children, whom she may never see again. Nevertheless the way in which the couple try to be lighthearted and happy together is well conveyed. It is by slight degrees and slight incidents that their relationship deteriorates: he misses his mother and sister, who will not receive Emmeline; his house is not run so well, because she has not enough confidence in herself to be firm with the servants, who have no respect for her; he misses the company of those in the neighbourhood who used to visit - and gradually begins to accept invitations made to him, which exclude her - yet feels guilty at leaving her. Thus his emotions swing between pity and love for Emmeline, and guilt and irritation at his situation and her lack of her former spirits; and while he begins to regret not having foreseen the consequences of his relationship with her, he curses the prudery of those who despise her. At times his irritation makes him speak sharply to her, bringing tears to her eyes - but he too at times feels despair. The constant attempts to be cheerful, to find things to do, the hopes that the situation will improve, lift the novel from an improbable Wertherian gloom; the atmosphere is rather one of gentle sadness. By using third person narrative, Mrs. Brunton is able to let the reader into the minds of both characters (on whom attention is almost claustrophobically focused) while herself being able to indicate the feelings of the neighbours and villagers.

Painful though it is, a quite credible social ostracism is the worst that happens to Emmeline (apart from the erosion of her husband's love) and even the ostracism is muted; she is never openly insulted, and the curiosity and contempt of the villagers is not exaggerated or (more importantly) presented as right or wrong - it just exists. It is reasonably clear from external evidence that Mary Brunton must have deplored the action of Emmeline in putting love for de Clifford before her duty to her first husband and her children; yet so immersed did she become in her creations, that it is sympathy

and understanding, rather than condemnation that is induced for the heroine and her husband. By making the couple so ordinary, and their lives so ordinary, she made the situation absolutely credible. Every distress they suffer is the result of their own actions, and since, basically, they are neither better nor worse, more or less foolish, then the average reader would feel himself to be, the situation is all the more telling. Though it is still possible to view Emmeline as a novel with a purpose (which is how the early nineteenth century saw it) it transcends its purpose, enabling the reader to enter into the experiences and feelings of the characters concerned. Its weakness lies in that Mary Brunton still had not learned completely to avoid "novel language" - though one cannot but feel that, had she lived, this was a fault she would have overcome.

Though only a fragment, Emmeline was reviewed as though it had been a completed novel, and was very well received, being praised for its "few and simple incidents", its "unaffected truth" and for the conception of the heroine.¹ At this time Mrs. Brunton's place in literary history seemed assured, her career, though brief, being regarded as "brilliant".² However, though the 1860 edition of Chamber's Cyclopaedia of English Literature still noted her works as of "superior merit"³, and though they continued to be published well into the middle of the century (still appearing on Mudie's lists

1. e.g. ER n.s. 12 (October 1819) 327-335; BC n.s. 13 (February 1820) 166-174; AJR 56 (July 1819) 401-407. BEM 5 (May 1819) 183-192 seems to have presented a minority view in, while praising Mary Brunton herself, finding the idea of writing about an adulteress appalling.

2. BR 14 (November 1819) 485. Cf. also ER n.s. 12 (October 1819) 329; "Of the excellence of Mrs. Brunton's design, and of the talent displayed in its execution, no difference of opinion, probably, now exists."

3. 1860 edition 466.

in 1884),¹ as early as 1843, seen in the light of the novels of the 1840's more perceptive critics were judging her performance to have been "creditable but not first rate."² By 1903 Chamber's Cyclopaedia had reduced the length of its extract on her, and omitted the comment noted above - and praise during the twentieth century has been limited to an occasional reference to such aspects as the "deft sketches of manners" in Discipline or the "promise of better things" in Emmeline.³

And, seen in the total context of later nineteenth and twentieth century literature, Mary Brunton's novels are, indeed, very minor - flawed and outdated. Yet they belong to a class of very significant minor works - those on which writers of greater talent are able to build. Though she was motivated first by the purely didactic aim of showing the value of religious principle in facing the decisions of life, her awareness of the need to show the difficulties involved in adherence to such principle, combined with her sensitive understanding of human motivation and human frailty, resulted in a quite penetrating psychological approach to characterisation which was her contribution to the development of the novel.

1. R. Colby, op. cit., 320

2. Anne K. Elwood, op. cit., 223.

3. Maurice Lindsay, History of Scottish Literature 323; John Millar, A Literary History of Scotland 542.

VI

Jane Porter 1776-1850

While Mary Brunton was merely able to admire Hannah More, two other, even more popular, writers of the early nineteenth century, the sisters Jane and Anna Maria Porter¹, were actually moving in the same cultured circle as she, and able to call her friend, and their veneration for her suggests that she might have had no small influence on their decision to use their talents as novelists actively to project Christian ideals. When, for example, Jane wrote to her in 1815, congratulating her on the change of tone which had occurred in society, she spoke of the way things had been twenty years earlier; and credited her friend with having been largely responsible for it:

.... The poor were in profligate ignorance - the rich in presumptuous apostasy. I cannot give the latter a milder name; for I remember that about that period (then a very young person) I burst into tears at a large table after dinner from horror and pity of some persons present, who were scoffing at religion, without a reprimand from any one. Such conduct now would not be tolerated a moment in any company; and the one I speak of, was then what was called a most respectable circle. You were then, dearest Madam, 'sowing seeds in the Lord's vineyard'. And the pious Mr. Raikes of Gloucester was "bringing little children unto Christ" by the opening of Sunday schools. From you and from him, under heaven, I date the regeneration of the people of this country.²

As has already been noted, Hannah More and Wilberforce saw no objection to novels of the right kind; indeed, Ian Bradley has pointed out that it was an Evangelical tactic to encourage stories which would illustrate by practical example "the noblest type of manhood and the truest Christian devotion", this being seen as one of the most powerful ways of influencing people's behaviour.³ It was just this, then, that the Porter sisters tried to do in their novels, though because they came to choose their examples of Christian

1. See Biographical Appendix.

2. William Roberts, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More, III, 432.

3. Ian Bradley, The Call to Seriousness, 146; 182-3.

nobility from the past, it is as historical, rather than as Evangelical, novelists, that they have usually been regarded. Of novels, Jane wrote:

..... our young hearts told us, that youth will always seek such amusement; therefore we held it no waste of time to take possession of some part of the vantage ground, and fill it to the extent of our humble abilities, with the best lessons our inculcated principles, and growing observations, might produce

- and, at another time, she is reported to have said

.... when we began to write for publication, we regarded our works not as a pastime for ourselves, or a mere amusement for others, but as the use to be made of an entrusted talent 'given to us for a purpose': and for every word we set down in our pages we believed we must be responsible to Heaven and to our Country.¹

This, of course was the kind of assertion made by many novelists of the period, sometimes sincerely, sometimes not; but the novels of the Porters differ from ordinary "novels-with-a-moral-purpose" by their deeply pious cast, largely, though by no means entirely, produced by frequent references to Heaven and God, the latter almost invariably being referred to by means of periphrasis. Expressions like "Searcher and trier of hearts" and "the Eternal", have already been quoted in passages from the work of Mrs. Opie and Mrs. Hamilton, but they used them very sparingly compared with the Porter sisters, who showed a quite extraordinary ingenuity in finding variants to avoid monotony: that powerful Being, the Divine Lord, the Greatest and Best of Beings, that Indulgent Being, the One Perfect Being, Lord of Battles, Omnipotent Virtue, Righteous Judge of Heaven and Earth, a Superior Being, the Great Author of Universal Harmony, Power Above, the Supreme of Heaven, All-Wise Dispenser of the fates of men, the Omniscient Eye, the Lord of Life, the Teacher of All Hearts, the Lord of All Things,

1. Introduction to the 1832 edition of The Pastor's Fire-side (in 1845 edition p. xiii) and Anne Elwood, Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England, II, 291-2. See also "Postscript to a Subsequent Edition" of The Scottish Chiefs, quoted in 1831 edition xxix. Despite this, the Porters saw themselves as historical novelists, not realising that their Evangelical purpose would vitiate their attempts to write historical novels, as will be discussed below.

Almighty Guardian, Almighty Captain, Almighty Being, Almighty Purity, Giver of all Good, Gracious Power, Spirit of Heaven, Almighty Pardoner, Power of Heaven, Power of Goodness, that Holy Being, Protector of the Just, the only True and Just, Power of Mercy, Power of Justice, Divine Master - these by no means exhaust the list.

Glib references to the Almighty, however, were only too easily inserted in their work by novelists who had no real religious concern, so that it is in their stress on Christian attitudes and values in their major characters that the Porters show themselves to have been wholehearted in their piety - whatever their weaknesses as novelists. And, interestingly, we find more frequent overt religious reference as the Evangelical movement gained force. It is not nearly so obvious, for example, in Jane's first novel of 1803, Thaddeus of Warsaw, as it is in her second of 1810 - and in neither is it so obvious as in later work.

Even so, Thaddeus is a tale of an exemplary Christian life - though with an element which in its day, must have given it the interest of novelty. Wanting to show a character whose principles remained steady through changing circumstances, one with "magnanimity" or greatness of soul (later to be called "true nobility") she decided to make her hero an exiled Polish aristocrat.¹ In doing so, she was using a very topical political situation, for in 1792, Catherine of Russia, regarding Poland as becoming too liberal, had ordered it to be invaded. Events had been followed with sympathetic interest in England, and when, in 1795, resistance was overwhelmed, and Poland partitioned between Russia, Austria and Prussia, London had given asylum to many refugees. Thus Jane, in Thaddeus of Warsaw based her hero partly on a real hero of the Polish struggle, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, tracing his life from riches to poverty

1. Preface to first edition, printed in second edition p. xii. All quotations are from the second edition of 1804 (4 volumes).

in England and demonstrating him showing a virtue little short of saintly, whatever his circumstances.¹

For the modern reader, indeed, Thaddeus holds little interest, since he is so obviously a model rather than a living being, and it is one of the women who love him who is the most credible character in the novel. Having been educated only in materialistic values, Lady Sara Roos had been led thoughtlessly into a loveless marriage - and is overwhelmed to find herself in love with Thaddeus. She, as Maria Bertram was to do some years later, represents a product of the kind of upbringing the Evangelicals deplored - and the accents of Mrs. More sound quite clearly through the following passage of comment on the failure of Sara's religious education:

.... though she sometimes went to church, [she] repeated the prayers without being conscious of their spirit; and, when the coughing, sneezing, and blowing of noses, which commonly accompanies the text, had subsided, she generally called up the remembrance of the last ball, or an anticipation of the next assembly, to amuse herself until the prosing business was over. From church she drove to the park, where bowling round the ring, or sauntering in the gardens, she soon forgot that there existed in the universe a Power of higher consequence to please than her own vanity, and the admiration of the spectators ... She had no conception, or at best a faint one, that a breach of the marriage vow could be an outrage on the laws of Heaven. The word Sin has been gradually banished the oligarchy of fashion[sic] ... Thus, religion being driven from the haunts of the great, pagan morality is raised from that prostration, where, Dagon-like it fell at the feet of the Scriptures, and is again erected as the idol of adoration. Guilt against heaven fades before the decrees of man (III, II, 37-40)

This is heavily didactic, with attention being drawn from Sara to the fashionable world in general; nor is this all, for there follows a denunciation of the "new philosophy", and of the idea that by reason alone man can control his actions, without recourse to the laws of God. However, such writing is alternated with dramatic scenes such as that when Sara, learning that her

1. The experiences of Thaddeus in London were based on those of the artist, John Sell Cotman, whom Jane had met through her brother.

sailor husband is coming home, begs Thaddeus to become her protector:

Thaddeus felt his hand wet with her tears ... Her hat being off, gave a loose to her long black hair, which falling in masses over her shoulders and eyes, gave such additional wildness to the imploring and frantic expression of those eyes, as distracted his soul

.... "I want no ... friends but yourself. Give me your home and your arms, ... and beggary would be paradise."

Thaddeus felt a dimness spread over his eyes. So much loveliness, such love, such disinterestedness, for a moment obliterated every other impression on his heart; but, recovering himself in an instant, he tore himself from her clinging arms (III, VI, 157-161)

Sara seems to have attracted little notice, however - it was the almost unbearably righteous hero who commanded attention. Indeed, it has been said that it was because of his admiration for Thaddeus that Shelley took lodgings in Poland Street after he had been sent down from Oxford in 1811.¹ Thaddeus of Warsaw, in fact, seems to have been the book of the year in 1803 - the year in which Jane Austen waited in vain for news of the publication of her Northanger Abbey (then called Susan). According to one contemporary, publication of the novel made the society not only of Jane, but of her sister and brother Robert, "sought for by all who aimed at a reputation for taste and talent."² The Imperial Review referred to it as "a work of genius" while The Monthly Review praised it for inculcating "virtuous and magnanimous sentiments." Eleven years later it seems to have been just as popular, for Carlyle wrote to his friend Robert Mitchell in 1814:

.... Firmly had I resolved, on ... your recommendation, to read Thaddeus, and you may believe me when I declare that it was not for want of exertion on my part that I have not seen it yet. The truth is, I am acquainted only in one circulating library, and there Thaddeus has always been "out" ... However I will have read it if possible before I address you again}

Acquiring also a European reputation, Thaddeus had gone into at least twenty-five English editions by the eighteen-eighties.

1. R. Ingpen and W.E. Peck eds., The Works of P.B. Shelley, Vol. VIII, 59. Letter of March 29 1811.

2. Anna M. Hall, Pilgrimages to English Shrines, 427.

3. IR 1 (February 1804) 309; MR n.s. 43 (February 1804) 214. Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle ed. Charles R. Saunders and K.J. Fielding Vol. I p.9. Letter of 30.4.1814.

It was not the portrayal of the hero alone, however, which made the novel such a success: high minded heroes, while popular, were not so uncommon as to cause the sensation Thaddeus did. Much of the interest centred in fact, on the strong documentary element in the first part of the novel, the attempt to recreate events of great interest which had actually occurred - and in a foreign country at that. That the technique was certainly new seems evidenced not only by the sensation the novel caused, but also from the fact that, having completed it, Jane Porter seems, quite naturally, to have become nervous about its reception, and claimed that she had written it as she had, because she had no intention of seeking publication - a statement which must be taken with a grain of salt, since the family friend she had asked to read it was the publisher Owen Rees. According to her own account, when he suggested publishing the novel:

.... I argued, in opposition to the wish, its different construction to all other novels or romances which had gone before it: from Richardson's time-honoured domestic novels, to the penetrating feeling in similar scenes by the pen of Henry MacKenzie; and again, Charlotte Smith's more recent, elegant, but very sentimental love stories. But the most formidable of all were the wildly interesting romances of Anne [sic] Radcliffe, whose indeed magical wand of wonders and mysteries was then the ruling style of the day. I urged, how could anyone expect that the admiring readers of such works could consider my simply told biographical legend of Polands [sic] any thing better than a dull union between real history and a matter-of-fact imagination?¹

When she eventually was persuaded to publish, she still felt so uncertain of her novel's reception that she apologised to her readers for the lack of interest of the first volume, asking them to bear with it for the light it threw on the hero's character; and telling them they need not "be alarmed at its battles; they are neither frequent, nor do they last long"²

1. Preface to 1831 edition xi.

2. Preface to first edition, printed in second edition xiv.

She need not have worried. Not only was Thaddeus in tune with the great sympathy of the age for nationalism, the political intrigue and military campaigning of the first volume provided exciting incident and intellectual respectability at the same time. Contemporaries found the recording of Polish life authentic - so much so that General Gardiner who had been British Minister in Warsaw during the period covered by the novel, is reported to have been astonished that he had not known that Jane Porter was also in Warsaw at the time, since he would not believe that any other than an eye-witness could have described what she had done.¹ Even Kosciusko himself, a participant in the events described, was so delighted with the book that he wrote to the authoress to thank her,² and a relative of his sent her a ring containing his portrait.

It seems, therefore, rather odd, since the novel had an almost contemporary setting, that from the first it was usually called a "historical" novel. Jane herself referred to it as the first of a class of novels which

.... uniting the personages and facts of real history or biography, with a combining and illustrative machinery of the imagination, formed a new species of writing in that day.³

Crabb Robinson, however, while admiring the novel greatly, and judging Jane Porter to be "infinitely superior to Miss Edgeworth in her conception of a story" was astute enough to see that it was certainly not

..... an historical romance in anticipation of Walter Scott, as Miss Porter would willingly think.... It is a novel, after all, turning on personal passions and not depending either on national or public events.⁴

This was to be true of all her novels, even when she did turn to settings which were far enough in the past to be accepted unquestionably as historical,

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1. Preface to 1831 edition xiii.
 2. Preface to 1831 edition xii-xiv.
 3. Preface to 1831 edition viii.
 4. Edith Morley ed., Henry Crabb Robinson on Books & Their Writers, Vol. I, 146, entry for 1.8.1814 and Vol. II, 454, entry for 3.1.1835. He does not, however, seem to have liked Maria's novels - see I, 162.

though her interest in history (like that of her sister) seems to have been genuine enough, and in accord with that of her brother Robert, who was making a name for himself as a painter of historical subjects.

It was some years, however, before Jane's next novel appeared. In the meantime she busied herself in writing a Sketch of the Campaigns of Count Alexander Suwarrow Rymnikski (1804) and collecting in two volumes, and commenting on, the aphorisms of that model Christian soldier Sir Philip Sidney (1807). Meanwhile, calls for the delineation of ideal portraits continued, The Annual Review for example, saying:

.... Heroic delineations, like the star which over-hovered the manger at Bethlehem, attract the steps of the wise toward the throne of perfection¹

and Hugh Murray asserting that fiction's most important role was the exhibition of "examples" of conduct superior to those which are to be met with in ordinary life."² It seems, therefore, to have been a desire to fulfil this function as a novelist, rather than merely to tell a tale from history, which impelled Jane Porter to the writing of The Scottish Chiefs (1810) based on the life of her favourite hero William Wallace. Certainly this is the impression one gets from her own declaration:

.... to inspire the most susceptible period of man's existence, his youth, with the principles which are to be his future staff, - and their effects, his "exceeding great reward," is the motive of my pen.³

Little was known for certain of Wallace's life, but there were certain events which any biographer would have had to introduce, apart from a background explanation of the situation of Scotland in the period, and an account of how Edward I had humiliated the puppet King John Baliol to the point where in 1296 the Scots rebelled and were defeated by the English, all key positions

1. An.R, 3 (1804) 544.

2. Hugh Murray, The Morality of Fiction (1805) quoted by John T. Taylor in Early Opposition to the English Novel, 92.

3. Postscript to a Subsequent Edition (to the first). In 1831 edition xxix.

being given to Englishmen or their supporters. She had to dramatise the events which, according to legend, led to Wallace's emergence as a leader of the Scottish resistance, and highlight some of the major events and battles (such as that at Stirling Bridge) leading up to his proclamation as Guardian of Scotland in 1297. She had to make clear the petty jealousies of many of the Scottish nobles, who resented his success, and show how these contributed to Wallace's defeat at Falkirk in 1298. Then she had somehow to get over a period of seven years, about which little was known of Wallace's movements, to reach the time of his capture and execution in 1305. And in addition she had the tricky task of trying to disentangle the "facts" about his relationship with Robert Bruce.

Whatever her motives, she certainly set about her task very seriously. For her novel, she said, she consulted almost every writer extant who could give her information about her subject. Blind Harry, Barbour, Holinshead, Buchanan, Spottiswood and Speed are specifically named as among her authorities, but her claim to have consulted "other old British historians" is vouched for by direct quotation in her text.¹ She made no mention, for example, of Walter de Hemingburgh, compiler of one of the most valuable of the medieval Chronicles, yet in The Scottish Chiefs she made Wallace defy the English at Stirling Bridge as follows:

.... "Go" said he, "tell your masters we come not here to treat for pardon, of what we shall never allow to be an offence: We come to assert our rights, to set Scotland free. Till that is effected, all negotiation is vain. Let them advance, they will find us prepared."

(III, I, 6)

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1. See Preface v. She discussed her fascination by the Wallace story in the introduction to the 1831 edition, viii and ix. Authorities acknowledged in footnotes are Blind Harry (Henry the Minstrel), dates uncertain, author of Wallace cc 1470; John Barbour, dates uncertain, author of The Bruce cc 1375; Raphael Holinshead, died c1580 whose Chronicles had just (1807-08) been published in a new edition; George Buchanan, 1506-82, scholar of European reputation and author of Rerum Scoticarum historia (1582); John Spottiswoode, 1565-1639, author of The History of the Church of Scotland (1655); and John Speed, 1552?-1629, author of History of Great Britain ... from Julius Caesar to King James (1611).

- a passage which seems surely to be based on Hemingburgh, who wrote of Wallace as saying:

"Carry back this answer: we have come not for peace, but ready to fight to liberate our kingdom. Let them come on when they wish, and they will find us ready to fight them to their beards."¹

Despite her assertions of historical accuracy, however, she departed from these authorities whenever it pleased her, partly for artistic reasons, partly, one suspects, for commercial reasons, but most importantly for reasons connected with her aim in writing the book, that of providing a model, a Christian hero to whose excellence she hoped her public might aspire.

That she was conscious of being circumscribed in her use of her material by the requirements of the novel as an art form, and particularly by the need to select and focus on key figures and events seems clear: in her preface to the first edition she wrote apologetically:

From the nature of my story more agents have been used in its conduct than I should have adopted had it been a work of mere imagination; for taste would have selected the simplest means of accomplishing the fable; and even here, where the principle could be followed without any extravagant violation of the fact, it has been obeyed. Very few persons wholly imaginary have been introduced
(Preface ix)²

Such attention to art did not go unappreciated, the reviewer of The British Critic noting as a merit that the main fictitious characters introduced "all contribute to the final catastrophe."³

Similarly it seems likely that it was a realisation of the need to focus on key events that led her to omit certain traditional elements of the Wallace

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1. Quoted DNB Vol. XX, 565. de Hemingburgh fl. 1300. He wrote a valuable chronicle of English affairs from the Norman conquest to 1346 - though the chronicle may not be entirely his work. It included copies of original documents.
 2. She seems only to have become aware of this after writing Thaddeus where the last three volumes suffer sadly from lack of focus, particularly as a result of the large number of characters brought in quite late, and the comparatively large number of love affairs in which the reader is expected to take an interest.
 3. BC 37 (March 1811) 250.

story at the beginning of the novel,¹ and to make a major alteration to historical facts at the end. Disregarding all the material in the first five books of what seems to have been one of her major sources, Blind Harry's Wallace, since these merely recount, in picaresque fashion, a series of legendary and almost unconnected skirmishes between Wallace and the English, she chose to begin with the event upon which Wallace enters most histories, his killing of Heselrigge, the Sheriff of Ayr, elaborating on this with fictions of her own and expanding on the motive for the killing, which was only briefly suggested by Blind Harry. According to him, after a skirmish with Heselrigge and his men, Wallace, who was in a small way already carrying on a kind of guerilla warfare with the English, retreated to Cartlane crags, leaving his wife at home; upon which, for no given reason, Heselrigge killed her, causing Wallace to kill him in revenge. The incident is but briefly and unsentimentally recorded:

Quhen Sotheroun saw that chapyt wes Wallace,
Agayne thai turnyt, the woman tuk on cace
Put hir to dede, I can nocht tell yow how;
Off sic mater I may nocht tary now.²

Jane Porter, of course, could not resist the drama and pathos of such a death scene; but in her fictitious fleshing out of the incident she showed some sense of form. Knowing that tradition ascribed the final capture of Wallace to his betrayal by one Sir John Monteith, she introduced him into this introductory episode by making him unwittingly partly responsible for the murder of Wallace's wife (whom she called Marion) while at the same time indicating the driving passion that was to cause him eventually to betray Wallace - his love of money. In the first chapter, Wallace is asked by Monteith to take care of a box. This had been entrusted to Monteith by Lord

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1. This seems a more likely explanation for their omission than her moral purpose, which would merely have caused her to omit any of Harry's references to his sexual exploits and to his killing of prisoners.
 2. Hary's Wallace, M.P. McDiarmid ed., Book VI, lines 191-4, p 114. Though "Hary" seems to have been her main source, she did not hesitate to correct him, e.g. by making one of the prominent characters, de Valence, an Englishman, as he was, and not a Scots traitor, as he is in Hary's Wallace.

Douglas, just before the latter was to be taken to England as a hostage, with instructions that it was to be given for safe keeping to the best man in Scotland, and left unopened till Scotland was freed from English rule.

Monteith is eager to get rid of his responsibility - till Wallace's casually wondering whether the box might contain treasure rouses his interest; and it is through his indiscreet mutterings about "gold" and "a box" that Heselrigge comes to believe that Wallace is in possession of something valuable. Thus, when Wallace (who to this time has been living in peaceful retirement) is forced to kill Heselrigge's nephew in order to save a Scot whom the nephew is attacking, Heselrigge has a double motive for wanting to capture him, and kills Marion in a fit of temper when she refuses to reveal his hiding place.

After this Monteith's appearances are brief, but frequent enough for the reader to remember him, and on at least one occasion he appears in circumstances 'dubious enough to make the reader doubtful of his honesty,¹ so that his betrayal of Wallace at the end seems perfectly in character.

The box, too, which features so largely at the beginning of the novel, though hidden and little remarked on throughout, has its place in the final chapter when, after the battle of Bannockburn, Bruce opens it to find the regalia of Scotland, preserved from Edward I's depredations in 1296.

Having thus organised her mixture of fact (or legend) and pure fiction not only to give a dramatic opening to the novel, but to allow for a sense of pattern and completeness to its form, Jane Porter did not make the mistake of weighing down her story with factual background to the situation, but, having given a minimum at the beginning, introduced most of the necessary material quite skilfully and gradually, largely through conversations between characters, choosing in the first three volumes rather to focus on a limited

1. e.g. he is found in suspicious circumstances among the few English survivors of the burning of the Barns of Ayr, (II, X). His story of how he came there satisfies Wallace, but it does not entirely satisfy the reader.

number of events covering only a few months and intended to bring out salient incidents in Wallace's career, working up to a climax with his acclamation as Guardian of Scotland after the battle of Stirling Bridge. Amid the crescendo of success in these volumes, however, she was careful to prepare the ground for Wallace's later desertion by the majority of the Scottish chiefs, in one scene, for example, (I, XI, 245-51) showing a possible ally hesitating to join him because of fears for himself and his position should he be defeated by the English - a scene which, unlike many of the other sequences (such as that at Stirling Bridge) which follow quite closely available accounts, is quite imaginary, yet is true to history in summing up and dramatising the kind of incident which must in actuality have occurred repeatedly.

In the last two volumes of the novel, however, she was much more cavalier in her treatment of historical fact, and specifically gave the requirements of the novel as her reason, claiming that she had been "obliged to take some liberties with time and circumstance" since her history was "intended to be within the bounds of modern romance and not to rival the folios of Scudery," (Preface x-xi). Once she had got to Wallace's defeat by the English at the battle of Falkirk in 1298 (a point she had reached by the beginning of volume four) she was faced by the fact that she had seven years to cover till his death, years of which there was little reliable record of his activities - and then another nine years till Scotland was liberated by Robert Bruce, the event on which she wished to end. For dramatic effect, therefore, she telescoped time, making Wallace's execution and the battle of Bannockburn occur within weeks of each other, and making both occur only a matter of about a year after Falkirk. With such falsifications of historical fact few would quibble, since they are dramatically justified; even the showing of Bruce and Wallace as the closest of friends after Falkirk, when Bruce, in fact, seems to have been on reasonably good terms with Edward I in the period before Wallace's death, has the poetic justification of Bruce's later taking on the mantle of Wallace.

Alterations to tradition or fact were not, however, made only for such artistic purposes. Wanting a wide audience, she apparently felt that a love interest would be an added attraction, at least for her female readers, and for this purpose introduced three female characters, the heroine pure Helen Mar, her passionate and unscrupulous step-mother, Joanna, and, late in the tale, as a bride for Bruce, Helen's sister, Isabella.¹ All are supremely beautiful: even Joanna, Lady Mar, who is in her middle thirties, is said to look like a girl in her twenties. Helen is "of resplendent beauty" (I, VI, 139) while Isabella is "beautiful as the creation of genius", (V, I, 32-3). Isabella, however, has so small a role that she cannot be regarded as affecting the novel in one way or another. Such is not the case with Helen and Joanna; and, by giving them so much prominence, Jane Porter lost what she had gained on her fairly tight structuring of the traditional Wallace story, and nullified her claim to have made no addition "excepting, where time having made some erasure, a stroke was necessary to fill the space and unite the whole." (Preface vi).

Even in the better, first, half of the novel, the main action is held up while Helen, in her role of persecuted maiden is abducted by a rejected lover, de Soulis. As the action becomes melodramatic, so does the language:

.... Again she struggled, again her cries echoed from side to side of the cavern. - Peace! cried the monster; you cannot escape - you are mine by a force that shall compel you to submit when and where I will. How often have I knelt at your feet, begging for that mercy on my passion which you denied? Twice you refused to be my wife! - you dared to despise my love and my power; - now you shall feel my hatred, and my revenge!"

"Kill me!" cried the distracted Helen; "Kill me and I will bless you!"

"That would be a poor vengeance," cried he: "you must be humbled, proud minion, - you must learn to fawn on me for a

1. Bruce did actually marry an Isabella Mar, but she had died and he had remarried before Wallace's death, whereas in the novel his marriage to her does not take place till just after Wallace's death. Jane Porter vouches in notes for the authenticity of Lady Mar (e.g. to IV, 104 and V, 135). There seems to be no historical justification for the existence of Helen Mar.

smile; to woo, as my slave, for one of those embraces which you spurned to receive as my wife. I will make you feel the tyger in my love! and then, if she will, the dishonoured and despised Lady Helen may die!" As he spoke he strained her to his breast with the contending expressions of passion and revenge glaring in his eyes. Helen shrieked at the pollution of his lips.

(I, XII, 267)

There is a vicarious thrill for the reader at the threat of imminent rape:

.... He opened one of the curtains, and throwing himself along the couch on which lay the exhausted but watchful Helen, he clasped his arms roughly about her and exclaimed - "Sweet minion, I must pillow on your bosom till the morn awakes!" His brutal lips were again rivetted to her cheek.

(I, XIII, 288-9)

It is interesting to note here the effect of the work of the Bowdlers. In 1810, such overtly sexual references were still possible to a highly proper female writer, who could, as was noted earlier, weep at irreligious conversations. By 1831, however, they had been greatly muted. In the two passages quoted above, de Soulis's intentions were made rather less explicit, by the removal from the first of the words "I will make you feel the tyger in my love! and then, if she will, the dishonoured and despised Lady Helen may die!" and by, in the second, de Soulis' being made to throw himself "beside" Helen, rather than "along the couch on which she lay".

It is perhaps needless to say, however, that even in 1810 the chaste Helen was saved from violation at this very moment by the intrepid Wallace, who carried her to safety in a storm over a yawning chasm bridged only by a tree (I, XVI, 295) - a feat which, since it seized the imagination of the illustrator of the Milner edition,¹ must certainly have roused the admiration of the novel's earliest readers - and which, if this was the kind of excitement they required, explains why Jane Austen's heroes roused comparatively little interest in the period.

1. An undated edition - Montague Summers (A Gothic Bibliography) suggests c. 1869. For this edition the expurgated passages noted above were restored.

One abduction and rescue apparently not being enough, in the second half of the novel Helen is seized and taken to France by yet another rejected suitor, and it is in connection with Wallace's second successful rescue mission that improbability after improbability of a different kind occurs. By this time Wallace has met and become allied with Robert Bruce who is also in France, though Wallace does not know where. Now, utterly ignoring the rules of probability, Jane Porter makes Wallace, on landing in France and looking for a house to give shelter to himself and a stranger whom he met when the latter was accidentally hurt, stumble upon the very house where Bruce is staying. Not only this, but the unfortunate stranger is John Balliol, exiled puppet King of Scotland - and, stretching credibility to its limits, Balliol's castle is the very place to which Helen's kidnapper has brought her.

Providing, as the persecuted maiden, one kind of excitement, as the courageous heroine Helen provides another, on one occasion making a dangerous night journey to deliver to her father and Wallace a letter she has found, lying "as if it had been just dropt " (III, XVIII, 399), which reveals a conspiracy against Wallace. This, however, is nothing to her exploit in dressing as a youth and travelling alone to London to be with Wallace in the days before his execution. Every ounce of pathos is dragged out of these scenes in the Tower and out of the concluding scene as Helen dies on Wallace's coffin. Yet the British Critic while noting their fictitious nature, regarded them as "affecting beyond almost any thing that we have read."¹

Helen, in fact, though her presence in the Wallace story seems purely fictitious, has quite a large role to play in the novel. Loving Wallace, but accepting his devotion to his dead wife, she provides a model of female conduct by loving in silence - in obviously complete contrast to her step-mother, whose sensual passion leads to a ludicrous episode in which, disguised

1. BC 37 (March 1811) 254.

as a knight, she fights with Wallace for some time without ever being recognised as a woman¹ (V, I, II and III). It says much about the lack of credibility of the major characters in The Scottish Chiefs that despite this, and her melodramatic behaviour in general, Lady Mar is one of the most believable characters in the novel; unlike so many of the others, her actions are reasonably motivated, her inward struggle is recognised, and, while wicked, she is complex enough to feel remorse. In common with Lady Sara Roos - and so many other female characters of the period, what she lacks is "principle", as a result of a deficient early education. Thus, having, as a young girl, become pregnant and, therefore, having been compelled to make a loveless marriage with a man many years her senior, her chief aim in life has been to restore her respectability and improve, or at least maintain, her social position. Her meeting with Wallace, however, completely unbalances her. For him she feels love for the first time, a consuming passion which she cannot restrain.² Melodramatically, but rather pitifully, she admits to herself her unworthiness of him -

"Oh Wallace! wert thou less excellent I might hope -
but hell is in my heart and heaven in thine."
(IV, IV, 124).

- and, unable to seduce him, she makes a last desperate effort to prove her love by fighting in his army. This failing, she swears vengeance (V, III, 59) and in her fury makes false accusations against him to the other Scottish chiefs. Not being utterly evil, however, she goes insane with grief and remorse when he is taken by the English and executed.

1. There have, of course, been numerous episodes recorded of women successfully passing themselves off as men. Jane Porter herself told of one in her Preface to the 1831 edition of The Scottish Chiefs xv-xix, where she claimed actually to have met such a person. Amelia Opie also claimed to have met a woman, Anna Maria Real, who had lived for long as a sailor (Cecilia Brightwell, Memorials of Amelia Opie 19). Nevertheless it is impossible to visualise the very feminine Lady Mar as a warrior - or to believe that Wallace would not have recognised her.

2. e.g. see II, VII, 162.

Such amatory interest, which titillatingly combines the utter propriety of Helen and Wallace with the lustfulness of de Soulis and Lady Mar, must have added to the contemporary popularity of the novel, but has nothing to do with history, or even much to do with universal human emotions, for the contrast of passion and purity in the characters of Lady Mar and Helen is presented in terms of pure melodrama. The most that can be said in palliation is that at least the romantic plot is subservient to the historical plot, the latter not being used merely as an excuse for a sentimental romance, as was usually only too true of the genre.

What the historical story is used for, however, is, as was noted earlier, to further a moral purpose, to illustrate in Wallace the Christian hero and the nature of true nobility; and it is this, together with the language of the novel (which rings true of no period, but is clearly the novel language of the time at which the book was written) rather than any telescoping of time or addition of romantic interest which prevents The Scottish Chiefs from being in any but the most surface way "historical".

It certainly cannot have been any lack of awareness of the nature of the period of which she was writing which caused Jane Porter to attribute to Wallace his great humanity and tolerance, for from her reading of Blind Harry's Wallace alone, she must have been made aware of the violence and cruelty practised by the Scots as well as by the English. Indeed it was only a few years after the publication of The Scottish Chiefs that John Jamieson said in the introduction to his new edition of Wallace:

.... It cannot be denied that the feelings of the reader are often harrowed up by the coarse description which the Minstrel gives of the warlike deeds of his hero and by the delight which he seems to take in those merciless scenes in which the English were the immediate sufferers. But great allowance must be made for him, not merely from the barbarism of the time in which he wrote, and from his want of such opportunities of refinement as even Barbour enjoyed, but from the soreness which every thorough Scotchman still felt in consequence of the unpardonable treachery, violence

and ferocity of Edward I and of those employed under him ... If the manners of the age do not form a sufficient apology for the cruelty ascribed to Wallace himself; [sic] it should be recollected that Scotland had no other chance of liberation from the usurpation of Edward than by the diminution of the number of the invaders, and that it was impossible for a few partisans to retain prisoners.¹

Though there was, in fact, a modernised and greatly softened version of Blind Harry's Wallace, written in very Augustan style and published in 1721,² which Jane Porter may have used, it is unlikely that she did so: according to David Craig (in a discussion of old Scottish poetry in general) not only were such poems well known in the period, they were most often read in original versions, though not in black-letter.³ Moreover, copious details of Wallace's perhaps necessary ferocity were available in other sources, even those much more favourably inclined to him than Fordun and Bower, who tell how he disciplined his troops by exacting the death penalty for disobedience and hanged burgesses in Aberdeen for refusing to send him conscripts.⁴ She, however, presented her hero as a Christian soldier - somewhat, it would seem, in the style of her admired Sir Philip Sidney.

And in one respect Wallace was certainly an ideal hero for her purpose, since he was fighting for his country's freedom, the only justification the Porters recognised for war. Yet since she had chosen to make the murder of his wife the motivation for his taking up arms, she had to face the fact that she was making him instigated by a spirit of personal vengeance - a passion

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1. John Jamieson ed., The Bruce and The Wallace, Preliminary Remarks vi.
 2. William Hamilton, The History of the Life and Adventures and Heroic Actions of the Renowned Sir William Wallace (1721).
 3. David Craig, Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, 308.
 4. DNB XX 564 and 566. Though Jane Porter did not quote these authorities it is likely that they were among her "other historians."

which she and her sister continually deplored.¹ Having given herself this difficult situation, however, she managed it by making a desire for personal vengeance only the immediate spur, mingling it so quickly with calls to patriotism (I, IV) that the prior motive, even from the beginning, is almost forgotten.

A similar problem occurs, later, however (II, IX; II, X) when, after the murder of a number of Scottish chieftains by the English in the Barns of Ayr, Wallace is made to cry for the very vengeance that he otherwise continually rebukes others for seeking. Here, though he is allowed to explain that his "vengeance" is really the judicial execution of murderers, that is certainly not the effect given by the method chosen of "executing" the English - by burning many of them to death and slaughtering most of those who escaped the fire. In scenes like this it is as if the spirit of the age (and a knowledge of human behaviour) was too strong to have its manifestation entirely suppressed in Wallace.

For most of the time, unfortunately, Jane Porter continued only too successfully to do this, making Wallace voice, however unfitting they might be to his situation, sentiments identical with those of the more modern heroes of other romances by her sister and herself - and to voice them as though he were making a parliamentary speech:

"All warfare that is not defensive is criminal; and he who draws his sword to oppress, or merely to aggrandize, is a murderer and a robber." (III, VIII, 185)

1. According to Ranald Nicholson (Scotland: The Later Middle Ages, 52) English sources support the story that Wallace slew the sheriff of Lanark in revenge for the killing of his wife (or mistress) and that it was after this killing that he emerged as a Scottish leader. Blind Harry, too, though recording him as fighting the English before his wife's death, makes him swear to avenge her death by slaughtering many Southrons - "And for hir saik thair sall x M de." (M.P. McDiarmid ed., Harry's Wallace, Book 6, line 222 p. 115.) In the Porters' novels, the model heroes have no thoughts of revenge for injuries, while a learning hero has to conquer the spirit of vengeance. Wallace's position is thus singular.

Illustrating Wallace practising this principle caused little difficulty, for his refusal of the crown of Scotland (III, IV, 92-8) was a matter of record, while to prove his innocence of any thoughts of oppression, his forays into England (which could not be ignored) were justified by Edward's prior threats to devastate Scotland, (III, XV, 323). However, the desire to provide an exemplary character made Jane Porter go far further than merely providing justification: Wallace's conduct in England is portrayed as merciful in the extreme. Taking only food for his soldiers and the starving Scottish peasantry, refusing to allow destruction of life or property, he declares:

" What justice is there in destroying the habitations and lives of a set of harmless people, because the like cruelty has been committed by a lawless army of their countrymen, upon our unoffending brethren?"
(III, XII, 256-7)

Quite apart from the unnatural formality of the language here, the sentiments lack the ring of authenticity given by Blind Harry's open admission that Wallace and his men usually spared nothing but churches and abbeys. According to him, they

Began at Tweid and spard nocht at thai fand,
Bot brynt befor throuch all Northummyrland.
All Duram toun thai brynt wp in a gleid.
Abbays thai spard and kyrkis quhar thai 3eid.¹

Moreover, Harry's Wallace more often than not killed all his prisoners of war:

Wallace commaundede thai suid na wermen saiff.
Twenty and twa thai stekit in that steid.²

- nor did his killings cause him any revulsion, as is evident from the following account of his behaviour after killing some captured Englishmen:

Thai band thaim fast with wedeis sad and sar,
On bowand treis hangyt thaim rycht thar.
He sparyt nane that abill was to wer;
.....
Quhen this was doyne to thar dyner thai went
Off stuff and wyne that god had to thaim sent.³

1. M.P. McDiarmid ed., op. cit., Book 8, lines 513-516, p. 193.

2. Ibid, Book 4, lines 256-7, pp 55-56.

3. Ibid, Book 3, lines 215-7 and 219-20, p. 40.

John Prebble would agree with this picture, for he says of Wallace:

.... Stories of his relentless lack of mercy towards some of his captives were long disbelieved. They did not fit the conventional pattern of a hero. But the age had little mercy for all men¹

For the Porters, however, mercy and generous treatment of enemy wounded were essential attributes of a Christian soldier, and were to be given to their heroes in whatever age they lived. Thus Jane's Wallace makes a custom of releasing all prisoners who swear never again to take up arms against Scotland - on one occasion not even demanding this promise.²

And, as a crowning attribute of nobility, both Wallace and Bruce are shown to be prepared to die for others. Of Wallace it is stated: "for every son and daughter of that harassed country he was prepared to lay down his life" (IV, XI, 320) - and when, in prison, he is offered life and lands in exchange for betraying Scotland and Bruce, he prefers to die, (V, XIII, 289). Bruce, likewise, hearing that Wallace has been captured, vows to die, if need be, in the attempt to save him (V, VIII, 200).

Of "matchless beauty" (III, XVI, 361), "godlike figure" (III, VIII, 402),³ "noble mein" (IV, VI, 179), with a "divinely modulated voice" (IV, VI, 177), and believing that "virtue alone is true nobility" (II, III, 64), Wallace is indeed, as his friend Edwin says, "the perfect exemplar of all nobleness" (III, V, 126) - and Bruce falls little short of this.

Obviously quite conscious that the attitudes she was giving her hero were not those of his age, that she was not being true to history, Jane Porter made efforts to achieve some degree of authenticity by making them seem strange to many around him. Even the otherwise noble Andrew Murray declares that

1. John Prebble, The Lion in the North, 80.

2. e.g. see II, V, 107; II, VI, 146; II, X, 283; II, XI, 309; II, XII, 345.

3. A note at the end of vol. V (p. 395) vouches for the extraordinary physical and mental superiority of both Bruce and Wallace - and on this occasion history seems to support the portrayal.

"Blood for blood is only justice" (II, IV, 78) and cannot understand why Wallace should be so concerned about burying the enemy dead:

"... leave them where they are, and the eagles of our mountains will soon find them graves." (II, VI, 135-6)

More particularly, however, does she try to represent the spirit of the thirteenth century in Sir Roger Kirkpatrick who, on being asked by Wallace (in a manner very typical of the speech style of the novel):

"Why, brave knight will you ever sully the fair field of your fame with an ensanguined tide?"

replies

"It is the fashion of the time ... you only, my victorious general, have chosen a mode of your own."¹

Then, reminding Wallace of the horrors the English have perpetuated in Scotland, he goes on to ask -

".... why, by this mincing mercy seek to turn your soldiers into women?"

- giving Wallace the chance to sermonise:

"I seek to make them men ... to be aware that they fight with fellow creatures with whom they may one day be friends ... I would neither have my chieftains set examples of cruelty, nor degrade themselves by imitating the barbarities of our enemies."

(III, VI, 140-41)

At least Jane Porter did not make the error of "reforming" Sir Roger: he continues to hate "Southrons" in general, and in particular one of their leaders, Cressingham, who has personally affronted him, and for whose death he lusts:

".... I would rather waste all my life in these solitary wilds and know that at the close of it I should see the blood of Cressingham on these hands, than live a prince and die unrevenged."
(II, I, 17)

1. The very turn of phrase here, so unlikely a reply to the question, suggests that Jane Porter was deliberately trying to show Wallace running counter to "the fashion of the time."

And by retaining his bloodthirstiness she was able, on his eventually meeting—Cressingham, not only to produce one of the gory scenes which, despite their undoubted gentleness and humanity, the Porter sisters were to provide in almost all their novels, but also to use him as a scapegoat for a notorious but historically recorded and well known incident in the Wallace saga. The meeting takes place after the English have been defeated in a vividly described battle at Stirling Bridge. (On the whole, the Porters described battles well, making their accounts surprisingly varied, considering the number contained in the novels). Kirkpatrick, with "glaring eyeballs and uplifted axe" goes in search of his prey, whom he finds, crawling away through the mud. His words and attitude, when Cressingham begs for mercy, are in direct contrast to those given to Wallace in such situations:

"Hell would be my portion did I grant any to thee," cried Kirkpatrick; and with one stroke of his axe he severed his head from his body. "I am a man again!" shouted he, as he held its bleeding veins in his hand, and placed it on the point of his sword. (III, I, 9)

That Cressingham was killed at Stirling Bridge is generally accepted. The interesting point is that Wallace's admirer, Blind Harry, attributes the killing to him:

Wallace on fute a gret scharp sper he bar.
Among the thickest off the press he gais.
On Kercyngaym a strak chosyn he hais
In the byrnes that polyst was full brycht.
The punjeand hed the plattis persyt rycht
Throuch the body stekit him but reskew;¹
Derffly to dede that chyftane was adew.

Since, even in Jane Porter's version of his life, Wallace does kill enemies in battle, there would seem at first to be no point in her altering the "facts" in this incident; but there was, actually, a very good reason, for to the death

1. M.P. McDiarmid ed., Harry's Wallace, Book 7, lines 1194-1200, p. 174. That Kercyngaym (whose name is spelled in a variety of ways in the poem) is Cressingham is clear from other details given about him - e.g. he is Edward's "tresorair" as was Cressingham.

of Cressingham was attached the gruesome story that his body was flayed and leather goods made from his skin, the Chronicle of Lanercost particularly specifying that Wallace made himself a sword belt out of one of the strips.¹ Clearly the saintly Wallace could not be tainted by the least connection with such a deed; therefore, while Kirkpatrick stalks along in fierce joy, with Cressingham's head, dripping blood, on the end of his sword, Wallace is portrayed far differently:

.... all of blood about him seemed to be on his garments;
none was in his eyes; none in his heart but what warmed it
to mercy and to benevolence for all mankind.
(III, I, 11)

And when Kirkpatrick tells him that his kinsmen are skinning Cressingham's body, Wallace rebukes him, urging:

" For your own honour commit no indignities on the
body you have slain." (III, I, 11-12)²

Kirkpatrick, however, shows no remorse, and continues to act in similar fashion to the end of the novel.³ And inasmuch as, despite such deeds, Wallace is still made to refer to him as his "good knight" (II, VI, 147), his "zealous friend" (II, VI, 148) and, even after the Cressingham episode, as his "valiant Kirkpatrick" (V, VIII, 191) one can see Jane Porter recognising the need to indicate the attitudes and values of the period - even herself in narrative referring to Kirkpatrick as "the honest veteran" (V, IV, 83) and showing him valiantly defending Wallace against his recalcitrant nobles (V, IV). But it is Wallace's own anachronistic pronouncements and actions which colour the novel - and, in order to emphasise these, Miss Porter had from time to time to make him, in contradiction to his apparently sincere terms of affection for Kirkpatrick, seem revolted by his behaviour:

1. DNB Vol. XX, 565-6.

2. There is, of course, no such contrast of the two men made in Hary's Wallace.

3. See e.g. V, XVII, 354 (the slaying of John Cummin).

Wallace shuddered at the ferocity with which his colleague contemplated those horrid features of war from which every humane soldier would seek to turn his thoughts, that he might encounter them with the steadiness of a man and not the irresolution of a woman. To hail the field of blood with the fierceness of hatred eager for the slaughter of its victim; to know any joy in combat, but that each contest might render another less necessary; did not enter into the imagination of Wallace until he had heard and seen the infuriate Kirkpatrick.
(II, IV, 68)

And just as the real Wallace's military behaviour is altered, so, too, is his sexual conduct. Blind Harry's Wallace appears to have taken his sexual pleasures lightly, one episode telling with great enthusiasm how his current mistress was bribed to betray him, but regretted her action in time and warned him, so that he managed to escape in women's clothes.¹ Jane Porter, however, transformed Harry's credible medieval chieftain into an early nineteenth century ideal of the tender husband and impeccably chaste and grieving widower. Admittedly he usually mourns in private, after which "resuming the warrior's cheerful look" he returns to his men (II, III, 62); but so often do his thoughts turn in sorrow to his dead Marion² that an unavoidable - and indeed desired - impression of great sensibility is left.

In this respect also, Blind Harry's Wallace is more authentic. Though, rather unexpectedly, he weeps not infrequently (one occasion actually being when he is talking about his dead wife)³ such passages are not characteristic of the tone of the poem, and are usually toughened by the stark language and by sentiments like the vow of vengeance in the following passage⁴ in which Wallace weeps over the body of his friend Graham:

1. M.P. McDiarmid ed., Harry's Wallace, Book 4.

2. e.g. II, VII, 161; III, V, 128; III, XIV, 305.

3. M.P. McDiarmid ed., Harry's Wallace, Book 8 1373-1374, p. 219.

4. A similar view of vengeance occurs in the passage where he weeps over his wife: Off Southeroun syn I can no peté haiff,
Your men in wer I think nevir mor to saiff. (Book 8, lines 1371-3, p. 219).

Quhen thai him fand, and gud Wallace him saw,
 He lychtyt doun and hynt him fra thaim aw,
 In armys vp; behaldand his paill face.
 He kyssyt him and criyt full oft, "Allace!
 "My best brothir in warld that euir I had,
 "My a-fald freynd quhen I was hardest stad,
 "My hop, my heill thow was, in maist honour,
 "My faith, my help, my strenthiast in stour,
 "In the was wyt, fredom and hardines.
 "In the was treuth, manheid and nobilnes.

 "I wow to God that has the warld in wauld,
 "Thi dede sall be to Southeroun full der sauld!
 "Martyr thow art for Scotlandis rycht and me.
 "I sall the wenge, or ellis tharfor to de."¹

Far different is Jane Porter's description of the same scene.² Wallace sinks on his knees by Graham's body:

"And shall I not look once more on that face," said he, "which ever turned towards mine with looks of faith and love?" The shroud was drawn down by his hand. He started on his feet at the sight. The changing touch of death had altered every feature; and deepened the paleness of the bloodless corse into an ashy hue. "Where is the countenance of my friend!" cried he; "where the spirit which once moved in beauty and animating light over this face? Gone; and all I see before me is a mass of moulded clay! Graham! Graham!" cried he, looking upwards, "thou art not here. No more can I recognise my friend in this deserted habitation of thy soul. Thine own proper self, thine immortal spirit, is ascended up above; and there my fond remembrance shall ever seek thee!" Again he knelt; but it was in devotion; a devotion which drew the sting from death, and opened to his view the victory of the Lord of Life over the king of terrors.

(IV, II, 74-75)

The pious note at the end of this extract is of course, an essential characteristic of Jane Porter's Wallace (the religious tone thus given to the novel being increased by the similar pieties of Helen). Blind Harry's Wallace, though conforming to religious practices seems to accept his religion on the necessary occasions without thinking of it much at others, and no one would say of him, as is said of his nineteenth century counterpart :

1. Ibid, Book XI, lines 563-82, Vol. II, p. 58.

2. However she used some of the best parts of the lament over Graham from Blind Harry's Wallace for a later passage of her own, to which she wanted to give more emphasis. This is noted below, p 236.

" and art thou a man and a soldier? Oh! rather say
an angel, lent us here a little while to teach us to live
and die!"
(IV, IV, 124)

As a result of such treatment, Wallace, with his combination of strength, courage, courtesy and piety, emerges as a pious lady's ideal hero, rather than a credible medieval leader, a historical character. The pity is that having, almost by chance, since what she was seeking was a hero not a period, stumbled on the kind of situation Scott could handle so well - a period of conflict and change, in this case with nobles torn between feudal loyalties (and self-interest in their English properties) and nationalism, she was unable, because her interests were elsewhere, to realise it. That she gave Wallace so important a role in Scottish liberation is not in itself necessarily false to the historical truth of the situation, for this is still a point of debate;¹ and she certainly indicated the atmosphere of political turmoil, the way in which the policies of England and France were intertwined, the way in which many Scots nobles were closely tied to the English throne, the jealous suspicions of the Scots leaders of one whom they thought aspired, with no right, to rule Scotland. Moreover, with her willingness to see good in men of all nations (an attitude which she shared with her sister) she was able to look reasonably objectively at the situation, making a special point of presenting some "noble" Englishmen.² (Indeed she is hardest on the Scottish chiefs who failed Wallace.)

However, though all this comes over intellectually, any real feeling of the period (despite the attempts noted earlier to indicate this) does not. Medieval siege machinery (well described in the chapters on the battle at Stirling, II, XII, 341-342), reference to the sand-glass as a means of telling the time, (I, VII, 177), descriptions of dress, and other stage properties, are in the end of little help, and the general impression of life and manners

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1. While Geoffrey Barrow (Robert Bruce 112) believes that the struggle should not be seen in terms of one heroic leader, Ranald Nicholson (Scotland: The Later Middle Ages, 58) supports the view that it was Wallace's personal dominance which was briefly enough to break down traditional feudal ties and that it was he who "inspired a patriotic resistance among the common folk that outlasted defeat".
 2. e.g. Grimsby, Gilbert Hamblendon and the Duke of Gloucester - neatly representatives of three different classes.

is very vague, even of the class within which most of the action takes place. . . . As for the large body of the common folk, represented for the most part by occasional peasants whom Wallace meets, they are given voice only spasmodically, with a chorus-like effect of lament for their woes and praise for Wallace. Moreover, their vocabulary differs not at all from that of their "superiors" - and it jars more than a little to find a servant on Wallace's family estate telling him how, to protect themselves from the English, the poor built "subterraneous dwellings", (III, IX, 234) or a cottar, leaning on his spade, declaring piously of Wallace, in carefully balanced terms:

" Who, like him of all our great captains, took such care of the poor, as to give them, not only the bread that sustaineth the temporal, but that which supports the eternal life?"
(IV, V, 131)

This language is modest, however, compared with that of the major characters - Lady Wallace, waiting anxiously for her husband's return, eyes "blinded with tears" and sighing

"Not yet, not yet! - ah, my Wallace, what evil has betided thee?"
(I, I, 11);

Helen, referring to her possible fate with de Soulis as "worse than death" (I, XIV, 298) and crying "unhand me," (I, XIII, 284) to her captor; his "there my haughty damsel" (I, XII, 270) - or Wallace himself crying

"Intrepid, glorious boy! tell me for what purpose did you thus hazard your precious life?"
(II, IV, 85)

More successful are passages where her attempt to achieve a dramatic effect is not destroyed by her inability to convey speech, as in the following, where the influence of Ossian is obvious:

. . . . The sky was obscured: an awful stillness reigned through the air, and the spirits of the mighty dead seemed leaning from their clouds, to witness this last struggle of their sons. Fate . . . pointed his spear, she wielded his flaming sword, and charged with him in the dreadful shock of battle.
(V, VI, 145-46)

And at times she approached the effects, heroic or tragic that she was seeking as when Wallace faces the Scottish chiefs in Stirling castle and

repudiates a charge of treachery (V, IV), or when, having fought furiously for his life and killed a man with his bare hands, he suddenly loses all will to live, when he sees his young friend Edwin die:

.... He looked round. Edwin lay extended on the ground, with an arrow quivering in his heart: his closing eyes still looked upwards to his friend. The beam fell from the hands of Wallace. He threw himself on his knees beside him. The dying boy pressed his hand to his heart, and dropped his head on his bosom. - Wallace moved not, spoke not

The men, more terrified at this unresisting stillness, than even at the invincible prowess of his arm, stood gazing on him in mute wonder. But Menteith, [sic] in whom the fell appetite of avarice had destroyed every perception of humanity, sent in other ruffians with new thongs to bind Wallace.—They approached him with terror: two of the strongest, stealing behind him, and taking advantage of his face being bent upon that of his murdered Edwin, each in the same moment seized his hands. As they gripped [sic] them fast ... he looked very calmly up; but it was a dreadful calm; it spoke of despair; of the full completion of all woe ...

"You may bind me with a hair," said he; "I contend no more." The bonds were fastened on his wrists; and then, turning towards the lifeless body of Edwin, he raised it gently in his arms. The rosy red of youth yet tinged his cold cheek ... "Oh! my best brother that ever I had in the world!" cried he in a sudden transport, and kissing his pale forehead; "My sincere friend in my greatest need! In thee was truth, manhood and nobleness; in thee was all man's fidelity with woman's tenderness. My friend, my brother, Oh! would to God I had died for thee!"

(V, IX, 239-41)

A comparison with the extract from *Blind Harry* quoted on page 233, however, reveals that she is leaning heavily, at times to the point of direct quotation, on his passage on the death of Graham. For the most part, all her high style produces is pure melodrama.

Nevertheless, to many of her contemporaries her style was not only acceptable, but praiseworthy:

.... The language is in general unexceptionable, always animated and sometimes rising to a high pitch of excellence....

Thus wrote the reviewer of the Glasgow Magazine, who believed that the book would "rank with the first of the modern race of novels."¹ More importantly,

1. G1.M (September 1810) 67 and 74.

someone as respected as Joanna Baillie admired it, and thought the account of the burning of the Barns of Ayr one of the sublimest descriptions she had ever read.¹

And even though most reviewers disliked the mingling of fact and fiction (a dislike seemingly not shared by the general public)² this aspect of the novel was treated by them mildly, The British Critic opining that the fact that "very little of indisputable truth" was known of Wallace made a difference, and the Monthly Magazine merely reporting that it did not intend in this case to judge the merits of mingling real history and romance: "Miss Porter has mixed them; though certainly with great judgement."³

As for the portrayal of Wallace, it was accepted with enthusiasm, the factors making him unauthentic as a thirteenth century man making him the ideal nineteenth century Christian gentleman; Mary Russell Mitford, for example, found him the only "héros de roman, whom it is possible to admire ..."⁴ And, despite the evident weaknesses of the novel, it is extremely doubtful that she would have found him so, had he been, as described in Fraser's Magazine in 1835:

.... a sort of sentimental dandy, who, if we mistake not, faints upon occasion, is revived by lavender water, and throughout the book is tenderly in love.⁵

- a description repeated, with variations by others (who, one suspects, had not read the novel) at later dates.⁶ Though Wallace is not a thirteenth century

1. Scottish Chiefs, 1831 edition, I, XXIX, 254-5.

2. Indeed, Scott gave as one of the reasons for the popularity of the Waverley novels "their nature as historical novels" QR 16 (January 1817) 466.

3. BC 37 (March 1811) 255; MM 30 (Supp. January 1811) 676.

4. Augustus L'Estrange, The Life of Mary Russell Mitford Vol. I, 217.

5. FM XI (April 1835) 404.

6. e.g. David Masson (British Novelists and their Styles, 182) says that Wallace "is not exactly the historical Wallace ... but a highly modernized Wallace, tremulous with the most exquisite sentiments, and carrying in his hand, as the saviour of Scotland, alternately a sword and a white cambric handkerchief."

man, and though even as a nineteenth century man his portrayal lacks the depth that would have been given by a more internal approach to his characterisation, and some feeling, however slight, that he was ever faced by moral decisions which caused him some heart searching,¹ as a portrayal of a moral excellence he is not effete, nor, if one disregards his manner of speech, an utterly incredible character. If he is "tenderly in love" it is with a dead woman - and since he has been recently widowed, and is still mourning for his wife, one can credit his failure to find other women sexually tempting.² For many of his high minded decisions he finds practical as well as honourable grounds: sparing the life of an enemy could provide a hostage (II, V, 110); refusing the throne of Scotland is only sensible, since so many would reject him as king (III, IV, 96-7); and preserving life and property in English villages could mean a further supply of food for the Scots on future occasions (III, XII, 257).

Moreover, far from being a dandy needing lavender water, he shows great military skill, personal courage, and great muscular strength, as in the following passage:

.... Wallace stood in front, making a dreadful passage through the falling ranks, while the tremendous sweep of his sword flashing in the intermitting light, warned the survivors where the avenging blade would next fall ... It seemed not the slaughter of a mortal arm, but as if the destroying angel himself were there

(II, V, 100)

Such scenes obviously need to be read in their entirety for the full impact to be gained; visualised, as probably an early nineteenth-century reader would do much more vividly than the modern reader, they display many of the same features as the modern adventure film with its rugged hero:

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1. Historians do comment on his singleness of purpose - but Jane Porter makes his decisions much too simple and straightforward.
 2. Typically, Jane Porter had to spoil a perfectly acceptable characterisation by overstressing it; e.g. Wallace, having rescued Helen from de Soulis, tells her: "You are as safe with me, lady ... as in the arms of the virgin." (I, XIV, 297)

All being quiet in the few streets through which he passed; and having set strong bodies of men at the mouth of every sally port of the citadel, he turned at once upon the guard at the Barbican-gate, and slaying them before they could give the least alarm, he and his chosen troop entered the portal and made direct to the palace. The lights which blazed through the windows of the banqueting-hall shewed him to the spot: and having detached Edwin and Graham to his right, to storm the Keep where their fathers were confined, he took the half-intoxicated sentinels at the palace gates by surprise, and striking them into a sleep from which they would wake no more, he fastened the doors upon the assassins. The palace was built of huge beams of wood, and therefore the fitter for his purpose. His men now surrounded the building with hurdles filled with combustibles, which they had prepared according to his directions; and when all was ready, Wallace, with the mighty spirit of retribution nerving every limb, mounted to the roof, and tearing off part of the tileing[sic], with a flaming brand in his hand, shewed himself, glittering in arms, to the affrighted revellers beneath, and as he threw it blazing amongst them, he cried aloud, "The blood of the murdered calls for vengeance, and it comes!" (II, X, 276-8)¹

That Napoleon did not see such a portrayal as that of a sentimental dandy is evidenced by the fact that he banned the book (which must have seemed to the authoress almost as great an honour as being made a Lady of the Chapter of ^{St.} Joachim by the King of Wurtemberg, as she was when the novel was "translated into the languages of the continent").² Though, when it is read in conjunction with all the other novels of the Porter sisters, it is evident that Wallace is meant to exemplify the wider concept of "true nobility" rather than that of "true patriotism",³ as Jane Porter suggested in a later edition, after Napoleon's edict, nevertheless patriotism was always one of the chief characteristics of the sister's "noble" characters, and Napoleon was obviously concerned about the possibly explosive effect on occupied territories of speeches like the following:

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1. Though this scene has been chosen as being perhaps the best known of the novel (the burning of the Barns of Ayr), in the light of earlier comments on Wallace's attitude to vengeance, it must be stressed that his vengeful attitude here is completely untypical of the character as portrayed in the novel. There are many vivid scenes of this kind - e.g. III, XV, 340-341; IV, I, 17-26; IV, II, 48-57.
 2. Postscript to a subsequent edition (to the first), quoted in the 1831 edition p. xxvi.
 3. Ibid, xxix.

" let the world see how much more might lies in the arms of a few men contending for their country and hereditary liberties, than in hosts which seek for blood and spoil. Slavery and freedom lie before you! Shrink but one backward step, and yourselves are in bondage, your wives become the prey of violence. Be firm! Trust Him who blesses the righteous cause, and victory will crown your toils!"
(III, XV, 339)

or

"Were all others of my countrymen to resign the liberty which is their right, I alone would declare the independence of my country "
(V, VI, 167)

Though such heroics now sound overdone, the feeling for nationalism was so strong when the Porter sisters wrote their novels, that, according to Mrs. A.M. Hall, who knew Jane,

.... even the exaggeration of enthusiasm was considered good tone and good taste.¹

Certainly the British Critic of the period expressed the opinion that a translation of the novel into Spanish would work wonders in rousing Spain to fight for its independence.²

With so much in its favour - its nationalism, its pathos, its historical story, its violence, its sensuality (and yet its emphasis on piety and purity) its brand of idealism which, in stressing sacrifice of self-interest to nation and duty proved no threat to social or family order, and (though it evokes Scotland but faintly) its regionalism at a time when the possibilities of the regional novel were just being explored - The Scottish Chiefs, not surprisingly "had an electric effect in Scotland"³ and was highly popular in England, one reader saying that it was a work

.... destined to create within me a new want, and to turn my thoughts to the reading and study of history .

1. Anna M. Hall, Pilgrimages to English Shrines, 427.

2. BC 37 (March 1811) 255.

3. "Its first appearance had an electric effect in Scotland" - William Jerdan National Portrait Gallery, "Memoir of Jane Porter", 4-5.

... Its influence is still with me.¹

And for long it retained its popularity, going through at least twenty editions between 1810 and 1882. Well before 1882, however, its artistic weaknesses had become glaringly obvious to critical readers, and when in 1894 William Minto wrote:

.... there is very little real local colour in her account of Wallace and Bruce - there is hardly an attempt made to keep to historical probability²

- though he was being rather unjust to Jane Porter, he was merely echoing a critical commonplace. Its popularity, even with the general public, had begun to wane as early as 1871, when Jerom Murch noted of it and Thaddeus of Warsaw that

.... though new editions are still issued in our own and other languages in various parts of the world, probably they do not kindle the same enthusiasm³

Thus, gradually rejected by the more critical as completely lacking in any kind of realism, and by the less critical as old fashioned in style, though The Scottish Chiefs has remained in print to the present day, it survives - its language made more acceptable by swingeing omissions, its passion and violence even further expurgated than in the authoress's own 1831 revisions - only as an uplifting adventure story, in editions for children.⁴

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1. Martha J. Lamb, "Formative Influences"; in The Forum XI (1891) 54. Cited in Charles Moulton ed., The Library of Literary Criticism, Vol. V, p.674. In an interesting appendix to the 1841 edition of The Scottish Chiefs (re-printed in an undated early twentieth century Dent edition, Jane Porter went so far as to imply that William Blake was so moved by the novel that Wallace became one of the many figures whom he believed appeared to him from the dead, and allowed him to sketch them. If it were the celebrated William Blake of whom she wrote, however, it is odd that she twice referred to him as a "young painter" and a "young man", since Blake was nineteen years older than she, and cannot possibly have been younger than fifty-three when he read the novel.
 2. William Minto, The Literature of the Georgian Era, 244. The novel's lack of truth to history had been noted from its first publication - e.g. in SM 72 (April 1810) 279; GLM (September 1810) 73; BC 37 (March 1811) 256 but this did not affect its reputation.
 3. Jerom Murch, Mrs. Barbauld and her Contemporaries, 35.
 4. It was listed in 1914 in Ernest Baker's Guide to Historical Fiction, p. 24 as "Juvenile Fiction" and, as far as can be discovered, has, in this century appeared only in editions for children. The 1956 reprint of the 1921 edition by Charles Scribner's Sons is still available.

Between 1810 and 1814, however, Jane Porter was, without doubt, the most highly regarded historical novelist in the country - for, whatever her lack of historical sense, she was superior to earlier writers of historical romances, who had either used a vague setting in the past to justify outrageous improbabilities, or used historical figures in a wildly inaccurate historical context, or written a piece that was quite carefully researched but little enlivened by the warmth of the writer's imagination.¹ However, 1814 brought Waverley, after which there was no doubt as to who was first in this particular field - though for long Jane Porter was credited with having shown Scott the way. Fraser's Magazine, for example, said:

.... It is to Miss Porter's fame that she began the system of historical writing which allowed the climax of renown in the hands of Sir Walter Scott. And no light praise it is that she has thus paved the way for the greatest exhibition of the greatest genius of our time. She may parody Bishop Hall and tell Sir Walter.—

I first adventured - follow me who list
And be the second Scottish novelist.²

Certainly she herself believed that she was Scott's forerunner. In the preface to the 1831 edition of Thaddeus of Warsaw she said that he had done her the honour "to adopt the style or class of novel of which "Thaddeus of Warsaw" was the first"; and just three months before her death she wrote to a Mr. Litchfield saying that she felt herself "a kind of sybil" in respect of the line of historical novels following her, among the writers of which she included "the author of Waverley". More than this, The Illustrated London News, on her death stated firmly:

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1. For a useful short account of early attempts at the historical novel see Joyce M.S. Tomkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 223-242. As far as Defoe's claim to be a historical novelist is concerned, as Ernest Baker has said, he was less a writer of historical fiction than of history - "or at least of facts, disguised as fiction." (History of the English Novel Vol. 6, 134). There had been plenty of attempts to write historical fiction: Frank G. Black (The Epistolary Novel in England in the Late Eighteenth Century, 174) provides a graph showing "historical fiction" (as differentiated from Gothic fiction) rising rapidly in volume between 1775-1790, declining then only slightly, and rising sharply after 1814.
 2. FM XI (April 1835) 404.

.... it is known that Sir Walter Scott admitted to George IV, one day in the library at Carlton Palace, that the "Scottish Chiefs" was the parent in his mind of the Waverley novels.¹

Scott certainly read The Scottish Chiefs; there is a copy of the first edition in the library at Abbotsford, and there is no reason to believe that he did not tell Jane Porter he liked it (as she claimed in the preface to the 1841 edition). However, he obviously gallantly refrained from giving her his real opinion, which, according to James Hogg, was that though The Scottish Chiefs was a work of genius,

" Lord help her! her Wallace is no more our Wallace than Lord Peter is, or King Henry's messenger to Percy Hotspur. It is not safe meddling with the hero of a country: and, of all others, I cannot bear to see the character of Wallace frittered away to that of a fine gentleman."²

Scott, in fact, had started Waverley before Jane had published anything but Thaddeus of Warsaw;³ moreover, in the Postscript to the novel, he indicated that he had been impelled to write "for the purpose of preserving some idea of the ancient manners [of the Highlands of Scotland] of which [he had] witnessed the almost total extinction." In addition, in 1829, in his General Preface to the Waverley novels he indicated very clearly the stages in its

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1. This, and the reference to Jane Porter's letter immediately above, are both in her obituary notice in The London Illustrated News, 16, (June 8, 1850) 412. The story about Scott was also repeated with assurance in her obituary notice in GM, August 1850, 221, in W. Jerdan, op. cit., Memoir of Jane Porter, 5, and in W. Bates ed., A Gallery of Illustrious Literary Characters 157. It should be noted, however, that both Jane and Maria acknowledged Scott's superiority: see Preface to Maria's Roche Blanche (1822) ix-x, and Preface to Jane's Field of the Forty Footsteps (1828) ix.
 2. J.E.H. Thomson, ed., James Hogg, The Domestic Manners of Sir Walter Scott 111-112, quoted by A.D. Hook in "Jane Porter, Sir Walter Scott, and the Historical Novel", Clio 2, 1976, 188.
 3. I have discussed this point with Miss Claire Lamont of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne who is working on a new edition of Waverley for O.U.P. Though all of Waverley after Vol. II, ch. 7 was definitely written in 1813 or 1814 (because of the dating of the paper) the earlier part was written before this, most probably in 1805 and in the winter of 1809-1810.

composition, which included an early desire to write a gothic romance in the line of The Castle of Otranto, but with Scottish characters, pleasure at the success of his use of Highland scenery and customs in his Lady of the Lake, a desire to emulate Maria Edgeworth's novels of Irish manners (something also mentioned in the Postscript to Waverley) and his interest in his task of completing the deceased Joseph Strutt's Queenhoo Hall, from which he learned much of what to avoid in writing a historical novel. Moreover, when Waverley was eventually published, it was published anonymously, because, just as Jane Porter saw her work as different from that of her predecessors, he saw his as yet again new - as "an experiment on the public taste which might very probably fail"¹ In view of the remarkable success of The Scottish Chiefs he could hardly have believed this, had he thought Waverley to be of the same kind as that novel.

Nor, however, was it anything like The Castle of Otranto or Castle Rackrent; from them Scott's individual genius seized on Walpole's idea (stated in his preface to the second edition) of combining romance and reality - and on Maria Edgeworth's idea of portraying a way of life with a flavour of its own, and combined these with his own insight into human nature and his own knowledge of the past - not merely to reproduce the "facts" of history, but to say something of human nature at all times, and of human behaviour also as affected by historical events and the mores of an age - producing a novel which was entirely original. It was not "scholarship" which was Scott's innovation in the historical novel;² others, including the Porters, were also providing this. Scott had scholarship enough - but he put truth to human nature first. Moreover, he was not "using" or distorting history as the Porters were, to convey uplifting examples. Thus, as Georg

1. General Preface to the Waverley novels, January 1, 1829, in Ioan Williams ed., Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction, 416.

2. As Robert Colby has suggested in Fiction with a Purpose, 34.

Lukacs has said, he was able to let his readers

.... re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality.¹

However, although after 1814 Miss Porter was not the premier historical novelist of the British Isles, she was certainly the second, and her work (as was that of Maria) was highly admired by Princess Charlotte (for whom, incidentally, Hannah More's Hints Towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess (1805) had been written). It is interesting, therefore, that it was not to her, but to Jane Austen that in March 1816 the suggestion was made that she might write any historical romance illustrative of "the august House of Cobourg" to honour Prince Leopold, who was shortly to marry Princess Charlotte.² The request came through the Prince Regent's librarian, James Stanier Clarke, but it seems highly probable that it was from the Prince Regent himself - suggesting that he was a more perceptive literary critic than many of his contemporaries. Jane Austen's reply was polite, but firm:

You are very kind in your hints as to the sort of composition which might recommend me at present, and I am fully sensible that an historical romance, founded on the House of Saxe Cobourg, might be much more to the purpose of profit or popularity than such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in. But I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No, I must keep to my own style and go on in my own way; and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.³

It was not till after Jane Austen's death that a similar request was to be made to Jane Porter. She, at this time, was completing The Pastor's Fireside (1817)⁴ a novel for which she had again obviously done much reading,

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1. Georg Lukacs, The Historical Novel, 42.
 2. Jane Austen's Letters, 451. Letter of 27th March 1816 from James Stanier Clarke.
 3. Ibid. 452; Letter of 1 April from Jane Austen to James Stanier Clarke.
 4. Lowndes, Allibone, NCBEL and most other bibliographies give 1815. However Pickering and Chatto sold an 1817 edition in 1934 as a first edition, the BL first edition is 1817, and the reviews are all of 1817.

though unfortunately this time she did not detail her sources, only acknowledging help in her research from the Reverend Percival Stockdale of Lesbury vicarage in Northumberland. Set in the early eighteenth century, the novel tells of Jacobite conspiracies centring round the Duke of Wharton, much of the action taking place on the continent. The early and closing chapters, however, are set in Northumberland, partly, Miss Porter said, because Wharton was known to have used Bamborough Castle as a nursery for plots in support of the Stuarts, but chiefly because, as a child, she had lived there for a while, with her family, and wanted to make "the rugged and artless-mannered north" the formative influence on her young hero, her aim being

.... to enforce on the mind of a young reader ... by the experience of Louis de Montemar ... that "the best use of talents and the really noblest ambition is to lead a life of Christian devotedness to the service of his fellow creatures."¹

In brief, the novel tells how Louis, having been brought up by his great uncle (the pastor of the title) in the simplicity of a Northumbrian village, goes to join his father, Baron Ripperda, a diplomat for the Court of Spain. Ripperda is at this time assigned to Austria, and is occupied in secretly negotiating the terms of what was to be the Treaty of Vienna (April 1725), a treaty intended to form a close alliance between Spain and Austria. Also in Austria at this time is the Jacobite Duke of Wharton, whom Louis had met earlier, in Northumberland, and who is abroad seeking support for the Stuart cause from the Austrians. He hopes also to get Louis to persuade his influential father (a supporter of Hanover) to change his allegiance - but to no avail; the two men remain opposed politically, and when Ripperda suddenly falls from favour in Spain, he suspects, wrongly, that Wharton has had a share in his downfall. Most of his bitterness, however, is directed at the Spanish

1. Introduction to the 1832 edition, printed in the 1845 edition p xii - which is the source of the comment about the Northumbrian setting and of her research assistance.

government, and, in an incident, historically authenticated, yet as fanciful — as any that could be fabricated, he joins the Moors, renounces the Christian faith, and organises attacks on Spanish possessions in Africa.

All this gives the opportunity for a wide variety of scenery, in England, Austria, Spain and Africa — but only the descriptions of Northumberland, which Jane Porter knew well, are at all evocative, ranging as they do from the bleak Northumbrian fells with "yawning coal pits" (IV, XVI, 328) to a wild coastal scene:

The next day rose in storms. The sky was covered with clouds, flying before the wind in infinite volumes of rolling blackness. The sea raged against the beetling rocks of Lindisfarne, as if it menaced the existence of the island; and the fishers who had prepared their little barks all along the beach, for embarkation at the dawn, were seen on every side, drawing them ashore, to prevent the mischief which threatened such small craft, from the beating of the waves. (IV, XXV, 461)

Here, in contrast, is Louis in Austria:

It was the vernal month of May and nature appeared in her robes of youth and laughing beauty. The tender azure of the sky was tinged with blushing radiance, while the soft green earth lay in enamelled smoothness, under the umbrageous canopy of trees and shrubs, diffusing odours from blossoms, flowers and southern zephyrs, laden with the warm breathing of the reposing sun. (II, XII, 327)

Descriptions of Spain and Africa are little better. The African sequences do, however, allow for some exciting battles — with their consequent horrors:

.... Victors and vanquished were mingled in one common grave. The steed with its rider, and he who slew, by the side of him that was slain. The Spaniards performed these frightful obsequies: and he who held the mattock or the spade, had often to contend with birds of prey and ravenous dogs, howling among the mangled remains. (IV, XIII, 218)

After a series of battles with the Spanish, Ripperda is finally mortally wounded, and is joined by his son, who reconciles him with his God before he dies — an event which seems to have been wholly imagined, for Ripperda lived with the Moors for ten years, before dying in 1731. However, as in The Scottish Chiefs, the telescoping of time seems justified. And as for

Ripperda's repentance, this was to be expected, for religion is never far away in this novel. Whatever happens, Louis is shown throughout all his adventures in Europe following the parting advice of his pastor uncle:

.... Remember, that no enterprise is great that is not morally good; that war is murder, when it commences in aggression ... Be single-minded in all things, having the principle of the divine laws delivered by the Son of God himself as the living spring of every action throughout your life. (I, IX, 253)

Louis then returns to England, where he is instrumental in saving Wharton's life, after he has been attacked and robbed. Wharton is nursed by Louis' pious cousin Cornelia - and the couple fall in love, before she finds out, to her anguish, who he is; for Wharton besides being a Jacobite, has a reputation as a man of dissolute life. Eventually, however, she decides not to reject him, but insists on

.... a year's trial at least. When you are far from me and the precepts of my uncle, your conduct must prove to all, that his niece gives herself to the virtuous as well as charming Duke of Wharton. (IV, XXVI, 484-485)¹

Only six years before, such a statement by the heroine of Self-Control had occasioned a spate of scornful comments for Mary Brunton: such was the speed of the change in tone in society during these years that this one seems to have gone unremarked.

Cornelia's love affair is not central to the novel, however - nor is that of Louis, which is so shadowy as to leave no impression on the reader. Something of the hives of political intrigue in the courts of Europe, both on behalf of the Stuarts and in the interests of various continental powers is suggested (for France and England are involved as well as Austria and Spain) but the novel's predominating concern is with showing the nobility of the life of Christian virtue, as contrasted with lives whose chief aim is

1. Wharton had actually married an Irishwoman in Spain in 1726; he was received into the catholic church and died in 1731, a drunkard and destitute.

for worldly ends. Thus it is unfortunate that Louis, with his "perfect form of youthful nobleness" (I, V, 155), is a much less sympathetic character than the Duke of Wharton - or even than Baron Ripperda, both credibly mixed characters. Yet had Jane Porter kept closer to historical fact (of which she was certainly aware) as far as the characters of these two were concerned, they would have been much less interesting. Wharton was not only dissipated, but a notorious liar, and Ripperda was not a man of integrity, destroyed by slanders against him, but arrogant in office and a traitor to the Spanish government which employed him.¹ Knowing this, Jane tried to explain what she had done by saying that though she herself objected strongly to the portrayal of mixed characters, she had given Wharton some good qualities to please her tender hearted sister - and that she regretted this.² Such may indeed have been the case - but if so, it is strange that there is a mixed character in every story which can definitely be attributed to her. One suspects, in fact, that Jane Porter the novelist at times got the better of Jane Porter the propagandist of Christian principles.

Unfortunately for her lasting reputation, however, such times were rare - and in her own day, it was her ideal characters who were applauded. In its review of The Pastor's Fire-side, The Gentleman's Magazine said:

.... In embodying the Beau Idéal of noble minds, Miss Porter is more eminently successful than any living writer³

- and that "the Beau Idéal" was what many people still required is seen from the fact that even though it was not quite as popular as Thaddeus or The Scottish Chiefs, The Pastor's Fire-side went immediately into a second edition and had had at least another thirteen by 1892.

1. See Sir Charles Petrie, King Charles III of Spain 10-14.

2. Introduction to 1832 edition in 1845 edition p xiv.

3. GM 87 (1) (February 1817) 145.

This was the last novel Jane Porter wrote before 1820; but as a pendant to the story of Jane Austen and "the august House of Cobourg", it seems only fitting to record that her next novel, Duke Christian of Luneburg (not completed till 1824, as she seems to have worked slowly and carefully) was the result of a similar request. After the publication of The Pastor's Fire-side, the Prince Regent sent her a message praising her novels and asking that her next subject should be "The life of his great and virtuous progenitor, Duke Christian of Lunenburgh"[sic] Unlike Jane Austen, Jane Porter (according to Mrs. Elwood) felt that she "could not but obey so distinguishing a command". She was, therefore, given access to original family documents - and embarked on her novel which, when completed, met with full royal approval.¹ Nor is this surprising: Duke Christian is presented as looking "like the sculpture of a Greek god", (II, III, 53-4) and as such a model of piety, chivalry and filial duty that on one occasion, on his leaving England after a visit to the royal family "there was not a pillow that night under the palace roof that was not wetted with its owner's tears" (II, XX, 385). One can imagine how Jane Austen, had she lived, would have smiled. Nevertheless, the tumultuous history of rivalry in the Germanic states in the early seventeenth century is portrayed with some gusto and, as far as it has been possible to ascertain, with no little accuracy. Even the pervading aura of "nobility" given to Prince Christian and his brothers and friends, which rings so false to twentieth-century ears, was apparently true to the way in which they were regarded in the seventeenth century. Thus, even a critic like Carlyle, who recognised Jane Porter's weaknesses, said of her:

.... with all her deficiencies she is interesting; - never failing to excite our sympathy, though she cannot rank with our Fielding or Smollett²

1. See Anne K. Elwood, Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England II 290.

2. Charles Saunders and K. Fielding eds., The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle Vol. I, 42-43.

After this, she began to publish in collaboration with her sister, providing a volume length tale for their Tales Round a Winter Hearth (1826) and another of the same length for their Coming Out; and The Field of the Forty Footsteps (1828). 1831 brought a work whose authorship has never been satisfactorily decided - Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative; she admitted only to being its editor - and the family monument attributes it to her brother William.¹ Then, in 1832 her sister Maria died - and the loss seems to have put an end to Jane's interest in writing fiction. She and Maria had always been extremely close - so much so that Jane is reputed as having said "our principles, our tastes, and our views in life were exactly the same."² This being so, Jane's possible contribution to the novel will be assessed, with that of Maria, in the following chapter.

1. See Appendix of later work.

2. A.K. Elwood, op. cit., 291.

VII

Anna Maria Porter 1780-1832

Where is she now?—Her chaste and hallowed relics
Sleep in the narrow house - her memory lives -
Will live in future days;—her magic voice,
Even from the tomb, shall speak, to teach, and charm
The youthful heart into the path of virtue.

This belief was vain - but the admiring tribute testifies to the high regard in which Jane Porter's younger sister Maria was held at the time of her death in 1832. Most people did, indeed, see Jane as the more talented of the two but it was generally accepted that "Miss Anna Maria Porter shares, in a considerable degree, the exquisite faculties of her sister."¹

More precocious and more prolific than Jane, Maria saw her first work in print ten years before the appearance of Thaddeus, her Artless Tales being published (by subscription) in 1793 when she was only thirteen.² This was followed by Walsh Colville (1797) Octavia (1798) and The Lake of Killarney (1804) - examples of sentimental nonsense best forgotten.³ Nor does it seem likely that A Sailor's Friendship, and a Soldier's Love (1805) was any more praiseworthy, for although it has proved impossible to locate a copy, it did not merit a single review and seems to have had only one edition.

These were, in fact, domestic (albeit high-life domestic) novels of a very run-of-the-mill kind, contrived in plot, predictable in character types, and, while of a high moral tone, not idealistic in the manner of Thaddeus. Maria, therefore, must have taken a lesson from her sister's success, for in 1807 she published The Hungarian Brothers, a very different kind of novel,

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1. GM December 1832, 578; New MM 77, 13 (June 1 1820) 634. William Jerdan, National Portrait Gallery V, Memoir of Jane Porter, p 8, was one of the minority who preferred Maria's work.
 2. The only location for Artless Tales is the University of Virginia, and it was impossible to borrow the copy for this study. It is interesting that one of the tales is called "The Noble Courtezan". Once the Evangelical movement gathered force it is most unlikely that a respectable girl of thirteen would have written about a "courtezan".
 3. Walsh Colville, however, has recently been reprinted (Garland Press 1974).

one which, like Thaddeus was regarded as historical, but which, also like Thaddeus, had an almost contemporary setting. Choosing as background the Austrian resistance to Napoleon between 1796-1801, Maria, following Jane's example, gave details of the campaign at some length. In her introduction to the 1832 edition of the novel, (p. vi) she explained that she had always loved reading her brother's books containing accounts of military campaigns, and though by this time she no longer liked the novel, she was still proud of that aspect of it, declaring with pride:

.... One of the greatest generals of the period did me the honour of expressing his satisfaction with their various details and confessing some surprise at my acquaintance with such a subject.

This was probably the French General Moreau, who features in the novel on the opposing side to the heroes, and who is portrayed as so brilliant a general that Napoleon grew jealous of his success. Moreau, apparently,

.... was so delighted with [the novel's] extraordinary fidelity to facts, added to the deep interest of the domestic tale she had connected with his battles, that he ever after gave it a place in his travelling library.¹

Despite its lengthy accounts of battles and campaigns however, The Hungarian Brothers is not really about them at all. Even less is it "about" the complicated love affairs of the two brothers who are the novel's joint heroes - though it is easy to see that they must have contributed largely to the popularity of the novel; it is again about principle, duty and self-control. Both brothers are soldiers. Charles, the elder is a paragon:

.... to the upright conscience of Charles, the voice of Integrity was ever the voice of Fate
(II, IX, 273)

and, assuming the role of mentor to his younger brother, he takes it upon himself to warn him of the dangers of the world, assuring him that it is "divine assistance" for which he must seek (I, I, 26). Demetrius, in contrast,

1. W. Jerdan, op. cit., Memoir of A.M. Porter, p 4.

is at first headstrong, and allows himself to become entangled with an unhappily married woman, volume one ending on the suggestion that they have committed adultery. However, his brother's guidance has not been in vain - and he later describes, in terms reminiscent of those used to describe Maria Bertram's adultery in Mansfield Park, how he, with difficulty, succeeded in restraining his "criminal wishes" (II, II, 35). Charles is the perfect Christian gentleman, Demetrius the hero with much to learn who, perhaps needless to say, is, like his brother, eventually suitably rewarded by marriage to a woman of impeccable beauty and purity, the novel leaving them, after the signing of the Treaty of Luneville (1801) working "to combine magnificence with utility and happiness with religious awe" (III, IX, 278).

For female readers, then, the novel's teaching was enlivened by love stories - for men, by battles. Nor was this all, for an added attraction must have been the descriptions of Austria and Switzerland and of Alpine scenery, of which Charles writes "It is here that imagination finds materials for her world" (II, VIII, 213). The descriptions are enthusiastic rather than vivid and drawn obviously from books and pictures - yet even the crudest attempts at picturing foreign scenery seem to have been popular, the plundering of travel books to provide colour and atmosphere being a fashion which had begun in the 1790's.¹

And The Hungarian Brothers was, without doubt, popular, going into a second edition almost immediately, and remaining in print at least till 1872, by which time there had been at least eighteen English editions. It is doing Maria great injustice, however, to regard it as her "chief work";² she, herself, on re-reading it in 1830, when she had almost completely changed her style, said that it gave her "much to smile at, and more to grieve for".³ Nevertheless, at the time of publication, its success, following on that of

1. See Joyce M.S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800, pp 181-186.

2. As does DNB XVI, 170.

3. Introduction to 1832 edition, iii.

Thaddeus must have confirmed the sisters in their view that here they had a --- formula suited not only to the public taste, but to their own aims and interests - heroic action calling for the exercise of lofty ideals, justifying high emotion, and justified by having some basis in factual events. For the rest of her writing career, therefore, with few exceptions Maria (as did Jane) promoted her values in highly successful romances, love stories with much fuller backgrounds of political intrigue and turmoil than Thaddeus or The Hungarian Brothers, frequently involving military campaigns, and most often set in countries other than England. Maria did, indeed, say of a later novel that she had chosen a foreign setting only to avoid comparison with Scott who had dealt so well with the period in England - but the fact remains that long before she had this reason to sway her choice, she had deliberately chosen to set all her historical romances abroad.¹

Spurred by the success of The Hungarian Brothers, Maria worked quickly, publishing her next novel, Don Sebastian in 1809, and thus actually preceding her sister in producing what today would be recognised as a historical romance of a kind, since it covers the period 1557-1640 (focusing chiefly on the years between 1578-1610). An advance on The Hungarian Brothers, Don Sebastian is not a novel of any great merit; however, as Maria made no marked advances in technique between 1809 and 1821, a more detailed look at this one novel will allow for her others of the period to be passed over briefly.

Like The Hungarian Brothers, Don Sebastian had most of the ingredients needed for popular success. Not only had it the attraction of settings in Portugal, Africa and Italy, Maria, with the skill of the best-selling author had chosen a historical subject with a highly topical flavour: Don Sebastian is the story of a sixteenth century Portuguese ruler in exile, and its Preface was able to link it with very recent events. In November 1807 John, Prince Regent of Portugal, had had to leave Portugal, escorted by British ships,

1. Roche Blanche (1822) Address to the Reader ix-x.

because of a threat from Napoleon; Maria, therefore, imagined him, on his voyage to exile in Brazil, reading to members of his family this story of one of their ancestors who also, according to the novel, lived in exile - though, according to history, he died young.

In fact, in choosing Don Sebastian, though he had actually lived, Maria avoided a trap fallen into by her sister. Having chosen to make William Wallace and Duke Christian of Luneburg the heroes of two of her novels, in order to carry out her purpose in writing, Jane had to imbue them with an odour of sanctity which at once strikes a false note with regard to Wallace and cannot but cause scepticism in relation to the ancestors of George IV. Don Sebastian, however, has little recorded history, the facts on which the novel is based being as follows. When John III of Portugal died in 1557, his successor was his three-year-old grandson, Sebastian, who himself became King at the age of fourteen. Stubborn, foolish, and fanatically determined to conquer heathen territories "for Christ", he found an excuse for fighting in Morocco by offering, in exchange for the promise of lands, to help a Moslem who had been dethroned by his brother. Ill equipped and prepared, but refusing to listen to advice, he rode to disaster in 1578. His army was almost wiped out - and he, it was presumed, was among the dead. His great uncle succeeded him, but died after two years - after which Philip II of Spain (a nephew of John III of Portugal) took over. The Portuguese hated Spanish rule, and, to comfort themselves, some said that Sebastian still lived, either as a prisoner in Morocco - or in self-imposed exile, and that in time he would come to free his people. Few had ever claimed to see Sebastian's body - so the story of his survival spread. Several people even claimed to be Sebastian - but all were accused of being impostors. Finally, in 1640, the Duke of Braganza led a swift, successful, and comparatively bloodless revolt against Spain, and Portugal was again freed.

To concoct a life, then, of the supposed surviving Sebastian must have seemed to Maria an ideal way of combining fact, fiction and edification. Few stories could have been better for a moralist's purpose. Nevertheless she

claimed that she had kept as close to historical records as was consistent with a work "wherein imagination[had] to make up for deficiencies of actual tradition" (Preface vi) and that she had drawn on "general history, accounts of particular periods, the Harleian Miscellany, and a curious old tract published in 1602" containing letters written by persons connected with Sebastian (Preface viii-ix).¹

Naturally Don Sebastian could not be a model hero; like Demetrius in The Hungarian Brothers he is a character basically good, but flawed - one who in the course of the novel learns to behave as a true Christian. To explain the fated Moroccan expedition, he is made to fall in love with a girl who is already married. Her marriage, however, is merely an arranged one, which has not been consummated, and the Pope, therefore, promises to annul it if Sebastian undertakes a "holy war": This is something which, against all advice, he is by no means unwilling to do, for he believes that glory "alone compensates the shortness of life by the immortality of fame" (I, III, 105). Thus he rides off to the disastrous battle of Alcazar, which is described at length. Left for dead on the battlefield, his first lesson is learned when he is rescued by an infidel, who, on Sebastian's surprise at his kindness, reminds him that "the same God which spake through the lips of thy Sidie Messika ... inspires the hearts of all good men" (I, IV, 157). Then, like her sister, not at all unwilling to dwell on horror, Maria provided a picture of Sebastian roaming the battlefield, searching for the remains of any friends among the perishing bodies,

.... His senses ... almost overcome by their noisome exhalations and ghastly appearance: some of them were half devoured by the wolves ...(I, IV, 170)

Next, Sebastian is captured by banditti, and sold as a slave. Even in these conditions, however, he is allowed no diminution in physical beauty. The real Sebastian was, apparently, "sick in body and in mind."²

1. This is probably the "old and rare book" mentioned by Anne Elwood, Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England II, 293, as having been loaned to her by Sir Frederick Eden of Hampton Court.

2. A.H. de Oliveira Marques, History of Portugal, I, 311.

completely unlike Maria's Sebastian of whom we read:

.... the crown of Portugal itself could not have added majesty to that commanding brow ... his dark brown hair glowing with living gold, hung in glossy curls over his forehead and his cheek, discovering at intervals, as the breeze lifted it, those eyes and that mouth whose sweetness had once been proverbial in a court.

(II, I, 4)

And though he has yet much to learn before he can be a model hero, nevertheless he already shows qualities never noted in his original, working for other old or weak slaves, and saving some of his own food for them. (An early reader wrote by the account of this, in the first edition used, "benevolent youth!")¹

One of his fellow slaves, Gaspar, is a man who had been one of his ordinary soldiers. Sebastian comes to respect him, and as the two men talk, Sebastian begins to learn new ways of looking at life. Gaspar, for example, regrets leaving his mother and sisters to fend for themselves, in order to fight infidels, and tells Sebastian that

"... our blessed Redeemer must be better pleased with us when we seek to preserve lives, than when we go to destroy them."

(I, VI, 265)

This makes the king think:

.... His days of prosperity had been unreflecting days - adversity now taught him to scrutinize the past and to prepare stores of principle for the future.

(I, VI, 266)

"Uplifting" conversations with Gaspar on such subjects are, however, relieved by action, as Sebastian himself attempts to escape, giving thanks to the "Almighty Being" when he thinks he has done so (II, II, 48) but "bowing to the will of Providence" when he is recaptured (II, II, 55) and praying for strength to bear his punishment when he is sentenced to one thousand lashes (II, II, 77). Such a combination of piety and excitement must indeed have been potent! From his dreadful fate, fortunately, Sebastian is saved by the good efforts of his master's daughter, the beautiful and tender Kara whom he determines to try to convert to Christianity. Sebastian was a Roman Catholic,

1. In Edinburgh University Library, catalogued 2f. 10, 13-14.

however, and, tolerant though the Porters were, and ready to admit that there could be good Catholics, they disliked Roman Catholicism as a creed. So we read that, despite Kara's wish to please Sebastian,

.... her clear reason could not blind itself to the monstrous system of Popery: unhappily the young monarch was unqualified to remove this veil from the simple beauty of Christianity. (II, II, 86)

Time passes; first Kara arranges for Gaspar to get back to Portugal, and then eventually, Sebastian's ransom is arranged - though he does not know that to ensure it, Kara has had to promise to marry a Syrian grandee. His return, incognito, to his own country brings, however, the shock of finding that the woman he had hoped to marry had been unfaithful to him even before he left Portugal, and that he is not wanted by the nobles - by some because they cannot forgive the deaths he caused, by others because they are faring better under the new régime. There seems nothing to be done, therefore, but to go to Brazil, where a friend of his is Vice-regent, and where Gaspar has already gone.

Few journeys in the Porters' novels are without incident and this is no exception. First comes a sea battle with a Turkish ship in which the Portuguese are victors, giving an opportunity for Sebastian to insist that mercy be shown to the conquered, and the wounded cared for (II, V, 200-201). And his conduct is rewarded, for by a remarkable coincidence this is the very ship which is carrying Kara to her marriage. She is, of course, only too happy to go with Sebastian to Brazil, but, at this point, is shown to be, though an infidel, more virtuous than he, for on his talking in angry terms about his disloyal nobles and vowing revenge,

Her soft nature trembled and grieved; for it was to this intemperance of feeling, this want of self-government, that all his misfortunes were attributable. (II, V, 220)

He needs still to learn - and in the process must suffer - but in a much more dramatic way than do any of Jane Austen's learning characters. His next ordeal, for example, is to be caught in a storm - which is quite vividly

described:

.... the vessel, with her masts swept by the board was lying a mere hull upon mountainous waves; through the blackness of midnight, by repeated sheets of lightning the whole ocean was momentarily discovered, dark, raging, covered with horrid foam, - now swelling to the clouds, now sinking as if into the depths of perdition.

(II, VI, 225-6)

The ship is wrecked, but Sebastian gets to land, and though he is again captured, he is bought this time by a kindly Moslem master, who, having tried in vain to convert him, gives him his freedom. At this, Sebastian decides to offer his services to the Persians, who are at war with Turkey, hoping thereby to gain the means not only to rescue Kara (who also survived the wreck) but also to regain his crown and glory:

.... Sebastian's proud nature was yet but imperfectly amended; he had to suffer and to learn still more.

(III, I, 40)

After a highly successful campaign against the Turks, Sebastian does indeed rescue Kara, who, he finds, has been converted to Lutheran Christianity by a captured English slave. Regarding this as a "false creed" (III, V, 163) Sebastian again tries to convert her to catholicism - instead of which, she manages to convert him. "Behold him then, a convert to truth!" exclaimed Miss Porter dramatically (III, VI, 183) - here departing not only from history but from legend.

She was now careful to provide a reason for Don Sebastian's not returning immediately to Portugal, but choosing to spend so many years after this in exile in Brazil; it is because Philip II seems secure on the Portuguese throne, and Sebastian, a changed man, refuses to cause bloodshed in order to displace him (III, VIII, 238). Instead, he lives among the poor, helping them as much as he can. Eventually, however, political events seem to make a relatively peaceful return possible, and the novel now turns to diplomatic intriguing on his behalf - in which Elizabeth of England is involved.

Sebastian had, of course, to be rejected by Portugal in the novel, since no claimant to be the missing king was ever validated - and in explaining the reasons for his rejection, Maria showed some ingenuity. She had clearly made

Sebastian become a Protestant because thus to her he was more perfect - but this is also given as the reason why the Pope and other leading figures refuse to acknowledge him. And because he will not return to Catholicism, he is made to endure a public trial in Italy, convicted as an impostor, confined in a "loathsome dungeon" and then given a life sentence in the galleys, to which he is taken, in degradation, on an ass - an incident which is noted as "an historical fact" (IV, VI, 213). He does eventually prove his identity, in a dramatic recognition scene on a galley, but, sickened, gives up his claim to the throne, leaving Europe, sadly, alone, as Kara, broken with suffering, has died, and his daughter is staying to marry a Portuguese noble.

But this is not quite the end, for there is a concluding chapter which is a kind of epilogue. Thirty years later, Sebastian, now a very old man, returns to Portugal, where his grand-daughter and her husband, Juan, are leaders of a revolution for which the country is now ready ".... better to die nobly, than to live meanly!" says Juan (IV, "Conclusion", 294) - providing a neat but unemphasised contrast between his asking men to fight for their freedom, and Sebastian's youthful urgings to his countrymen to join him in wars of conquest. Sebastian and his grand-daughter Luisa sit, tensely, listening to distant sounds from the city:

.... shouts, shrieks, the clamour of alarm bells, the
trampling of horses, the beat of drums
(IV, Conclusion, 313)

- then with news of the success of the almost bloodless coup, Sebastian, ready to die, blesses Juan and Luisa, taking their baby son in his arms:

His eyes closed as he spoke, and Luisa, starting
up to catch her falling babe, discovered that the soul
had indeed ascended to happiness and its God!
(IV, Conclusion, 320)

Sentimental though this sounds, the sentimentality throughout is somewhat leavened by the remorseless descriptions of Sebastian's sufferings - and though the piety is out of fashion, even now there can be no doubting the writer's

sincerity. All the emotional stops are pulled, and, by the end of volume four, the reader has been brought to a pitch at which he can just accept the ending as he might accept a similar scene in an opera. In 1809 it was lauded - and the novel continued to be reprinted till the 1880's.

With The Hungarian Brothers, then, Don Sebastian set the pattern for Maria's novels for the next thirteen years. In each she took a model hero or a hero with much to learn, or both, who, whatever the political and historical situation they are in, are expected, besides encompassing, or learning to encompass, all the more prosaic virtues, to eschew worldly ambition, to fight for national independence only, never for conquest, to show courage in battle, while recognising that the higher glory lies in rejecting unnecessary bloodshed, to put aside all thoughts of vengeance towards their enemies, to show mercy to the defeated and pity for all unfortunates, to recognise that there are good men of other creeds, and to put other's welfare always before their own - even to the point of risking their lives, if need be. It is understandable, then, that Jane Austen's subtle balancing of the code of moral values to which her society paid lip service against the code of material values on which it largely acted, should have been quite overshadowed - or even, since she used comedy as her vehicle, to have gone unnoticed. Anne Romilly, for example, was possibly thinking of novels like Don Sebastian when she said of Mansfield Park that it was good to "amuse an idle hour", but thought it lacking in "that elevation of virtue, something beyond nature, that gives the greatest charm to a novel."¹

It was to be five years before Maria had her next novel ready for the press - though in that time she also wrote a book of poems, Ballad Romances, and Other Poems (1811) and a book for children, Tales of Pity, (1814), these

1. Romilly - Edgeworth Letters, ed. S.H. Romilly, 92. Letter of 7 November 1814. In Critical Heritage, 12.

being "on fishing, shooting and hunting" and "intended to inculcate in the minds of youth sentiments of humanity towards the brute creation" - sentiments which she took care to give to most of the exemplary heroes of her books for adults. When The Recluse of Norway did appear, however, (also in 1814) its appearance was well timed, for though Miss Porter claimed in her preface to have chosen Norway merely as being "ground untrodden by other novel writers", the fact remains that two months before she began the novel, Norway had just gained its independence from Denmark - and anyone as interested in politics as she, would have been aware of the possibility of an attack by Sweden - which did happen and was going on when the book was published. Not only was this a book with a novel setting, therefore, it was a book about a country currently struggling for its independence.

As always, Maria had done some historical research for her novel, though on this occasion she did not indicate her sources. She had also, however, obviously had to rely on books for her topographical information - and the beginning is written in almost text book style:

The long line of coast which forms one boundary to the kingdom of Norway, is broken into shapes of picturesque wildness. In some parts, its black and perpendicular rocks present a gigantic wall that has defied the storms of ages; while in others, the ocean, penetrating far inland, forms interior seas, amongst forests tenanted by wild beasts alone, and mountains whose heads are covered with eternal snows.
(I, I, 1)

Thereafter the possibilities of delineating a very different way of life in this country are made little of, and what local colour there is tends to be tacked on from time to time, rather than permeating the whole. Indeed, a reading of the novels of Maria Porter and her sister makes it clear why the Irishness of Lady Morgan's novels, and the Scottish flavour of Mrs. Hamilton's Cottagers of Glenburnie, and the Highlands section of Mary Brunton's Discipline, seemed to so many of their contemporaries to be so brilliantly portrayed.

The period in which the novel is set is the early eighteenth century. Norway is under Danish sovereignty, and the plot makes much of the intriguing of a Count Lauvenheim (a fictitious character) to get himself the vice-regency of Norway. Portrayed as intelligent, and basically a good man, he is corrupted by his ambition, that "fatal passion" (I, V, 174). One of his two dazzlingly beautiful daughters is loved by the hero, Theodore, a foundling. Noble beyond belief, in appearance as well as in character, Theo is used as a painfully pointed contrast to his foster-brother, Heinrich. Unlike the latter, who is utterly careless of his parents' needs and feelings,

.... The free service of the heart which an affectionate son pays to a father, alike in poverty as in power was, in Theodore's estimation, a sacred and ennobling tribute.
(IV, III, 117)

Deeply pious, Theo refuses to consider joining the army as his career:

" I dislike the profession of arms from principle ... Yet, I hope I should not be found wanting did the country I lived in, or the friends I lived with, require defence."
(II, II, 81-82)

He refuses to kill animals, except for necessary food (e.g. I, IV, 133-4) and detests the custom which encourages one man to kill another in a duel.¹ Such qualities are, indeed, admirable, but Theo's rectitude is rather too conscious, especially when he seeks out his foster-brother, who has left his simple country home to make his fortune in the city, and lectures him on the dissipated life he is leading - or when, on Heinrich's finally reaching the depths of degradation, and coming home to find forgiveness and to die, he reflects with awe on

.... the power and the goodness of that beneficent Being who can thus turn afflictions into blessings, and make our very sins sow the seeds of additional piety.
(III, III, 137)

As has already been noted, Theo is a foundling - a common enough convention of the romance of the time, but here used to rather more purpose than usual,

1. Duelling was especially hateful to the Evangelicals, not only because of the risk of taking life involved, but also because it was "the ultimate expression of the code of honour of the fashionable world." See Muriel Jaeger, Before Victoria, 46.

for this allows for him to be really the grandson of a Spanish nobleman, and his lengthy visit to Spain to trace his relatives gives an opportunity both for a change of scene and for the inclusion of details of an additional political crisis, in the contest between Philip of France and Duke Charles of Austria for succession to the throne of Spain. There is thus, without doubt, an abundance of political activity in the novel - but it is quite submerged by incidents contrived to show Theodore's nobility - as when, being "too Christian for one wish of revenge to enter his heart" (II, IV, 155) he forgives and helps a jealous Spanish cousin who, regarding him as an interloper, has tried to harm him. Much of this is dull in the extreme; nevertheless one reviewer of the novel gave it as his opinion that it was "impossible to rise from its perusal without feeling ourselves both wiser and better."¹

And no less pious is the beautiful Ellisef, whom Theo loves. During the course of the novel, through a series of very contrived misunderstandings, he seems lost to her, but at the end, all is explained, and she goes into "a transport of pious effusions" (IV, IX, 326), believing that

.... He that suffereth not a sparrow to fall to the ground unnoticed, had surely conducted her to her present happiness, by a chain of slight circumstances which the unthinking so often call accidents. (IV, IX, 325)

Not only are the characters given such thoughts, the novel is full of authorial intrusions to moralise, for example on truth and prudence (II, II, 86-7), on life and death (II, IV, 163-4) on revenge and ambition (III, I, 23) - and the hackneyed plot is further spun out with descriptions of the emotional states, the transports, swoonings and weepings of the absolutely lifeless characters. Yet, oddly, Maria believed that her characters took on a life of their own:

.... Let us do what we will, the stubborn materials often take a direction completely opposite to what we had intended; incidents necessarily following the bent of the characters from which they are supposed to originate; and these latter, as frequently, develope[sic] contrary to our original conceptions.²

1. GM (December 1832) 577.

2. Roche Blanche (1822). Address to the Reader viii.

There were, indeed, many who believed that she was "entitled to rank among the best of our living novelists"¹ as far as characterisation was concerned, her portraits being said to have "clear individuality, and the vividness of real life".² Crabb Robinson, however, was much nearer to what were to be later judgments when in February 1815 he wrote in his journal:

.... After dinner was seduced to read first volume [sic] of A. M. Porter's Recluse of Norway, a very moderate novel. Interesting indeed, for what novel is not? but with very inferior pretensions. The style wretched [sic], the characters coarsely drawn, the sentiments commonplace, and the descriptions, though lively and spirited, incorrect and monotonous.³

In fact one feels, somehow, that Maria was not very interested in Norway, nor had anything in its policies given her imagination the spur it needed to write at all vividly. However, in 1814 Malta came under the sovereignty of Britain as a result of the Treaty of Paris, with a resulting burst of interest in the island and its history. And one story stood out above all others, that of the valiant four-months-long defence of the island against the Turks by the Knights of St. John in 1565, under the leadership of Jean de Valette. Here was a tale of veritable Christian heroes, suffering and dying for each other and for the faith - and one Maria tried to record in her The Knight of St. John (1817). In it, war in itself, in accordance with her principles, is not glorified, a typical comment being that

.... the greatest glory a soldier or sailor can obtain is to give up a brilliant action when the same object may be reached by a less showy and less dangerous road.
(II, IV, 73)

Nevertheless, she believed that war against an aggressor was justified - and the heroic stand of the Knights obviously fired her imagination. Here, for instance, is her description of the ending of the siege of St. Elmo, when a

1. CR 3, 18 (December 1809) 356.

2. GM (August 1832) 183.

3. Edith Morley ed., Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers, I, 162.

handful of knights, having for days fought off a great Turkish force, prepare...
for the last assault;

.... Even the wounded and the sick prayed to find death,
not by lingering pain or murderous blows in their beds,
but where they had so often sought it, in front of the
enemy: they were therefore placed in the ranks with their
less disabled associates.

Thus passed the dismal night.

When day dawned, the infidels came on to the assault with
the fury and the yells of demons. What was to withstand
them? Not a ruined fortress, beaten to the ground! - not a
handful of bleeding and dismembered men, whose brave souls
were already flitting away!

Yet did these unconquerable men continue to fill up the
breach with their bodies, till one by one they fell under
the ruthless battle-axes of the enemy.

(III, III, 60)

Nor did she spare to include the horror of the Turkish leader's order, after
the battle, for "the bodies of such as were found with remaining life, to be
ripped open, and their hearts torn out" (III, IV, 63) . There was no need to
exaggerate the drama of such a historically recorded event, and it is easy to
see how, to readers who enjoyed her work, that of Jane Austen must have seemed
very tame indeed.

There are several such vividly described battles, in which the element
of selflessness on the part of the Knights is stressed:

.... The Christians thought not of themselves; nobler and
stronger feelings inflamed them; they fought for the
preservation of each other and the continuance of their
Order.

(III, V, 96)

So engrossed, in fact, does she seem to have become in her source material,
in the parts pertaining to the fighting during the siege, that she allowed
truth to overcome her desire to show the Christians behaving with Christ-like
nobility, revealing that they were quite capable of using horrific means to
gain a victory, by describing their "new and dreadful weapon of destruction ..."

.... circles of fire composed of combustible hoops dipped
in blazing oils

and the

shrieks and groans of the miserable wretches expiring of
the torments they caused (III, III, 31-2)

- a passage which resulted in her being censured by The Monthly Magazine for describing conduct best forgotten.¹

This, however, is by no means all of the novel; the defence of Malta provides one third of the subject matter; the rest is a sentimental romance of a rather mawkish variety, in which the high minded, noble, and "singularly -beautiful" Giovanni (I, VII, 116), distressed that a law suit has given to his family property and lands once owned by the family of one Cesario, offers the latter friendship - which at first is refused, false pride being something Cesario must learn to conquer. Giovanni perseveres, and Cesario begins to love him. A complication arises, however, when he mistakenly gets the impression that his friend is attempting to seduce the affections of the girl he loves, and strikes him. Nobly eschewing the duel which the code of honour demands of him, Giovanni goes to fight in Malta, and Cesario follows him there, when he discovers his error. Needless to say, the two risk their lives both for each other, and for their fellow soldiers² - and, when the siege of Malta is over, there is a long sequence when, Giovanni having been captured, Cesario plans to free him, in the process finding and falling in love with Giovanni's long-lost sister.

The novel is thus disappointing to a twentieth century reader - though it does show a slight development in technique, in the amount of reflection and conflict in the mind of the hero who has to learn, which the reader is allowed to share - a development heralding the greater changes and improvements in Maria Porter's technique in general, in the 1820's.³ And it was admired in its day: according to William Jerdan, Princess Charlotte liked it so much "that she made it her choice book when reading English with her husband, Prince

1. MM 44 (November 1817) 346-7. On the other hand, six years earlier, Jane's portrayal of the bloodthirsty Kirkpatrick in The Scottish Chiefs was praised as historically accurate (BC 37 March 1811, 250).

2. e.g. III, IX, 183. Disregard of personal survival, in the interests of fellow soldiers and the Order, is said to become characteristic of the Knights - e.g. III, IV, 75; III, V, 96.

3. Oddly, however, her last novels do not seem to have sold nearly as well as her earlier ones.

Leopold" - it being the last book they read together before her death.¹

Certainly, whatever its weaknesses, it was infinitely superior to her next novel, The Fast of St. Magdalen where all her worst characteristics are seen in almost caricatured form. Set in Italy, it covers the period 1508-1512 and has a background of rivalry between the great city states, and the danger of French invasion. When the novel begins, the Medicis have, for the time being, fallen from power, and are outlawed. The heroine, Ippolita, is a Medici, and the hero, Valombrosa, is a member of another aristocratic Florentine family - the only relevance of the historical setting being in relation to the course of their love affair.² Action there is in plenty, but of the "Perils of Pauline" kind, with the delicate and circumspect heroine being constantly harrowed and persecuted and the spotless hero not only being accused of being illegitimate, and, therefore, not the rightful heir to his estates, and blackmailed about this, but also being charged, falsely, with treachery to the leaders of Florence. At times this gets too much for him, and on one occasion he collapses, falling "perfectly insensible" at the heroine's feet - whereupon (so lacking in a sense of the ludicrous is Miss Porter in this novel) Ippolita, with a resourcefulness better fitted to burlesque, takes the flowers out of a vase and pours the water in it over him, to revive him (II, XIII, 6).

Needless to say, though there are enough accounts of seductions, adulteries and secret marriages within the tale to satisfy those in search of such excitement, relations between hero and heroine are utterly chaste. Both are devout, and supplications to "the Almighty Being" come thick and fast - again unintentionally often causing a smile, as when Ippolita, contemplating likely rape, is said to comfort herself

1. William Jerdan, op. cit., Memoir of A.M. Porter, p. 5.

2. There had been a love interest in The Knight of St. John, but it had been played down, the emphasis being on brotherly love.

.... by repeating the promises of Him who bade his fainting disciple walk the waves. (II, XXI, 289-90)

Nonsense indeed! Nevertheless, according to The Gentleman's Magazine,

.... In all her writings - though in none of them is it more apparent than in "The Fast of St. Magdalen[sic]- Anna Maria Porter evinced the finest dramatic tact.¹

It is evident, in fact, from the popularity of this and her other novels that she, like her sister, provided plots that were not only exciting enough for the reader who wanted nothing more than escapism, but were also sufficiently anchored to historical facts to seduce the more serious reader; moreover, because of their lofty idealism, their characters, too, were highly admired throughout the period, and for some years afterwards. The heroines are all pious, filial and devoted, like the heroes - but in most of the novels it is the men on whom attention is chiefly focused (which was possibly another factor in widening the Porters' readership in a period when so many women were writing novels with women as the central characters). There were, of course, some who found heroes like Thaddeus, Giovanni, Louis and Wallace too good to be true - but even many of these had nothing but praise for what the reviewers called the "beau idéal"² of character, the general view seeming to be that:

.... Romance is certainly allied to Poetry; and its value is not to be measured by any positive rules of practical utility, but by its general tendency to ennoble human nature, and by its direct influence on our moral and religious sensibilities.

- or that

.... if we find ... that the colour is a little too celestial for any mortal portrait ... we ought to admire and respect the example ... given to us, rather than quarrel with such an example of what man once was³

Many, however, did not question the truth to life of the characters:

Warren Hastings wondered how it was possible that Jane could, at such an

1. GM 102 (December 1832) 577-578.

2. e.g. GM 87 (February 1817) 145. One recalls that Jane Austen's characters in Northanger Abbey and Persuasion were regarded by at least one reader as "galleries of disagreeables" (Edith Morley ed., op. cit., 625. Entry for 23.9.1842).

3. GM 87 (July-December Supp. 1817) 614; GM (December 1832) 576.

early age have known so much of the human heart and of human conduct.¹

Likewise, it was said of Maria, that with regard to "discrimination of character"

.... which must be considered at once the quality most difficult of attainment and most worthy of admiration, Miss Porter is entitled to rank among the best of our living novelists.²

Such statements merely underline Mrs. Inchbald's ironic comment that "characters and events merely as they [were] in real life" were "beneath the concern of a true voracious novel-reader", for whom "a novel should be like a novel".³

For most nineteenth-century readers, however, the characters and events of the Porters' novels were laudable in creating a moral tone which must have seemed impeccable. It was possible for Maria Edgeworth to be faulted as a moralist because of her lack of reference to religious principle (this, on one occasion, being called her "original sin")⁴ but not they. On the other hand, they could not be charged with fanaticism: the religious note in their novels, though pervasive is tolerant and reasonable, and while the characters are frequently said to pray, or put their trust in God, this is usually something they do privately; thus the sisters were able to avoid the charge of "preaching" levelled at writers like Mary Brunton by opponents of the Evangelical movement.

They knew how to please, too, by (fashionably) deprecating a great show of sensibility, while yet maintaining a high emotional tone, as a result of depicting their characters as feeling great emotion. The characters are presented in situations which keep them - and presumably kept early nineteenth-

1. Introduction to 1831 edition of The Scottish Chiefs, xx.

2. CR s.3. 18 (December 1809) 356.

3. The Artist (June 1807) 12-13.

4. See QR 2 (August 1809) 148 and ER 8 (June 1812) 608.

century readers, in a constant state of inner turmoil. We read of them "fluctuating between resentment and misery" (KJ II, I, 4), "maddened by successive agonies of doubt, conviction, and despair" (KJ II, VI, 126), suffering a "mixed transport of doubt and hope, of incredulity and rapture" (KJ III, VII, 127), being "lately all confidence ... now all apprehension" (KJ III, XIII, 286), "completely unnerved by so sudden a transition from despair to hope" (KJ III, XIV, 318), enduring "powerful and struggling passions" (KJ III, XIV, 341), "trembling with a strange emotion" (SC I, VI, 146), "in a paroxysm of mental agony" (SC I, IV, 113-4), "hardly rational from the contending emotions of horror and hope" (SC I, XIV, 294), "exhausted by the variety of ... emotions" (SC II, VI, 129) or being torn by "ten thousand varying emotions" (SC II, XII, 357). Such expressions, taken at random from one novel of each writer, can be found in almost every chapter of the novels written before 1821. And though in accordance with their code of "controlled sensibility", the characters do not often weep in public, they do so so frequently in private, that it became necessary to invent an almost endless supply of expressions to describe this, in some attempt to avoid monotony. We read of eyes "wet with tears", "drowned in tears", "blinded with tears", "bathed in tears", "suffused in tears", "gushing into tears". Tears can be "scalding" or "bitter" - or "delicious". Of a character we might read that he "wept like a child", "wept to suffocation", that "tears suddenly covered his eyes", "tears welled down his cheeks", "tears formed anew". And the emotional effect is sustained by the use of an emotive vocabulary most of which rarely, much of which never, appears in Jane Austen's novels, favourite words, used over and over again, being agony, agonised, anguish, anguished, agitated, agitation, affecting, beat, beating, bitter, devoted (meaning sacrificed) distracted, distress, distressing, emotion, glided, glowing, grief, honour, melancholy, melting, noble, nobility, pulses, pang, quivered, quivering, shuddered, shuddering, sensibility, sorrow, thrill, thrilling, thrilled, transport, tremulous, tremulously, trembled, trembling, throbbed, throbbing,

tumultuous, tumultuously, woful[sic] - and, less frequently, pensive, rivet, rivetted, totter and tottering. Jane was also especially fond of "paroxysm".

Such language, of course, was not peculiar to the Porters; indeed, so common was it that, in an amusing article giving advice on how to avoid writing a bad novel, Mrs. Inchbald, who certainly was not aiming her shafts specifically at Jane and Maria, touched on just the kind of vocabulary they used:

Take care to reckon up the many times you make use of the words "Amiable", "Interesting", "Elegant", "Sensibility", "Delicacy", "Feeling". Count each of these words over before you send your manuscript to be printed, and be sure to erase half the number you have written; - you may erase again when your first proof comes from the press - again, on having a revise - and then mark three or four, as mistakes of the printer, in your Errata.

Examine likewise, and for the same purpose, the various times you have made your heroine blush, and your hero turn pale - the number of times he has pressed her hand to his "trembling lips", and she his letters to her "beating heart" - the several times he has been "speechless" and she "all emotion", the one "struck to the soul;" the other "struck dumb".

The lavish use of "tears", both in "showers" and "floods", should next be scrupulously avoided; though many a gentle reader will weep on being told that others are weeping, and require no greater cause to excite their compassion.¹

Both Jane and Maria were, in fact, perfectly capable of writing naturally, as they were to demonstrate after 1820; but before that the narrative style of their novels is highly emotional, and the speech style, for the most part, high flown and exclamatory. There are unnatural soliloquies, as in The Fast of St. Magdalen when the hero gets a letter from his loved one:

"Mine, mine once more!" he exclaimed aloud, straining the letter to his bounding breast.

(III, XXIV, 93)

Strong emotion is also frequently indicated by the use of broken sentences:

"Giovanni!" exclaimed Cesario on his entrance, "now do I demand all the succours of your friendship! - help me to understand Beatrice - to understand myself - what is

1. The Artist I (June 13 1807) 10.

it I have done? - am I indeed deserving? - think for me
- judge me - for I can no longer think!"
(KJ II, v, 97)

Even in quieter mood the characters often tend to make speeches at, rather than talk to, each other - and theatricality of speech is accompanied by theatricality of gesture as characters wring their hands, stretch forth their hands, clasp their hands together, throw up their arms, gnash their teeth, throw themselves on their knees, or cast their eyes to heaven.¹ Such theatricality was common: The Critical Review, for example, drily referred to the heroine of Mary Brunton's Self-Control as clasping her hands "à la Siddons" and noted the "due stage effect" of her subsequent actions.² Nor did the Porters entirely escape censure: each, in reviews otherwise praising her novels, is at times faulted for her "false ornament" and for "mistaking... inflation for elegance or sublimity".³ Much more common, however, are references to Maria's "elegant pen", to the "graceful ease and fluency" of her style and to Jane's "manly and energetic style" and her "tone of pathos which is real eloquence".⁴

That such writing should have brought the sisters a readership which included not just sentimental ladies but politicians, members of the royal family, and respected literary figures, says much about the taste of the age

1. At least three of their novels were actually adapted for the stage: Jane's Field of the Forty Footsteps (1828) was dramatised by Percy Farren and produced in 1830; Maria's Village of Mariendorpt (1821) was dramatised by J. Sheridan Knowles, and produced in 1838; and, according to William Jerdan, op. cit., Memoir of A.M. Porter, p. 5, Maria's Roche Blanche (1822) was also dramatised. Indeed, despite their piety and association with Evangelicals both women actually wrote plays. Maria's The Fair Fugitive was produced at Covent Garden, May 16, 1803; Jane's Switzerland was produced February 1819, and her Owen, Prince of Powys January 1822.

2. CR s.3.24 (October 1811) 164.

3. SM 72 (April 1810) 282; CR s.3. 18 (December 1809) 363.

4. MM 44 (November 1817) 346; GM (August 1832) 183; MM 16 (Suppl. January 25 1804) 634; GM 87 (February 1817) 145.

and the originality and independence of Jane Austen. Warren Hastings, who (to her gratification) was appreciative of Jane Austen's novels, went so far as to say of those of the Porters:

.... They are like a good drama, and will live when the author and the present audience are no more

As well as the Prince Regent, Princess Charlotte, Prince Leopold and the Duke of Clarence (later William IV) admired their work.² Their readers included Shelley, Mary Brunton, Mary Russell Mitford, Leigh Hunt, Crabb Robinson, Carlyle and members of Jane Austen's family - though she herself left no comment on them.³ And repeatedly one finds the words "interest" or "interesting" applied to their novels: they succeeded because they offered not only novelty, the "highest seasoned food" which a reviewer of Northanger Abbey and Persuasion thought was the only thing which could satisfy the taste of the age,⁴ but moral uplift, combined with an affirmation of more prosaic, generally accepted standards of conduct. Kindly paternalistic, they yet believed firmly in all men's doing their duty "in that state of life in which it pleas[d] God to call them,"⁵ they stressed filial duty as one of the highest virtues - and romantic love as an emotion which should grow slowly and be based on mutual esteem:

" Surely love comes not in a whirlwind to seize the soul at once; but grows by degrees according to the developement[sic] of the virtues of the object and the freedom we give ourselves in their contemplation."⁶

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1. See Jane Austen's Letters, 320 (letter of 15.9.1813) and Anne K. Elwood, Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England II, 295.
 2. Allibone 1646.
 3. See above p.211 and below p. 280 for Shelley and Mary Brunton. For M.R. Mitford, see Arthur S. Collins, The Profession of Letters, 94 and Augustus G.K. L'Estrange, Life of Mary Russell Mitford I, 217. See also "Blue Stocking Revels" in Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt, ed. H.S. Mitford 176-192, and Jane Austen's Letters 228.
 4. Unsigned notice, B EM n.s. 2 (May 1818) 453 (In Critical Heritage 266).
 5. SC, 1831 edition II, XXV, 234.
 6. Edwin to Lady Mar, SC IV, IV, 109. Only rarely did they allow for love at first sight, such as that of Valombrosa for Ippolita in The Fast of St. Magdalen, and Bruce for Isabella in The Scottish Chiefs.

Nevertheless, the Porters were perfectly willing to reveal the passionate longings of their women, and to portray love scenes - though their crudity underlines Jane Austen's wisdom in not attempting them:

.... Ippolita felt herself snatched to Valombrosa's breast. "This first - this last kiss!" he cried, as with impetuous force he sealed his lips on her's.
(FM III, XXVI, 231)

Such passages must, however, have made Jane Austen's novels seem very prim - while yet not offending by the sensuality many found in the work of other novelists, such as Charlotte Dacre.

There was, in fact, very little that public taste required that they did not provide, even, as has been seen, food for lovers of gothic horror, in grim details of death and its aftermath. Made respectable (unlike the horrors of Matthew Lewis) by their intention to emphasise the horrors of war, such scenes must have appealed to some readers merely for their sensational value.¹

Reasons then, for the popularity of the Porters are not hard to find; but their contribution to the art of the novel is more difficult to assess. As was noted earlier, with regard to Jane, the Porters cannot be regarded as historical novelists of the same kind as Scott; because their overriding purpose was to provide ideal characters, they produced pictures of perfection with little psychological depth, characters one cannot believe existed in any age. Moreover, with few exceptions, the attitudes with which the characters are imbued are those of Regency England - a fault in the writing of historical novels of which Scott was very aware, saying in the dedicatory epistle to Ivanhoe:

.... It is one thing to make use of the language and sentiments which are common to ourselves and our forefathers, and it is another to invest them with the sentiments and dialect exclusively proper to their descendants.

1. Nevertheless Jane Porter was certainly not an "exponent of Gothic romance" as Devendra Varma claims in The Gothic Flame, 173.

The Porters' heroes take part in national events, and the historical situation is presented in every novel in no small detail, but the impact of movements in history, of political and social change, on the major characters and on the populace at large is scarcely felt. There is, naturally, some slight indication of such changes - as in the plight of the Polish exiles in Thaddeus and of the peasants in The Scottish Chiefs - but personal problems tend usually to have most prominence and for the most part the historical data merely provide backgrounds against which characters representing various attitudes play out dramas of varying degrees of intrigue, which are themselves only the vehicles to carry the theme that was almost obsessive with them, namely the nature of true nobility.

But when this has been said, it needs also to be granted that in the nineteenth century there was general recognition that the romances of Jane Porter "were a great improvement over any imaginative treatment of history that had yet appeared", a view which is still heard today;¹ and though it is usually Jane's name that is mentioned in late nineteenth-century criticism, Anna, whose work was so similar, cannot be denied this small meed of praise. There seems no reason to doubt their claims to have spared no effort in getting historical details for their novels, Jane, for instance, telling how she was complimented on the accuracy of her portrayal of the Polish situation in Thaddeus, saying that she had consulted "almost every writing extant" on her subject for The Scottish Chiefs, vouching for the accuracy of the facts in The Pastor's Fire-side and acknowledging her use of private documents of the royal family for Duke Christian,² while Anna repeatedly made claims such as " it has always been my principle never to violate historical truth;"

1. Wilbur Cross, The Development of the English Novel, (1889) 112. See also J. Baldwin, English Literature and Literary Criticism, Prose (1883) 177, quoted by Charles Moulton in The Library of Literary Criticism V, 674; Margaret Oliphant, The Literary History of England Vol II 275; William Jerdan, National Portrait Gallery V, Memoir of Jane Porter, p 4; Robert Hume, "Gothic Versus Romantic" PMLA 84 (1969) 283.

2. Thaddeus of Warsaw, 1831 Paris edition, xiii; Scottish Chiefs, Preface V; The Pastor's Fire-Side, introduction to 1832 edition in 1845 edition xv; A.K. Elwood, op. cit., 290.

and "I am not aware of having to apologise for any material alteration in historical facts and dates."¹ But in addition to this, they did not make the mistake, while trying to be factually accurate, of being merely instructive, as was Mrs. Hamilton in her Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina (1804) or dull, as was Joseph Strutt in his Queenhoo Hall (1808). Despite their desire for accuracy, they were quite willing if the shaping of their new novels seemed to demand it, to make alterations to historical facts,² and showed some concern for focus, indicating the essence of a political situation by concentrating on a few major episodes. And as a final word on the Porters as historical novelists, it seems only just to them to bear in mind that it has been only rarely in the nineteenth century that a British writer of historical fiction has approached Scott's stature;³ it might even perhaps be said that it was the Porters rather than Scott who were the forerunners of such novelists as Harrison Ainsworth, Bulwer Lytton and Charles Kingsley.

In addition, as far as the novel in general is concerned, their attempts to describe foreign scenes for their readers, not vaguely, for emotional effect, but more precisely, to evoke the particular character of a region cannot be disregarded. Maria, for example, while admitting in the preface to Don Sebastian that she had described scenes of which she had only read, yet claimed that she had "endeavoured to give as faithful a picture as was possible", saying that she had even consulted travel books written in the period of which she was writing, rather than modern ones, in order to give an impression of various places "as they appeared in the sixteenth century"

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1. Recluse of Norway, Preface vi; Roche Blanche, Address to Reader, x.
 2. e.g. Anna said in her Preface to Don Sebastian vi, that in some places she had been obliged to antedate an event in her novel, and Jane in the Preface to The Scottish Chiefs acknowledged her telescoping of time at the end of the work.
 3. Hugh Walpole provided an interesting discussion on this point in "The Historical Novel in England since Sir Walter Scott" in Sir Walter Scott Today, ed. Herbert Grierson, 161-188.

(Preface vii). It is true that, despite their care, they still convey little if anything of the atmosphere of the many places of which they jointly wrote. Nevertheless they did, in a much less vague way than that of Mrs. Radcliffe and her followers, try to take their readers not only to France and Italy, (those quite commonplace settings for novels of the period), but to many other European countries also, and to Africa, and must have been in the vanguard of those attempting to widen the scope of the novel in this direction. Their early readers felt this, and even as late as 1877 we find Jerom Murch saying of the first part of Thaddeus of Warsaw:

.... so lifelike are all the scenes of the book that the world believed the author must have lived in Poland

In the same way William Jerdan said of Maria:

.... The accuracy of her information with regard to all these countries preserves truth in every detail of their national or moral qualities.¹

This is far from the truth - yet at their best, their natural description was better than that of many of their contemporaries, as in the following when Jane described a storm in Scotland:

.... A dismal hue overspread the country; the thunder yet roared in dismal peals, and the lightning came down in such vast sheets that the carriers were often obliged to set down their burden and cover their eyes to regain their sight. A shrill wind pierced the slight covering of the litter, and blowing it aside discovered the rough outlines of the distant hills, visible through the mist, or the gleaming of some wandering water as it glided away over the cheerless waste. (SC I, XIII, 286)

And lastly, however blatant their moralising may seem to later generations, their attempt to replace strident didacticism almost entirely by example, also needs to be seen in the light of much of the fiction of their contemporaries to be appreciated. To replace "telling" by "showing", they produced what Shelley was to call "idealisms of moral excellence"² which, however incredible

1. Jerom Murch, Mrs. Barbauld and her Contemporaries, 36; William Jerdan, op. cit., "Memoir of A.M. Porter", 4.

2. P.B. Shelley, Preface to Prometheus Unbound.

they may seem today, were, in their own time, regarded as inspirational, and far from the Richardsonian model, as is indicated by the fact that the heroine of Mary Brunton's Self-Control (1811) in choosing Thaddeus as her ideal man, laughs heartily at the idea that she could ever have chosen Sir Charles Grandison.¹ Unlike the latter, the Porters' heroes glow with ardour:

" It is this enthusiasm in all he believes and feels that makes him what he is "

says a character of William Wallace (SC III, V, 128).²

This portrayal of idealistic passion was, in the early nineteenth century regarded as

.... perhaps the highest excellence of composition which can be possessed by a work of fancy. Wit, humour, description, are in their turn all pleasing; but they cannot communicate the same gratification which is afforded, when the high emotions and passions of the human heart are strongly and eloquently delineated.³

- and whereas Jane Austen was regarded as being entirely deficient in this respect, the Porters were seen as among the most successful. Nor did their different approach to using the novel as a means of improvement go unnoticed by contemporary readers, one being reported as having said to Jane of herself and Maria:

.... you made a field of your own - you and she came forward, the first to teach in such works - the first to inculcate Christianity in stories of romance. You came forth with doctrines, that there was and is, the same moral law for man as for woman; that no other is sanctioned by Heaven; you declared it boldly, and have sustained it steadily ... It struck us with its deserved force, and caused a new era among us ... I read your early works in my own youth. Thousands felt the same that I did, and everywhere acknowledged their effect - infusing the great doctrine of universal purity, without the formality of preaching it; teaching, in effect, by example.⁴

1. Self-Control, I, IX, 136.

2. This ardent passion, however, had always to be for the highest ends, and had never to result in mere impetuosity. Self-command is stressed throughout the novels.

3. SM 72 (April 1810) 282.

4. Anne K. Elwood, Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England II, 301-302.

In the light of the achievement of Jane Austen and later nineteenth-century novelists, this praise seems highly extravagant - but one needs to read some of the other "respectable" authors of the period, Laetitia Hawkins, Margaret Cullen, and their ilk, to see what was meant.

VIII

Thomas Skinner Surr 1770-1847

From the genteel, idealistic world of the sisters Porter, it is now necessary, in order to consider another direction taken by the early nineteenth-century novel, to turn to that of a writer who, reared in very different circumstances, produced novels which, though very similar in basic attitudes and values to theirs, were infinitely different in the way in which these values were promoted. The bright son of parents with no pretence to gentility, Thomas Skinner Surr was, with Coleridge, Lamb, and Hunt, a Christ's Hospital School boy, after which he became a clerk in the Bank of England.¹ Lack of a university education does not seem to have worried him - there are no scholarly allusions in his novels, no musings over old books; but what one does find, which is not evident in the writing of his more highly connected or more educated contemporaries, is a fascination with the minutiae of upper class life, which was to result in his producing detailed sketches of "fashionable" society some years before the usually recognised start of the so-called "Silver Fork School."²

As did the Porters with their new kind of historical romance, however, Surr appears to have evolved this kind of novel almost accidentally, for, though it has proved impossible to locate a copy of his first novel, Consequences (1796), its lack of popularity suggests that it had nothing new and interesting to offer.³ It seems, in fact, that it was only after having

1. See Biographical Appendix.

2. The period of public interest in the novel of high life is usually reckoned as being about twenty five years "roughly from 1825-1850". (See Matthew Rosa, The Silver Fork School, 7.) Byron Hall Gibson, The History from 1800-1832 of English Criticism of Prose Fiction says that "criticism of this short lived form was almost universally adverse" (p. 255).

3. Frank G. Black, The Epistolary Novel in the Late Eighteenth Century, 149, lists this as epistolary, but as he also lists Lady Morgan's O'Donnel and her O'Briens as epistolary (p. 110) it would seem that he was not able to read all the novels he included, and may likewise not have been able to locate a copy of Consequences. In the preface to A Winter in London, his fourth novel, Surr commented that two of his former novels had been favourably received. As this was certainly true of his second and third, it suggests that Consequences was not popular.

included a brief "sketch" of high society life in his second novel, and several in his third, that he realised the commercial potential of such material, the popularity of which Lord Ernle explained as follows:

.... challenged in their wealth, the old aristocracy
entrenched themselves behind their birth. To enter their
exclusive circle became a social ambition which Miss
Edgeworth ridiculed, especially in The Absentee.

Thus, whereas Gothic romances were once all the rage:

.... past are such terrible touches,
Our lips in derision we curl,
Unless we are told how a Duchess
Conversed with her cousin the Earl.¹

Almost certainly, then, Surr's astonishingly successful fourth novel, A Winter in London (1806) owed its nine editions in one year not so much to its moralising, or its far-fetched plot, as to the fact that a good third of the material had but the flimsiest connection with either, being purely "sketches of fashionable life". Nevertheless, while Surr's novels pointed the way to the short-lived "Silver Fork" or "Dandy" school (usually regarded as beginning with novels like Robert Plumer Ward's Tremaine, 1825), they were very different from them in an important respect; for though in A Winter in London

.... Instead of [being transported] to faery-land or
into the middle ages, [we] take a turn down Bond Street
or go through the mazes of the dance at Almack's²

- there is no intention merely of exciting admiration for "the folly, caprice, insolence and affectation of a certain class" or of teaching the public what to wear, where to stay, where to go - which was all Hazlitt thought the novels of the Dandy school did;³ Surr also wished to expound what might be called "progressive conservatism" and sound religious principle

1. Lord Ernle, The Light Reading of our Ancestors, 270. See also Arthur Bryant, The Age of Elegance 318-319.

2. W. Hazlitt, "The Dandy School" from Examiner, November 18, 1827, in The Complete Works of Wm. Hazlitt ed. P.P. Howe, vol. 20, p. 144.

3. W. Hazlitt, op. cit., 144. Although Mrs. Gore wrote in the Preface to her Sketch Book of Fashion, "The only apology admissible for a fashionable novel is the successful exposure of vices and follies daily and hourly generated by the corruptions of society" (quoted by Vineta Colby, Yesterday's Woman, 57) in fact the motive for writing seems, in the majority of cases, to have been the exploitation of interest in high life. Besides Ward, others of the school included Theodore Hook, Bulwer Lytton, Disraeli, Mrs. Gore and Lady Blessington.

This certainly seems to have been the purpose of his second novel, George Barnwell (1798), an adaptation of George Lillo's The London Merchant (1731). Taking advantage, apparently, of the fact that Lillo's play had just had a great revival, with Charles Kemble as George, and Mrs. Siddons as his mistress, Millwood, Surr used its story, but updated its action from Elizabethan times to his own day, making one of the characters, Mr. Mental, a disciple of Godwin (I, V, 33). During the course of the novel, Mental is brought to realise the danger of his ideas, and to believe

.... that REFORMATION is much better adapted to the
purposes of philanthropy than the best planned
REVOLUTION. (III, V, 69)

This was a political stance which Surr was largely to retain, one which saw the British constitution and government as the best in the world, class differences as inevitable - and the duty of the well-to-do as being to alleviate the lot of the poor. Of one rich family, "uneducated in any true principles of religion" (III, IX, 144) he wrote:

.... Instead ... of alleviating the consequences of that
inequality in society (which experience seems to pronounce
inevitable), the occupation of their lives was to increase
the splendor[sic], which dazzled—but never cheered the poor!
(III, IX, 144)

As for the irreligion of the fashionable world, this is brought out on George Barnwell's arrival in London; finding that "smart" people laughed at religion, "imperceptibly his mind became moulded into a compliance with fashionable life" (II, I, 2) - and in this, it would seem, Surr found the main reason for George's later crimes. Indeed, there is such an evangelical desire to "convert" the unthinking rich and "save" the unthinking bourgeoisie, not only in this, but in several of Surr's novels, combined with frequent invocations to the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Great Creator, and so on, and the attribution of events to Providence (with a fervent interest in charitable works and a loathing of the slave trade thrown in for good measure)¹

1. See Surr's Magic of Wealth II, V, 222, 227. These were not merely conservative attitudes, for the Anti-jacobin Review 48 (April 1815) 364 reproved him severely for his attitude to the slave trade.

that it is amusing to find him incorporating, as a typical evangelical, a stereotype of the enthusiast. Introduced in Mental's lengthy account of his past life, he is made one of the main reasons for his turning to Godwinism. So bigotted is he, for example, that on being told, of a set of plays, "they are the immortal Shakspear's" [sic], he replies:

"God forgive you, child! Immortal! Yes; he is, doubtless, in immortal torments. Here, Henry, take the immortal Shakspears away".
(I, VIII, 90)

In its plot, Surr's adaptation follows fairly closely that of Lillo's play (a tale of an honest apprentice seduced to crime by the schemes of his ruthless mistress Millwood)¹ though, presumably in order to provide three volumes, he added two major figures, Milwood's father, Mental, and her Italian lover and accomplice Zelotti, and the two separate sub-plots in which they feature. George, like Lillo's hero, finds the consolations of religion before his end, unlike Milwood, who dies when a blood vessel bursts as a result of her agonised (but unrepentant) mental torments in jail. Because of her father's attachment to the ideas of Godwin, she had lacked a Christian upbringing as a child, had been seduced, and had disappeared from her father's ken. This, told in flashback, is the background which has produced a woman utterly lacking in scruples. Indeed, having herself espoused the ideas of the new philosophers, she insists that "fixed principles" are unwise (I, VIII, 136-9) and scorns the need for marriage (II, VIII, 130-131). By far the most vital creation in the novel, she drives George from theft to forgery, and then to murder, using a technique of following scorn by tenderness, and alternating displays of fierce courage with appeals to his chivalry. Drawing all her strength from Lillo's creation, however, she is the only living character in George Barnwell - one might almost say in all of Surr's novels, for his concern in his writing always seems to have been with ideas rather than with people.

1. For no apparent reason he took an "l" from Lillo's spelling of her name.

Already suffering from this defect as a novelist, Surr was further hampered in his portrayal of character by his devotion to techniques of the theatre. As has already been noted, quite a strong influence from the theatre can be traced in many novels of the period, not least in the exaggerated speech style and gesture so necessary in the conditions in which plays by professional actors were usually performed, and which resulted in "ham" acting. Surr, who even regarded his important innovation in George Barnwell as being a reversal of the contemporary fashion for making plays from novels,¹ was no exception to this; here for example is Milwood's father, brooding (he thinks alone) over his wife's death. In order to allow George to learn about this, instead of his thoughts being conveyed, he is given a long unnatural soliloquy which George overhears, and of which the following is a typical passage:

..... he drew a pistol from his bosom - "This in a moment, brings me to my - Would I could say, my end! But no - no - no! - She did not cease to be, when this accursed arm plunged this bloody sword into her beauteous breast!" (holding up a dagger, bloody at the point) - "Somewhere she still exists " (I, IX, 101)

The dialogue, in fact, is at times written out as in a play text² - and though it is occasionally brisk and lively it is far more frequently melodramatic and stagey. The theatrical device of overhearing is used again when George hides behind a door and hears the ramblings of his master's daughter who has gone mad with love for him (III, VIII, 116-7). Such lack of subtlety is accompanied by frequent use of coincidence, and by long flashbacks, as when Milwood's father tells his story (I, VII and VIII) or when we learn of Milwood's past (III, VII).

1. See his Advertisement (i.e. his Preface) to the novel, pp. v and viii.

2. e.g. III, II, 38; III, IX, 138-140; Surr was to use this device more and more frequently and must surely have been one of the least obtrusive narrators of the period. It was also used by H. More in Coelebs - e.g. chapter XIX, chapter XXXVIII, (and in her tracts), by Rowland Hill in his Village Dialogues (1810), and repeatedly by Peacock.

Yet the novel was popular enough to merit being abridged by the tireless hack Sarah Wilkinson as tale 54 of The Tell Tale, IV, 1804.¹ It reached a fourth edition by 1807, was reprinted at least till 1857, and in parts can still hold the interest, as in volume III, chapter XII, pages 190-197 where there is action and atmosphere only, and none of the speech which today usually sounds merely ludicrous. The following passage describes George about to kill his uncle, at Milwood's bidding:

.... Not a breath moved along the gallery - he stood trembling for a few moments fearfully gazing around him - his shadow on the floor startled him - he shuddered. ... Summoning a desperate effort he made two or three strides, and found himself in his uncle's chamber. He closed the door after him, and approached the bedside. A chamber lamp burned in the fire place: by this light as he leaned against the feet of the bed, he perceived his uncle slept. At that moment he fancied, that he heard a footstep in the gallery ... He fixed his eyes upon the door in horrid dread of a detection ... No one entered - all was again silent. (III, XII, 191-2)

Nevertheless, despite Surr's popular success, the reviewers were not very impressed - though The Critical Review thought it would be "very respectable" as a circulating library novel, while The Monthly Magazine blamed its faults largely on its hackneyed story, saying

.... Mr. Surr seems capable of writing an original story, and we should, in all probability, read it with pleasure.²

Surr, however, must still have lacked the confidence to attempt an entirely original work, for the hero of his next novel, Splendid Misery (1801) was based on Wallenstein, and in his preface, he acknowledged a specific debt to Coleridge's translation of Schiller's play about this character.³ In addition he claimed an even closer link with the theatre, observing that, having been commended for following the "rules" of drama in George Barnwell,

1. See Robert D. Mayo, The English Novel in the Magazines, 515.

2. CR n.s. 24 (December 1798) 472; MM Supp. 7 (July 1799) 541.

3. Preface iv.

he had in this new novel "endeavoured to approach nearer to the Conduite du Théâtre, especially with regard to unity of action (Preface, pp. i and iii) - something for which again he was highly praised:

.... Mr. Surr is perfectly right in adopting the ideas[sic] of unity of action as commended by M. André and Marmontel; for unity is as necessary to a romance as to a play; and many more of our novels would deserve praise, if their plots were not rendered unintelligible by their intricacy.¹

Despite this, unfortunately, the plot of Splendid Misery could hardly be more intricate (or melodramatic), including, as it does, not one but two separately "lost" children, and even more use of coincidence and deus ex machina than George Barnwell.² Set in 1800-1801, it also has long accounts of happenings twenty years earlier, and tells how the Earl of Latimore, rejected as a young man by a beautiful girl called Olivia (who was, in fact, already secretly married), persecuted her and her protectors till, exhausted from distress, she died in giving birth to a daughter. The latter, the heroine of the novel, has been called Oceana, and brought up by Melville, the captain of the ship on which she was born. All this is told in flashbacks, for the novel actually begins with Oceana's going to London to visit two schoolfriends - who, coincidentally, are Latimore's sisters. She hears Latimore talking in his sleep, and he, learning this, thinks she has heard too much of his guilty past, and has her abducted. She, however, is rescued in a storm at sea, he is exposed, and, though attempts are made to reconcile him with those he has wronged, he goes mad and poisons himself.

The aim underlying all this seems, on one level, to be to show the perversion of a mind capable of great things, by a fatal passion for a woman, followed by an almost insane desire for revenge on her and her lover; but the lack of focus of the plot is caused by the fact that the novel aims to show "splendid misery" not only in the person of the villain hero, but also in the

1. CR n.s. 35 (May 1802) 112.

2. e.g. I, VI, 114; I, IX, 256-7; III, VIII; III, IX.

lives of many around him. However, Surr's attack on fashionable dissipation -- now led him to develop the "sketches" or "scenes" of various aspects of society which were eventually often to escape from their purpose and become merely vivid vignettes of a culture.

The inadequacy of wealth to provide happiness had already been touched on in George Barnwell:

.... Never, perhaps, was the insufficiency of wealth to make the heart happy, more powerfully proved than in the miserable Barnwells (George Barnwell, III, XIV, 221)

So, in Splendid Misery, when the Duke of Derrington is carried off by two servants, dead drunk, a sober bystander is made to remark:

"Could the poorest sons and daughters of labour become inmates of this villa and spectators of these scenes ... would they not exclaim, even on the owners of a palace, "Poor Duke and Duchess of Derrington!" (III, II, 31-32)¹

Similarly the Duchess of Devonshire declares herself "the most miserable creature in existence" (III, IV, 47); in debt, and

Floating on bubbles of pleasure in the regions of Fashionable Follies from her birth, this votary of fashion was a stranger to those joys of the heart which are found in the tranquil walks of domestic life. (III, IV, 45)

Oceana writes home of her low estimate of the fashionable world, counting as one exception a Mr. Elmer, who

.... is not ashamed to acknowledge in public company, that he is of opinion a man may fulfil every relative and individual duty in society, according to principles of Religion and Morals, which his heart feels and his understanding sanctions. (II, IV, 133)²

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1. Good political conservatism, of course - linked to various references to "the perfect theory of the British Constitution" and to George III as "the best of sovereigns".
 2. Cf. Jane Austen on Evangelicals (Letters, 410) "I ... am at least persuaded that they who are so from Reason and Feeling must be happiest & safest". Cf. also Wilberforce and H. More on the religion of the heart.

By the majority of young men of fashion, she goes on to say,

Principles of every sort are confounded with prejudices.
(II, IV, 134)

Again there are continual references to the workings of Providence, invocations of "the Omnipotent Ruler of Events" and "the all powerful and beneficent Being"; and this time there is a pious heroine, who goes to bed, breathing

.... the most fervent prayer to Heaven, that the protecting wings of the Angel of Peace might be spread o'er the couch of her father.
(I, II, 42)

It is no wonder, therefore, that Surr was praised for "the piety of his sentiments".¹ However, such attitudes and sentiments were so common that one must suspect that the novel owed much of its popularity to the sketches of fashionable life themselves, linked but slightly to the plot, and including figures with such type names as Lady Lustre, Mr. Galaxy, Lord Yawnley, Tom Pliant and Mr. Lance.² Oceana writes to her friend that, as she is now "in the very focus of fashion", she intends to keep her informed of

.... the interesting Panorama of Men and Manners that every day presents itself to contemplation in this vast capital
(II, IV, 135)

However, it is not in the first person but the third, that descriptions are given of "A Masked Gala" (I, VII), "A Dinner and a Concert" (II, II), "Private Theatricals" (II, VI)³ or "The Levée of a Lady of Fashion" (III, IV).⁴ In the

1. CR n.s. 35 (May 1802) 112.

2. Cf., from George Barnwell, Mr. Drudge, Mr. Mental, Mr. Negotiate. Such type names were still common - e.g. in Mrs. Sherwood's History of the Fairchild Family (1818) there are such characters as the good Charles Trueman, the Fairchilds themselves, and the rich Miss Noble. Laetitia Hawkins defended their use in the Preface to her Rosanne, 1814, on the grounds that invented names might either be so odd as to sound silly, or, if natural, to turn out to be the names of real people, and possibly give offence.

3. Where we read that the mind of the heroine "revolted at the first invitation to play any character", but that she was ridiculed into doing so (II, VI, 236)

4. M. Rosa, op. cit., 62, lists as the stock in trade of the novel of fashionable life "the balls, the dinners, the hunts, the teas, the gossips, the electioneering, the opera, the theater, the clubs, the marriage settlements, the love marriages, the fashionable marriages, the gambling and the dissipation."

last mentioned for example, we read as follows of a duchess's breakfast room:

This room, or rather suite of rooms, had been recently decorated and furnished a la Egyptienne^[sic] On the ceilings and pannels^[sic] sphinxes and centaurs kept stately watch. Sophas and chairs, much too splendid for the purposes of comfort, by the gilded emblems carved on their frames, seemed designed as monuments of Nelson's Victory on the Nile. Balcony windows were crouded with the produce of hot houses, and the orange-tree and myrtle bloomed at your elbow in all the luxuriance of summer, while your cheek was scorched by the emission of heat from a winter's coal-fire ... A sort of elegant disorder in these apartments marked their use and the taste of their general occupants. On a green satin cushion, with gold border, taken from one of the chairs, and placed on a table, reclined at her perfect ease the little French dog, Sappho, while Monsieur L'Abbé, lolling on the sofa, in his morning gown, was sharing a cup of frothed chocolate and a rusk with Sappho. One chair was laden with music; another with books. French novels, German plays, Political, Theological, OEconomical, Agricultural, and Statistical Pamphlets, were indiscriminately scattered about the room.

(III, IV, 50-51)

There had been one such scene in George Barnwell¹; here there are several, and Surr's next novel, A Winter in London was to be full of them, as he latched on to what he could do that the public really seemed to want.²

Splendid Misery was very popular; Cyrus Redding included it in a list of works that were "noted ... in their time",³ it had a fourth edition by 1807, and was well reviewed, The Monthly Magazine crediting the author with "considerable genius". Crabb Robinson, however, gave a fairer estimate of the novel when he wrote in his journal:

During the walk [sic] I read part of Splendid Misery which I finished before I went to bed. This is one of those novels which interest me but leave me ashamed of having been interested.⁴

As Robinson went on to note, the plot and characters are highly improbable, and the speech inflated (again in the style of the theatre) - though amazingly

1. I, XVI, ("The Masquerade").

2. GM 75 (October 1805) 912, noted that the public wanted "descriptions of high life".

3. Cyrus Redding, 50 Years Recollections of an old Bookseller, vol. I, 62.

4. Edith J. Morley, ed., Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers, I, 174, entry for 21st September 1815.

The Critical Review praised the novel for its simplicity of language and ease of style, and The Monthly Magazine admired its "correctness" of language.¹ This, for example is Latimore, being told that those he has harmed wish to be reconciled with him:

"Ha-ha-ha" uttered Latimore, in a convulsive laugh.
"Reconciliation! Ha-ha-ha. Thou dolt, thou fool! Hear me, recording Spirits: When winter's ice shall float in summer's streams; when rains shall scorch, and lightning's fires shall refresh earth's verdure; when the pale borrowed light of Hecate shall eclipse its source, the Sun; or, when the axis of this globe shall snap, and in the centre North and South embrace; then - no, not then will I be reconciled to the thing I hate - I loathe."
As he spoke his teeth gnashed horribly, and he stamped his foot as in the act of trampling on something most odious and hateful. (III, XI, 224-225)

And the heroine's utterances while not melodramatic, are painfully stilted. Here, for example, she soliloquizes:

" I will destroy my letter and wait the further progress of this adventure ere I determine upon the propriety of abiding implicitly by the condition of an oath, extorted under such circumstances of terror and commiseration."
(I, VI, 114-5)

Fortunately the minor characters are much more relaxed. An influence, very possibly from Smollett,² is seen in the attempt to give a nautical flavour to the speech of Captain Melville, who says, for example, of his fears that he will soon die, "I feel my old hull won't float long" (I, I, 2). Similarly, another sailor character signifies reaching his destination in London by declaring, "I'm in the right hammock at last", and describes a storm by saying:

" the rain came down in water spouts, and it was dark as a Purser's soul". (III, VII, 137)

Likewise the inconsequential chat of Lady Lustre is poles removed from the ranting of Latimore:

1. CR n.s. 35 (May 1802) 112; MM Supp. 14 (January 25 1803) 599.

2. The influence of Smollett is seen in other elements of style - see e.g. I, V, 130; II, V, 130 (quoted below p.301).

" You must know I've been on a penance of patience, these few days, at an old Dowager's, a relation of mine, something between a sixth or seventh aunt, immensely rich, who lives, of all places in the world, upon Hampstead Heath. Well, my dear, there I have been compelled to sit and strum a wretched harpsichord to amuse the old soul, while she repaid me with hearty fits of coughing; quite a hearty cough, I assure you, she has, and not at all dangerous, only so shockingly unpleasant. Is'n't[sic] it provoking?"

"That it is not dangerous, do you mean?" said Lady Amelia.
(II, II, 70)

Surr was, by now, gaining in competence, and the remarkable success of his next novel, A Winter in London, though ephemeral, was, in a way, deserved. In contrast to many who claimed a moral purpose in turning to fiction, he claimed here and elsewhere that his chief aim was to entertain (Preface pp. v and vi); and though his didactic purpose is only too evident, there is certainly a great deal of entertainment to be found, not in the plot or in the characterisation, but in the sketches of fashion which are now the chief feature of the novel. (Indeed, "Sketches of Fashion" is its subtitle).

Once again the action is highly contemporary, most taking place in 1804-1805, (II, XI, 202) though the story begins in 1785 when a baby is washed ashore on the Cumberland coast from a wrecked ship, and, after being taken to a fisherman's cottage, is then brought up at the expense of the Earl of Roseville and his wife. The former is nouveau riche, his father, by hard work, some craft, and a series of lucky chances, having risen from being a boot-boy in an inn to being a wealthy merchant banker.¹ His wife, one of an old family, has married him to save her father from bankruptcy. The rescued child, who is given the name Edward, is sent into the country to be reared in a peasant's home, and there meets a mysterious recluse who keeps appearing, making strange remarks - and then disappearing again. Near Edward's lodging is Beauchamp Abbey, the mouldering home of an old country family, the Beauchamps, and the fine new mansion built by Lord Roseville on the site of his wife's old home, Darlington Hall. As a girl, Lady Roseville had hoped to

1. This theme of speculation and sharp dealing was to loom large in his next novel, The Magic of Wealth.

marry Alfred Beauchamp - but he was murdered in Italy. His brother who inherited the Beauchamp estate had died, and his Italian widow and her son have come to sell up Beauchamp Abbey.

At the time when the main action of the novel takes place, Edward has grown to manhood, being a paragon, who is loved by all, excels in all his studies, and has perfect natural taste. He meets and falls in love with Roseville's daughter Emily, likewise a paragon of lofty principle (II, I, 5) and outstanding beauty - a creature far removed from Jane Austen's down to earth heroines:

.... never before did Lady Emily in dress or person appear so lovely. Her complexion, ever fair, was now rendered still more beautiful by the agitation of her mind, which suffused the delicate whiteness of her transparent skin with the rich redness of a new-born rose. Her dress was elegantly simple: her head was unadorned; a white robe floated loosely round her; and, as she moved, an unaffected modesty and graceful innocence accompanied her steps.

(I, X, 261-2)

The difference in their rank, however, prevents any hope of marriage, and she, until the end of volume one, is scarcely aware of his existence.

Volume two follows Edward's adventures in London, where he goes at the invitation of Emily's father, after he has, in an incredibly hackneyed scene saved her from drowning; and it is here that Surr develops his sketches of society life, just as in volume one he had indulged another hobbyhorse of his (which was to be the main theme of his next novel), the decline of the old gentry. The mysterious recluse also goes to London, and eventually reveals himself to be not only the supposedly "murdered" Sir Alfred, but, even more incredibly, Edward's father. He relates that after he had been attacked in Italy (at his brother's instigation) he had lost his memory for a time and been tended in a monastery. Then he was cared for by a rich Quaker, whose daughter he married and whose money he inherited. Being made to suspect her, falsely, of adultery, he had tried to murder her - upon which she had escaped with her child - only to be drowned at sea. The child, of course, is "Edward"

(now called by his real name of Alfred). By chance Sir Alfred has learned how he was tricked about his wife, and longs to be reconciled with his son. He exposes his brother's widow and her lover as criminals, and reveals that the wife's supposed son was stolen by her merely to provide her with a claim on the estate.

Restored to his title at the end of volume two, Sir Alfred spends most of volume three in attempting to reform members of the fashionable society round him, including the spendthrift Duchess of Belgrave - and his and the author's moral and political reflections, plus the scenes from high life which produce them, seem to be the reason for the tale. However, presumably to increase the "entertainment" which he had stated to be his main object, late in volume three Surr introduced a complication between young Alfred and Emily.¹ Circumstances lead Emily to believe that Alfred has seduced a peasant girl, but it emerges that, on the contrary, he has been helping her, and that she is a child of the fishing family which rescued him as a baby. Thus the novel ends on the expectation of a marriage which will unite the Beauchamps and the Rosevilles.

With its foundlings, its disguises, its recognition scene (I, VIII, 158), and its frequent use of deus ex machina devices,² the plot is again highly melodramatic, and Surr obviously realised this, for at one point he made Edward "exclaim to himself":

"Can I be in London? Surely such things cannot be in London! I am dreaming of events more likely to happen in some lone castle on the snow covered Alps than in a mansion in the very heart of the British metropolis!"
(II, II, 58)

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1. This could, of course, be a structural device to return the reader, in the closing chapters, to the fishing family of the first chapter.
 2. e.g. Sir Alfred accidentally helps a starving man in a London street, who turns out to be the very man who deceived him into thinking his wife was an adultress, and who now confesses his guilt.

Indeed, when he makes the sensible Dr. Hoare say to Edward, when he enthuses --
about Beauchamp Abbey -

"It is a pity ... that there is not some wronged female orphan of this old Abbey, in whose behalf such a knight-errant might break a lance "

(II, V, 104-105)

- Surr seems to be more than a little tongue in cheek about his plot. In fact one suspects that for him, and for many other authors of the period, the plot was the least important part of a novel, the sop to entice a mass public, a thread on which to hang ideas.

And his ideas, as has already been seen, were very much in tune with those of the novelists discussed earlier in this study. Of London, the hero is told:

" in this metropolis ... 'Fashion in everything bears sovereign sway' ... The passport, sir, to the tables of princes, to the drawing room of nobility and gentry, is fashion, which is synonymous with notoriety "

(II, III, 67-68)

Later he learns that people will regard him as a hypocrite unless he adopts a few fashionable vices:

" The race - course of these animals is marked out for them, and whoever refuses to run it is esteemed a fool or a hypocrite."

(II, IV, 96)

And, despite the contempt Surr thought he had for evangelicals, not only do the good characters speak firmly of religious principle (e.g. I, IX, 236), much more significantly Sir Alfred's Quaker wife is referred to as "a sweet enthusiast", who (though he refuses to use the term "conversion") brought about a change in his attitude to religion. He says of this:

".... but for the early lessons of our dear[tutor] and some natural strength of mind, I am persuaded that I should have fallen into the belief, that the change I felt was an act of especial inspiration of the Almighty; as it was, I acknowledged its source with genuine devotion and gratitude and only dissented from my amiable Rebecca, in what she termed non-essentials."

(III, I, 16)

Like the Quakers (and others, of course) he spends time and money visiting hospitals and prisons "on Howard's plan" (III, I, 56). Indeed he himself is regarded by others as an Evangelical, for when the Duchess of Belgrave writes to her sister that she may reform, saying:

.... You laugh, and say, that would be a miracle! Well, child, I don't know why a modern miracle may not be wrought, which certainly will be the case if I should reform; but who do you guess, now, is the apostle?

- she names him as Sir Alfred Beauchamp (III, III, 115). Likewise he is charged with "preaching" when he says that he would rather see his son's name on a subscription list for aid to the Bedlam and the Fleet prison, than for a ball (III, V, 165-71).

Moreover it is not the good characters who are made to mock the Evangelicals' Society for the Suppression of Vice, but a gang of badly behaved, drunken hooligans at the opera, while Edward, who has not previously heard of the society, seems impressed by its activities (III, VII, 199); and at the end of the novel the characters retire to Cumberland, to find "more rapture" than ever can be found in the city.

Politically, the plot carries irreproachable conservative sentiments. Unlike Shelley, who regarded George III as "An old mad, blind, despised and dying king", and his sons as "Princes, the dregs of their dull race",¹ Surr made Sir Alfred say with pride:

"Look round the globe ... and point me out a court like that we have just left! A king adored by his people ... Princes, conspicuous as much by their manly virtues as by their exalted stations!"
(III, III, 136)

Another character expatiates on how fortunate the common people of England are. Pointing out a man in Hyde Park, he says:

" That man I happen to know; and he is but one copy of a class of five thousand. He is an honest brazier, who with his family all the week long labour at their calling with patient industry; but on the Sunday he is as independent as the first nobleman in the realm; visits in

1. P.B. Shelley, England 1819.

the morning what church or chapel he pleases; dines in his best parlour; and then takes the air; as you perceive, with as much freedom, and more enjoyment perhaps, than any one here."

"The unrestrained intermixture of ranks in your public places," said Lady Paulina, "is a remarkable trait of your national manners."

"And a glorious one it is," said Dr. Hoare.

(III, VIII, 219)

There is no suggestion that class distinctions are wrong - or that the lot of the poor may be hard, as we read of "sturdy peasants bending to gather from the golden spots the waving corn" (I, VI, 108), and of fisherfolk that

.... health and content administered to these children of labour enjoyment more exquisite than results from all the pleasures which art invents for the victims of opulent indolence.

(I, I, 4)

The changes which were occurring in society, however, Surr reflected and sorrowed over, seeing a commercial élite superseding a gentry of birth. Darlington Hall, home of a banker of scrupulous morality, is pulled down to make way for the opulent mansion of the "upstart" earl of Roseville, who, while not by any means a villain, is not nearly so scrupulous. An old retainer of the Beauchamp family says of him

"An earl! Good Lord! an earl! - the waiter's son to come to be an earl! Well, thank God they can't unmake the father, what he was. No, no - they cannot tell me that this new-fangled banker lord is not a waiter's son."

(I, VI, 111)

He goes on:

" Selling and buying, digging and delving, as if there was no difference between tradesfolk and farmers, and gentry and nobility! Ah lack-a-day! ... what will poor old England come to at last, with all this trafficking confusion! Well, they can't say that we do these mean things! No, no, the oldest man alive never saw a plough in Beauchamp Abbey Park. No, no - The noble owners of that proud building never took in calves to grass. They knew the dignity proper for the station to which it pleased God to call them; they left farming to farmers and grazing to graziers and so let all ranks live."

(I, VI, 112-113)

Nevertheless, despite his clinging to a paternalistic, class society, Surr obviously believed in the advancement of the gifted members of the lower ranks, for Dr. Hoare, a statesmanlike character who is fairly obviously a spokesman for the author, praises England as a country in which it is possible to rise, and approves highly of poor but talented youth being able to get on (I, IX, 244-5).

However, while such attitudes gave the novel undoubted respectability, it was the by now large admixture of sketches of fashionable life which caught the public eye, as the reviewers observed. The Monthly Review, for example, saying that novelty was no longer to be expected in a novel, went on to admit (tepidly) that

.... Mr. Surr has endeavoured, we suppose, to exhibit something new by catching "the manners living as they rise" and pourtraying [sic] some of our leading characters of fashion.¹

The European Magazine was quick to see that the story was merely intended

to introduce good things; that is, to convey the fashionable characters and persons to the notice of the reader²

- though in seeing the story as "subordinate to his plan" it saw the plan to be "the satirical delineation of well-known characters " In similar fashion, La Belle Assemblée said:

.... It is chiefly ... as a sketch of real life that the merit of "The Winter in London" must be rated."³

Like the novels of the Silver Fork school, the novel is full of real people and places.⁴ For example Surr makes a character talk of the "wonderful genius" of Opie - namely John Opie, Amelia Opie's husband, who was then still living (I, IX, 214). Later we read that a gallery in the Roseville's mansion

1. MR 49 (February 1806) 207.

2. European Magazine 50 (July 1806) 46.

3. La Belle Assemblée, Supp. V (1806) 30.

4. See M. Rosa, op. cit., 17 and V. Colby op. cit., 54.

has been made to appear like an Arabian desert by Carbonel, Loutherboung "and that promising young artist Kerr Porter" - that is, the brother of Jane and Anna Maria (II, X, 221). Not only this, but other real people appear under different names; according to various records, for instance, the Duchess of Belgrave was a portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire, whose reaction Samuel Rogers reported thus:

.... The Duchess was dreadfully hurt at the novel A Winter in London ... "Never read that book, for it has helped to kill me," were her words to a very near relative.¹

Today there is no enjoyment in spotting notorious or noted personages - but no small amount in entering into the activities of the time. We attend, for example, Covent Garden Theatre (II, V), a lecture at the Royal Institution (II, VII), a masquerade (II, X), a presentation at court (III, III), a grand rout (III, V), the opera (III, VII) - and Hyde Park on a Sunday morning (III, VIII). These are all lengthy chapters - but as they contain what Surr gave to the novel, it seems only just to him to quote at least fairly generous extracts from two of them. The first, from the visit to Covent Garden Theatre, is a mixture of low and high life:

They were set down in Bow-Street, where a crowd of people were already assembled, waiting for the opening of the doors.

"Will you venture in this crowd, sir?" said Edward.

"Will I?" replied the doctor, buttoning up his coat, and preparing for a squeeze. "Will I?" repeated he, with a species of enthusiasm: "Zounds, man! I have stood at the doors of the theatre three hours, for the sake of seeing a new play, before now; and have elbowed my way as well as the stoutest among them! Come, you have only to stand close, and take care to keep your arms down, and your elbows a little to the right and left of you; and mind, when the doors open, don't go near the wall, but keep in the middle of the stream."

In a few minutes the doors were opened; and the ears of Edward were assailed with the following outcries: - "Stand back! Stand back! Take care of your pockets! Don't squeeze so, sir! You'll kill this lady, sir; she's fainted! O Lord, my arm's

1. Morchard Bishop ed., Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers, 138. The tale is also recounted in Jack Morpurgo ed., The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt 469 n. Ten further characters are identified in Notes and Queries 5th series March 31 1877, p. 255. A.M. Porter in the Prefacing Address to her Coming Out (1828) noted the fashion for this sort of thing, and said she disliked it, and had not taken advantage of such a method of gaining readers.

broke! Sir, you're no gentleman to shove so! Ma'am, this gentleman pushes me!"

The novice, in such a scene, was actually alarmed, and could scarcely believe his guide, that all this vociferation was excited simply by the impatience of the crowd to obtain admission.

At length, however, they entered the theatre, where all these alarming exclamations were exchanged for smiling faces with the exception of one or two country young[sic] lasses, who bewailed the demolition of various articles of finery; having ignorantly attired themselves in box dresses to scramble into the pit.

The eyes of Edward had now ample employment; they were first directed by his ears to the high regions assigned to that part of the audience called the "gods", namely the galleries, where a loud confusion of voices of all tones, and in all keys, accompanied by cat-calls and whistles, were calling out, "Jones, where are you? Wilson! Jerry! Jem! Here! Come up! Where's Sal? Here! come down!" Doxies were screaming for their sweethearts and prentices roaring for the companions of their toils and pleasures.

Doctor Hoare had taken his old station, on the first row of the pit; and while Edward was gazing at the gods, the doctor was leaning his back against the orchestra, and adjusting the position of his wig after the disorders of the crowd.

"What an uproar they make there!" said Edward.

"Oh, it's quite shocking!" said the fat wife of a tallow-chandler from Bishopsgate Street, who had been treated to the play by a wine-merchant's clerk, who lodged in her first floor. "It's quite a nuisance to respectable people, as comes to hear a play. I think it would be a good thing if there wasn't no galleries at all!"

"'Pon my vurd, ma'rm " said her cicisbeo, "thats vat I calls a good highdeer. Such low people might go to Hashley's and such has[sic] that there, you know."

The chattering continues, the musicians ascend into the orchestra from beneath the stage, the rich arrive amid a different kind of clamour - then the play, in which Kemble is acting, begins. Some account of it is given - then we are taken into the street to see the confused bustle, as the crowds disperse:

They were now in Bow-Street, where a scene which makes no impression upon the frequenters of a theatre filled Edward with wonder. The night was dark, and in addition to the torches of a score of barefooted little wretches, whose infant voices usually scream, "Light, your honour - Want a coach, your honour? - Coach unhired," - on this occasion a hundred flambeaux, from powdered footmen, added to the blaze. The crashing of wheels, the trampling of horses, the oaths and exclamations of coachmen, and the voices of footmen bawling for the different carriages, altogether formed a spectacle as interesting in its kind to the observant mind of Edward, as the cause and origin of the confusion.

(II, V, 106-130).

In this second extract, the Duchess of Belgrave writes to describe to her sister a presentation at Court:

"We arrived at St. James's early, that the novices might be gratified with the whole scene. The crowd was excessive. Perhaps you have not been informed, that since the king has gone so much seldomer to court, all the presentations of ladies which used formerly to take place at the Queen's common drawing-rooms, are now reserved for the birth-days. This arrangement of course adds to the usual attractions of the birth-day, and the squeeze in consequence is almost intolerable.

"You will readily conceive how impracticable it would be for their majesties to go round the circle, as was customary when you were in London. The ceremony is quite altered. About two, the king entered, having passed through the anti-room [sic], where you know the children belonging to Christ's Hospital, and destined for the king's navy, annually are presented to his majesty, who inspects their drawings and mathematical exercises ... From this inspection, his majesty entered the drawing-room, attended by the lord chamberlain and his other officers of state as usual; the queen followed, attended also by her lord chamberlain. At the door of the inner room her majesty's train was resigned by the page of honour to lady Harrington, who threw it gracefully over her arm, and kept it there during the whole of the drawing-room. [sic]

"The princesses followed their majesties, each led by an equerry.

"The king and queen immediately took their stations, and the ode was performed. The vocal parts were admirably sustained by Walsh, Knyvet, Sale, and Smith. The music was a selection from the works of Handel, and was creditable to the taste of sir William Parsons. The poetry, by much too good to be forgotten with the day, I have requested Susan to transcribe, and ornament with suitable vignettes as an elegant memento of the day; I really think the fire of the laureat, [sic] Pye, increases with his years.

"After the performance of the ode the queen took her station between the second and third window, where the company are introduced, instead of her majesty's walking round the circle. The hearts of the novices now began to throb. Oh, how strongly did the fluttering Susan remind me of what I was, and what my feelings were, when in her situation!

"The number of presentations was so great, that it was extremely late before the drawing-room closed. Among them, besides the three I have named, were lord Barton and lady Emily Roseville: they were attended by the earl and countess. Their Italian friends, and the old cynic Dr. Hoare, were in the outer rooms as spectators.

"The drawing room, towards the close actually differed in nothing from the crush-room at the opera on a very crowded night. Only conceive the confusion of feathers and fans, of swords and hats! Here the corner of a tall gentleman's chapeau, wedged fast under his arm, sticking in the wig and carrying away the ostrich ornaments of a short lady; there the fan of a six-foot countess inflicting the punishment of blindness upon a little three-foot beau; while, emblematical

of the power of Venus over Mars, sword after sword
surrendered to opposing hoops! No rank, no sex, could
possibly receive exemption from the general crush.
(III, III, 131-136)

So fascinating did people find such details, that the novel had eight editions in 1806 alone;¹ lengthy extracts from it were given in November of that year in three issues of The Weekly Entertainer;² The Monthly Magazine praised it to the skies, saying that few novels had been better since those of Smollett and Richardson, and in two later issues noted the "crowd of servile imitators" of the book, who were making "a catch-penny attempt to impose upon the public" by producing novels with similar titles; while La Belle Assemblée, though finding its satire rather too clearly and cruelly directed at individuals, praised it for its "general purity" in style and sentiments.³

Such approval of the sentiments can easily be understood - and it is also easy to understand the novel's popularity with the general public; but while one can see that certain scenes may certainly have been regarded as very effectively written, most of those which carry the plot are again very weak indeed. Though, in the chatter of unsentimental high society characters Surr showed himself capable of producing lively and often quite credible, (if still rather stagey) dialogue,⁴ the main characters talk and act in an utterly unnatural way. They even speak about being in "scenes" (e.g. III, IX, 233); there is frequent stage gesture - a favourite being striking the forehead with the hand (e.g. II, XI, 244), frequent use of the soliloquy (e.g. I, VIII, 137-138) - and occasional use of the stage tableau, as in the following recognition scene:

"Wonderful providence!" exclaimed the doctor, clasping
his hands together. Then, after a moments pause, he threw

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1. It had reached a 13th edition by 1824.
 2. See R.D. Mayo, op. cit., item 616, p. 520.
 3. MM Supp. 21 (September 1806) 609; MM 22 (1806, Supp. January 25, 1807) 643; MM Supp 23 (July 30, 1807) 644-645; La Belle Assemblée, Supp Vol. I (1806) 29.
 4. e.g. I, I, 5; I, I, 9; I, III, 48; I, VIII, 147; II, V, 106-34.

his arms around the neck of the long lost sir Alfred,
and wept tears of tenderness upon his cheek, while Edward,
kneeling clasped the hand of his father between both his
own, and fervently exclaimed;

"Blessed by the moment in which a father acknowledges
his son!" (II, XI, 262)

- And there are again lumbering "histories" - sometimes told in letters, such
as the ninety-page epistle (III, I, 1-90) in which Sir Alfred tells his story.
These Surr never managed to dispense with.

As a result, despite public approbation, the reviewers were not unanimous
in their praise: The Monthly Review and The European Magazine were merely
lukewarm (though the latter noted that the work had been "stamped with
approbation resulting from the judgement of the public"), while The British
Critic and The Critical Review were scathing, the characters being regarded
as "sad daubs", the plot "commonplace" and "improbable".¹

It may have been because he recognised such criticism as justified that,
despite his commercial success, Surr produced no other novel for nine years,²
till, evidently driven by his deep concern over certain economic trends, he
wrote The Magic of Wealth (1815). Set in a period which seems to be 1814,
this tells of the appearance in London of a mysterious Mr. Lyttleton who
appears to have an endless supply of money with which to help others, though
he is very economical with regard to his personal expenditure. First, having
heard a tale of distress, he goes and rescues from the workhouse a young
medical student called Jack Lancaster, and, while there, also rescues White,

1. MR n.s. 49 (February 1806) 207; European Magazine 50 (July 1806) 44-7; BC
27 (June 1806) 672; CR s3 8 (July 1806) 318-20.

2. Andrew Block (The English Novel 1740-1850) and William Ward (Literary
Reviews in British Periodicals 1798-1820) attribute to him a novel of Dec.
1806 called The Mask of Fashion. It has been impossible to locate a copy,
but external evidence suggests strongly that he did not write it. According
to reviews (Flowers of Literature 5, 1806, 505; Monthly Literary Recreations
1, December 1806, 487) it contained poetry, voluptuous love scenes and an
abundance of French expressions - to none of which Surr was addicted.
Moreover, he himself referred to his Magic of Wealth (1815) as his fifth
novel, whereas had The Mask of Fashion been his, it would have been his
sixth. And on the crest of the success of A Winter in London there would
have been every reason to publish in his own name, and none to publish
anonymously.

an old merchant - who, somewhat miraculously, turns out to be the grandfather of Emma, the girl who loves Jack.¹ Needless to say, "Lyttleton" (this is merely a pseudonym) makes them all financially secure.

His main business, however, is with two old county families, the Beaumonts and the Oldways (names indicating tradition and conservatism). The daughter of the Beaumont family, young, yet already the dowager Countess St. Orville, has been caught up in the fashionable world, but longs to leave its ways, and asks Lyttleton, whom she has met earlier abroad, to help her. She is loved by the son of Squire Oldways, whose estates and coffers are dwindling - a fact he cannot find a reason for, since he has not lived extravagantly. Surr, however, makes it clear that it is because he has refused to put up his tenants' rents and to speculate. The rising light on the horizon is Mr. Flimflam, a speculative banker and builder, who is about to use his financial acumen to buy his way into Parliament - by way of Oldways's seat. Conveniently, however, Flimflam's empire, built, as it is, on credit, collapses when one or two rumours begin to get round that he is financially unsound, and all ends happily - though there is a clear warning that this might not have been the case.

These are the essentials of the plot - which gives Surr characters to make his social, political, religious, and, in this case, economic points. Unfortunately however, as The British Lady's Magazine said,

.... The great defect in the "Magic of Wealth" is the construction of its story.²

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1. "' O, God of Heaven! exclaimed old White," of her mother, and of her grandmother - Oh my wife - my child - my grandchild, all in one! Oh God --." He struck his forehead [sic] with his hand, and sunk [sic] back in his chair." (I, V, 103). Such recognition scenes had seemed ludicrous to Jane Austen over twenty years earlier - but Surr was certainly not alone in still using them - cf. Mrs. Opie, in ch. III above, p. 101.
 2. BIM 1 (June 1815) 426. More accurately the reviewer should have said "A great defect", for it is by no means the only one.

Surr, in a manner typical of him, chose to add two long and complicated sub-plots, told in flashback, one about the seduction of old White's daughter, and the subsequent fate of her child, Emma, and another about the origins and earlier life of Lyttleton, which reveals him to be related to both the Beaumonts and the Oldways, Sophia Beaumont having had to keep secret her marriage in 1748 to Erasmus Oldway, because of social and political family differences at that period.. In a chequered career, Sophia's abandoned son, now "Lyttleton", has become possessed of vast funds of the Jesuits, funds he intends using to spread happiness.

Again there are anti-revolutionary views; Lyttleton refers to "the madmen of France" (II, I, 27), the "scenes of revolutionary anarchy in Paris" (III, V, 119), calls the French Revolution "one of the most fruitless, yet sanguinary convulsions, of anarchy and power, that ever stained the annals of this world" (II, I, 7), and prays that the streets of London may never "be crimsoned with the blood of its own citizens" (I, I, 19); once again there is a distaste for excessive "enthusiasm" and hypocritical cant coupled with an earnest desire to see a reformation in manners brought about by religion. In the early chapters the master of the workhouse, Bogle, who is said to have got his position through the influence of the highly influential "saints" (I, IV, 69) wears "the costume of a methodist preacher" (I, IV, 64) but is too plump to appear "the gloomy methodist", his appearance contrasting with "the hypocritical cant of his tongue which [is] continually declaring "the miserable state of his soul" (I, IV, 65). Similar dislike of his kind is seen in the portrait of a methodist "illiterate fanatic" who, in the workhouse, screams hellfire and destruction at the bedside of the apparently dying Jack Lancaster (I, V, 74-5, 78-9). The "saints" are also accused of buying up parliamentary seats and church livings (I, VIII, 188-9).¹ Nevertheless Surr is no keener on the red-

1. There are, in error, two chapters headed VIII in vol. one, of which this is the first. The charge that the Evangelicals tried to buy livings is correct - but the purpose was to make sure that they were presented to devout parsons - something the High Church at that time could not be relied on to do.

nosed rector (I, IV, 69) - and makes his sneers at those who deplore the frivolity of fashionable life characters for whom no respect can be held (e.g. see II, II). Moreover, it is significant that the heroine (if any of the female characters can be given that title), the Countess St. Orville, longs to be a better person - and the reference is obviously to religion. On one occasion, for instance (a scene at her breakfast table, described in great detail), while looking at the paper for an announcement of a concert, she sees a tale of a distressed family, and is struck with guilt and a feeling "as poor Lady Longface described to me as the means of her conversion and call" (I, VII, 151) - that is, though she has the experience, she refuses to use the emotional term "conversion". Nevertheless, she says she wishes, if Lyttleton will be her "monitor," to

"..... defy the sneers of all the fashionable world, throw off the servile yoke of imitation ... But alone, and unaided in the vast region of fashion, I dread to be pointed at as an innovator ... In the circle of which I am one, every thing of late has run into extremes - There is no medium between impiety and fanaticism - the majority are atheists and the few that are not have turned methodists." (I, VII, 155-6)

Perhaps it is to illustrate this, that the worldly vicar having breakfast with her (the Reverend Flirt) is sadly dismayed to be told to take money to a sick family instead of getting tickets for a concert, while another minister she knows, at the opposite extreme of conduct, is called David Delude.

Unlike A Winter in London, however, this novel does not concentrate on the "scene" of fashionable life, though those which are there are well evoked.¹ As in the Silver Fork novels, real places are described - for example in I, VIII (the first of two chapters headed VIII), we follow Lyttleton in London

1. The smaller number is possibly because by 1814 Surr had had so many inferior imitators that he felt they were rather stale. Certainly in ch. I of Waverley (1814) Scott, noting the kinds of novel then popular, included the "Tale of the Times" - "a dashing sketch of the fashionable world, a few anecdotes of private scandal, thinly veiled, and if lusciously painted so much the better". (p. 6.)

from Lubbock and Co.'s in the Poultry, with Debatt's the pastry-cook's opposite, to Lombard Street and Cornhill and the corner of Change Alley, past Richardson the bookseller's, to Garraway's coffee house, where there is to be an auction - and the lively scene described there is the sort of thing that Surr did best:

.... Round the bar were collected more than a hundred persons, jostling each other, and scrambling to obtain the viands, which the landlord, with a good-humoured, rosy face was dealing out with expert celerity, assisted by three or four flying waiters. While the wondering eyes to Lyttleton were employed on the scene, his ears were assailed with the discordant cries of "Soda, soda!" - "Who wants spruce?" - "Capillaire and water" - "Ham-sandwich" - "Rum-doctor" - "Give me change" - Seven-pence - "Beef-sandwich" - seven-pence - "Brown stout" - "Spruce, Spruce" - Ten-pence halfpenny - "Waiter" - "Coming, coming" - The vocal part of this coffee-house concert was instrumentally accompanied by the incessant drawing of corks, and the frothing and whizzing of spruce beer, bottled ale, and soda water.

(I, VIII, 164-5)

Another is the now unheard-of "public breakfast", held for charity (II, V, 205-8) while a third is the scene, noted earlier (p. 307) at the Countess St. Orville's breakfast table. And a new venture in detailed description of this kind is the scene of extreme poverty, in an extended series of pictures of a workhouse in the early chapters of volume one - scenes which follow Crabbe, and foreshadow Dickens.

But it is not so much the manners and morals of fashionable life, or low life, or revolutionary politics that Surr is engaged with in this novel, as with a radical change he sees in society, in the growth of speculation of various kinds, and in the way in which the old values and the old gentry are being superseded by the mercenary values of the nouveaux riches, and by "the plague of commerce" (II, I, 25). In The Magic of Wealth greed and speculation (of various kinds) - a "get rich quickly attitude" - is seen to have infected society - and not just at the higher levels. In the early chapters Peter Perryman, a dandy haberdasher, and his sister Arabella put making money before integrity, while Charles Crisp, a workhouse apothecary is in the process of rising by

means of a "sensible" marriage, cheap-jack practices, a skin lotion called "rosa tinctura" - and by working hand-in-hand with his father-in-law, the local undertaker. At a higher level, the Honourable Mr. Light, "a good sort", nevertheless regards as "an unreasonable rascal" a shopkeeper who tries to have him arrested for the non-payment of bills (I, VII, scene II).

However, the chief target is the mind obsessed with speculation, seen chiefly in the shadowy Mr. Flim-Flam - the insubstantiality of his portrayal somehow suggesting the insubstantiality of his assets; we hear about him, rather than see him. Flim-Flam, we learn, was the son of a small shopkeeper, and was first apprenticed in a London bank. Then suddenly father and son set up as bankers, getting a Member of Parliament to act as sleeping partner - the result being that from nothing

" the bank has flourished to such a degree that the oldest families in the county are obliged to bow to Flim-Flam who, since the old boy's death, is what they call the head of the firm." (I, VIII, 216)

All the local gentry (and especially the significantly named Oldways) seem powerless against him, and, using unscrupulous lawyers and methods to get land, he is building the new and fashionable seaside resort of Flimflamton, which he fully expects to be highly successful, since, we are told, the age is obsessed with travelling from home (II, III, 56-7):¹

.... The whole face of the neighbouring county had been changed as by magic; and the memory was racked to trace out the spot, where farms and cottages had stood ... Instead ... there had arisen, on one hand, as in scorn of the old Manor house, a gew-gaw villa of a country banker; and, on the other, a new town, built on the sea-coast, and denominated after its founder Flimflamton.

1. Cf. Robert Southey's Letters from England XXX p. 164: "The English migrate as regularly as rooks ... the tribes of wealth and fashion swarm down to the sea coast It is fashion which influences them, not the beauty of the place, not the desirableness of the accommodations, not the convenience of the shore for their ostensible purpose, bathing". Though Surr always spelled the name of the resort "Flimflamton" - not "Flimflampton", as in Mr. Southam's study, noted p. 314 below - he spelled the character's name at times Flimflam and at others Flim-flam. A flim-flam was "a contemptible trick or pretence; a piece of humbug" (Oxford English Dictionary).

In the same space of time and much in the same proportion as this Flimflam influence and power increased, that of the mortified and astonished Oldways depreciated, and ere he saw the danger, he felt the magic power of wealth.

Born and bred the fine old English gentleman, he possessed no particle of the trafficking spirit of the times. It never once occurred to him that the revenues of his estates were to be considered only so much capital with which he must carry on some speculation in grazing or draining or in cutting canals, or working mines, or building towns, or establishing country banks, or country fire offices; he never contemplated the necessity of engaging in such projects, to save himself from being overwhelmed by the effects of that power, which paper circulation imparted to every dealer in every article of general consumption. (II, I, 14-15)

This belief in the pernicious effects of "paper money" was one which had concerned Surr at least since 1801, when he had published a pamphlet, "A Refutation of Certain Misrepresentations Relative to the Nature and Influence of Bank Notes." Here he included a lengthy discussion (between characters, for he rarely intruded himself in his novels) on the nature of a bank, revealing the age to be obviously one of rapid change. Mr. White (the ex-merchant) is amazed to find that Flimflamton has a bank, and cannot see where the superfluous cash is going to come from, in such a small place, to make a bank necessary. This idea of a bank as a repository of money, the Reverend Flirt finds appallingly old-fashioned, and he tells White that now the best customers of banks are people with no money, who pay the banks interest, not for money, but for the use of their names. Thus, as the Countess wryly points out, the banker is only a guarantor, and since he has not money for all the credit he has guaranteed, he may fail. To White this is making banking as risky and speculative as trading, but Flirt (referring to him as Mr. Williams, having previously called him Wilkie, Withers and Vile)¹ calls the past "dull" and says

" now when the world is awake, Mr. Williams, when Loan jostles Loan out of market; and new and old omnium

1. These errors made by Flirt occur over several pages, and are not at all stressed but serve quite subtly to reveal how little interest this professed man of God takes in individuals.

confuse even jobbers and brokers; when little lottery treads on the heels of lottery just drawn: - when engineer's powers rival Harlequin's swords, and tunnels and archways and bridges appear and vanish like pantomime scenes;... when water works and iron pipes abound to inundation: - and gas-light and heat-works threaten conflagration: - when villages are metamorphosed into watering places; ... who can be so dead to self-interest as to look tamely on at this scramble for profits, while the price of a ten pound share in any of these tempting speculations lies idle in the hands of his banker?" (II, II, 49)

- to which White bitterly returns, that in his days in trade

" it was necessary for a banker to possess wealth, in order to obtain credit; it is now only necessary that he possess credit, to obtain wealth ... It follows that, in such a state of things, credit, caution, and judgement, are all the stock in trade requisite to the Banker; who, ceasing to be the stake holder, as heretofore, is simply the coiner and assayer of other men's wealth, giving to it the means of circulation by his name." (II, II, 50-51)

What Surr wanted to show was the shaky foundations on which such dealings were laid - and did so by making the collapse of Flimflam occur with the rapidity of a pricked balloon, when the first breath of suspicion of his financial credibility was rumoured abroad. It is a political stance which like that in his earlier novels seems firmly conservative, and so Allene Gregory and Brian Southam have seen it.¹ However, the facts cannot be ignored that it was a conservative government which took the country off the gold standard, and that the model Oldways, while having learned from both Burke and Fox, leans more to Fox in the political rift between the two men (II, I, 367) - something which offended the Anti-Jacobin Review². It is not so very surprising, therefore, that E.M. McClelland, on the basis of this novel, should claim Surr as a liberal. Had he turned to Surr's

1. A. Gregory, The French Revolution and the English Novel, 295; B. Southam, "Sanditon, the Seventh Novel", in Jane Austen's Achievement, ed. Juliet McMaster, 19. Miss Gregory refers to Surr as E.T. Sun.

2. AJR 48 (April 1815) 367.

later Russell (1830) he would have found even more liberal attitudes.¹ Surr seems, in fact, to have become more liberal with age.

The Magic of Wealth, then, is a novel of ideas - but, having fewer scenes of fashionable life than A Winter in London, it is of less interest than that novel, except to the historian of ideas, for it was such scenes that were Surr's forte. This novel has little artistic merit. More than any of his other novels it uses techniques of the stage: the chapters are divided into "scenes" (literally so called) and there are also passages of explanatory narrative outside of the "scene" sections - almost in the manner in which a narrator might stand before the curtain and say a few words before an act or scene of a play begins. Indeed, the Anti-Jacobin Review declared that it bore

.... a more striking resemblance to a dramatic production than any other which we remember to have read.²

Many of the "scenes", as in earlier works, are even set out as in a play.

However, while the effect is lively, the technique at times seems very crude for a novel: chapter three of volume two, for example, begins with three pages of narrative (pp 56-8) then announces "scene one" - and by page 72 we have reached scene five. The soliloquies, too, are no less artificial, and are evidently used as short cuts to the conveying of information, such as one by Jack Lancaster, lasting six pages, in which he decides to give up the idea of becoming a doctor (II, IV, 75-81).

And the characters are merely mouthpieces for ideas - something which Surr's contemporaries noted, but accepted, The British Lady's Magazine saying:

.... Mr. Surr may be termed the Gillray of novel writers; his portraiture is a species of caricature; but, like the productions of that ingenious artist, it is a caricature

1. E.M. McClelland, The Novel in Relation to the Dissemination of Liberal Ideas 1790-1820, pp 210-215.

2. AJR 48 (April 1815) 357-358.

grounded upon a thorough knowledge of the principles which produce the distinctive and the singular.¹

Similarly, though the plot is highly improbable, his age looked for Surr's strengths rather than his weaknesses, the same periodical suggesting he would do better

.... to get rid of the shackles of a formal story, and adopt some less irksome medium for his pictures of life and manners; as for instance an Asmodeus, a Chrysal or a Gyges's Ring.² We cannot call to mind a writer more apparently adequate to the taking off of the tops of houses of the metropolis, and of describing the inside of them. We are aware that this has been done before, but by none so intimately acquainted with the various fry whom the sunshine of commerce and luxury has quickened into existence, like reptiles from the mud of the Nile; or who sees the operation of the times upon all ranks and degrees more clearly.³

His age, then, by bringing different expectations to Surr's work than are common in the twentieth century, was able to enjoy his novel, which was thought to have "no ordinary degree of merit".⁴ Thus it is interesting to speculate, with Brian Southam, whether Jane Austen in Sanditon had been influenced by it into experimenting with a new style of fiction "away from the comedy of character and toward the comedy of ideas."⁵ Certainly The Magic of Wealth provides lively descriptions of the same kind of speculative building as was

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1. BLM 1 (June 1815) 426. James Gillray (1756-1815) was a Tory political cartoonist. He worked with Canning on the short lived Anti-Jacobin (1797-8) and was granted a government pension of £200 p.a.
 2. The references seem to be to (i) Asmodeus; or, the Devil in London by Charles Sedley (1808) in which Asmodeus takes a young ne'er-do-well on a supernaturally transported tour of London, where they fly above, and see into, various buildings; (ii) Chrysal; or the Adventures of a Guinea by Charles Johnstone (1760-65) in which a guinea is made to describe its different owners and their activities; (iii) a character in classical legend, Gyges, who had a ring which allowed him to pass about invisible. I have not been able to ascertain whether he was used in an eighteenth-century or early nineteenth-century novel.
 3. BLM 1 (June 1815) 427.
 4. BC n.s. 4 (July 1815) 106.
 5. "Sanditon: the Seventh Novel" in Juliet McMaster ed., Jane Austen's Achievement, 16. He also includes Peacock's Headlong Hall as a possible influence in this direction.

going on in Sanditon,¹ both are about people who "know the value of money", and both are about the rejection of old comfort for brash smartness. Mr. Southam, of course, is surely right in suggesting that, having made the experiment, Jane Austen probably decided that the discussion novel "[did] not really add up to very much as a work of art"². Nevertheless the very fact that she was amused enough to make an essay into (or perhaps a parody of?) this kind of novel, indicates the interest it had for its own time.

After this, Surr published no more fiction in his own name, though two novels, Richmond, or Scenes in the Life of a Bow Street Runner (1827) and Russell : or, The Reign of Fashion (1830) have been attributed to him.³ The second is, with little doubt, his, for not only does its title page proclaim it to be "by the author of A Winter in London, Splendid Misery &c" - something which Surr was alive to deny if it had been untrue - its themes and style are merely developments of those in Splendid Misery, A Winter in London, and The Magic of Wealth. Richmond, however, which has also been attributed to a T. Gaspey, is so different as to make it very unlikely that he wrote it, the only similarity being in the use of the word "scenes" in the sub-title.⁴ Moreover, there is a story (unproven yet somehow very credible) that round about the time that Richmond was published, Surr was engaged on a novel about

.... the life of ... a swell. He had written about half when his health broke down and his work was handed over to a young man to finish. The young man, however, rewrote

1. e.g. II, V, 200-203; II, VI, 236 et seq.

2. B.C. Southam, op. cit., 18.

3. Only the sub-title of Russell is given in NCBEL, which makes for difficulty in locating copies. Other works are attributed to Surr - e.g. L'Hermite de Londres and L'Hermite d'Irlande, but, according to Notes and Queries (4th series, vol VIII, November 18, 1871, p 412) it had been "satisfactorily settled" by 1871 that these were by F. MacDonogh (given in NUC as Felix McDonough).

4. See Appendix of Later Work. Russell was perhaps published anonymously because, in view of the long period intervening since his last novel, Surr may have doubted whether he could still hit public taste. It does not seem to have caused any stir.

it, and Pelham was the result. Mr. Surr[sic] always said¹ that Pelham was far better than his work would have been.

Pelham, of course, was the society novel by Bulwer Lytton, published in 1828 - and, if the story be true, it firmly connects Surr with the Silver Fork school.

Of all the popular novelists to be considered in this study, Surr probably had the least literary ability. Nevertheless his novels can still be read with interest. As a contemporary said:

.... Nor are these sketches of modes rather than of characters - of habits rather than of principles, valueless either to the cotemporary[sic] or to posterity. The first they interest as pictures of what is ; the latter inspects them as records of the mental costume of a period which is no more.²

But more than this, they had their small share in the development of the novel; for just as it can be argued that the evangelical tract encouraged the tale with naturalistic description of low life, so it was the castigation of fashionable life, encouraged by the evangelicals, which gave Surr the excuse to dwell so lovingly on the details of a life-style which obviously fascinated him and thus, like the Silver Fork novelists but some years before them, to prepare the way for "the selective domestic realism of George Eliot, Dickens and Thackeray."³

1. Notes and Queries 5th series vol VII p 48, January 20 1877.

2. BLM 1 (June 1815) 426.

3. Vineta Colby, Yesterday's Woman 53. Professor Colby is referring, in the passage quoted, to the novelists of the Silver Fork School. The element to which these writers contributed might, however, be more accurately called "naturalism."

IX

Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan) 1780?82?-1859

A fascinating aspect of the novel in the first decades of the nineteenth century, and a sign of its vitality, is the frequency with which writers claimed to be (or were credited with) doing something new, though this originality tended to be in developments, rather than in complete innovations. As has already been noted, there had been historical romances before the Porters wrote theirs, but they, until Scott overshadowed them, were seen as producing a new kind of historical romance by giving an imaginative treatment to carefully researched historical facts. So, when, in 1800, Maria Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent¹ was hailed as a new kind of novel, the novel of Irish life and manners, (often called by her contemporaries the national novel), this was not because there had never before been novels set in Ireland but because no novel set there had given such an authentic-seeming picture of life in this little-known country.² As a result it roused great interest and admiration; indeed, as was noted earlier,³ Scott gave as one of his reasons for writing Waverley a desire to do for Scotland what Maria Edgeworth had done for Ireland. In this respect, therefore, it is with justice that she is regarded as the first novelist of Ireland.

Castle Rackrent, however, was for Maria Edgeworth, something of a sport; had she not felt that she was portraying a way of life that had passed away, it is unlikely that she would have provided such a picture, and, as Marilyn Butler points out in her stimulating study of this novelist, in her later Irish tales (Ennui, 1809, The Absentee, 1812, Ormond, 1817)) she aimed not to show the uniqueness of the Irish but to present them as essentially the same

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1. I am indebted to Mrs. Marilyn Butler's study of Maria Edgeworth, Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography (1972) for most of the biographical material on Miss Edgeworth which appears in this chapter.
 2. See Lucien Leclair, Le roman régionaliste dans les Îles Britanniques 20-21, and M. Butler, op. cit., 344-5.
 3. p. 244.

as the English, in order to stress their right to similar treatment. Moreover, not having been born or brought up in Ireland, she had little sympathy with Irish traditions, which she regarded as (to quote Mrs. Butler) "the survival of irrational and inefficient habits."¹

Recognising this, Mrs. Butler has made a new and interesting claim for her as innovator in her Irish tales. Saying that "isolating what is particularly Irish is never the main intention," she sees her as trying to explore how a modern community works, and suggests that she discovered "how to draw a modern society with all its parts functioning in their real-life relation to one another."² But as the society she chose to explore was Irish, she was still limited, since there were important sections of Irish society which she did not know well. Mrs. Butler herself has noted that it was October 1810 before she had her first glimpse of high life in Ireland, that she travelled little in the country, and that she knew little about the peasantry beyond that on her father's well-run estate.³ In addition, any attempt to portray the relationship between the various social groups in Ireland which made as little as she did of the legal sanctions against Catholics was bound to be inadequate, since those sanctions caused so much injustice and so much unrest. Her father was always strongly in favour of Catholic relief, and it is possible that she was too, since her support for this cause in the 1820's was keen. However, this does not come over in her tales and, according to Bridget MacCarthy, they "carried conviction" only "to those who did not fully know Ireland."⁴

She had, however, a contemporary about whom this cannot be said. Sydney Owenson, daughter of a highly popular (though frequently almost penniless)

1. M. Butler, op. cit., 391, 364. Apart from two years spent in Ireland as a very young child, she did not live there till she was fourteen years old.

2. M. Butler, op. cit., 394.

3. M. Butler, op. cit., 215.

4. See M. Butler, op. cit., 451; Bridget G. MacCarthy, The Later Women Novelists 1744-1818, 225.

actor manager, was familiar from childhood with a wide range of social groups; she was fiercely proud of her country's traditions and cultural heritage; and, though a Protestant herself, she early became involved in the cause of seeking justice for the Catholic majority, the cause to which she was to dedicate her efforts as a writer. It is understandable, therefore, that, though her mother had been an ardent follower of the evangelical Lady Huntingdon, she had no time for the evangelicals, most of whom were strongly opposed to Catholic emancipation - and seized on their use of the novel in the service of their cause, to defend her own use of it for political and social ends, saying:

.... while missionary misses and proselyting peeresses affect to "stand instead of God, amongst the children of men" may not I be permitted, under the influence of merely human sympathies, to interest myself for human wrongs.¹

For her efforts she was bitterly attacked; but she was no martyr, and was probably thinking of herself - when she made one of her heroines (also a novelist) say:

" With Ireland in my heart, and epitomizing something of her humour and sufferings in my own character and story, I do trade upon the materials she furnishes me; and turning my patriotism into pounds, shillings and pence, endeavour at the same moment to serve her and support myself."

(Florence MacCarthy III, V)

And she certainly did both, most successfully. If Maria Edgeworth was, between 1800 and 1814 "easily the most celebrated and successful of practising English novelists"² after this date Sydney Owenson (by then Lady Morgan) may be regarded as her strong rival, and was seen as such by contemporaries.³ Though Maria Edgeworth obtained £2,100 for Patronage in 1814, the same year as Sydney Morgan was paid only £550 for her O'Donnel, the rewards they were commanding only a few years later were much the same; Miss Edgeworth was paid £1,150 for Harrington and Ormond in 1817, while in

1. Preface to The O'Briens, and the O'Flahertys v, (Paris 1828 edition). It should be noted that Mrs. Owenson was not intolerant in religious matters.

2. M. Butler, op. cit., 1.

3. e.g. see Ed. R I (June 1819) 656 and William J. Fitzpatrick, Lady Morgan, her Career Literary and Personal, 263.

1818 Sydney Morgan received £1,200 for Florence Macarthy (though a scientific work by her husband was included in the price). Altogether, Maria Edgeworth earned little more than £11,000, while the total profits of Sydney Morgan were estimated at £25,000.¹

She did not begin by writing of Ireland, however; her first spur to writing seems to have been the desire to relieve her father of the burden of her upkeep. Whatever his financial situation, he had always seen to it that his daughters had the best available education, and it was, as she later recorded in her Memoirs, at a time when he had just gone bankrupt, that she wrote the following (undated) letter to him from school:

.... Now, dear papa, I have two novels nearly finished!
The first, is St. Clair. I think I wrote it in imitation of Werter which I read in school-holidays, last Christmas [sic]
The second is a French novel, suggested by my reading The Memoirs of the Duc de Sully, and falling very much in love with Henry IV. Now, if I had time and quiet to finish them, I am sure I could sell them; and observe, Sir, Miss Burney got three thousand pounds for Camilla²

Her faith in herself was justified. Though neither novel brought her fame or three thousand pounds, both were accepted, and both were reasonably successful,³ especially considering the youth and inexperience of the author. Pitt, indeed, liked her "French novel", The Novice of St. Dominick so much, that it was a book he chose to re-read in his last illness. Neither, however, (as might be expected) has any literary merit, their only real interest lying in their use (since they were specifically written to make money) as indicators of popular taste in the early years of the nineteenth century.

1. M. Butler, op. cit., 492; Allibone 1366.

2. William Hepworth Dixon and G. Jewsbury eds., Lady Morgan's Memoirs : Autobiography, Diary, Correspondence (afterwards to be referred to as Memoirs) I, 134-135.

3. Reviews, too, were favourable; ironically (in view of its future opinions) The Anti Jacobin Review 30 (June 1808) 190 referred to her "brilliant talents".

St. Clair (1803)¹ is a short epistolary novel, with the slightest of plots. Telling of the growth of love between the hero, St. Clair, and a beautiful girl called Olivia, (a love which culminates in his death at the hands of the man to whom Olivia is betrothed, and her death from grief and shame), its aim, according to the preface, was to deprecate the lack of control in the lovers which allowed love to develop in the circumstances. The whole tenor of the novel, however, till the final pages (and even partly there) is to make such a love appear to be the kind of lofty emotion possible only in creatures of exquisite sensibility. Though the setting is in Ireland, there is no attempt to encourage interest in things Irish; the entire emphasis is on feelings rather than (as was to become characteristic of Sydney Owenson's later writings) on facts and ideas, and anywhere wild and beautiful would have done to contribute to the desired emotional atmosphere.

St. Clair is, indeed, imitative, as the authoress confessed in her letter to her father, and of a type of novel still popular, but on its way out. With The Novice of St. Dominick (1805)² however, while she still chose an established and popular genre, she showed some originality, for here, in trying out her powers on the historical romance, she attempted to anchor her fiction to a basis of accurate historical fact. Coming before the historical

1. The date of the first publication of St. Clair is uncertain. According to her Memoirs (I, 205, 209) it was published in Dublin in 1801, with some success, and this is confirmed by Samuel Hall in his Book of Memories (1871) though he may merely have been using information from the Memoirs. However she also wrote in October 1802 that St. Clair would "be out early next month" again with Dublin mentioned as the place of publication (Memoirs I, 223). Catherine Hamilton, Women Writers, Their Works and Ways 218 recorded an edition of before 1803, and though Lionel Stevenson (The Wild Irish Girl 317) doubts its authenticity, since no copy exists, correspondence does exist in which the authoress discusses the novel with her friend, Mrs. Lefanu, who certainly had a copy in January 1803 (Memoirs I, 230-231).

2. There appears to be some doubt about this. Lowndes gave 1806 as the date of the first edition, Pickering and Chatto in their Collection of English Novels and Romances 1612-1837 (1934) gave an 1806 edition as the first, and the British Library's copy of 1806 appears to be a first edition. However The English Catalogue of Books gives the date of publication confidently as 1805, and as Lady Morgan's chief modern biographer, Lionel Stevenson, accepts this, it has been accepted here.

romances of the Porter sisters, the novel compares not unfavourably with those which Anna Maria wrote before 1820, and suggests that the Porters were perhaps only a significant part of a general movement towards greater authenticity in this kind of novel. Only in this respect, however, can one accept Lionel Stevenson's generous comment that The Novice anticipates "the new type of historical fiction perfected a decade later by Scott,"¹ for though the plot hinges on problems brought on the heroine, Imogen, by religious strife in sixteenth-century France, all the interest of the first half is on Imogen's personal adventures, her affairs of the heart, and her discovery of her long-lost father, while the second half is in the line of the currently popular novel of individual reform, as Imogen learns to correct her faults, which include failure to live within her income, and failure to take care of her reputation.

At this stage Sydney Owenson seems to have been set to become merely a fairly successful commercial novelist. However, her journey to England to discuss the publication of The Novice of St. Dominick revealed to her how little the English knew about the state of Ireland, and how many regarded the Irish as a degraded and feckless people living on false stories of their ancient greatness.² There had already, in The Novice, been indications of her concern for Ireland's problems in her choice of religious intolerance as part of her subject matter, and in her choosing as one of the heroine's lessons that of responsibility towards the tenants on her estate. Now, to publicise Ireland and its problems became her vocation, and the aim of her next novel, The Wild Irish Girl (1806), which made her, almost overnight, a name to be

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1. Lionel Stevenson, The Wild Irish Girl, 64. He does, however, admit that the chief interest lies in the character of the heroine. MM Supp 20 (Jan. 31, 1806) 616 did not even comment on the fact that the novel is historical.
 2. Preface to her Patriotic Sketches of Ireland (1807). In Maria Edgeworth's Ormond, Sir Ulick's fourth wife, a London widow, has been taught to hold the Irish people "in contempt and aversion", (chapter I, page 5, Dent 1893 edition).

reckoned with among the popular novelists of the period. The success of her first two novels is evidenced by the fact that for The Wild Irish Girl,¹ her publisher, Phillips, was willing to pay her £300,² though it is unlikely that he realised just how great an impact this new novel would make. The Monthly Magazine wrote of it:

The Wild Irish Girl, a National Story by Miss Owenson must be distinguished as a work of superior merit. The design of the writer is so laudable, that had she executed it with only a mediocrity of success her work would have been entitled to our praise. The talents which she displays in this novel are, however, of no common order. With an imagination exuberant almost to blemish, Miss Owenson combines considerable knowledge of the world and of human nature; and we perceive in the Wild Irish Girl the fruits of much reading, blended with the results of actual and accurate observation. The character of the Irish peasantry is drawn with a friendly, but at the same time, we think, a faithful pencil. Her delineations of Irish customs and manners are pictures from the life; and while they amuse by their pathos they rectify the judgment of the reader upon an important subject concerning which too many successful attempts have been made to mislead it.³

She had been a subscriber to, and eager reader of, the Anthologia Hibernica, a monthly magazine produced in Dublin 1793-4, which encouraged interest in Irish heroes, literature and antiquities. In particular she had made an intensive study of Irish history and archaeology in preparation for writing this novel, obtaining advice from the scholar Joseph Walker, to whom, says Thomas Flanagan, she was indebted to for much misinformation.⁴ This may be clear in the light of modern scholarship - but her "facts" seem to have

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1. A title felicitously suggested to her by the writer, Dr. Wolcot ("Peter Pindar") to replace her original title of The Princess of Inismore: see Preface to 1846 edition, xxviii.
 2. Phillips originally offered £200 plus £50 for each new edition, but was forced to increase his offer when he found that a rival, Johnson, had offered her £300 (Memoirs I, 268-275). She seems to have remembered wrongly when she stated in a note to the Prefatory address to the 1846 edition that Johnson offered 300 guineas.
 3. MM 22 (1806, Supp January 25 1807) 643.
 4. Thomas Flanagan, The Irish Novelists 1800-1850 p. 117.

appeared accurate enough to her contemporaries. Offering as it did, therefore, to a public with a taste for things old and for things unfamiliar, information about Ireland ancient and modern, wrapped up in a romantic plot and told in a highly emotional style, The Wild Irish Girl's contemporary success is easy to understand. Yet it is not a good novel, nor Sydney Owenson's best,¹ and it is a sad quirk of fate that has caused it to be that by which she is today most often remembered - and dismissed-as a novelist. Better than her first two novels, because she was writing openly of a subject in which she was seriously and sincerely interested, it is in the same high flown style, a style which she herself was later to condemn as "over-charged" and "exaggerated".² Moreover it is not so much a novel as a set of sketches of Irish life and discourses on Irish history and custom, linked by a slender thread of plot. Briefly this is that the younger son of the Earl of Mortimer, having sown some wild oats, is sent to the family estate in Ireland, to concentrate on his study of law. The young man regards himself as having been banished to a "semi-barbarous, semi-civilised" country, (Introductory letters xxix) but soon learns how mistaken his ideas have been, his chief teachers being Glorvina, daughter of the "Prince" of Inismore (whose ancestors were the original holders of the lands which had passed to the Mortimers in the Cromwellian Wars) and her family priest, John. With Glorvina and John, young Mortimer sees Irish peasants and learns of their hardships, their traditions, and their cultural heritage which the English have tried to destroy. Gradually he falls in love with Glorvina, but dare not admit to her or to her father who he is. At the very end of the novel, however, when Glorvina is about to be married to a mysterious stranger, whose visits to her have at various times been hinted at, Mortimer finds this stranger to be none other than his own

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1. As Stanley Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, British Authors of the Nineteenth Century, 449 suggest.
 2. Prefatory address to the 1846 edition of The Wild Irish Girl, viii - See also her Book of the Boudoir I, 82.

father, who has been secretly, over the years, trying to help the family he feels has been wronged, and who has decided to marry Glorvina as a final act of reparation. The wedding is stopped in time, and Glorvina marries Mortimer, their marriage seeming to symbolise a harmonious reconciliation between the old Irish and the Anglo-Irish, a plot device which was to recur in some form in all Sydney Owenson's novels of Irish life.

Told thus badly, the plot sounds melodramatic,¹ but, in fact, it is not this which vitiates The Wild Irish Girl, since all the really incredible events occur towards the very end: its weakness lies, as has been already noted, in its style, and in the way in which art is subordinated to purpose, the bulk of the novel being records of lengthy conversations about Irish life, history and culture, in which a listener is instructed by untiring teachers on such subjects as the nationality of Ossian (II Letter XII), the power of Catholic priests over the peasants (II, Letter XV), and the way in which conquerors destroy relics of ancient history in conquered lands (III, Letter XXV). Contemporary readers, however, were apparently not at all deterred by this, or by the distancing effect of the numerous long footnotes which added further information that even Sydney Owenson's ingenuity could not find means of introducing into the text. Warmed as they are by the writer's enthusiasm for her subject, even now these sections are not dull, and it is easy to see the interest they must once have roused.

Much more difficult for the modern reader to accept, however, are the passages, somewhat in the style of St. Clair, where Mortimer either expatiates at length on his emotions, or reports more personal encounters with Glorvina. Unfortunately, Sydney Owenson's heroes were usually her weakest creations, characters whose speech is either stilted or inflated,² and this novel suffers

1. Though no more so than that of Ennui or The Absentee.

2. i.e. until The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys (1827).

from being composed almost entirely of letters written by the hero to a friend.¹ Thus while it is noticeable, in the parts where he describes Irish life and customs, that his style often becomes quite plain and vigorous (one feels Sydney Owenson herself taking over) much of the rest is still written with an eye to appealing to lovers of "sensibility". The following passage for instance, is one where Mortimer is writing of his feelings for Glorvina:

.... I feel a certain commerce of the soul - a mutual intelligence of mind and feeling with her, which a look, a sigh, a word, is sufficient to betray - a sacred communion of spirit which raises me in the scale of existence almost above mortality; and though we had been known to each other by looks only, still would this amalgamation of soul (if I may use the expression) have existed.

What a nausea of every sense does the turbulent agitation of gross commonplace passion bring with it. But the sentiment which this seraph awakens "brings with it no satiety". There is something so pure, so refreshing about her, that in the present state of my heart, feelings and constitution, she produces the same effect on me as does the health-giving breeze of spring to the drooping spirit of slow convalescence! (I, Letter VIII, 255-6)

And this is moderate compared to some other scenes, such as that where he tells how father John explained to him that Glorvina could never marry him:

I fell at her feet; I seized her hands and pressed them to my burning lips. I heard her stifled sobs; her tears of soft compassion fell upon my cheek; I thought them tears of love, and drew her to my breast; but the priest held her in one arm, while with the other he endeavoured to raise me, exclaiming in violent emotion, "Oh God, I should have foreseen this! I, I alone am to blame. Excellent and unfortunate young man, dearly beloved child!" and at the same moment he pressed us both to his paternal bosom. The heart of Glorvina throbbed to mine, our tears flowed together, our sighs mingled. The priest sobbed over us like a child. It was a blissful agony; but it was unsupportable.

(III, Letter XXIX, 171-172)

That this style was not Sydney Owenson's natural style is evident from her later work - but she had been encouraged to go on using it by the antiquary J.C. Walker, whom she had consulted to guide her research, and who also took

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1. There are two introductory letters to the hero from his father, and one from the father in the last chapter, which is otherwise in third person narrative.
 2. By the 1846 edition "God" had become "Heaven".

it upon himself to instruct her in her manner of writing, urging that while "the language of simple narration" should be "easy, elegant and familiar", in the "impassioned" parts, she should employ "words that burn, or melt, as the occasion may require." Years later, the authoress confessed the result of such advice:

.... Conscious of the poverty of my vocabulary, I frequently borrowed a word or adopted a phrase ... not for its precise application ... but simply pour orner mon langage.¹

Not only the language, but the main characters, too, belong only too obviously to the novel of sensibility; even Glorvina, who is said to have health and vitality and great skill at dancing the jig (Letter XIX p. 243), has very delicate feelings and temporarily loses her wits on the death of her father (Conclusion p. 405). Eaton Stannard Barrett recognised her parentage only too clearly when he made her one of the main targets of his burlesque, The Heroine (1814). It is thus difficult to understand why contemporaries found her such a "new" heroine - though it may be that the early nineteenth-century reader saw qualities in her portrayal which are not so apparent today. As Julia Kavanagh wrote in 1862:

.... Little avails it to have been first, when to have been first is not to have been best. Glorvina has been more than equalled, she has been surpassed, and few who take up "The Wild Irish Girl" will care to know that this delightful being, so full of light and life was one of the very first of her kind that appeared among us.²

The other characters are shadowy, and there are none of the down-to-earth portrayals of peasants, or the full satiric portraits that she was later to do so well. The quixotic father of the hero has a negligible role, so that, apart from Glorvina, there are only three other major characters. Of these, Glorvina's father, the Prince of Inismore, an eccentric clinging to old ways in a world that has moved on, never comes to life, but is merely a symbol of

1. Memoirs I, 262; Lady Morgan, Book of the Boudoir I, 83.

2. Julia Kavanagh, English Women of Letters II, 314. Both she and William Fitzpatrick (op. cit., 108-109) believed, surely wrongly, that Scott was influenced by Lady Morgan, Fitzpatrick specifying Diana Vernon as a descendent of Glorvina.

Ireland's past and Ireland's wrongs, the melancholy romance of his fantastic mode of existence being stressed rather than its closeness to madness.¹ Father John, too, despite the fact that the authoress claimed that he was based on Dr. Flynn, the Catholic dean of Sligo,² has little of the individual about him, and is merely a useful mouthpiece for discussions of Ireland. This is true even of Mortimer whom the reader ought to know most fully. One must assume that the epistolary form was chosen as being a still reasonably popular method of allowing him to express very personal thoughts and feelings, and of allowing the reader to see Ireland through his eyes and to follow his changing views; the technique, however, is very unskilfully used, the letters being unconscionably long, and there being no exchange of ideas between Mortimer and his correspondent. The early letters clumsily set out the exposition, as the Earl of Mortimer tells his son many things he must already know, while young Mortimer awkwardly announces to a friend his intention of giving him "a correct ebauche [sic] of the recent circumstances of [his] useless life" (I, Introductory letter XX). Because he must tell everything, he is reduced to referring to his own "generous mind" (II, letter XIV, 116) or repeating another's praise of him as an "excellent ... young man" (III, letter XXIX, 172) - and his memory for reporting long conversations is phenomenal. Even allowing for the fact that the form was an established convention, it is very difficult to suspend disbelief.

Nevertheless, when all this has been said, there is an enthusiasm for Ireland in the novel which is infectious, and it is Ireland for which the novel exists, not the portrayal of individual characters. From time to time there are vividly executed sketches of Irish life, such as the Catholic service, held in a rough cabin packed with peasants, at which the priest

1. It was to be the closeness to madness of an obsession with the past which was stressed in Florence Macarthy (1818) and The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys (1827).

2. Prefatory address to the 1846 edition of The Wild Irish Girl, xviii.

* There is, of course, no suggestion that Wordsworth was echoing Lady Morgan; he himself gave his source as a passage in Thomas Wilkinson's account of his tour in the Highlands of Scotland. This work had been circulated in manuscript long before it was published in 1824 - but it seems highly unlikely that Lady Morgan had seen it.

.... address[ed] each of his flock by their name and profession ... exposing their faults and extolling their virtues, according to the nature of their contributions

while a friar was

.... piously turning his beads to two accounts - with one half he was making intercessions for the souls of his good subscribers, and with the other diligently keeping count of the sum total of their benefactions.¹
(II, Letter XVII, 158)

There are many such scenes: an Irish dance, "the lads and lasses ... ranged opposite to each other, with no other intercourse than what the communion of the eyes afforded or the transient intimacy of the jig bestowed" (II, Letter XIX, 196), a priest called out to see a child cursed by an "evil eye" (II, Letter XV, 139-141) or much briefer, yet evocative, passages such as the following, which strangely anticipates Wordsworth's Solitary Reaper (which had not yet been published);*

.... Nothing could be more wildly sweet than the whistle or song of the ploughman or labourer as we passed along; it was of so singular a nature, that I frequently paused to catch it; it is a species of voluntary recitative, and so melancholy that every plaintive note breathes on the heart of the auditor a tale of hopeless despondency or incurable woe. By heavens! I could have wept as I listened, and found a luxury in tears." (I, Letter II, 80)²

Such episodes were to be more integrally woven into the fabric of her later novels - but even given as they were in The Wild Irish Girl they attracted because they were new: if Maria Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent had been the first novel of Ireland, this was the first novel of modern Ireland, its highly romanticised plot coating a great deal of realistic fact. As Sydney Owenson herself said:

.... No work ... of fictitious narrative, founded on national grievances, and borne out by historic[sic] fact, had yet appealed to the sympathies of the general

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1. Already can be seen Sydney Owenson's dislike, not of religion, but of certain religious practices and attitudes. Her dislike of much about Roman Catholicism grew even stronger - but her desire to see Catholic emancipation never waned.
 2. There is a beginning of realism in this novel which was to be developed later. In St. Clair, the hero observes only "... a sturdy peasantry ... gathering in the harvest," who provide a scene "at once animating and picturesque" (Letter LV, 201).

reader, or found its way to the desultory studies of domestic life. "The Wild Irish Girl" took the initiative in an experiment since carried out to perfection by abler talents.

And to this she added, with truth, in a footnote:

Miss Edgeworth's useful, admirable and most humorous "Castle Rack Rent" had long preceded, as it surpassed "The Wild Irish Girl", but did not come under the same category.¹

Thus, despite what are clearly seen today as its glaring weaknesses, the novel was a great success. It became highly fashionable to dress in the style of Glorvina, the name "glorvina" was given to a type of hair clip,² and Charles Maturin tried to make use of its popularity by calling his next novel The Wild Irish Boy (1808). Even the practical Mr. Edgeworth enjoyed the book so much that he felt compelled to write to the authoress. In a letter of December 23, 1806 he referred to her as "a young lady of uncommon genius and talents" and said:

.... AS a sincere and warm friend to Ireland, I return you my thanks for the just character which you have given to the lower Irish, and for the sound and judicious observations which you have attributed to the priest. The notices of Irish history are ingeniously introduced and are related in such a manner as to induce belief among infidels ... I think it is a duty, and I am sure it is a pleasure, to contribute as far as it is in my power, to the fame of a writer who has done so much, and so well, for her country."

This generous praise was followed, however, by some tactful advice which regrettably was not taken for many years:

Maria, who reads (it is said) as well as she writes, has entertained us with several passages from the Wild Irish Girl, which I thought superior to any parts of the

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1. Preface to 1846 edition of The Wild Irish Girl, xxvi-xxvii. Cf. William Renwick, Oxford History of English Literature Vol. 9, p. 76, who notes that while Maria Edgeworth's Absentee turns on a similar situation to that in The Wild Irish Girl, and "is much better written and arranged ... it does not annul the very divergent values of Miss Owenson's novel". Apart from the more varied scenes of Irish life, there were also many passages of natural description which Rackrent did not provide. However, though these may have been unusual and evocative to her early nineteenth-century readers, they are not good, most being either in the worst Augustan style (e.g. see Letter II) or sentimental (e.g. see Letter XV). The influence of Ossian is evident.
 2. Memoirs I, 408.

book which I had read. Upon looking over her shoulder, I found she had omitted some superfluous epithets. Dare she have done this if you had been by? I think she would have dared; because your good taste and good sense would have been instantly her defenders.¹

That such a popular work was recognised as potentially politically influential can be seen from the fact that it was bitterly attacked in letters in The Freeman's Journal, signed M.T., but supposed to be the first of many attacks on Sydney Owenson by the Tory John Wilson Croker, a rising young writer, lawyer and government supporter who was soon to be a Member of Parliament and some years later to be satirised as Con Crawley in Florence Macarthy (1818).² However, the attacks, which were ably parried by her defenders³, had the effect of giving the novel even more publicity and popularity, something she learned the value of; for when Longman's later wished her to make another novel less controversial, for fear of public outcry, she replied:

.... On the contrary, the fermentations in public opinion, which it gives rise to, awakens a public interest, and rouses a species of fanaticism in its readers (whether for or against the leading tenets of the work) which eventually promotes its sale and circulation and consequently the interests of its publisher.⁴

Thus it was probably a belief that to be successful she must supply something new, rather than any concern about the attacks on her, which caused her to give up her Irish theme for a while, and set her next novel, Woman: or Ida of Athens⁵ in Greece, and to follow this with The Missionary (1811) set in India.

1. Memoirs I, 293-294.

2. Though it is generally accepted that Croker was M.T., there is room for doubt about this; a note from him dated October 19th 1808 (Memoirs I, 337-8) is in the tone of one wishing to be on friendly terms with her. There is, however, no doubt of his later vindictiveness.

3. See W.J. Fitzpatrick op. cit., 128.

4. Memoirs I, 347.

5. Between The Wild Irish Girl and this, she had had successfully produced in 1807 a comic opera, The First Attempt; or The Whim of a Moment, and had published The Lay of an Irish Harp; or Metrical Fragments, and Patriotic Sketches of Ireland Written in Connaught, a series of fine first-hand observations, giving material for later novels.

These, though carrying on major themes of The Wild Irish Girl - the subjection of one nation to another, and the evils caused by religious bigotry, completely lack the freshness which, to some extent, redeems The Wild Irish Girl's faults of style. She herself was soon to be ashamed of Woman, referring to it as "a bad book",¹ but she always had a soft spot for The Missionary, which Shelley called "a divine thing"² and which Lord Castlereagh admired so much on hearing it read before publication, that, despite his own very different political views from Sydney Owenson's, he personally helped her to get the terms she wanted for it from the publisher, Stockdale.³ Certainly it is a better novel than Woman, because the situation is a reasonably simple and poignant one, in which two young people, both devoted to different faiths and one vowed to celibacy, fall in love with each other, with tragic consequences. As with St. Clair, attention is focused only on the two main protagonists, and their sad situation gives at least some justification for the fervid language used.

"Luxima!" exclaimed the Missionary, in a melancholy transport, and pressing her to a heart which a feeble hope cheered and re-animated. "Luxima, my beloved! wilt thou not struggle with death? wilt thou not save me from the horror of knowing that it is for me thou diest? and that what remains of my wretched existence, has been purchased at the expence[sic] of thine? Oh! if love, which has led thee to death, can recall or attach thee to life, still live, even though thou livest for my destruction." A faint glow flushed the face of the Indian, her smile brightened, and she clung still closer to the bosom whose throb now replied to the palpitation of her own.

(Vol. III, "Conclusion", pp. 200-201)

Had Sydney Owenson continued to write in this way, it is highly unlikely that her later work would have been as popular as it was, for such a style was

1. Memoirs I, 352.

2. The Works of P.B. Shelley, edited R. Ingpen and W. Peck, vol. VIII, 112, letter of 21.6.1811. Daniel MacDonald in The Radicalism of Shelley and its Sources 53-64. provides a detailed study of the similarities in theme and treatment of theme between The Missionary and The Revolt of Islam, which Shelley began in 1811, shortly after reading The Missionary. Lady Morgan produced a revised version of it, called Luxima, in 1859.

3. Memoirs I, 414 and 424. According to W.J. Fitzpatrick (op. cit., 159) she was paid £400.

rapidly becoming unfashionable. She could not have known that Jane Austen had written of her -

.... If the warmth of her language could affect the Body
it might be worth reading in this weather¹

- but she could not have been unaware of the fact that even critics who recognised her talents often deplored her style. A review of Woman, for instance said of her "The powers of her mind are of no inferior class," and referred to her "brilliant imagination" and "subtlety of intellect" - but felt compelled to regret "the pompous inflation of the style".²

Whether it was as a result of criticism of this kind, or whether, as the compiler of her memoir suggested,³ it was the influence of Sir Charles Morgan, whom she married on 20th January 1812, it is impossible to say, but the fact is that after The Missionary her style began to change - and continued to do so to a point at which it would be difficult, from stylistic evidence alone, to believe that the sharply ironic Lady Morgan could ever have written the novels which appeared under the name of Sydney Owenson.

The first signs of this change appeared in her next effort, O'Donnel (1814), a novel once again on Irish themes, in which interest had grown rather than waned. Shortly after the appearance of The Wild Irish Girl, Maria Edgeworth had produced another Irish tale, Ennui (1809) for which she seems to have borrowed from Sydney Owenson the whole idea of taking to Ireland a young society gentleman, disenchanted with life, and letting him learn for himself the state of the country.⁴ Not surprisingly, since Miss Edgeworth was far more experienced and competent than her young rival, Ennui was better, though much shorter, than The Wild Irish Girl, and began exploring "how a

1. Jane Austen's Letters, 251. Letter of 17.1.1809.

2. A J R. 32 (April 1809) 364 and 366.

3. Memoirs II, 3-4.

4. Ennui must have been started soon after The Wild Irish Girl was published, since jottings for it appear at the back of her 1805-7 notebook. (See M. Butler, op. cit., 239.)

modern society works" much more systematically than was possible in that novel, given the large amount of antiquarian and romantic impedimenta it had to carry. Ennui had been followed by The Absentee (1812), a review of which had noted that the state of Ireland was

.... perhaps the most interesting that now exists ... the ancient barbarism no longer renders it savage, and cold formality has not yet made it tame ... society as it exists in the best circles in Ireland, is not less an object of curiosity, than a source of rational enjoyment.¹

It was perhaps because of this that Jane Austen's niece Anna decided, in 1814, to set in Ireland part of a novel she was writing, though she had never been there - only to be judiciously advised by her aunt:

.... we think you had better not leave England. Let the Portmans go to Ireland, but as you know nothing of the Manners there, you had better not go with them. You will be in danger of giving false representations.²

Whatever her limitations as a novelist, Lady Morgan did know her Ireland - and that she had consciously decided to take a different approach to writing about it from that used in her earlier work is evident from her preface, where she declared:

.... I have for the first time ventured on that style of novel, which simply bears upon the "flat realities of life."
(Preface, ix)

Thus the hero and heroine and the society in which they move are more credible, and, instead of inflated language and high sensibility, there are not only touches of real humour, but some sharply satiric scenes. So great was the change that Walter Scott, who earlier had told Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, who wanted to write a harsh review of Woman, that he sympathised with his views, and that, from her Wild Irish Girl, the authoress "seem[ed] to deserve

1. QR (June 1812) 337. (Review of Tales of Fashionable Life).

2. Jane Austen's Letters, 395. Letter of 10.8.1814.

such discipline very heartily",¹ now wrote:

.... Lady Morgan has fairly hit upon her forte - for O'Donnel is incomparably superior to The Wild Irish Girl, having nature and reality for its foundation.²

- an opinion confirmed by a private note written much later in his journal:

I have amused myself occasionally very pleasantly during the last few days by reading over Lady Morgan's novel of O'Donnel, which has some striking and beautiful passages of situation and description and in the comic part is very rich and entertaining. I do not remember being so much pleased with it at first³

It seems worth noting that the immediately following passage in the journal is the well known one in praise of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice, which he had also been reading; high though the praise of the latter is, he did not feel it necessary on this occasion, apparently, to draw any comparisons unfavourable to Lady Morgan's novel.

Eaton S. Barrett and Mary Russell Mitford too, noted the change. In the former's The Heroine, which was also published in 1814, pointed attacks are made throughout on Lady Morgan's earlier work - yet, at the end, O'Donnel is in the short list of novels which the heroine is told "may be read without injury" and even "with advantage" as being both instructive and entertaining.⁴ Mary Russell Mitford's change of heart is recorded in a letter to Sir William Elford:

.... I ... took up the book with the idea that nothing but nonsense could come from that quarter, I was, however, very much disappointed in my malicious expectations of laughing at her, and obliged to content myself with laughing with her. Her hero is very interesting, her heroine very amusing.

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1. H.J.C. Grierson ed., The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, 1808-1811. 166. Letter of 17.2.1809. His later comment to Lady Abercorn, who had asked him, in a letter of 12th January 1810 whether he had written The Quarterly Review's scathing attack on Woman, that he had not, and that he was "sure that the authoress of the Irish Girl (sic) [could] produce nothing deserving of severe criticism" seems to have been more polite than honest. (The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, 1808-11, 284 (Letter of 21st January 1810.)
 2. The Letters of Sir Walter Scott 1811-1814, ed. H.J.C. Grierson, 465. Letter to M.W. Hartstonge of 18.7.1814.
 3. W.E.K. Anderson, ed., The Journal of Sir Walter Scott, 114. Entry for 14.3.1826.
 4. The Heroine, Letter XL, Elkin Matthews and Marrot edition (1927) 349.

There are some good characters, particularly a managing bustling woman of fashion; et pour la bonne bouche there is an Irish servant, not much, if at all, inferior to the admirable Irishmen of Miss Edgeworth.¹

Appearing as it did in the same year as such novels as Fanny Burney's The Wanderer, Scott's Waverley, Jane Austen's Mansfield Park and Maria Edgeworth's Patronage, O'Donnel had formidable competition to face, yet private opinions such as these, and public ones, such as that of The Monthly Review which saw the authoress as now having "skilfully entered the lists with Miss Edgeworth in the delineation of Irish character and manners",² indicate the impact it had. Lady Morgan's publisher on this occasion was Colburn, then a rising young man, whose efforts were second to none in promoting the works of "his" authors. For O'Donnel he paid her £550, and a bonus of £50 when it reached a third edition. According to William Fitzpatrick, with the novel her claims to take her place among the best novelists of the age became cordially and universally recognised by the public.³ The first edition of 2,000 copies was rapidly sold out, it went into a third edition by 1815 and was still being reprinted at the very end of the nineteenth century.

However, despite the improvement on The Wild Irish Girl, there is still much that is weak in O'Donnel, not least being the far-fetched plot which gave The Quarterly Review grounds for calling it a "rhapsody of nonsense".⁴ As a comment on the novel as a whole, this judgement was, and is, unjust; yet the modern reader tends to find himself much more conscious of its weaknesses than was Scott, who was obviously better able to assess its original and positive qualities. (Even Maria Edgeworth, who disliked Lady Morgan, is reported to

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1. The Life of Mary Russell Mitford, ed., Augustus G.K. L'Estrange, I, 305, Letter of 3.4.1815. Crabb Robinson was another who, though he in general had disliked Sydney Morgan's work, found O'Donnel "certainly the best of her books which I have yet read". (Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers, ed. Edith Morley II, 500).
 2. MR 74 (May 1814) 110.
 3. Memoirs II, 53; W.J. Fitzpatrick, op. cit., 168.
 4. QR 17 (April 1817) 261 (from a review of her France).

have said "Never mind the improbability, let us get on with the entertainment!")¹

The first half of the novel is, in fact, credible enough. In it Ireland is introduced as it appears to unfamiliar eyes when Mr. Glentworth,² an absentee landlord, his second wife, Lady Singleton, her two daughters, and their governess Miss O'Halloran visit Glentworth's Irish estate, become acquainted with a sycophantic Irish protestant, Mr. Dexter, travel in Ireland, meet English friends (Lady Florence Grandville, whose husband, a naval commander is stationed in Ireland, Colonel Percy Moclere, an English army officer also stationed there, and a Mr. Vandaleur who is visiting Lady Florence), and come across O'Donnel, a romantic figure with an Irish wolfhound. He, they learn, has, through the harsh penal laws against Catholics, been deprived of his family lands and title (the law in this case being that which allowed a member of a Roman Catholic family, on renouncing Catholicism, to oust the rightful heir) and has maintained himself, like many in his circumstances, by serving abroad as a soldier. In the first volume, and in the early chapters of the second, he talks to the English party at length about the different peoples of Ireland and defends the Irish peasantry against charges of barbarism, the purport of the conversations being very much that of those in The Wild Irish Girl, only here there are more auditors, and there is, therefore, a more varied and natural interplay of opinion. It is only when the family returns to England, early in volume two that the romantic plot begins to smother the theme. Glentworth dies, and after some passage of time, O'Donnel, largely as a result of the iniquitous behaviour of a local agent from whom he rents land, but also partly through his own generosity to an impoverished relative, finds himself in such financial straits that his only recourse seems again to join the army

1. Quoted by Vineta Colby in her Yesterday's Woman, 86.

2. The fact that Glentworth's name is similar to that of Glenthorn in Maria Edgeworth's Ennui is occasionally (e.g. by T. Flanagan, op. cit., 130) used as evidence that Lady Morgan was borrowing heavily from her rival. She may, indeed, have learned from Ennui to be less rhapsodical, but the original theme of the Anglo-Irish learning about Ireland was her own, and there are no obvious borrowings from Ennui in the plot or characterisation of O'Donnel.

of a foreign power. At this point, however, he receives a gift of £2,000 from an anonymous wellwisher, and, assuming it to be from Lady Florence Grandville, he goes to England to return it. Finding himself to be mistaken, he then, again wrongly, thinks the donor to have been a friend of Lady Singleton's, the Countess of Llanberis, since the latter, he learns, has expressed a particular desire to meet so romantic a character. At the Countess's home he again meets the former governess to Glentworth's family, now amazingly and conveniently a widowed Duchess (and the one to whom he owes the £2,000 gift, though it is long before he knows this). Equally amazingly, the Duchess's dead husband had won, by gambling, some of the estates of which O'Donnel had been deprived. Having helped her to establish her claim to them, he is persuaded by her that, despite his poverty, they should marry - and thus he is restored to at least part of his family's ancient heritage in the same manner as was Glorvina in The Wild Irish Girl.

Romantic nonsense though it is, the plot has obvious popular appeal, and an additional pleasure must have come from the descriptions of scenes of outstanding interest, like the Giant's Causeway, though to the modern reader Lady Morgan seems to have been rather too inclined to present a scene from the point of view of its "picturesque" aspects, or its similarity to paintings by Salvator Rosa (e.g. I, V, 128-9; I, VII, 222-3) whose work she admired and about whom she later wrote a book.¹ The contrast too, between the insensitive pleasure travellers and the wild beauty around them is rather too pointedly made, as in the following description of the abbey of Bona Marga:

.... The desolate wildness of its site, the turbulent ocean it commanded, the rocks, cliffs and mountains, by which it was environed, the death-like stillness which hung upon it, the mortal relics strewed around, were grand and gloomy images, strongly contrasted by the flippant loquacity, rapid motions and appearance of its unusual visitants

(I, VI, 167)

1. The Life and Times of Salvator Rosa, Colburn 1824.

There is also a great deal of information about Irish history, customs and language.¹ Her scholarly adviser this time was the antiquary William Monk Mason, but she was possibly still influenced by the advice of J.C. Walker (since his counsel had seemed so astute with regard to The Wild Irish Girl), who had written to her shortly after the publication of that novel, to give her more advice for her next:

.... you will, of course, be minute with regard to customs and manners. You should also give all the traditions that prevail ... Allow me further to observe, that you should look over the Irish historians (Keating, O'Hilloran[sic] Leland, &c.), for such remarkable events as may have occurred in any of the scenes which you mean to describe. By relating or referring to such events, you will give a stronger interest to your work. But, above all, do not neglect to describe particularly, all the ancient buildings (either houses or castles), and the gardens. You will thus render your work historic in regard to the early state of architecture and gardening in Ireland.²

Thus there are passages like that giving a long account of the tale of O'Donnel the Red, the hero's Elizabethan ancestor (II, I, 7-36), or details of the founding and early history of the Abbey of Donegal (I, VIII, 265-6). The popularity of the novel vouches for the contemporary appeal of such information - but it is far too obviously inserted.

What is significant, however, is the beginning of an attempt to show not just the culture of the Irish, and the hardships and injustices they had suffered and were suffering, but the relationship of some of Ireland's social groups; as yet the portrayal is tenuous, and lacking the complexity of that

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1. For information for this, as for all her novels, Lady Morgan seems to have read extensively, referring in footnotes to the following: Annals of the Four Masters; Annals of Munster, Borlase; C. Brooke: Relics of Irish Poetry; E. Burke, Sir J. Davis: Historical Relations; Baron Finglass: Breviate of Ireland; Dr. Hamilton: Letters on the Coast of Antrim; Harris: Hibernica; Leland: History of Ireland; L'Abbé McGroghan: Histoire d'Irlande; Morris: Ireland; Rev. Dr. Neilson, Historical Collections; O'Halloran: Introduction to the History and Antiquities of Ireland; O'Rourke; Richardson: Folly of Pilgrimages; Rymer: Foedera; Smith, History of Kerry; Statistical Survey of Donegal; J.C. Walker: Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards; Ware: Monasticon; A. Young: Tour Through Ireland [sic].
 2. Memoirs I, 314-315.

in later novels - but it is already as good as that in Ennui and The Absentee (on which, admittedly, Lady Morgan may have built). There are fascinating glimpses of the English, fearful of rebel groups like the White Boys (II, I, 2), or discussing the possibility of being attacked by the peasants (e.g. I, II, 43, 50) - while at the same time they are making plans to educate and "civilise" them. The atmosphere created is somewhat that one would expect to find among white settlers in a primitive and hostile country, regarding the natives with a mixture of fear and curiosity. Their attitude to the Irish gentry they have dispossessed is likewise one of curiosity, though not, in this case, of fear. O'Donnel, descended from the first Earl of Tirconnel, is, in contrast to the English group, living in comfortless penury, and so shabbily dressed that of the English travellers, most of whom judge by external appearances, only Glentworth and Lady Florence recognise him at once to be a "gentleman". In contrast, the peasantry still regard him with something approaching reverence (e.g. II, IV, 129; III, XI, 305) - an attitude seen in the extreme in the devotion to him of his servant and foster-brother McRory. There are other kinds of native Irishmen, however, like the sycophantic Protestant, Mr. Dexter, obsessively anxious to secure a patron and so antagonistic to what he calls "the lower orders", and to Catholics in general, that an English bishop finds it difficult to believe that he is an Irishman (I, II, 55). Dexter, however, is ineffectual, and the English society set (with the exception of Glentworth) are portrayed as thoughtless and trivial-minded rather than as positively grasping or malevolent. These are the qualities assigned to their agents, represented in this novel not by Glentworth's agent O'Grady, who is merely said to have allowed things to fall into a sad state of disrepair in his master's absence, but by one Costello, an agent who has feathered his nest and become one of the "plebeian oligarchy" (e.g. II, IV, 89-97; III, VII, 200-210; III, IX, 255-7; III, IX, 262-4); it is he who, by raising O'Donnel's rent to an impossibly high level, deprives

him of his small landholding, and who later is quite prepared to have McRory imprisoned for trying to defend his master's rights. It was on such characters that the weight of Lady Morgan's condemnation fell, for, despite the constant use by her political opponents of the term "jacobin"¹ to describe her, she had no desire to cause any rift between English and Irish. On the contrary, though she had originally intended O'Donnel to be a historical novel (Preface ix-xi), when her researches uncovered events likely to stir up ill feeling, she changed her mind (most fortunately, for she was thus channelled into the more realistic novel for which her talents better suited her) and wrote a novel of contemporary life in which, though the sad plight of Ireland's dispossessed Catholic gentry is seen in the fate of O'Donnel, the possibility of friendship between the two nations is suggested in the sympathetic understanding which grows between himself and Glentworth. The novel was even dedicated to one of the greatest English holders of land in Ireland, the Duke of Devonshire:

.... whose liberal feelings in her interests class him high in the rank of her best friends; whose example in the country, so frequently distinguished by his presence, is THE WISDOM OF CONCILIATION; and whose conduct towards a grateful and prosperous tenantry best evinces in its effects how much the happiness and improvement of the lower classes of the nation depend upon the enlightened liberality and benevolent attentions of the highest

- and Glentworth is made to give voice to Lady Morgan's own wish to see not just religious tolerance but full political rights for Catholics, declaring that

.... where ascendancy is claimed by one tribe or cast, [sic] over others, subsisting under the same government, there is little chance of internal union, or safety for either

1. The term, as used abusively at the time, seems to have had no specific meaning, but was applied to anyone with apparently over-liberal ideas. Wilberforce, in A Practical View ch. IV section 5 p. 196 (16th edition 1827) referred to "Democrats and Jacobins" as if they were both much the same. In this novel, far from expressing "jacobin" sentiments, the hero, who has served in the French army, quotes Burke and shows an almost religious devotion to the memory of Marie Antoinette - e.g. II, II, 65; II, IV, 103; III, VIII, 240-241.

party ... The surest pledge, therefore, which can be given of the loyalty of the excluded, is their constant and unremitting efforts to be admitted to the rights and privileges of the government under which they live.
(I, VI, 212)

Such sentiments, Lady Morgan seems to suggest, might be heard more frequently and have some effect if the English concerned themselves more personally with their Irish estates - but in O'Donnel, "Almost all the great landholders for twenty miles around [are] absentees" (II, III, 80), and in Costello she illustrates the scope this gives to self seeking agents and middlemen.¹

Interaction between various elements in Irish society is, then, already beginning to be illustrated, but the novel is blighted artistically, not only because there is little in the second half except a trivial romantic plot, but because of the way in which the characters still too obviously exist almost entirely to convey points of view. O'Donnel is a great improvement on Lady Morgan's earlier heroes, but he has to carry the weight of giving much of the political and generally informative teaching. Though he is the character who features most prominently throughout, and though there is an interesting attempt at times to give a situation from his point of view,² he remains somehow an unreal figure. His generosity, courtesy and dignity are prominently featured - but he moves too clearly according to the demands of the plot, and orates at length as required by the theme.³ His moderation alone is almost too good to be true, as when he points out to McRory that the O'Donnells themselves originally won their lands by the sword, just as indirectly by the

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1. Even Glentworth, who on this first visit is supposed to be moved by what he has learned, does not propose to return for two years. This seems to be as much as Lady Morgan felt could be expected, at the time.
 2. As in III, III, 101, when he thinks of the Duchess as "cold and passionless" - with no immediate authorial attempt to correct this belief, so that the reader must share it.
 3. Scott found the story weak (Journal ed., W.E.K. Anderson, p. 114, entry for 14.3.1826) while Julia Kavanagh thought it was the hero rather than the story that failed (Julia Kavanagh, op. cit., 321). In fact the novel is weak in both aspects.

swords of the English they lost them (III, IX, 271). He regrets the tyrannous penal law that caused his branch of the family to lose their lands - but says that he can see no point in bitterness and hatred, since

.... a spirit of accommodation and conciliation in all parties would prove the surest, safest and speediest means of union and prosperity to all.
(III, IX, 275)

Even more incredible are "speeches" (for such they are) like the following to Glentworth who has been expressing his personal disapproval of religious disqualifications in general:

"O! then", said O'Donnel, with enthusiasm "liberal and enlightened, benevolent and temperate, as you appear, remain among us. Extend your pacificating influence to the utmost verge of your sphere; and encourage by the success of your example our other great English landholders, who draw their ample revenues from our plenteous soil, to visit, to know, and to acknowledge us. Let them come with minds detached from every bias which can influence passion, or revive prejudice: let them come unfettered by office, unsuing for place - more prompt to heal than to irritate, to soothe than to excite "
(II, II, 60)

- and so he continues for another full page.

The weakness in the portrayal of O'Donnel is seen, in varying degrees in all Lady Morgan's male characters till O'Brien (in The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys, 1827) - and her heroines are no more definitely portrayed; though they, from now on, are the main forces in her novels, with an intellectual and spiritual authority which is recognised by the men, they are, while key figures in the plots, kept very much in the background; they instigate action, but never become real as people.¹

1. Despite their outlandish activities, plots and disguises, her women carry with them more than a breath of her own sturdy independence - thus differing greatly from the traditional heroine, who needed protection. She once told a younger novelist, Mrs. A.M. Hall, "I desire to give every girl, no matter her rank, a trade - a profession if the word pleases you better ... give her a staff to lay hold of, let her feel this will carry her through life without dependence" (W.J. Fitzpatrick, op. cit., 278).

Just as shadowy is the portrayal of the agent in this novel; his activities, while important to the plot are quite briefly recounted - either by Lady Morgan herself, or in letters. Much more vital, however, is the portrait of the peasant representative McRory,¹ whose utter loyalty in refusing to leave O'Donnel when he is almost penniless and in even putting aside his planned marriage to serve him, is moving, and saved from sentimentality by the unconscious humour with which he is endowed. Moreover, unlike the speech of the characters already noted, McRory's volubility is natural and entertaining, as in the following exchange, when he comes across the English party who have lost their way:

"The Lord Jasus be good to me, now, and evermore, amen!" cried McRory, crossing himself; "for surely this bates the world, fairly; so it does, to see the English quality that I left safe and snug in their coaches, as good as a month go, [sid] upon the Shaughraum? I may say, this blessed night among the mountains of Kelmecrennan, the leedies, and the famales and all; sure I took ye'z for the good people at first, so I did," then rubbing his knee, he added:

"Oh, Jasus, but I got a cruel joulting off that thief of a rock, so I did; but any way, ye'z are all heartily welcome to County Donegal. So ye'z are," and he made a low bow to the whole party. (I, VIII, 259-60)

Almost as good is the portrayal of the high society characters. In The Wild Irish Girl, these had been romanticised in Mortimer and his father. The success of that novel, however, had resulted in the authoress's being invited to become house-guest-companion to Lord and Lady Abercorn, as a consequence of which she had been in daily contact with such people; and, though her continuing desire for conciliation (and her sense of justice) led her to show in Glentworth that high society had some admirable members, her obvious scorn for the general ethos of the group comes out in sharply satiric portraits, of

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1. She was to introduce more peasant characters into later novels, but usually only one drawn in much detail.
 2. Lady Morgan supplied a footnote: "Shaughran, a very expressive Irish word in frequent use, meaning unprovided for, or on the look out." There is either a misprint in the text, or McRory's Shaughraum is a variant of Shaughran.

which that of Lady Singleton is the most detailed and the best.¹ In her, not only ridiculous, but also warm and endearing traits are so combined with those that repel, that at times the reader is forced to remind himself that she is not merely delightfully inconsequential, but empty and basically selfish.² A busybody, who believes herself to be knowledgeable in almost every field, she is full of impractical schemes (the magnitude of which never deters her) for improving the lot of the Irish, switching from one whim to another, like a child. This in itself is more amusing than otherwise, especially as the poverty of the peasantry is not laboured in O'Donnel, but there are frequent reminders (through her own words and actions) of just how shallow she really is, and she needs merely to be ruffled, for her "kindly" concern to turn to harsh words about the barbarous Irish and their uncivilised country.

As is the case with all of the society characters (perhaps because they are obviously meant to have a "natural" affectation) her speech style is credible, and the French with which her talk is punctuated, was, as Maria Edgeworth noted with distaste, characteristic of Irish high society circles.³ Sydney Morgan peppered her own talk and letters with French phrases - and not merely as an affectation, since the principal of her first school, which children of the best families attended, was a French Protestant, and a great deal of French was spoken. Thus, making her characters use French expressions was part of the realism of the portrayal. So credible is Lady Singleton, indeed, that one is jarred when the illusion of reality fails, as when she turns to O'Donnel and says:

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1. There are, in fact, two society sets satirised in the novel, in much the same fashion, but as the second is centred on the Countess of Llanberis, in the London area, it is not so relevant in discussing Lady Morgan as a national novelist, except that the patronising tone of its members to O'Donnel and McRory is obviously intended to indicate typical English attitudes to the Irish.
 2. Nevertheless, one of her pleasanter traits is a desire to see the end of all penal sanctions against Catholics (II, II, 58)
 3. See Marilyn Butler, op. cit., 215.

"Oh dear! then I dare say your history is quite a romance; pray indulge us with a little biographical sketch."
(II, II, 43)

The others of this group, however, are weaker, all being rather too one-dimensional, and tending to have a dominant trait used like a flag to identify him or her. Mr. Vandaleur, for instance, is pinpointed by his hobby horse, "the gastronomic science", Lady Florence exists to be flirtatious and the Honourable Colonel Percy Moclere to be a man-about-town and a quiz, while Mr. Dexter, who is so very anti-Catholic that in real life he would be dangerous, is made so ridiculous by his anxious display of misquoted "elegant extracts" that his very bigotry seems amusing.¹ Lady Morgan was to do better in the novels that were to follow, making her points more successfully by reducing the amount of caricature. Nevertheless, these characters give a memorable picture of a closed society, unthinkingly unaware of the realities of life outside of its own circle.

Some of the ways in which their lack of comprehension of the problems of Ireland and their lack of ability to deal with them is satirised may perhaps be indicated in the following exchange between Lady Singleton and Dexter. The former, who has a "kindly" scheme for helping and educating the Irish says:

"Poor people! I am quite of opinion[sic] that they want nothing but manufactories, commerce, and schools, to be a very clever people indeed; and you must know, Mr. O'Donnel, that I mean to establish a bobbin-lace manufactory at Ballynogue. I have laid out, too, the ground for two school houses, to be conducted upon the Lancastrian system, modified according to some ideas of my own. There is, however, a system which sets the Bells and the Lancasters quite in the distance and which was practised by a German professor at Vienna, when I was there, with great effect. It was termed mnemonics and was the most expeditious and extraordinary mode of giving instruction that was ever

1. Elegant Extracts seems to have been a much read book of the period, it features in Jane Austen's Emma as being read by Emma, her father, Harriet Smith and Robert Martin (Emma I, IV, 29 and I, IX, 79).

devised. I don't know how it was done; but it was a most ingenious thing; for, without studying, thinking, or even learning at all (which certainly is a troublesome, slow process), all the languages and all the sciences were taught at once, in a few lectures; and to a thousand people together, as easily as to one."

- to which Mr. Dexter replies:

"If that may be the case ... there can be no great harm in educating the lower Irish; for, provided no ideas were communicated with their learning, it would alter the whole affair " (I, VI, 213-6)

Though Lady Morgan still had a besetting fault, which she never outgrew, of holding up the action by giving often inordinately long static descriptions of her characters either just before or just after their first dramatic presentation, on the whole such dramatic presentation, in which they expose their own weaknesses makes them so credible that they appear to have been drawn from life. Her contemporary readers certainly felt this - but it was a charge she constantly denied, even making the authoress heroine of one of her novels say:

Combine qualities as you may, to the very verge of extravagance, the world will furnish models, trace likenesses and find originals.¹

Just as Fielding claimed that in a character he depicted "not an individual but a species,"² Lady Morgan was later to claim:

...I have drawn none but such as represent a class, or identify a genus. Even my ladies Llanberis and Dunore were illustrations, not individuals. They were intended to represent the spoiled children of high society in all ages ... The only "key" therefore, that I acknowledge, is that to be found in the great repository of human nature.³

1. Florence Macarthy IV 144-5.

2. Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews III, ch. I.

3. Preface to The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys ix-x, Paris 1828 edition. Cf. her Book of the Boudoir I, 249 "Except in the instances of a few public characters, which are fair game, all my sketches have been of the species or genus, and never of the individual."

This is not to deny, however, that her characterisation found its starting points in her keen observation of the foibles of actual people,¹ and in her next novel, Florence Macarthy (for which, so high now was her reputation, she had little trouble in getting Colburn to pay her £1,200)² she was to build on her experience with O'Donnel to produce not only better vignettes of society life, but also to expand her picture of the relationship of various social groups in Ireland. Arguably her best novel, it will be discussed at some length in the following chapter.

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1. See note 31. She herself admitted that Father John in The Wild Irish Girl had an original. William Hepworth Dixon (Memoirs II, 33) suggests that Lady Singleton was based on Emily, Lady Cahir, and (Memoirs I, 392) that Lady Llanberis was based on Lady Morgan's patroness, Lady Abercorn.
 2. Memoirs II, 74. A scientific work by her husband was included in the price.

X

Lady Morgan and the National Novel :

Florence Macarthy (1818)

After completing O'Donnel, Lady Morgan, who had much in her of the reporter and sociologist, took the opportunity in 1816 of going to France, now open, after many years, to English travellers, and embarked on a comprehensive and very successful account of her impressions of life there. This was not completed till 1817,¹ in which year Maria Edgeworth produced her next Irish tale, Ormond, which as Mrs. Butler has said, showed a great advance on Ennui and The Absentee in "for the first time successfully [linking] the ambitious survey of a whole community with the moral development of an individual."² Lady Morgan's Florence Macarthy, which came out in the following year did not yet do this - that was, for her, a development to come later; but it was a much more ambitious work than Ormond, and a much better novel than O'Donnel, in its closer integration of theme and plot, its skilful handling of a much larger cast, and its attempts to present its subject matter almost entirely dramatically. The plot is still highly romantic, but this is the least important aspect of the novel, and its details are soon forgotten; it is individual characters, groups and scenes which make a permanent impact.

The reader is immediately plunged into the mixture of romance and realism which characterises the book, in the opening chapter, in which a ship draws into the docks at Dublin carrying two men, who have met accidentally and who both, for reasons of their own, wish to keep their real identity secret. One calling himself De Vere, is really Adelm Fitzadelm, a member of one of the Anglo-Irish landowning families, visiting Ireland for the first time; the other

1. France (1817). By 1818 there had been four English and at least three American editions.

2. Marilyn Butler: Maria Edgeworth, A Literary Biography, 389.

calling himself Fitzwalter, is really Fitzadelm's cousin, the rightful heir to the Fitzadelm estate, who, having been kidnapped as a child, is now, after many years, returning to Ireland to claim his rights. Both, therefore, have much to see and to learn; and their education begins almost at once, as, at the docks, they get their first sight of working class poverty, especially in one figure, waiting listlessly for a chance of carrying luggage;

.... Miserably clad, disgustingly filthy, squalid, meagre, and famished, the petitioner for employment had yet humour in his eye and observation in his countenance ... though debasingly acquiescent to a destiny, which left him without motive for industry, in a country where industry is no refuge from distress, he yet preserved the vindictiveness of conscious degradation; and there was a deep-seated sincerity in his curse which was sometimes wanting to his purchased benediction. (I, I, 21)

The antithesis here, and the utter lack of sentimentality set the tone for the novel. In Maria Edgeworth's The Absentee (chapter 6) there is a similar scene as the hero lands in Dublin, but it is not as vivid as Lady Morgan's, and the one man pinpointed here becomes far more real than Maria Edgeworth's amorphous crowd struggling for work and tips. From this point, a picture of Ireland begins to be created, slowly, solidly and inexorably, which even the unnatural manner of speech of both Fitzwalter and De Vere fails to destroy.¹

First the two men travel through Dublin, seeing the appalling conditions in which the poor live, the irony being heavy, since De Vere is, at the same time, reading Spenser's account of Ireland as "a most beautiful and sweet country," (I, I, 41).

.... The houses, between which they passed, were in ruins; the sashless windows were stuffed with straw; the unhinged doors exposed the dark and dirty stairs, which led to dens, still more dun and foul. (I, I, 38-39)

1. Fitzwalter's speech is pompous and De Vere's is mannered to such an extent that he seems almost a caricature of the romantic. Yet at times it seems as if he is to be taken seriously - and that his extreme romantic attitudes are merely a pose. As the text does not fully support such an assumption, however, the characterisation is unsatisfactory. Nevertheless it is interesting to note that Maria Edgeworth, who disliked much about the novel, liked him, and saw him as representing Byron (see Augustus Hare, Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth, I, 259. Letter of 22.1.1819).

It is not this, however, that their guide wants them to see, but the buildings of the fine part of Dublin, of which he is touchingly proud. Marilyn Butler has noted that the journey from the place of embarkation into the centre of Dublin took the visitor through Ringsend, described in 1806 by John Carr as "one of the most squalid sinks of filth I ever beheld," before he reached the centre of one of the most beautiful capitals in Europe - which is exactly the impression given of the journey by Lady Morgan.¹ There is much of the documentary here, and in what is to follow, yet the writing, which has the force of sincerity and first hand observation, is now marked by the art which is able to pick out the significant detail and reinforce a point by silent contrast. Lady Morgan, in the manner of her age, was not always able thus to refrain from unnecessary authorial comments, but she had moved far in this direction from her own earlier works.

As the novel proceeds, the picture of the state of the country is further elaborated when the travellers journey together to Munster. The fact that slums are not confined to the cities becomes glaringly obvious, and evidence of military control is apparent in the number of barracks, and in casual gossip about troops on the move.

So far an atmosphere of uneasily contained unrest has been finely conveyed; but at this point Lady Morgan seems to have felt that her readers might find so much realism difficult to take, for she now provided an interlude for those with a taste for the gothic. On reaching Holy Cross, Fitzwalter and De Vere make a sightseeing tour to the abbey by night and a rather Radcliffian atmosphere of suspense is at first built up, culminating in their hearing strange sighings and a short wild laugh. Gone, however, is the seriousness of the Ossianic melancholy of The Wild Irish Girl; Lady Morgan now

1. M. Butler, op. cit., 79.

plays this scene for humour rather than suspense, since De Vere is positively-- enjoying the thrill, while Fitzwalter calmly sets about looking for some human agency - and the incident concludes with a fine touch of bathos as the two, seeing something moving, hurry to investigate - and find it to be a cow. In itself the scene is quite well executed, and possibly for nineteenth-century readers gave the enjoyment, if not of suspense, at least of some mystery.¹ Its only importance, however, is in connection with the romantic plot, and for later readers it becomes merely an irritating distraction from the main source of interest in the novel.

Further travels through the mountains, with a new driver, a loquacious Irishman named Owny, and conversations with peasants, result in their hearing some Irish history, which, unlike most of that given in The Wild Irish Girl is relevant to both the theme and the plot. They learn that the Macarthies More originally owned the local territory, which was granted by Henry II to the current landowners, the Fitzadelms, when the Macarthies were conquered, and that

" little good ever they did the country yet, them
Fitzadelms." (I, III, 138)

That the people are indeed suffering is brought home (again without authorial underlining) when the men stay the night at an inn, where they meet a peasant who has walked all day trying to sell his horse, on a diet of a dry potato and a drink of water² (I, III, 165). Fitzwalter buys the horse, and, hearing that one of the homes of the Fitzadelms is up for sale, decides to inspect, and perhaps buy it.

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1. The strange noises have been made by the heroine, Lady Clancare of the Clan Macarthy, apparently to alarm De Vere, though this is not explained till the end of the novel. Though an attractive young woman, she has disguised herself as an old one in order to follow the two men - De Vere because he has trifled with the affections of one of her female relatives, and Fitzwalter because he was once betrothed to her.
 2. She was not exaggerating the poverty: 1816 had been a particularly bad year when the potato crop had failed.

The decrepit state of this building, Court Fitzadelm, now becomes a silent commentary on the effect of the absence of its owners - and the attempt of the travellers to find a way in gives Lady Morgan a chance to illustrate the stultifying effects of grinding poverty:

The long and broken road which wound round the wall, seemed to lengthen as the travellers proceeded; and they stopped to inquire the way to the nearest approach, of a poor man who was driving a lamb with a straw rope round its leg. The man pointed to a winding in the road, and directed them to the ruined gates of the principal entrance; he then took up the wearied lamb on his shoulders, and proceeded sullenly on. (I, IV, 193-94)

The little girl who eventually lets them in is also briefly but vividly realised - with her face that showed

.... rather the stupor of unawakened intellect than a natural deficiency of intelligence.
(I, IV, 199)

She has no further part to play in the novel - but she is not unnecessary. She is an essential part of the face of Ireland, as is a priest, met by chance, who rides with Fitzwalter, then departs

.... with a cordial benedicta and a bow, learned in his French college some thirty years before, but not yet forgotten in the wild scenes where his laborious and ill-requited calling placed him. (I, V, 248)

And in contrast to all the squalor, Fitzwalter comes upon a little mountain village:

.... It was silent and solitary, and seemed to sleep in the noon-tide sunshine (I, V, 248)

Neither priest nor village belong to the plot, but both are part of the cumulative picture of Ireland that Lady Morgan is creating.

By this time Fitzwalter and De Vere have separated to pursue the individual concerns that brought them to Ireland, and the reader follows Fitzwalter on a visit to a man called O'Leary, whose name he heard mentioned at one of his overnight stops, and in whom he shows a mysterious interest. O'Leary (who delighted even Maria Edgeworth, who found little in her rival's

work to please her)¹ is presented as an eccentric, his head full of the genealogies of the old families of Ireland:

.... living only in the past, contemptuous of the present, and hopeless of the future, all his natural learning, and natural vanity, were employed on his history of the Macarthies More, to whom he deemed himself hereditary senachy² (I, V, 284-85)

However, he is also fiercely attached to the Fitzadelms, having been foster father to one of them who disappeared as a boy:³

Thus, there existed an incongruity between his prejudices and his affections that added considerably to the natural incoherence of his wild, unregulated, ideal character. (I, V, 285)

The reader is allowed to see into his confused mind, in his mental soliloquies, and also to see this confused mind reflected in his sometimes incoherent speech. He is, indeed, close to madness, and though a plausible reason is given for his present bemused state (he has been flogged as a suspected rebel conspirator for having a note in Latin and Irish in his pocket) it seems evident that Lady Morgan is now suggesting either that his obsession with antiquities has to some extent upset his reason, or (less likely) that he is obsessed because he is odd. Lady Morgan's own pride in Ireland's past seems always to have been intended both to arouse England to a consciousness of her country's right to be treated with dignity and to wake the Irish into a consciousness of what they might again be. However, even as early as 1806⁴ she was conscious of the possible danger of dwelling too much on the past - that it could lead to inertia - or even to mental unbalance. Here, therefore, the long and rather dull genealogies of The Wild Irish Girl become not merely instructional, but are rather presented as an integral part of the idiosyncrasy of the character.

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1. Christina Colvin ed., Maria Edgeworth, Letters from England, 166-167. Letter of 28.1.1819.
 2. Senachy = genealogist.
 3. In fact to "Fitzwalter" - which explains the latter's interest in him.
 4. e.g. see The Wild Irish Girl, Letter XXVI.

Yet, close to madness though O'Leary is, he is not mad.¹ His eccentricity makes him unsuitable as a confidant, as Fitzwalter comes to realise - but it does not prevent him doing his job as master of a hedge school, and he is presented at work in the following scene as he calls his class forward to meet Fitzwalter:

Half a dozen overgrown boys with bare heads and naked feet, hustled forward.

"Them's my first class, plaze your honour! sorrow one of them gassoons but would throw you off a page of Homer into Irish while he'd be clamping a turf stack - Come forward here Padreen Mahoney, you little mitcher ye. - Have you no better courtesy than that, Padreen? Fie upon your manners. Then for all that, Sir, he's my head philosopher, and I'm getting him up for Maynooth. Och! then, I wouldn't axe better than to pit him against the provost of Trinity College this day, for all his auld small cloathes, Sir, the cratur! troth, he'd puzzle him, great as he is, aye, and bate him too; that's at the humanities, Sir. Padreen, my man, if the pig's sould at Dunmore market tomorrow, tell your daddy, dear, I'll expect the pintion ... Well now, dismiss lads, jewel - off with yez extemplo, like a piper out of a tent; away with yez to the turf; and mind me well, ye Homers ye, I'll expect Hector and Andromach[sic] to-morrow without fail; observe me well, I'll take no excuse for the classics, barring the bog, in respect of the weather's being dry; dismiss, I say."
(I, V, 288-90)

It is not surprising that The Scots Magazine felt that O'Leary might "be placed without suffering much by the comparison, by the side of the very best of Miss Edgeworth's creations."² In his rambling, disconnected way, he adds much to what the reader has already gathered about the Fitzadelms, but as he talks, flashing backwards and forwards from the distant to the recent past in Irish history, and stopping again and again to ruminate on Fitzwalter's likeness to the Fitzadelms, it is O'Leary himself the reader is interested in, both as an individual and as a type of character moulded by Irish history. Then, in ironic commentary on what he is saying, there comes marching by the

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1. Nor is he always incoherent, as is evident from the passage below; indeed, his turn of speech is at times very attractive.
 2. SM n.s. 3 (December 1818) 554. The original of O'Leary is, without doubt the Thady O'Conolan vividly described in her Patriotic Sketches (1807) Sketch XVIII, with his Greek and Latin quotations, his reprimand to his barefooted pupils for their want of good manners to a guest, and his first class, who can construe Homer, but have a day off to cut the turf.

"supplementary auxiliary yeomanry legion" of Mr. Derby Crawley, the local agent, whose name has already echoed ominously from time to time, bringing suddenly to the fore another of the strands of Irish society, and illustrating O'Leary's sad refrain which seems a key to the whole novel:

"And now tis the reign of the Crawleys"
(I, V, 315)

The very fact of Crawley's being responsible for this "order maintaining" force immediately indicates the extent of the power he wields, since the Yeomanry (intended to be a supplementary police force) were normally raised by the Protestant gentry - of which Crawley is certainly not one. And unlike the agents in the earlier novels, Crawley is portrayed in depth, the reader being allowed to see him in various situations - not only at home, where his views are openly expressed but also in relation to his employers, whom his cunning enables him to manage, and in relation to the peasantry, who have good reason to go in fear of his power.

The opportunity for the picture of the Crawley family at home occurs quite naturally from the fact that it is Derby Crawley, as agent, whom Fitzwalter must see if he wants to buy Court Fitzadelm, and the theme of Ireland's subjection, not so much to the English as to people like the Crawleys, is here illustrated by a portrayal of the family and its social connections which quite surpasses any mere propagandist intent. Attention is first focused on Derby himself, as Fitzwalter sees him on his arrival at his home:

.... agent, magistrate, county treasurer, land jobber, road maker, landlord and attorney-at-law, captain of the Dunore volunteers, and commandant of the New-Town Mount Crawley supplementary-auxiliary volunteer legion
(II, I, 2)

- he is seen shaving, while his Protestant volunteers wait outside to be reviewed. His relationship with the mass of the local community is suggested by the fact that the volunteers are being watched by a great crowd of people who are waiting to pay rents or hear his judgments. The scene in Maria

Edgeworth's Ennui, where the hero describes the crowds coming to see him on various matters (chapter 7) is in some ways like this - yet in others it is very different. In Ennui, for example, the people are wanting favours and advice, while here they are paying out. This scene is richly satiric, and more suggestive of an atmosphere of unrest. Yet though Crawley and his force are obviously a sore in the side of the waiting people, Lady Morgan creates a very amusing picture as the clumsy squad attempt to drill, directed by Crawley, who is still shaving and shouting down from an upstairs window. First he lambastes the sergeant (obviously a tailor) for not yet finishing his new pair of trousers - then orders him to

" fogle me those haroes through all them system[sic] of tictacs I sent you down from Lord Rosbrin in a castle frank last week "

"I shaul, your honor; that's eyes right and eyes left, Sir; and is eligant marchers at a quick step, plaze your honor, captain."

"Well then, Sergeant Kelly, march me them through a little circuitous cut to Paddy Scanlan's potato ridge; but have a care of my meadow; do you mind Sergeant Kelly?"

"I shaul, Sir. Quick march," cried the sergeant, while the protestant boys struck up, and the legion went shambling off in a contrary direction to that intended by Mr. Crawley, who, with that half of his face which was not covered with soap-suds purple with rage, called after them

(II, I, 7-8)

Here, like Smollett, Lady Morgan treats corruption in a way which makes it almost farcical - but there is a bitter taste to the farce, and she ends the scene much more soberly, with the comment that the recruits are marching off

.... to oppose prejudice and ignorance armed with power, to prejudice and ignorance in subjection; and most probably (as is the usual case upon such occasions in Ireland) to breed and forment the disturbance they were sent to anticipate or to quell

(II, I, 12)

The portrait of Derby Crawley is now elaborated and set in a frame of his family, as seen by Fitzwalter at a dinner party to which he has been invited by Derby's spinster sister Anne, a man-hungry evangelical. Disappointed in love, she has been awakened by an evangelical preacher, "the celebrated

Zachariah Scare'um" to a vocation which has "induced her to give to heaven all that had once been Counsellor O'Rafferty's" (II, I, 69). Having run "in rapid succession through all the shades of the sectarian prism" (II, I, 69) she is now what Lady Morgan calls "a high church methodist" - presumably an Evangelical rather than a methodist. She has joined those

.... who give books where they should give bread, and
lavish dogmas and credenda to those who want the means
of existence (II, I, 16-17)

- and has a "charitable repository in Dublin where piety and patchwork [are] sold together" (II, III, 131). And interestingly, in one of the scenes in which she takes a leading part, we find Lady Morgan making capital out of the two possible meanings her age gave to the word "serious": because Fitzwalter tells her that the business on which he has come is "not a pilgrimage made merely in pursuit of amusement; [but is] business of a more serious nature" (II, I, 24) she hopefully believes that he has come on business of a religious nature, that he is "some male Huntingdon, some imitative Wilberforce, whom the odour of her new-fangled sanctity ha[s] allured to the scenery of Dunore," (II, I, 24-25).

With her affected speech, and her pretensions to culture, she could have been a complete caricature, yet, satirical though the portrait is, she lives, in little touches like her "look vibrating between doubt and disappointment,"¹ as she gathers that Fitzwalter's interest is in her brother, not in her (II, I, 28), in the skill with which, by a fawning humility, she insinuates herself into the graces of the local great lady, Lady Dunore, (II, III, 152) and in her capacity to surprise, as when, when things go wrong for the family, she retires "to brood over her own venom" (IV, I, 30). She has earlier been seen

1. This phrase, so commonly used (with variations) by the Porter sisters, has a completely different effect in Lady Morgan's usage here, and illustrates how far she had moved from the style of "sensibility".

as ludicrous, pathetic, and cunning - but not till this point have the darker possibilities in her been suggested.

Nor is Derby himself a caricature: though his speech is full of solecisms and he is absolutely lacking in the culture to which his brothers and sister and the younger generation of his family pretend, he is yet, of all of them, the most at ease in any company. As for his sister's "methodist" acquaintances, he treats them with a contempt which Lady Morgan contrives to make highly amusing (while aiming some equally barbed shafts at established Anglican behaviour):

" I will not have my house made a magdalen asylum to a parcel of canting methodistical thieves, who are of no use but to set aside the simple lethargy of the church service, and to substitute the errors of the Presbyterians for those of the established faith. With your missions and missionaries, conversions and perversions, have you left me a tinpenny in my pocket to give to my own poor in New-Town Mount Crawley? And pray, what's gone of my one pound note that was to make Christians of the black negroes? Never saw a single sowl of them set foot in a church yet, barring Mrs. Casey's little black boy, that carries her prayer-book to early service. And I'd trouble you for my eleven and fourpence halfpenny, Miss Crawley, that you made me give to get King Pomarre of the Okaheitee islands, to let himself be baptized ... And 'bove all, where's my sixteen and three-pence, carried off by your "angel without wings", for lighting up the dark villages?"

(II, II, 79)

A hard-headed realist, he says quite openly (at least in the family circle) what most of his kind know, but keep quiet about, namely that flattery and bribery are keys to success; and, laughable though he may seem at times, he is a figure of very real power and influence, easily able to manipulate his employer, Lady Dunore, who regards him as

" an excellent creature to whom we are much indebted "

(II, III, 144)

The other Crawley who figures quite largely in the novel is Derby's son Con, usually said to be a portrait of Lady Morgan's adversary John Wilson Croker. Like Croker, Con is a lawyer, an aspiring Member of Parliament and

a dogmatic literary critic, whose favourite term of abuse is "jacobinal". More than this, he is even made to use, in relation to the heroine and her novels, some of the very same abusive phrases used by Croker about Lady Morgan,¹ (IV, I, 36-7). Nevertheless, he and the rest of his family exist, rather as Sporus and Bufo exist, as satirical portraits of universal types.

The rest of the family appear more as lengthy pen sketches than as vital creations; but together they emphasise the extent of the tentacles of such a family, in a way that the thin sketch of the agent Clendenning in The Wild Irish Girl, or even the brief account of the activities of the agent Costello in O'Donnel, was unable to do. And they are credible, partly because, while there is no doubt that they, en masse, as representatives of their kind, are the villains of the novel, they are not made inhuman. The ostentatious vulgarity of their way of life, the young girls, anxious to show how they can play the piano in the newest fashion "with five hands", one of the family's guests mildly teasing one of the girls by pulling off her shoes, to the tune of her

" Quit now! behave Thady Windham, or I will complain
to your aunt - I will, upon my honour;
(II, II, 83)

- is all very ordinary. The vulgar display at the home of the Raffartys in Maria Edgeworth's The Absentee (chapter 6) is no better than - if as good as - this.

And the family portraits and relationships are presented with a wealth of material detail. Noting that Jane Austen's novels are, in general

1. Rigby, in Disraeli's Coningsby (1844) is another caricature of Croker, who according to Cyrus Redding made "political feeling the standard of literary merit". Redding went so far as to say that Croker "ruled the Quarterly. Gifford he kept under his thumb ... Murray feared him." (Fifty Years Recollections, Literary and Personal, III, 306, 308). The worst of the attacks on Lady Morgan came from the Quarterly which Hazlitt, as well as Redding, claimed was utterly biased: "No statement in the Quarterly Review is to be trusted," he said (Hazlitt, Works ed. P.P. Howe, vol. II, p. 124).

"reticent concerning the details of characters' style of living," Douglas Jefferson goes on to say:

.... Within a generation or two of Jane Austen the vogue had changed. The early Victorian Thackeray, in his portrayal of society, enriches his surfaces with lavish details of manner and visual effect. The toilette and dress of Major Pendennis, the incontinent profusion of the Claverings' drawing room are material for great set pieces.

In fact description of this kind was to be found in the work of Lady Morgan, from 1818².

Having established the reality of the agent class, Lady Morgan then moves on to present the Anglo-Irish gentry, in the persons of Lady Dunore (Fitzadelm's mother) and her society guests - developments of the characters in O'Donnel, and much more skilfully portrayed. Lady Singleton figured largely in the first volume of O'Donnel - and then virtually disappeared, her place being taken by the leader of a society set in England, Lady Llanberis. Here the two roles are fused into one, and Lady Dunore's guests are much more natural than those in O'Donnel, only one, Lord Rosbrin being a caricature, with a passion for the theatrical which is carried to an absurdity only suited to stage farce. The caustic comment on him that -

.... The intellectual capabilities of Lord Rosbrin went further to overturning the doctrine of innate ideas than all Locke has written on the subject, without, however, affording much testimony in favour of ideas acquired...

(II, III, 179)

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1. Douglas Jefferson, Jane Austen's Emma, 80-81.
 2. Thackeray knew Lady Morgan well during the years in which she lived in England (1837-1859). By the time he met her, she was approaching sixty, and no longer the formidable figure she had been, with the result that he seems to have regarded her (especially her vanity) with amusement. Nevertheless, despite the fact that he was a contributor to Fraser's Magazine, which made her one of its prime targets, the amusement seems to have been quite affectionate. See The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray ed., Gordon N. Ray, I, 376-8; II, 149; III, 374; IV, 123 and 343. He must have known her work, and, interestingly, in Vanity Fair included a character called Glorvina, a family called Crawley, and, in Mr. Wenham, yet another caricature of John Wilson Croker. Lionel Stevenson (PMLA 48 (1933) 547-551) has suggested that in Becky Sharp Thackeray was projecting Fraser's view of Lady Morgan.

- is only too fully illustrated in making him speak almost entirely in quotations from Shakespeare - an idiosyncrasy which rapidly becomes irritating rather than amusing. The rest, however, are represented as thoughtless, irresponsible, and ignorant of the real troubles of the Irish, rather than really stupid, or in any way malevolent; a reference to them as "a group of grown children" (IV, I, 43) being very appropriate to the way in which they are portrayed. Lord Frederick Eversham for example, is as frivolous and affected on the surface as the others - but he

.... almost dignified vanity, and rendered affectation supportable by the good sense and good feeling, which, in spite of his efforts to conceal both, formed the basis of his character. (II, III, 177)

No secret is made of the fact that his income comes from the Irish, a salary

.... very acceptable to the younger brother of one of the poorest dukes in Great Britain (II, III, 171)

but he is represented as invariably courteous and good-natured. In a scene where the Irish peasantry (who are clearly shown to regard the landlords very differently from the agents) admiringly crowd round the coach of Lady Dunore as she arrives for the first time on her estate, greatly alarming the female passengers who cannot understand what is happening, he addresses the crowd with joking good humour - and it is not until he has finished speaking that the reader realises that the crowd have not understood a word of what he has been saying, but have been completely won over by his manner:

" I would have been Irish, gentlemen, if I had been consulted; but c'est une affaire arrangée and there's no more to be said on the subject. If you have any interest in a name, not purely Milesian, mine is Eversham, and I have the honour to be in the service of the Irish Lord-Lieutenant, who shortly means to visit this oppressed barony, to redress all your grievances, grant all your petitions, banish proctors, suppress tithes, to permit every man to distill[sic] his own poteen, and every woman to drink it; - that is, if she pleases; for liberty, gentlemen, liberty is to be the order of the day; so, ERIN, GO BRACH! Ireland for ever!"

(II, III, 138-39)

The contrast between Lady Morgan's (and, she would have her readers believe, the people's) attitude to this society and to the Crawleys and their ilk, is brought out sharply in the passage immediately following Lord Frederick's address to the crowd:

"The joyousness ... that beamed in every wild countenance, and betrayed itself in every forcible gesture, was soon dispelled; for the sound of a drum and fife was heard at a distance, and in a few minutes Mr. Crawley, accompanied by his sons, (the two elder and himself in full uniform), and riding at the head of the Dunore yeomanry cavalry, approached the carriage at a gallop, scattering on every side the bare-footed crowd. (II, III, 139-140)

Another of Lady Dunore's guests, Mr. Pottinger, represents (somewhat as did Mr. Dexter in O'Donnel), the hangers-on of the titled families - supremely conscious of his good fortune in being able to do so. Lord Frederick finds his sycophancy very amusing:

".... I had the honour of driving through the streets in one of the vice-regal carriages, with the dear little vice-regal children."

"Memorable events, my Potty!" - returned Lord Frederick, solemnly. (II, III, 143-44)

The only woman who figures at all largely in the castle set, apart from Lady Dunore, is Lady Georgiana Vivian, who is, it seems fairly clear, the mistress of Lord Frederick. Without dwelling on her, merely by casual references or brief snippets of conversation, Lady Morgan brings her to life in all her brittle, charming frivolousness and selfishness.

It is Lady Dunore herself, however, who chiefly epitomises all that Lady Morgan believed to be wrong in the attitudes of the landlord class; and whose "portrait" ranks in the novel second only to that of Derby Crawley. Having no stability of character or sense of responsibility, change and excitement are essential to her existence. On her arrival in Ireland, she is at first full of enthusiasm for the idea of running the estate herself, but Derby Crawley, who wants no change, ensures that she shall be overwhelmed with documents to the point of distraction, with the result that she throws every thing aside:

"There, Mr. Crawley, I can hold out no longer; pray remove these horrors from my sight; if you wish me to live. You are the best judge of what is for my son's interest. You have always been active in our service. Only we want money to carry on the war, observe; for you Irish are always so dreadfully in arrears, at least so our English agent tells me; and in fact, Mr. Crawley, we must get our rents better paid. For the rest, if you wish me to remain among you another week, never overwhelm me again in this way "

Old Crawley, with a mingled look of obsequiousness and humour, thus attaining his point, swept up all his papers and parchments into his green bag

(II, IV, 187-88)

Similarly when she takes a fancy to go electioneering, Derby and Con are able to foil her, both by making sure that her journey is extremely uncomfortable, and by horrifying her by the squalor she sees. One visit is enough. Con Crawley stops the carriage at a wretched, foul-smelling cabin, where two startled, half-naked children run to bring their parents - the father unshaven and ragged, the mother barefoot, barelegged and emaciated:

.... Old Crawley, who was perfectly aware of his son's manoeuvre, and who had sat silently enjoying the disappointment surprise, and disgust of his patroness, now exclaimed, in the usual tone of familiarity with which he addressed the lower orders, from whom in manner and language, he was so little removed,

"Morrow Denis Regan: how is it with you man?"

"Musha! long life to your honor, I'm brave and hearty, Sir; and hope you're well, Mr. Crawley, dear."

"And how is the woman that owns you, Denis? How are you Judy?"

Judy dropped a courtesy to the ground. "Well, I thank your honor's asking, praise to God, amen, and am glad to see you looking so beautiful, Mr. Crawley, Sir."

The vote is asked for, and promised, but Lady Dunore cannot bring herself to take her handkerchief from her face:

"Would your ladyship wish to alight?" asked young Crawley.

"Alight! why the road is ankle deep. Pray let us get out of this shocking spot," said Lady Dunore, with a countenance of nausea.

"I am afraid, however, your ladyship must alight, for this road is terminated by a bog; and there will be some difficulty, if not danger, in turning the carriage in this narrow spot."

"Good God! how could you bring us into such a scrape, Mr. Conway Crawley?" asked Lady Dunore angrily.

"Madam," he replied, in affected consternation, "I hope I did not mistake your ladyship's order. I thought it was your wish to stop at the door of the first freeholder, who - "

"Yes, yes, but I could not for a moment suppose that this wretched place, these wretched persons - in short if I stay here a moment longer, I shall catch a typhus fever, or be suffocated by the stench. Thomson, why don't you turn instantly? Do you hear me?" (II, V, 241-44)

Such a scene bringing together in lively fashion, three distinct classes of Irish society still has interest, and brings out, without need for further comment, the irresponsibility of some landowners and the deviousness of their agents.

And in this novel Lady Morgan's fertile imagination produced an abundance of equally telling episodes, one of the best being that immediately following the electioneering scene, one which again leaves a surface impression of comedy and an underlying feeling of horror. It is, however, much longer and more complicated, involving almost all of the characters in the novel. Wishing this time to illustrate the way in which some agents tried to foment mistrust between landlords and peasantry, Lady Morgan made the Crawleys send Lady Dunore an anonymous letter, warning her of a planned peasant riot. To their dismay, her reaction is very different from that which they expected - she is merely excited:

.... The threatened danger relieved the torpor of her feelings, gave play to her wild imagination, and afforded ample occupation to her laborious idleness.
(III, V, 249)

Thus, when the supposed rebels are rounded up at the very time that two circuit judges ask for overnight accommodation in her home, she looks forward "in a fever of delightful agitation" to "an amazingly amusing trial" (II, V, 261), merely saying:

" I hope, though, they will not hang many of these wretches. You have no idea how I hate to have people hanged."
(II, V, 263)

Here Lady Morgan refrained, as she so often earlier failed to do, from emphasising this by authorial comment, and proceeded to show, by a full scale treatment of the trial, how the socialites saw it as a play, with no thought that men's lives might be at stake. But, before the trial, the action

is held up for two of the pen sketches of which she was so fond, this time of the two judges, Baron Boulter and Judge Aubrey. Both passages in themselves are clever, but both are much too long, since the judges appear only in this episode, and are unnecessary, since the qualities which are catalogued, in very balanced style, are almost immediately illustrated dramatically. We are told, for example:

No one trifled away liberty with more grace or pronounced sentence with more humour than Baron Boulter; and the culprit whom he jested to the gallows ... must almost have been reconciled to his fate by the gaité d'a cour that sealed his destiny.
(II, V, 271)¹

This "wit" is then immediately demonstrated in his conduct at the trial, when, for instance, he is said to observe that the Irish are "a very fine people, and a very handsome people" - but that "a little occasional hanging, just now and then" does them no harm (III, I, 5).

The trial, which occupies the whole of chapter XI is used, somewhat as Jane Austen had earlier used the play episode in Mansfield Park, to focus attention both on an issue and on the people involved, but the scene is presented in a much more theatrical manner, with the characters sharply differentiated, and reverses and surprises following quickly upon one another. Lord Rosbrin, who regards counsel and prisoners and jury as his dramatis personae, fusses about seating arrangements:

" this is the place for the counsel for the crown ... the prisoners, you see my lords, occupy the lower part of the hall, the background or portion filled up with guards, officers, mutes and others: (III, I, 8)²

Lady Dunore is

.... fluttering about from place to place, ... tears in her eyes and smiles upon her lips;
(III, I, 9)

1. In later editions "gaité d'a cour" became "pleasantry" - a typical example of the way in which she eventually tried to refine her work. With The Wild Irish Girl she seems to have worked on the principle of a large scale removal of adjectives.

2. Later editions have "the background being filled up with guards" etc.

The Crawleys stand, dumbfounded that the arrest and trial they hoped would be hustled over in secret is now on full show. Baron Boulter

..... endowed with a pliancy of mind which permits the pursuit of many objects at the same moment, and who was in the habit of dispatching an epigram, and a warrant, of giving judgement and an invitation to dinner in the same breath

- calls "for pen, ink and paper, that he might answer a few letters and listen to the examinations "without loss of time or hindrance of business"" (XI, I, 12) - illustrating this by asking for a lighted candle and wax during the hearing. Aubrey, on the other hand, behaves with utter correctness, reminding Boulter of the seriousness of the situation and dealing acidly with Con Crawley's attempts to give him "a slight sketch of the actual situation of this barony". (III, I, 13) ¹

The Irish peasant prisoners, obviously innocent in their naive explanations of their activities at the time of their arrest, and the fascinatedly amused society group, who act as jury, and call out, to Crawley's horror "not guilty, not guilty" (III, I, 26), complete the "cast".

Humour now takes a different turn, as Crawley proceeds with a more serious charge against O'Leary (who is among the prisoners) of having suspect documents, including a letter which proves him to be intriguing with France and Spain as an associate of a spy who, he says, he knows has been working in the neighbourhood recently, but who has now been caught. At this Lady Dunore can hardly contain herself for excitement - when Judge Aubrey completely deflates the charge by examining the documents and finding that they refer to an insurrection in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Undeterred, Con Crawley (despite his father's agitated attempts to get him to give up the case) now has the "spy" brought in. Seen at first from the "audience's" point of view merely as "a person of singular and splendid appearance" (III, I, 39) he is soon revealed to be none other than Fitzwalter, who has been

1. One of the ways in which Lady Morgan maintains an impression of realism is by always including at least one unsatirized figure in a satirized scene.

missing for so long from the action that the reader has forgotten him.¹

Unlike the peasants, he is not to be subdued, asserting that he knows that

.... no man shall be imprisoned but upon the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land.

(III, I, 43)

On Aubréy's kindly suggestion that he find two people to act as bail for him to save him unnecessary imprisonment, an offer is made by one of the spectators, who, with another dramatic flourish is found to be the De Vere of the early chapters, and, in fact, really Adelm Fitzadelm, Lady Dunore's son. Lady Dunore is in ecstacies:

.... She threw herself into her son's arms, as much transported by the theatrical scene of his unexpected appearance, as if she had not, for months, intrigued his absence.

(III, I, 47)

She herself wants to act as the second bail Fitzwalter needs, but on learning that it must be a man, delightfully turns round and orders Derby Crawley to do so, who, stunned at finding himself pledging bail for the man he himself had had arrested, is only able to think, "Well, this bates Banacher any how." (III, I, 51)

Surprises are not, however, yet over, for one of the "villagers", a shawled female, now casts off her shawl and reveals herself to be Lady Clancare of the clan Macarthy. Representing the old Irish gentry, she, though the "heroine", has, as far as the reader knows, played as yet no part in the novel.² She is greeted with delight by Lady Dunore, who had met her in London, where she was noted as a novelist, and the two drive off, cheered by the peasantry, in a theatrical ending to a highly theatrical but very effective chapter.

Unfortunately, at this point the novel begins to languish, too much of the last part (rather less than half of the whole) being taken up with the

1. This indicates the relative unimportance of the hero in Lady Morgan's novels up to this time.

2. She has, in fact, made a few fleeting appearances as an old woman, but this is not revealed till later.

romantic plot which has, as yet, been kept very much in the background. The Edinburgh Monthly Review, while highly praising much in the novel, referred to the plot as

.... the most uninteresting part of the work - tedious, obscure, and unsatisfactory¹

Earlier any "obscurity" had been relatively unimportant; now the plot is made clearer, but in the process the novel does become rather tedious. There are many meetings and discussions between Fitzwalter and Fitzadelm, Fitzwalter and O'Leary, Fitzwalter and Lady Clancare, in which it becomes obvious that Fitzwalter is the missing rightful heir to the Dunore estate, and in which he learns of the presence in the district of a cousin of Lady Clancare called Florence Macarthy, a woman he is in honour bound to marry because of a promise made to her dying father, but whom he has seen only once, fleetingly, years before, and with whom he has completely lost touch. Eventually his claim to the estate is recognised, he learns that Lady Clancare, with whom he has fallen in love, is, in fact, Florence Macarthy, and, uniting the blood of ancient Irish and Anglo-Irish, they marry and settle on the Dunore estate, convinced that, (to quote the closing words of the novel) "Ireland can best be served in Ireland."

Ridiculous though all this sounds, it must have been acceptable to many in its day. Mrs. Hamilton, writing in 1892 still believed that it was "the sugar of the story" which sweetened "the physic of politics"² and Crabb Robinson, who disliked the book as a whole, at least found this last part interesting.³ Melodrama, however, while perhaps always popular in the best selling market, dates quickly; the only scenes now which stand out from the later part of the novel are those which not only reflect Ireland's plight, but which reveal timeless traits of character, like Lady Dunore's suddenly taken up and suddenly dropped enthusiasms. Such a scene is one in which

1. Ed.R I, (June 1819) 657.

2. Catherine Hamilton, Women Writers: their Works and Ways (first series) 223.

3. Edith Morley ed., Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers, I, 226.

Fitzwalter comes upon her standing with a coarse bib and apron tied over her superb dinner dress of crimson satin, busily fastening green rushes into sheaves. The floor is spread with these rushes, which some of her guests are, on her instructions, peeling - and it is evident from her handling of this incident how far Lady Morgan had developed as a novelist since The Wild Irish Girl. Wanting to convey to the reader her belief that food and work were more important than Evangelical schools, and that the rich could count themselves fortunate that the poor did not rise and murder them, she avoided doing this, as she would have done earlier, in a series of didactic exchanges between a "straight" character like Lady Clancare or Fitzwalter and some of the others, but let Lady Dunore babble it all out enthusiastically while spurring on her guests to help her to peel rushes with which the poor might make objects to sell. Most of the group are furtively laughing at her, and the reader has learned enough, by this time, to realise that this is just another new enthusiasm springing from her burning (and transitory) attachment to Lady Clancare, and likely to be as soon forgotten as started. So the points are made in a scene that is, in itself, both amusing and of use in developing a character. "For my part", says Lady Dunore,

" I shall employ all the poor at Dunore at rush work.
I'll have rush sofas, rush mats, rush fillagree, rush lights,
and rush carpets; everything, in short, that can be made of
rushes."
(IV, I, 24)

Almost immediately afterwards her son comes back from electioneering, and this is enough to fill her mind with something else - not pity for the poor, but disgust at the recollection of the squalor she had seen on her own single venture into electioneering:

"Did you speak to them?" she returned with a look of
nausea. "I mean to those horrors, the forty-shilling
freeholders?"
(IV, I, 27)

Again Lady Morgan managed to refrain from the obvious authorial comment.

Equally memorable in the second half of the novel is the scene, reinforcing the impression already given of the skill of agents in manipulating their employers, in which Derby Crawley craftily persuades Lady Dunore that his son Con will be doing her a favour by standing as a candidate for Parliament instead of her son Fitzadelm, on whose electioneering expenses she has spent so much, since, he claims, if her son is elected, his opponent means to petition against him in Parliament on the grounds that he has used bribery and corruption. Having just sanctioned the spending of more money on bribes, Lady Dunore is nevertheless naively horrified that anyone should dare to impugn the honour of her son and her family. In addition, who could be got to take her son's place "and vote as we bid him?" Derby is ready with his reply:

" if it's eloquence and poethry you want, and one ready made to their hands, and just in their own way, quite ministarial, isn't there Con, Counsellor Con, the darlint of the corporation, and would prefar him 'bove the world? I'll engage he'd be returned as soon as nominated; and has been merely known, as law agent for the election, and has nothing to do with what the whigs call bribery, but stands with clane hands; and would lay down his life for the Dunores, though Lord Adelm treats him de ho-on baw, as the French says."

Here Crawley paused, looking from under his shrewd little eyes on Lady Dunore, and puckered up his mouth, in silent expectation of her answer to this hazardous proposition.

Lady Dunore, after a few moments silent cogitation, exhausted alike in body and spirit, and already weary of a subject which now ceased to agitate her, at last observed, "Well, Mr. Crawley, you have hitherto conducted this business your own way. I am quite ignorant of the details; but all I know is this, the deputy member for Glannacrime must be a staunch thorough-going friend to the present ministry."

"Lave him alone for that," interrupted Crawley; "Sure isn't he after their own heart?"

"And the honour and intentions of my son must never even be called in question."
(IV, IV, 177-78)

- The immoral has been outwitted by the corrupt - and while the implications for Ireland are clear, they are made through living characters, not puppets.

Very obviously this is not a novel where there is much to be said about the conventional heroine and hero, whose function, as has been noted, is respectively to represent the native gentry and the new landowner class at its best and to symbolise again, in their marriage, the reconciliation between

old and new which Lady Morgan seems to have seen as the best solution for Ireland's problems. Fitzwalter is said to have large, flashing eyes, a rather gloomy face, a rare and singular smile, strong and powerful feelings - in fact, some of the characteristics of the Byronic hero;¹ but the assertions are not convincing. Despite recorded tales of his fearlessness in danger, he seems a very ordinary and not very interesting person. Indeed, he would seem a very conceited one, did the reader not accept that it was a failure in Lady Morgan's technique which made her let him say, in the rather pompous style she kept for her heroes:

"I have broken the chain of oppression wherever I have found it galling the oppressed

(III, II, 101)

- or let him, in public, attribute his success to

" the force of perseverance, firmness, decision and enterprize "

(III, V, 282)

His most pleasing characteristics are his concern and tenderness for O'Leary, and the cool common sense with which he realises O'Leary's weaknesses - the same common sense which prevents him from being perturbed by superstitious fears in Holy Cross Abbey (I, II, 108-119), which makes him prefer, "realities to visions" (IV, II, 72) and leads him to realise quite quickly that there is more to Lady Clancare than is revealed on the surface. But he does little; he is acted upon rather than acts - and though the reader is allowed into his thoughts, his mental soliloquies are a means of carrying on the narrative, or elucidating points of fact for the reader as he elucidates them for himself, rather than a means of showing psychological conflict or development.

All the main action of the plot is, in fact, instigated by Lady Clancare, though the reader does not recognise this immediately since all her first

1. She regarded Byron more highly than any other contemporary writer (e.g. see Memoirs II 263) and though he began by regarding her with some mockery, he came to think highly of her, referring to her Italy (1821) as "fearless and excellent." See Byron's Letters and Journals ed. Leslie A. Marchand, Vol. 8, p 189, letter of 24.8.1821.

appearances are as a grotesque evangelistic Methodist, one Molly Magillicuddy--- whom Fitzwalter and De Vere meet on first arriving in Ireland; and Lady Morgan takes pains to deceive the reader, as well as Fitzwalter, about her identity, suggesting that Molly possibly "believed herself the elected agent of salvation" to the two men (I, I, 72). Once this suggestion is accepted, Molly's personality is fixed, and she becomes just another odd character met on the journey through Ireland. Even if her repeated appearances give rise to the suspicion that there is more than chance involved in her meetings with Fitzwalter, there is no indication that she is the heroine. Lady Morgan, with her theatrical background, even remembered to make Molly walk like an old woman; she waddles (I, IV, 210) and hobbles (I, IV, 239). And since she is given a stream of obsessive religious cant to characterise her speech, she begins to take on life, while still remaining a grotesque.

Out of disguise, Lady Clancare is very different - fresh and healthy with vigour, spirit, powerful feelings and a needle keen wit¹, which is seen in action as she gives her own sardonic description of some of the local people whom Miss Crawley suggests to Lady Dunore as suitable to invite to the castle. One is:

" Like a diamond beetle - small, shining and insignificant. You would find her tiresome for anything exclusive, but she might answer for a ball - you might ask her to that, on the strength of her diamond necklace; it helps to dress a room." (IV, I, 44-5)

Another is

"Like - like a scarlet flamingo, lean and lank, all legs and neck, in an eternal red velvet gown." (IV, I, 47)

However, because she, like Fitzwalter, is (compared with many of the other characters in the novel) so poorly realised, though the reader becomes

1. These qualities, rather than beauty, were now stressed. It is generally recognised that Lady Morgan's heroines are self portraits.- therefore perhaps in middle age, with any beauty she may have had fading, she preferred to underplay it in her heroines.

very concerned about the troubles of Ireland (the real "heroine" of the novel) he is unlikely to care much about the fate of Lady Clancare. In this respect it is interesting to compare with a similar scene in Persuasion the scene in Florence Macarthy where the heroine, who, we are told, has loved the hero for years, following his career, but believing she might never see him again, tells him of the way in which a woman's love endures. Anne Elliot makes her avowal in general terms to a third party; only the reader and the listening Frederick Wentworth know how personal her statement is; and because, during the whole course of the novel, the reader has lived in her consciousness, and has shared her feelings for Frederick, the statement merely crystalises what he already accepts to be true, and he is deeply moved. In Florence Macarthy, on the other hand, there has been no earlier indication of Lady Clancare's feelings for the hero, no means of believing that what she says is true. As she speaks to Fitzwalter of how Florence Macarthy has loved him, without hope, for years, she is still pretending that she and Florence are two different people:

"I see you are amazed, confounded, stunned, because the omnipotence which belongs to the affections of a devoted woman is unknown to your sex: still less can you judge of its disinterestedness, of its power to abnegate self, to confound its identity with the object beloved. It is you, you alone, Florence Macarthy prizes."

Fitzwalter cannot bear to listen to this: it is Lady Clancare whom he loves:

"I cannot, dare not, hear you on," interrupted Fitzwalter, in a burst of passion amounting to agony. "Why should I deceive her, you, myself? 'Tis not on Florence Macarthy my thoughts are bent, admirable and wonderful though you paint her. 'Tis on you my existence at this moment depends; my soul, my senses, my life are your's. 'Tis on your eloquence I hang, on your countenance I gaze, on your eyes I look ... In a word, Lady Clancare, I love you to madness, to folly, to dishonour." (IV, V, 222-224)

Coming as they do after a novel full of satire and down-to-earth social observation, these "passionate" outpourings rouse no emotional response whatever in the modern reader.

It is unfortunate, therefore, for her lasting reputation, that Lady Morgan felt the need to graft a love story on to her tale of Ireland; yet for her own day she probably judged aright. Florence Macarthy was highly popular, and reached a 5th edition in 1819.¹ The New Monthly Magazine now even suggested that she was a rival of Scott, with talents "little, if at all, inferior" to his;² and though such praise is a great exaggeration of her merits, it serves to indicate her contemporary reputation. There were always adverse criticisms of her work, especially from organs like The Quarterly Review; nevertheless the attention given to her reveals her influence. Moreover, while harsh criticisms of her early work were entirely justified, it is evident that hostile reviewers of her later novels had to fall back on the absence of "religious knowledge" and the "crude and ill understood specifics" (by which was meant her liberal political and economic views) which she put forward instead of "sound principles of political economy."³ Others, like Lady Louisa Stuart, found the characters vulgar.⁴ Among these was Maria Edgeworth, who, while admitting the authoress's "highest talent" and admiring the portrait of O'Leary, said that she had read Florence Macarthy with "shame and disgust."⁵ And indeed many of the characters, both aristocratic and upthrusting middle class are vulgar - the capturing of their essential vulgarity being one of the achievements of the novel.

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1. It was dramatised for the Surrey theatre before 1821 (Lionel Stevenson, op. cit., 222).
 2. NMM I (January 1819) 533.
 3. BR 13 (May 1819) 493. The Prince Regent, who enjoyed the novel, is reported to have said "Croker may rail on, he'll do her no harm!" (Gertrude T. Mayer, Women of Letters II, 142).
 4. Lionel Stevenson op. cit., 200. The Anti-Jacobin Review 55 (February 1819) 514-5 quoted at length a scene of the Crawleys at home as a piece of "sad vulgarity".
 5. Christina Colvin ed., Maria Edgeworth, Letters from England 166-7. Letter of 28.1.1819. Lady Morgan was much more generous to her, calling her "clever and truth-telling Miss Edgeworth", Book of the Boudoir I, 207.

After this¹, Lady Morgan wrote only two more novels, The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys (1837) and The Princess (1834), though she also produced a group of tales set out in dramatic form (Dramatic Scenes from Real Life, 1833) and some influential factual works, the most noteworthy being her survey of Italy (1831) which Byron admired greatly.² By the beginning of the 1830's her reputation was at its height, and we find Sydney Smith writing, evidently in some surprise:

.... I have been reading Lady Morgan. I had no conception she had so good an understanding, and could write so well. 3

Much more fulsome in his praise was Allan Cunningham:

.... In all she writes there is genius, and that of a very varied kind: there is wit, humour, tenderness, heroism, love of country, and a fine vein of light and agreeable fancy. Some of her sentiments are, no doubt, unwelcome to one party in the state; but why should her merits be weighed in a party balance? The presence of genius in her works ought to protect her against such rudeness and incivility.⁴

Such a statement has, perhaps, most value in acting as a corrective, in reminding posterity of Lady Morgan's contemporary reputation. As a verdict on her achievement it lacks the balance of the earlier judgement of a critic of The Edinburgh Monthly Review who wrote:

.... That she has genius, and that of a most felicitous description, it would be equal folly and injustice to deny; but that her genius is not without very considerable drawbacks ... it would be imprudent in her warmest admirers to advance.⁵

Even here one wonders how the writer defined "genius" - for as a novelist her weaknesses were more than can be excused as minor blemishes on great conceptions. Yet she was, as others have said of her, "fresh", "vivacious", "original" - possessed

1. See Appendix of later work.

2. See note 1, p. 371.

3. Letters of Sydney Smith, ed., Nowell C. Smith, II, 521. Letter of 15.10.1830.

4. "Biographical and Critical History of the Literature of the Last Fifty Years", Athenaeum, November 16, 1833, 776.

5. Ed.R I (June 1819) 660-661; W. Fitzpatrick op. cit., 169 also attributed her with "true genius".

of "considerable talents", and "more than ordinary powers",¹ and these were recognised officially when, in 1837, she was granted a government pension of £300 a year for her "merits literary and patriotic" - the first such award ever to be granted to a woman.²

This being so, it seems strange that so little has been said about her possible influence on the development of the novel. One suggestion that has been made is that she introduced the new, independent heroine.³ This, however, is very doubtful. Women were already being shown as determined, capable and intelligent, and Jane Austen's heroines, though less daring, were really far more "new" and ultimately more influential. Lady Morgan's heroines may not have been passive, but they are very quickly forgotten, because they were so shallowly portrayed. The most that can be said, perhaps, is that with her capable woman she added to a growing trend.

Another suggestion is that it was she, rather than Maria Edgeworth, who first wrote of Ireland as it really was:

.... Miss Edgeworth's theme was the discovery by a young landlord of his responsibility to the land and the tenantry; Miss Owenson's was the discovery of a mode of life which a European like Miss Edgeworth could, at best, only patronise as amiable eccentricity.⁴

This does less than justice to Maria Edgeworth; nevertheless, as a regional novelist, Lady Morgan did know Ireland better, and wrote of it with more feeling for its uniqueness, than did any other novelist of the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

1. Julia Kavanagh op. cit., 300, Oliver Elton Survey of English Literature 1780-1830, I, 369-70; C.J. Hamilton op. cit., 226; Henry F. Chorley, Authors of England 51, 54; SM n.s. 3 (December 1818) 551; W. Rogers, "The Reaction against Melodramatic Sentimentality in the English Novel 1796-1830", PMLA 49 (March 1934) 103.

2. See Memoirs II, 418 and Preface to 1846 edition of The Wild Irish Girl xxxvii.

3. See W. Rogers, op. cit., 103.

4. William Renwick, English Literature 1789-1815, 177. Renwick sees this as her most useful innovation.

What seems more important, however, is her contribution to the novel of society, which, as was noted earlier, Marilyn Butler has demonstrated to have been an innovation of Maria Edgeworth's. It can be argued, however, that Lady Morgan was possibly as influential as she, in developing this aspect of the novel. Interestingly, while pointing out that a flourishing social novel came into being in England with Maria Edgeworth and Scott two decades earlier than in France, Mrs. Butler nevertheless finds that the way in which Thackeray and Dickens wrote of society was very different:

.... the images that came to Thackeray and Dickens when they depicted the contemporary world were *Vanity Fair* and the Marshalsea Prison, comparisons which conveyed their sense of a corrupt, self-perpetuating structure that dominated and destroyed individual lives. It would never have occurred to Scott or to Maria Edgeworth to use such images.¹

Such a view of society was, however, to be found in *Lady Morgan*:² even though O'Donnel and Florence Macarthy still have hopeful endings, her view of men and manners is largely satiric; and by 1827 in The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys she was unable to bring herself to provide such a contrived ending.³ In this novel, at last, no solution to Ireland's problems is suggested; the reader is merely allowed to see a situation and an individual struggling helplessly in that situation. Verbal persuasion and armed revolt are shown to be equally futile; the most memorable image is that of the gloomy, crumbling ancestral home of the O'Briens, which symbolically collapses - and for the first time the ending finds the hero making a life in another country. Little could be bleaker than the following passage from one of the concluding chapters:

" To be born an Irishman is a dark destiny at the best
... Here the fortitude of long endurance turns into
obsequiousness and the spirit of the gallant maddens into

1. M. Butler, op. cit., 486.

2. Whose work, as has been noted (note 2, page 360) Thackeray knew.

3. See Appendix of Later Work.

lawless intemperance. Here genius is the object of
suspicion to dull rulers, and of insult to petty
underlings, and all that bends not - falls."
(IV, V, 173-4)¹

One hears the orator's tones here - and Lady Morgan was perhaps always too much of the politician, the sociologist, the journalist, to be a fine novelist; nevertheless it was largely because of this very fact that she was able to make a positive contribution to the development of the social novel, providing, for later and better novelists, models, flawed but seminal, from which they might draw and on which they might build.

1. Paris, 1828 edition.

Charlotte Dacre 1783?-1815? 1816?

Tw'as a keen frosty morn, and the snow heavy falling,
When a Child of Misfortune was thus sadly calling:
Sweep, sweep - I am cold! and the snow very deep,
O, Pray, take compassion on poor little sweep!
Sweep, chimney sweep.¹

These lines, from a poem by a Mr. Upton, which appeared in the staunchly conservative anti-Parliamentary reform, anti-catholic emancipation Morning Post on November 28th, 1807, must have seemed to its editor, Nicholas Byrne, evidence of his benevolent humanity, in contradiction of the opinions of his liberal opponents. They must almost certainly have been read, too, with a sympathetic tear, by one of the paper's favourite writers, Charlotte Dacre, or "Rosa Matilda", soon to be (if she was not already) Mrs. Nicholas Byrne.² "Mr. Upton", however, must have laughed heartily, highly delighted at the success of what seems to have been a ruse to get something printed in a periodical which would never have accepted anything submitted under "his" own name - for "Mr. Upton" seems to have been none other than Sydney Owenson, who, ten days later, saw the poem published under her own name in The Freeman's Journal.³

Yet, though Sydney Owenson was anathematised and Rosa Matilda lauded by The Morning Post, there was, at this period, no little similarity in their style of writing. Sarah Green, in fact, linked them together in the preface to her Romance Readers and Romance Writers (1810) as the "most licentious writers of romance" of the time.⁴ Sydney Owenson, however, as has been

1. See Wilfred Hindle, The Morning Post, 124. The whole poem appears in William J. Fitzpatrick, Lady Morgan, her Career Literary and Personal 155.

2. See Biographical Appendix.

3. See William J. Fitzpatrick op. cit., 155. Sydney Owenson's popularity was so high at this time, following the success of The Wild Irish Girl, that there can be no question of her trying to pass off such a poem by someone else as her own. The joke (for such it surely was) seems to have gone uncommented on by writers on Sydney Owenson.

4. Romance Readers and Romance Writers, "Literary Retrospection" (i.e. Preface) x.

illustrated, was soon not only to change her style, but to make sexual relationships the least important part of her novels, whereas Charlotte Dacre's style was always fevered, and sexual relationships were of paramount importance in all she wrote. As a result, though she was highly popular with the clientele of the circulating libraries, most intelligent readers seem to have shared the view of Byron, who wrote of her in his English Bards and Scotch Reviewers (1808)

Far be't from me unkindly to upbraid
The lovely Rosa's prose in masquerade,
Whose strains, the faithful echoes of her mind,
Leave wondering comprehension far behind.

Yet Shelley, according to his early biographer, Thomas Medwin, was "enraptured" by her Zofloya (1806) and modelled his own Zastrozzi (1810) closely on it;¹ and though his praise was undoubtedly excessive, nevertheless he, perhaps, judged more perceptively and fairly than most contemporary critics, for Charlotte Dacre was writing one kind of novel, and being, for the most part, judged by the standards of another. Unlike Sydney Owenson, whose early work was only superficially somewhat like hers, and whose strength lay in a completely different direction, she wrote in an emotional way not merely to follow a fashion, but to explore human, and especially female, psychology. Mary Brunton, as has already been noted, was moving in this direction using the method of self-examination as her basis; Charlotte Dacre, however, moved into areas untouched by Mrs. Brunton, using the confession, the epistolary mode, the soliloquy, and even the supernatural, in an attempt to portray some of the darker, less rational areas of the mind. The resulting inflation of style was a problem which Robert Kiely (writing of such novels in general)

1. See Thomas Medwin, The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley, 25. For a quite detailed study of Shelley's borrowings from Zofloya see A.M.D. Hughes, "Shelley's Zastrozzi and St. Irvyne", Modern Language Review 7 (1912) 53-63. St. Irvyne, while still similar in style to Zofloya lacks such closely related plot details.

pinpointed in his introduction to The Romantic Novel in England:

.... Phrases like "unspeakable horror" or "indescribable transports of joy" may at first have been little more than trite literary evasions, but they point to an impulse which was ultimately to bring romantic novelists into serious conflict with some of the basic premises of formal realism. The human experience to be reported on was gradually being expanded to include feelings and dreams which seemed to defy - at least before Freud - a referential vocabulary.¹

Thus, because of her concentration on "the passions", conservative though she was, Charlotte Dacre was not a novelist approved of by the Evangelicals, even the least bigotted of whom would obviously not have encouraged their followers to read the work of one of whom it could be written

.... where's the male scribbler, with all his pretences,
Like Rosa Matilda, can ravish our senses!²

Indeed, part of the foolishness of one of the girls whom Coelebs was made to meet in his search for a wife lay in that she actually preferred reading Rosa Matilda to reading Virgil.³ Nevertheless, it is clear today that, though certainly no Evangelical, Charlotte Dacre saw herself as writing to support orthodox religion and conventional morality.

Her first novel, Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer (1805) was, despite its gothic-sounding title, in many respects a quite run-of-the-mill cautionary tale, written in a style of high sensibility.⁴ Devendra Varma, finding it "notable for its gothic elements"⁵ cites as evidence of this, manuscripts left behind to unfold secrets, a "voluptuous Italian setting", a "mysterious correspondent", a wounding by bandits, a murder, two suicides, and the use of natural description. However, while these are certainly there, the atmosphere

1. Robert Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England, 11.

2. Introduction to 1974 Arno edition of Zofloya, ed. Devendra Varma xi.

3. H. More, Coelebs in Search of a Wife, ch. III, p. 23 (1830 edition).

4. Her first publication (apart from individual poems) had been two volumes of sentimental verse, entitled Hours of Solitude (June 1805) which went into a second edition in December 1805.

5. Introduction to Zofloya (1974) ed. D. Varma xv.

is not in the slightest gothic, the story being the familiar one of the girl who is an easy prey to seduction, as a result of not having had proper guidance as a child, presented in the form of her own memoir, supposedly written after she has become a nun.¹ And Charlotte Dacre certainly knew the language of the religious novelists; her heroine, Cazire invokes God under various names, discusses her beliefs with one of her lovers who is not, like herself, orthodox in religion, and declares, in terms similar to those soon to be used by Elizabeth Hamilton in her Series of Popular Essays Illustrative of Principles Connected with the Improvement of the Understanding, the Imagination and the Heart (1813) that her story is meant to be "a warning of the miseries which are entailed by neglecting the early formation of the heart and the principles" (III, XI, 190). As a result, The British Critic, while regarding it as:

.... a very fine, sentimental, and improbable story, written in turgid and affected language

nevertheless commended the moral.²

What the reviewer did not appear to notice, however, was that Miss Dacre's heroine was in one respect very different indeed from the usual run of seduced heroines: conventionally she weeps, faints, trembles and composes extempore verse - but, very untypically, she bears witness to the strong sexual passion of which some women can be capable and which was to be a characteristic held in common by all of her otherwise quite differentiated

1. It is, therefore, unfortunate that Kathleen Tillotson in her Novels of the Eighteen-Forties should, in an interesting account of the number of novels bearing on controversial religious questions have commented " as at all periods, the sensation-novelist is quick to seize the scandalous possibilities of convent life. 'Rosa Matilda' (Charlotte Dacre, author of Confessions of a Nun[sic], 1805) had a long ancestry and a considerable progeny." (129-130). There is, in fact, nothing at all about convent life in the novel.

2. BC 26 (December 1805) 671.

heroines.¹ Cazire is not so much the maiden seduced as the woman unable to withstand the drive of her own sexuality - something emphasised by the fact that, having lost her reputation, then (in a manner unusual in the novel of the period) having had it restored by marriage with a man who has long loved her, she finally succumbs again, this time to the attractions of another man from her past. And by using first person narrative, Charlotte Dacre was able to let the reader enter into Cazire's mind, and follow with her her highly charged emotional experiences - much to the delight of the public, who seem to have read them avidly, since, according to Devendra Varma, the novel had a third edition in 1807.²

Much more interesting to the modern reader, however, is her second novel, the gothic Zofloya (1806), which not only had "an extraordinary vogue"³ in the early nineteenth century, but is still discussed today - with more critical interest, indeed, than it had then, for its popularity owed nothing to the reviewers. The Literary Journal, in fact, declared that the authoress was "afflicted with the dismal malady of maggots in the brain", The New Annual Register dismissed it in eleven lines as a copy of Matthew Lewis's The Monk, The Monthly Literary Recreations deplored its style and its moral tone - and its moral tone was also what mainly concerned The Annual Review. In fact the only praise (apart from that in The Morning Post) came from The General Review which said:

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1. Jane Porter's Lady Sara Roos in Thaddeus and her Lady Mar in The Scottish Chiefs also reveal this, but they are not the major characters in the novels in which they appear. Heroines in the period tended to be emotional - but "delicately" so, and the passionate heroine, as in Lady Caroline Lamb's Glenarvon (1816) was rare. Jane Austen's achievement in suggesting the strength of feeling in Marianne Dashwood, without making any resort to sensational scenes or vocabulary seems to have been unparalleled.
 2. Introduction to Zofloya (1974) ed. D. Varma xiv.
 3. Montague Summers, Essays in Petto, 62.

.... The author tells her tales of indiscriminate horror in many instances, with great force, and if the plot had been more original we doubt not that this novel would have obtained an higher rank in the public estimation than it is now likely to acquire.¹

Zofloya did not, however, need the good opinion of the reviewers. In 1798, there had appeared in Surr's George Barnwell the lines:

" This is an enlightened age; and pray, does not the popular opinion sanction, almost exclusively, a novel, a romance, or a drama where the prominent character is a ghost or a demon?" (I, III, 20)

- and by 1806 the gothic novel was still very popular, even if it had, as some scholars believe, passed its peak of popularity by the end of the eighteenth century.² According to Robert Mayo, 1805 was the high water mark for gothic fiction in The Lady's Magazine, eighty-four percent of the serialised fiction being gothic; and even though we read in The Gentleman's Magazine of October 1808 that the public was by then "jaded with horrors", Shelley, writing in 1810 of his St. Irvyne, still saw gothic novels as selling "almost mechanically."³ In fact, though the gothic novel in general may have been becoming rather less fashionable, individual gothic novels of any merit could depend on a favourable reception all through the period under review.⁴ And this was certainly true of Zofloya, which, with its expression of lust and

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1. LJ n.s. I (June 1806) 634; New AnR 27 (1806) 372; MLR I (July 1806) 80; AR 5 (1806) 542; GR I (June 1806) 593; Critical opinion was generally strongly against the gothic novel - e.g. see GM (October 1805) 914. Considering the literary level of most of those produced, this is not difficult to understand. Interestingly, once the vogue for the gothic novel had declined, and reviewers were no longer nauseated by the flood of far-fetched nonsense, some of them began to see its possibilities, and to defend it as a genre - e.g. see BEM (September 1818) 648-50 and QR (October 1832) 167.
 2. e.g. see Devendra Varma, The Gothic Flame 207.
 3. Robert Mayo, "How Long Was Gothic Fiction in Vogue?" PMLA 58 (1943) 61; GM (October 1808) 883; The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, Vol. VIII, p. 18, letter of 14.11.1810.
 4. e.g. see E. Nitchie, Mary Shelley, 145-6, for the reception of Frankenstein.

violence, portrayed with vigour yet constantly condemned, seems to symbolise the consciousness of an age not only of suppressed political and social unrest, but an age with two faces, one of licentiousness and comparative barbarity, the other of great propriety. In the very month after its publication, The Morning Post announced that a "dramatic piece" based on it would be produced in the next season. It was translated into German in 1806 and into French in 1812 - and even had the dubious honour, in 1810, of being condensed into a chap-book as The Daemon of Venice.¹

Yet little could be more didactic than the opening paragraph:

The historian who would wish his lessons to sink deep into the heart, thereby essaying to render mankind virtuous and more happy, must not content himself with simply detailing a series of events. he must ascertain causes, and follow progressively their effects; he must draw deductions from incidents as they arise, and ever revert to the actuating principle.
(I, I, 1)

Immediately we learn that the two children of the Loredani family of Venice, Victoria and Leonardo, have been foolishly indulged:²

.... lavish and imprudent was the fondness bestowed by the parents upon their idolised offspring ... The consequence was that Victoria, though at the age of fifteen, beautiful and accomplished as an angel, was proud, haughty and self sufficient - of a wild, ardent and irrepressible spirit, indifferent to reproof, careless of censure - of an implacable, revengeful and cruel nature, and bent upon gaining the ascendancy in whatever she engaged

- while her brother was "unable to resist, in any shape, the first impulses of his heart" (I, I, 4-5). This alone, however, would hardly be enough to account for the extraordinary passions which are to be aroused and acted on later, therefore these are further prepared for by an account of the climate of the society in which they live: the Venetians, we are told, were "sanguinary and violent by nature, climate, habit and education" (I, I, 9).³

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1. Morning Post June 28, 1806, quoted by D. Varma, Preface to Zofloya (1974 edition) xxvi); Montague Summers, Essays in Petto, 67.
 2. As have, e.g. Mrs. Hamilton's Bridgetina, Mary Brunton's Ellen, Jane Austen's Emma, and many of the leading characters in Mrs. Opie's tales. The basic idea is similar - the treatment of it is very different in each case.
 3. This allusion to the society in which the characters live is not, however, followed up.

Education and environment are not given the entire responsibility for character, however. Miss Dacre was by no means of the school of the new philosophers; thus we read that Victoria is by nature more prone to evil than to good, and requires "at once the strong curb of wisdom and example" to regulate her conduct (I, V, 75), - a curb which is lacking, both to her and to her brother; indeed the principal cause to which all the horrors of their lives in the future is attributed is the adultery of their mother, which is referred to again and again throughout the novel, even to the very end, when Victoria, fleeing from justice as a murderess,

.... reflecting upon her early youth, what she might have been, and what she was, cursed (terrible to say) the mother that first had weakly indulged, and then, by her own example, tempted and destroyed her. (III, XXXI, 162)¹

Needless to say, the mother, Laurina, herself dies in shame and heartbreak, no longer wanted by her lover, and gasping

" Terrible - yet just God! - oh, pardon - pardon
- mercy!" (III, XXXII, 206)

- while her lover's death at the hands of Leonardo is attributed to

.... the retributions of a just Providence, which, though sometimes tardy, are generally sure, even in this world.
(III, XXXI, 197)

Such passages did not, however, win over Hannah More or the reviewers, The General Review, for example, seeing it as having "no pretension to rank as a moral work" and The Monthly Literary Recreations condemning it as an "odious and indecent performance."² And, given the temper of the age, this attitude is understandable, for despite the overt moralising and the fact that Victoria is never whitewashed, she stands out above all the other characters

1. See also I, VIII, 191; I, XII, 283; II, XIV, 50; II, XV, 77; III, XXXI, 162; III, XXXI, 167.

2. GR I (June 1806) 591; MLR I (July 1806).

in the novel, strong, passionate and ruthless.¹ Raven haired and wild,

.... her's was not the countenance of a Madona [sic] - it was not of angelic mould; yet, though there was a fierceness in it, it was certainly not a repelling, but a beautiful fierceness - dark, noble, strongly expressive, every lineament bespoke the mind which animated it.

(I, X, 219)

What Charlotte Dacre seems to have done, in fact, was to adapt the concept of the gothic villain-hero, to produce her original villainess-heroine - and she must surely have been one of the first, after the Jacobean, to create a central female capable of such intense and turbulent passion.² Unlike the flawed heroines of other novels of the period, Victoria sins, and knows no remorse, except on two fleeting occasions. In her sheer egotism and drive, she is larger than life - and, read in short passages, the presentation of her thoughts, words and actions is ludicrous. Yet by using a setting far in the past, though the novel conveys little flavour of fifteenth-century Venice (unless one is willing to accept the presence of such obvious properties and devices as the use of stilletos, duelling and banditti) Charlotte Dacre was able to do without many of the requirements of naturalism, and make acceptable an emotional atmosphere which would appear entirely out of place in a novel set in nineteenth-century England. We accept much of Victoria's conduct, too, because as was noted earlier, it has been prepared for by an indication of her nature and upbringing.

More importantly, perhaps, for twentieth-century readers, however, Victoria's violent behaviour is further made understandable by a circumstance which Charlotte Dacre herself made no attempt to offer in her defence. Child

1. The progress of Leonardo, who is much weaker than Victoria, is similar to hers, but attention is chiefly focused on her - and after II, XV, he disappears from the action until the concluding scenes. The main female character in T.S. Surr's George Barnwell is equally wicked, but she is not the central character of the novel, and her emotions are not analysed as are Victoria's - she exists chiefly as the instrument of George's downfall. The same is true of the villainess in Miss Dacre's later The Passions (1811). Lewis's Matilda in The Monk is likewise, while ruthless, not central.

2. Zofloya has many of the ingredients of the Jacobean drama: violence, revenge, poisoning, madness, and charnel horrors.

of a broken home, having lived first with her father, then, on his death, with her mother and the latter's lover, she is next boarded out, against her will, with a mean, elderly relative. Not surprisingly, then, she runs away from strictness and boredom to live with a man who has earlier declared his love for her:

.... Berenza had awakened in her breast feelings and passions which had till now remained dormant, mighty and strong, like the slumbering lion, even in their inactivity.

(I, V, 76)

So far, stripped of Charlotte Dacre's florid language, Victoria's story sounds like a report from a social worker's casebook. Her lover is now her only anchor, and she proves her courage, and also her loyalty to him by saving his life at the risk of her own (I, XI, 237). Ironically, however, it is when, in gratitude for this, he asks her to marry him, that she discovers that his previous failure to do so had been because he believed that the daughter of an adultress would not make him a fitting wife. She, idealistically, had believed that his avoidance of marriage was because his love "needed not the aid of artificial ties to rivet it" (I, XI, 232); now, learning the truth:

.... Her brow lowered, she turned of an ashy paleness, as sudden hatred and desire of revenge took possession of her vindictive soul.¹

(II, XVI, 84)

Today it is this explosion of her illusions, and her burning sense of injustice, that seem to mark the turning point in Victoria's career; and much of the sympathy which remains with her, despite her subsequent horrifying actions rises from a distaste for Berenza's peculiar standard of morality. Though he regards Victoria as tainted by her mother's adultery, he himself has kept at least one mistress before his meeting with her (I, IX, 210).²

1. Cf. the burning desire for revenge of Heathcliff who, though far more credible than Victoria, and set in a world which seems real, nevertheless acts almost as ruthlessly as she.

2. This seems to have been a fairly common attitude - e.g. it plays a part in Maria Edgeworth's Patronage and in The Absentee, where Colambre gives up Grace Nugent because he thinks she is illegitimate and tainted by her mother.

More oddly still, when she complains about the effect on her life of her mother's adultery, he reproaches her with "filial ingratitude and unkindness" (I, V, 87). And though he has earlier tried to persuade her to be his mistress (I, V, 79) when she does eventually run away to live with him, we read that

.... his delicate and refined mind experienced a sensation of regret at the avowed freedom of her principles.
(I, VIII, 191-2)

With her conscious mind, Charlotte Dacre seems to have seen nothing illogical in this: Victoria's anger is regarded as unjustified and we are referred to the delicacy of Berenza's mind (I, X, 206), to his sincere and honourable love (I, X, 225) and are told, (with no hint of irony) "How few in character resemble Berenza!" (I, IX, 217). This is, in fact, perfectly understandable, for women were largely indoctrinated to accept one code for men and another for women.¹ But Victoria's fury is so credibly realised that one suspects that Charlotte Dacre subconsciously rebelled at such an idea.

Since Victoria now hates Berenza, it is, for her, an easy step to thoughts of murder, when his brother Henriques arrives and provides a new focus for the strong sexual passions which Berenza (whom she has married, despite her feelings about him) has wakened in her. But to achieve her desires with Henriques, who is high-minded to a degree, she has two obstacles to remove - her own husband, and Henrique's betrothed, Lilla. Lacking personality, the latter exists merely as an obstacle for Victoria to overcome. Physically and spiritually like the conventional persecuted gothic heroine, she is a stark contrast to Victoria, with her flaxen hair, blue eyes, innocence, piety, and filial duty to a cruel father. Charlotte Dacre was later, in The Libertine (1807) to show herself capable of imagining a good woman who was also strong - but here she made do with the period's stereotype of the "good" woman - quite probably so as not to detract attention from her central character.

1. Cf. Mrs. Opie's Valentine's Eve, where it is indicated that a "respectable" woman, would not visit a woman of doubtful reputation - yet where Lord Shirley's friend Livesey, who is referred to as "a very amiable young man" (II, IV, 120) has kept a mistress. The double standard did not go unchallenged, however - e.g. Hannah More and Wilberforce did not countenance it.

Victoria at first largely ignores Lilla, seeing Berenza as her chief obstacle - and it is (significantly, if the novel is to bear more than a merely sensational reading) at the point when Berenza's existence becomes unbearable to her, that she begins to be conscious of, and attracted to, Henrique's impressive Moorish servant Zofloya - so much so that she grieves when he disappears and another servant confesses to his murder. But (again significantly, as will be seen), in a short while Zofloya reappears, saying that he had only been wounded in the attack on him. Now he quietly allies himself with Victoria, seeming to anticipate her every wish - and from this point the novel becomes more passionate, more violent, the imagery and emotions more horrifying. Scene shifts to different scene with the swiftness of a dream - blending with the nightmares of actual dreams, of which the novel holds many. In one series, for example, dreamed by Victoria on an evening when she goes to bed tormented with passion for Henriques, the figures of Berenza, Henriques, Zofloya and Lilla float before her eyes in a ghastly pageant in which finally Berenza lies in his blood, Lilla is a spectre, and Victoria reaches to take Henrique's hand, only to find him "changed to a frightful skeleton" (II, XVII, 114). Just as remarkable is another series of dreams she has shortly afterwards, in the first of which she is alone with Zofloya:

.... she slumbered, and he haunted her dreams; sometimes she wandered with him over beds of flowers, sometimes over craggy rocks, sometimes over burning sands, tottering on the ridge of some huge precipice, while the angry waters waved in the abyss below. (II, XVIII, 134)

This is followed by another nightmare, in which she is unable to move, while Zofloya, Berenza, Henriques and Lilla appear, all but Zofloya dead or dying.

Half waking

.... her heart beat violently, her brain throbbed, and, essaying to rise, she found herself no longer incapable of motion. (II, XVIII, 137)

The horror of her nights merges into the horror of her days, as she cold-bloodedly sanctions the use of an innocent old woman in an experiment to find an undetectable poison (II, XXIII, 226). This is finally used successfully

on Berenza, and when a monk tries to revive him by puncturing a vein, the blood, as though accusingly, spurts up and stains all her face (II, XXIV, 265). The murder is followed by further ghastly and foreboding dreams:

.... She thought that entering the apartment where the corpse of the deceased [Berenza] reposed, she had drawn aside the curtains of the bed, and beheld his countenance and various parts of his body discoloured and disfigured by livid marks - evidences of the poison which had been given him
(II, XXV, 270-271)

The dream foretells the waking actuality - and Zofloya has to hide the incriminating body for her. Now in a state bordering on frenzy, Victoria has Zofloya abduct Lilla, then, by using drugs,¹ she tricks Henriques into making love to her, only to find that he prefers to kill himself rather than submit to her embraces. At this, her rage and frustration reach a pitch where she loses all semblance of self control, and rushing to the cave where she has hidden Henrique's beloved, she stabs her over and over again, in a frenzy that has an orgasmic quality (III, XXIX, 104). There follows a dream-filled sleep, in which she hears her servants shouting in horror as

.... from the chest they drew the disclosed, half-mouldered skeleton, that had once been Berenza!
(III, XXIX, 111)

Again the dream is premonitory: Zofloya now warns her that the body really has been discovered - and though she is, for the most part, utterly fearless, one thing she does dread, "the terrible Inquisition" (III, XXIX, 117). Thus she agrees to escape into the mountains with her accomplice.

Victoria's active career of evil is now over, and the novel could have been brought to its conclusion at this point. But Miss Dacre, in order once more to revert to the prime cause of Victoria's wickedness (as she saw it) brought together, regardless of the laws of probability, the whole Loredani

1. Dorothy Scarborough has seen the use of drugs in Zofloya as an indication of the influence of scientific thought on the gothic novel, (The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction, 35). This is evident in Frankenstein, but surely not so here: drugs to cause death, and love philtres, were ancient devices.

family for a grand finale: indeed, the only way in which the ending can be -- accepted readily, is to see it as similar to a scene in grand opera. As Victoria and Zofloya flee through the Alps they are captured by banditti - and shortly afterwards other prisoners join them - amazingly, Victoria's mother, and her lover Ardolph, who are also fleeing, though merely from creditors. Now, without warning, the bandit leader lunges forward and stabs Ardolph to death - immediately afterwards revealing himself to be Victoria's brother Leonardo, who, like her, has sunk to crime (III, XXXI, 179-182). Laurina, too, is dying, having been brutally beaten by Ardolph just before their capture - and her death is used to show the utter vindictiveness of Victoria as she steadfastly refuses to forgive the expiring woman (III, XXXII, 203-206).

Events are now, however, rapidly drawing to a close; one of Leonardo's band, to avenge an insult, betrays him to the militia, and the bandits' cave becomes piled with corpses. Hearing the soldiers outside, Leonardo's mistress commits suicide, as does Leonardo, after first killing the traitor (III, XXXIII, 221-222). This is the moment when, all bounds of credibility having already been stretched, Victoria would have been captured and killed. But the allegory which seems so clearly to be embodied in this romance, required a different ending. What has been shown is the destruction of a soul, not a body; thus Victoria is saved by being miraculously transported by Zofloya to the summit of a mountain, where, now utterly spellbound by him, and full of awe for his power, she admits the passion for him that has been growing in her, and swears to be his, body and soul, if he will save her from "all future worldly misery" (III, XXXIII, 229). On this, he horrifically reveals that he is not really Zofloya, who, at the time of his earlier disappearance had, in fact, been murdered, but Satan inhabiting the Moor's body. For one moment she sees him as he is, "fierce gigantic, and hideous to behold" (III, XXXIII, 232)- then she is hurled by him into the foaming waters below.

Read literally the novel is evidently nonsense; but to read Zofloya literally is to read it as did the nineteenth-century reviewer who saw it as the work of a woman with "maggots in the brain."¹ In the early nineteenth century, though the critics quite frequently praised "imagination", their view of imagination, for the most part, seems to have been limited. Though Scott, for example, praised Frankenstein, another critic suggested that the reader would be left doubting "whether the head or the heart of the author be the most diseased;" and The Quarterly Review's verdict on Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer (perhaps the best of the gothic novels of the period) was that it was nonsense - "Every page teems with it," it said.² The twentieth century, however, has begun to learn that a romance should not be judged by the same criteria as a realistic novel:

.... To condemn a romance for lacking the kind of circumstantial realism one has come to expect in novels is like condemning a whale for being without horns.³

In Zofloya, the characters are representative rather than naturalistic⁴ — though the whole melodramatic narrative works to produce a more honest insight into human feelings under stress than many more naturalistic novels. If it is read as an allegory, achieving a poetic truth (which is the way in which Shelley must have read it) then it is possible to see Zofloya not as a supernatural being at all, but as an embodiment of the evil in Victoria herself. Certainly he makes a strange impression. Despite repeated accounts of his "noble presence" (II, XIX, 150), his likeness to a demi-god (II, XXI, 198) and his eyes "like two diamonds" (II, XX, 158) he seems, somehow, insubstantial.⁵

1. LJ n.s. 1 (June 1806) 634.

2. Ioan Williams ed., Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction 260-72; QR 18 (January 1818) 385; QR 24 (January 1821) 30.

3. James L. Calderwood and H.E. Toliver, eds., Perspectives on Fiction 71. (This is an editorial passage.)

4. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism 304-7 deals in masterly fashion with this point, though with no reference to Zofloya.

5. Two things are particularly interesting about the way in which he is described: a) though the rôle of the "villain-hero" is taken over by Victoria, he retains some of the villain-hero's characteristics, notably the penetrating eyes; b) his physical beauty is emphasised, with no trace of colour prejudice.

he first appears, as has already been noted, only when Victoria's evil impulses have already overwhelmed her; after this he appears and "disappears" with her thoughts and need for him.¹ Although he is Henrique's servant he relates, really, to no-one but her - and while he may hint and suggest, he actually does nothing but fulfil her wishes. He continually emphasises that he can do nothing without her full will and consent, and that if she rejects his help he must go:

" Zofloya must fly you in despair, should you disdain his proffered services." (II, XX, 174)

.... your co-operation with me can alone render me powerful; but fly me, disdain my assistance, and despise my friendship, I sink abashed into myself, and am powerless. (II, XXI, 192)²

Noting the relatively passive role of the Moor, The Monthly Literary Recreations saw him, as a supernatural agent, as

.... totally useless, as the mind of Victoria ... is sufficiently black and depraved naturally, to need no temptation to commit the horrid crimes she perpetrates "³

However, if Zofloya is seen as really part of Victoria's mind, and the novel a poetic image of the growth of evil, much falls into place. At first Zofloya is submissive, but as the evil in Victoria grows, he becomes more dominating, his appearance becomes more awe-inspiring, his eyes at times horrifying rather than beautiful, as when they shine "with lambent fire, as a dark thunder-cloud emits the vivid flame" (III, XXIX, 112). Evil becomes more fearsome - but more and more hypnotically fascinating, as seems symbolised by the growth of Zofloya's sexual attractiveness for Victoria - first seen even before she realises that her hopes of gaining Henriques are doomed to failure:

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1. Dorothy Scarborough, op. cit., 35, thinks that Victoria used mesmerism or hypnotism to summon Zofloya to her, but there is no textual evidence for this.
 2. The italics here, and in similar speeches elsewhere surely indicate Miss Dacre's intention.
 3. MLR (July 1806) 80.

"Oh! Moor, I thank thee," exclaimed Victoria, seizing
in her joy his hand, and pressing it to her bosom.
(II, XXIV, 249)

The explicit sexuality of this is underlined when, a little later, we read:

.... Zofloya smiled, his hand had remained on her bosom,
its hard pressure seemed heavy on her heart! - He now
withdrew it, and her confused senses began to rally
(II, XXIV, 250-51)

Seen in this way, Zofloya is no concocted spectre, but the embodiment of
Victoria's own worst impulses, which finally destroy her - a harbinger of Mr.
Hyde, and of the portrait of Dorian Gray.

Unfortunately for Charlotte Dacre, however, while her very obvious
weaknesses of style have been severely dealt with, her contribution to the
novel, in her attempt to convey mental processes and emotions, has been
obscured by the fact that this, her most original novel, has been usually seen
as merely an inferior imitation of Matthew Lewis's The Monk: "after the manner
of The Monk", "a humble, very humble imitation of the Monk", "closely
imitated from Lewis's Monk", "formed on the chaste model of Mr. Lewis's 'Monk'"¹
In more recent times Montague Summers has repeated the charge - "throughout
accusingly imitative of Lewis' The Monk" - echoed by Devendra Varma's "an
unremitting imitation of Lewis's fascinating novel."² However, Devendra
Varma's account of the novel is so considerably indebted to that of Montague
Summers, that it is difficult to regard it as a completely independent view.³

1. New An.R. 27 (1806) 372; MLR I (July 1806) 80; GR I (1806) 590; An.R 5
(1806) 542. The references to The Monk are not given italics in these reviews

2. Montague Summers, Essays in Petto, 62; Devendra Varma, introduction to
Zofloya (1974 edition) xx.

3. This can be seen by comparing the following brief passages:

The Moor supplies her with poison
with which she experiments on her
husband. Lest suspicion should
be aroused, as his health fails,
she accompanies him to Torre-Alto
his remote castle in the Appenines,
where they are joined by Henriques,
Lilla, and an ancient lady, Lilla's
aunt.
(Summers)

The Moor furnishes her with poison
with which she does not hesitate to
experiment on her husband. To avoid
any suspicion caused by his declining
health she takes him to Torre-Alto,
his remote castle in the Appenines,
soon to be joined by Henriques, Lilla
and her aged aunt.
(Varma)

For further comparison of the same kind, see M. Summers, op. cit., 63-65,
and D. Varma, op. cit., xvii-xix.

There can, of course, be no question of the fact that Charlotte Dacre had read The Monk, or that she admired it greatly, since her own first novel was dedicated to Lewis, in appreciation of the pleasure his work had given her;¹ nor would one deny similarities in style, and a few similarities in plot. But this is no mere copy. Moreover, it is difficult to reconcile Devendra Varma's verdict of "unremitting imitation" with his later statement that

.... The whole work is a sample of brilliant fancy and sound judgment, a production of rare and undeviating excellence.

Indeed, the evidence suggests that this second statement is as erroneous as the first - that while Zofloya is by no means a novel of "undeviating excellence", neither is it an unremitting imitation; it is a flawed work, but one of no slight originality - and it seems necessary to free it from the charge of being a mere pale copy of The Monk, so that Charlotte Dacre may be given whatever credit is due to her. Since, therefore, Varma does usefully specify the ways in which he sees Zofloya as imitative (something not all critics have done) it is proposed, for convenience, to refer to his listing.²

1. They are similar in setting, The Monk in Spain, Zofloya in Italy, "both countries dominated by superstition and fear." However, the use of such settings was commonplace in the gothic novel. Moreover, while the Inquisition actually has a role to play in The Monk, there are only fleeting references to Victoria's fear of the Consiglio di Dieci (e.g. II, XXI, 189 and 190); thus Miss Dacre avoided one of the pitfalls of gothic novelists who tried to describe religious practices of which they knew little or nothing.

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1. It is possible then, that she admired Kotzebue, author of Lovers' Vows, since Lewis liked and adapted his plays.
 2. Dr. Varma's high praise of the novel may be found in his introduction to the Arno 1974 edition of Zofloyaxxvi; his list of correspondences is in pp. xx-xxi. For readers not familiar with Lewis's novel, a summary of the plot is given in Appendix IV.

2. "The counterpart of the innocent Antonia in The Monk is Lilla in Zofloya. Both are young, beautiful, naive, virgins, - victims of barbaric murder." One might even add to this that each is killed by the principal character in the respective novels. However, not only is Antonia far more important in The Monk than Lilla in Zofloya, the roles the girls play and the reasons for their deaths are entirely different; the monk kills Antonia to hide the fact that he has raped her; Victoria kills Lilla in a jealous rage.
3. "Both novels present characters who break sacred vows" However, the vows are very different; the monk's is a vow of celibacy, Antonia's a vow of fidelity: the psychological and physical pressures on Ambrosio are far greater. By making his villain-hero a monk malgré lui, an ambitious youth drawn by circumstances, and not by his own free choice, into a celibate existence, wanting sexual fulfilment, but also wanting to retain the dignities his office gives him, Lewis gave a far different and even stronger motive for mental turmoil leading to murder.¹ In addition, Lewis presented a conflict in Ambrosio's mind between good and evil which, except for two fleeting occasions (I, III, 43; III, XXXI, 117-9) is absent in Victoria.
4. Both present characters who "suffer the pangs of unrecompensed love." This, however, is a common property of prose fiction of any age.

1. Robert Kiely, in his stimulating study of The Monk in his The Romantic Novel in England, has said that he believes that Lewis was rather presenting "the dilemma of an ego unwilling to accept a life of moderation and unable to find fulfilment in extremes" (108) and the "question of power - the conditions under which it increases and those under which it is transferred from one individual to another ... " (115). That it is possible to accept this as a reading of The Monk is indicative of its power as a romantic novel (rather than a romance), for in this, as in romantic poetry, the writer was usually exploring a personal problem in a manner which allowed for varying interpretations of the finished work. Whatever its wider relevance, however, it is surely significant that the homosexual Lewis should have chosen to make his protagonist a monk, so that he could centre his frustrations on forbidden sexual activities.

5. Both have the theme of a pact with the devil. However, apart from the fact that, unlike Victoria, Ambrosio is early aware that he is dealing with the devil (i.e. conscious of the growth of sin in him?), pacts of this kind were part of folk-lore.
6. "Several blood-curdling scenes of murder in both novels bear good comparison: in The Monk Ambrosio quickly dispatches Elvira [Antonia's mother] and removes all obstacles against his designs upon Antonia; in Zofloya Victoria poisons Berenza, thus facilitating her affair with his brother Henriques." But many murders are committed to remove an obstacle to someone's desires - and these murders are entirely different, not least in that that committed by Victoria is premeditated, that by Ambrosio is not.

Some of the similarities which are noted cannot, it must be admitted, be refuted, the most striking being that the chief protagonist in each novel is finally destroyed by being hurled by the devil from a high place. Yet Charlotte Dacre's debt to Lewis seems to have been far less than his debt to others;¹ and though The Monk must rank as a greater achievement than Zofloya, nevertheless the latter does not lack originality and is, in some respects, superior.

In the first place, its supernatural agent is a more consistent creation than Lewis's Matilda, who is made too substantially human in the first part of The Monk for it to be accepted at the end that she is either a mental projection, or, to take the story literally, a fiend in human form. Zofloya, on the other hand, as has been noted, always has an air of mystery, of unreality. Moreover, though one can see, even in The Monk, the device of the temptation of Ambrosio as a means of externalising his own inner desires, the actual temptation is done very explicitly and clumsily. Since Zofloya follows,

1. Lewis is said to have taken two thirds of The Monk from a German romance Die Blutende Gestalt mit Dolch und Lampe, oder die Beschwörung im Schlosse Stern bei Prag. See Joyce M.S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800, 245.

rather than suggests, Victoria's desires, the allegory if such it is, is far more effective.

Secondly, though both use the supernatural chiefly as an aid to exploring psychological states, Charlotte Dacre seems to have learned much from Lewis's mistakes.¹ It is no wonder that Scott had complained (and was later again to complain) of the over-use of the supernatural by so many writers of gothic novels² — for The Monk includes, besides Satan and his agent, the Wandering Jew, the ghost of a bleeding nun, the ghost of the heroine's mother, and magic spells. Charlotte Dacre's supernatural effects, on the other hand, are much more subtle; there are no spectres except those that appear in the heroine's dreams, and merely hints of Zofloya's being able to come and go at will and of his being able to read Victoria's mind. Only when he wants, miraculously, to transport her from one place to another are any obviously supernatural occurrences provided. Moreover, though Miss Dacre did not (as Maturin was to do shortly afterwards) realise that the best way of presenting Satan was by suggestion only, her restraint in seeing him only as "fierce, gigantic and hideous to behold!" (III, XXXIII, 232) is a great improvement on Lewis's lurid figure, with blasted limbs, sable wings and live snakes for hair. Her dream sequences too, while rather too conveniently full of presaging spectacles are less explicit, more really dream-like than Lewis's.³

Thirdly, she was much more sparing also in her use of gothic effects other than the supernatural. Most of the early gothic novelists, including Lewis, used, for instance, a castle and/or a convent, with subterranean passages and secret panels, as a chief property. These she did without — as well as without chiming bells, hooting owls, ancestral portraits, and crumbling

1. Cf. Arthur M.D. Hughes, The Nascent Mind of Shelley, 33: "Mrs. Byrne ... borrowed and bettered the supernatural element of The Monk."

2. See e.g. Ioan Williams ed., Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction 194, 211-212.

3. She was, apparently, interested in the significance of dreams, which had already featured in Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer.

manuscripts. Frederick Karl has said of the slightly later Frankenstein (1818) and Melmoth the Wanderer that they saw

.... the battle for a man's soul panoramically, no longer within the confines of castle and moat¹

- but Charlotte Dacre had already moved out of this confined setting.

Fourthly her description of physical horrors is much less gruesome than Lewis's - and her horrors are always essentially related to her plot and theme while those of many gothic novelists (including Mrs. Radcliffe, who, while not of the "horror" school liked to suggest horrors) were not.

And lastly, in structure, too, Zofloya, despite its frequent use of explanatory "flashbacks" is superior to The Monk, and to the average type of gothic novel which tended to be loose and rambling. Lewis distracts attention from his central figure by bringing in a secondary plot, involving an erring nun. Ambrosio's relentless attitude to this nun's sexual frailty is, admittedly, an integral part of the portrayal of his character, and his own moral problem, but any of the convent's nuns would have served this function, without the necessity of giving detailed attention to her story and that of her lover. Zofloya, on the other hand, while having, to a certain extent, two plots, in that it follows the careers of both Victoria and Leonardo, aims to connect these with one central theme - the results on a family of moral laxity; moreover, after the first third of the novel, attention is focused almost entirely on Victoria. In fact, the weakest parts of the novel are those which deal with Leonardo (in whom Charlotte Dacre seems to have taken very little interest) and which try to connect his life with his sister's. To do this she had to make Leonardo accidentally meet, and become the lover of, Berenza's cast-off mistress, and also to become the leader of the band of outlaws by whom Victoria and her mother are captured. This she merely attributed to "the wonderful and inscrutable ways of Providence" (III, XXXI, 191). However, her use of coincidence as a mere contrivance, in the manner of

1. Frederick R. Karl, A Reader's Guide to the Development of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century, 265.

the theatre, to bring her characters together on two occasions, is easier to accept than the coincidence on which much of the horror of The Monk depends - namely that the woman Ambrosio murders and the woman he rapes and murders should be, unknown to him, his own mother and sister. And just as outrageous coincidences are used in the sub-plot - in, for instance, that the nun Ambrosio condemns should be the sister of the man who is in love with his own (unrecognised) sister.

Such weaknesses in The Monk, however, are outweighed by its presentation of Ambrosio, and the mental conflict which makes him far more truly a "villain-hero" than Victoria is a villainess-heroine - whereas the artistic weaknesses of Zofloya counterbalance much of any merit it possesses. Charlotte Dacre was first shackled by her avowed intention to "draw deductions from incidents as they arise, and ever revert to the actuating principle" (I, I, 1). Thus the narrative is frequently interrupted by such authorial exclamations as

.... Gradual and terrible are the approaches of vice! ...
Should not this lesson, then, be conveyed to the mind -
that the propensity of our natures to evil should be
vigilantly checked, and that the guard which should be
constantly kept over the wanderings of the heart, should
never be suffered to slumber on its post?

(I, IV, 68-69)

Such passages could only be acceptable to an age which looked for (or was used to) heavy didacticism in its fiction. And in contrast to these stern, admonitory intrusions, there are others of an almost conversational nature, inserted to cope awkwardly with changes of scene, such as the following:

.... Let us leave then for a time this guilty pair to
enjoy the society of each other, and return to the deserted
Victoria.

(I, VI, 123)¹

1. Such sentences occur quite frequently also in the novels of Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Opie, and seem to have their twentieth-century counterparts in the clumsy "meanwhile, back at the ranch" cliché of early silent films.

The greatest defect of the novel, however, is its language, which The General Review referred to as "inflated", The Monthly Literary Recreations as "bombastical" and The Literary Journal as "extravagant."¹ Even one of the kindest of her reviewers felt it necessary to say of a later novel written in the same style:

.... If the fair author of these volumes would ... become sensible... of the ridicule which invariably attends on an inflated extravagant style of language, she possesses powers of invention, talents for description, and dominion over the feelings, sufficient to give her a high station among female novel-writers.²

In all she wrote, her style was a weakness. The situations in each of her stories are highly emotional, and she never freed herself from "novel diction" in her attempts to convey this. Thus we read of "the dangerous vortex" of illicit passion (I, V, 72) of "the soft gale" sighing among the trees (I, VIII, 175) - and emotive words like "soul", "transport", "melancholy", and "voluptuous" are frequent. She even ventured on such coinages as "enhorrored" (III, XXIX, 102) and "enanguished" (III, XXVII, 60).³ And in Zofloya, moreover, she faced the greater problem of conveying not only emotion, but violent emotion. Jane Austen, who was to illustrate that deep feeling can be conveyed without the vocabulary of the novel of sensibility, was wise enough to avoid the pitfalls of trying to convey violent passion. Charlotte Dacre, however, tried to do it by frequent use of dashes, exclamations, italics, rhetorical questions, and melodramatic phrases, resulting in passages like the following:

" Henriques, my soul adores you! - behold me at your feet, - I offer you all, - all that I possess - my hand in marriage - grant me but your love!"
(III, XXVI, 9)

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1. GR (June 1806) 591; MLR (July 1806) 80; LJ (June 1806) 635.
 2. CR 53 v 24 (September 1811) 51-2.
 3. As did another young novelist of the period whose style is remarkably like hers, namely Sophia King. All Miss King's novels were published before Charlotte Dacre's first appeared, and it is interesting that it has been suggested that Charlotte Dacre's real name was King. As yet, however, no positive identification has been achieved.

Or:

.... with a basilisk's eye she gazed upon her, breathing destruction and revenge. " ... dearly shall he pay, for the short-lived raptures his inconstancy has procured him."
(II, XV, 55)

Yet at times one almost hears the accents of Heathcliff:

" Without her, life to me would be a dreary blank; and, if fate snatched her from me in this world, I would die, yes, hasten to die, that my soul might rejoin her in the next, and my body repose by her pure form in the grave."
(II, XXII, 210)

There are, too, occasional scenes of some power, particularly when scenery and weather are used to reinforce the emotional climate. These are common accompaniments of Victoria's passion, not something her senses feed on, or "set pieces", as are so many of Mrs. Radcliffe's natural descriptions. Victoria herself usually seems regardless of them. Such, for example, is the scene after Henriques, though his beloved Lilla has disappeared, has still rejected Victoria. Angrily she walks to the forest where she usually meets Zofloya, and the growing storm in her mind is paralleled by a growing storm without her:

With perturbed and gloomy spirits, mechanically she bent her steps towards the forest. It was late in the evening; the sky was overcast with black, heavy clouds, but unheeding she pursued her way; the thunder now rattled over her head, and the blue lightning flashed across her path; her mind, however, too engaged in its internal warfare, regarded not the warring of the elements
(III, XXVIII, 61)

Zofloya appears, and they talk in short, urgent sentences, as the storm rages:

" speak, Zofloya; if you have aught to suggest, withhold it not an instant from me."

At this moment, a vivid flash of lightning dividing the skies, Zofloya said:

"Let us seek, Signora, a more sheltered spot - the storm appears e ncreasing."[sic]

"Oh, heed not the storm! - but speak," cried Victoria, "If aught you can adduce to sooth [sic] the despair of my mind."

"You heed not the lightning, Signora, neither do I - deign then, to answer me; is it now your firm belief that Henriques will never grant you his love?"

"Alas! I have said so," replied Victoria in a gloomy accent.

"And under these circumstances, do you still love him? - still feel him necessary to your happiness?"

"Sooner than resign hopes of obtaining him, I would
plunge this instant a stiletto [sic] in my bosom!"

Zofloya remained for a few moments silent ...

(III, XXVIII, 68-9)

Though still theatrical, such passages, in context, at times produce the required effect in the reader. Even so, it is impossible to agree with Devendra Varma that "The whole work is ... characterised by elegance of style." Too often the style, as well as being vitiated by hackneyed expressions, is either shrilly melodramatic, or stiltedly formal - as when Leonardo is addressed by Berenza's cast-off mistress:

"You appear a stranger here; and though your dress bespeaks inferiority of situation, pardon me if I distrust what it seems meant to convey. Without therefore deeming me impertinently curious, allow me to inquire whither you intend to bend your course, as the evening is already far advanced, and I know not of any house near this that could yield you accommodation for the night."

(II, XIII, 15)

And, unfortunately, attempts to be dramatic or dignified are not infrequently accompanied by errors of syntax, grammar or spelling, as when Victoria cries at a moment of crisis, "O Zofloya! Zofloya! ... this is irrelavent." (II, XX, 165).²

Yet not withstanding such flaws, Zofloya deserves to be remembered as a stage in the development of the novel in which the gothic was used not only, or even chiefly, to evoke suspense, or fear of the supernatural, or horror at man's cruelty to man - but fear of the beast within. Charlotte Dacre did not invent psychological gothic, which used the conventions of the gothic novel to explore "the unknown, dark, fearful, subterranean, or "psychological" side of human behaviour",³ but she developed it by using a woman as her major character,

1. Introduction to 1974 Arno edition of Zofloya xxvi.

2. That this is not merely a printer's error seems confirmed by the fact that the word is spelled in the same way elsewhere - e.g. II, XX, 167. Other examples are, Laurina "sunk upon the floor" (I, V, 86), Leonardo "fell postrate on the floor" (I, IV, 69).

3. Frederick R. Karl, op. cit., 244.

and reminding her readers of the potential for passion and violence in some women. Would Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff have existed, one wonders, without Victoria, Ambrosio, Melmoth, and others like them?

The gothic, however, was the only medium really suited to Charlotte Dacre's particular talent, since it released her from the bonds of naturalism and allowed her to take her readers into a different world from that of every day, one where heightened emotions could be accepted without too much incredulity; and, unfortunately, despite its popularity with the public, the scathing reviews of Zofloya seem to have deterred her from future efforts in this line. Thus, her last two novels are, like Confessions, merely novels of extreme sensibility. These had passed their heyday by 1807 - but that they were by no means out of fashion seems evidenced by the fact that her The Libertine published in that year¹ had three editions within twelve months, and was, in that same period, made into a play, Angelo.² Nor was its popularity short-lived - for it was still popular enough in 1816 to warrant a translation into French. Again founding its morality on the need for the right kind of early upbringing, The Libertine has, as its central male character Angelo - one who, having been indulged as a child, lacks "decided principles" (I, I, 21) and though not wicked, is weak. Thus he seduces Gabrielle, a girl whose education has been deficient in a different way; scorning the evils of society, her father has mistakenly brought her up in solitude, so that when she feels a "turbulent and uneasy passion" (I, II, 50) for Angelo she lacks experience to teach her the dangers of yielding to it. The plot follows her fortunes and his, as he plunges into one affaire after another, refusing to marry Gabrielle on the pretext that, having allowed him

1. William S. Ward, Literary Reviews in British Periodicals I, 233 gives the date of the first edition as 1798. This is an entirely different work, called The Libertines, by an anonymous author.

2. See Devendra Varma's introduction to the 1974 Arno edition of The Libertine xiii.

to seduce her, she is not a suitable person to become his wife.¹ When, a broken man, he finally does marry her, she is already dying from the hardships she has endured.

Some idea of the far-fetched nature of the plot may be gained from the fact that at one stage Gabrielle follows Angelo from Switzerland to Italy, and enters his service dressed as a youth, without his recognising her.² Agony is piled on agony: her old father dies, unbalanced in his mind because of her disgrace (I, V, 119-20); she and her baby almost starve on one of her searches for Angelo; their first child, a girl, is seduced, her lover is slain by Angelo - and she ends in a convent; their son, indulged by his father and an unprincipled nurse, and taught to despise his mother as a fallen woman who has cursed him with the stain of illegitimacy, becomes a thief, and is finally executed, having been identified as a highwayman by his own father. Finally, in the most effective passage in the novel, Angelo, nauseated with self-disgust, shoots himself.

One can only suppose that Charlotte Dacre's original readers were so familiar with the landscape of the world she evokes in her novels that they were immediately able to immerse themselves in its conventions and suspend disbelief. For a modern reader, the effect of the melodramatic plot and speeches, the coincidences, the patent appeals to the emotions, is, for a long while, to induce a combination of amusement and boredom. Yet, as the story relentlessly unfolds, one becomes almost drugged by the atmosphere created; and though it is far too much to call it a "powerful and distressing tale", in which the author "displays a great command of style and power over words,"³ it becomes possible to share some of the absorption of its earliest

1. Cf. Zofloya. This seems to have been an attitude that worried Charlotte Dacre. In Zofloya overtly at least, she accepted the conventional double standard; here she seems to have rebelled against it.

2. See note 1, page 223, to the chapter on Jane Porter.

3. Devendra Varma, Introduction to the Arno 1974 edition of The Libertine, vii and viii.

readers and to recognise that at her best Charlotte Dacre did have some ability to suggest minds suffering great stress - something which it is impossible to illustrate in brief quotation, as the effect is cumulative.

The conception of Gabrielle too, is interesting; though in society's eyes dishonoured, she is portrayed as courageous, resourceful and faithful - and this is done without sentimentality, since it is made clear that she eventually ceases to love Angelo, and stays with him only because by that time he needs her.¹ Despite her championing of the orthodox views of her age on chastity, Charlotte Dacre showed an understanding of the varied nature of women, and a willingness to judge individuals by their total behaviour, rather than by one part of it. Thus in each of her novels the "erring" female is seen in a different light, according to her different circumstances. Gabrielle is presented as the object not just of pity, but of respect for her "virtue" and "excellence" - a view shared by the Morning Post which, in a glowing review of the novel, praised its combination of "liberality of sentiment, with the utmost purity of moral."² Not all reviewers were so broadminded, however: The Monthly Magazine found it "prurient trash" and The Oxford Review referred to it as "worse than wild nonsense". By far the most balanced verdict came from The Annual Review which, while censuring its improbability of plot and seeing its language as, though at times "energetic", also "often bombastic", admitted that it had "many striking scenes and some few pathetic ones."³

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1. Cf. Goethe's Gretchen in Faust forgiven by God because she acted in accordance with her love and her natural instincts. While clinging largely to the conventional morality and attitudes of the period, Charlotte Dacre seems to have been the most tempted by "romantic" attitudes to sexual relations of all the novelists covered by this study.
 2. Morning Post, June 13 1807, quoted by Sandra Knight Roth, Charlotte Dacre and the Gothic Tradition 71. If one remembers the relationship of author to editor, the view is not surprising.
 3. MM Supp. v. 23 (July 30 1807) 645; OR 2 (August 1807) 190; AR 6 (1807) 668.

Unfortunately, however, in her last novel, The Passions (1811) she reduced her chance of portraying such scenes by concentrating on the outpourings of emotion in letters. Here attention is focused on six characters: Weimar and his wife Julia; Darlowitz and his wife Amelia; Appollonia, the "villainness", whose advances to Weimar have been rejected, and who, having been brought up only in self seeking (another example of faulty education) seeks only to destroy him; - and finally Rosendorf, friend of Weimar and Darlowitz, whose function is solely to act as mentor and voice of reason. The plot is of the slightest; Appollonia, to avenge herself on Weimar pollutes the mind of his wife, Julia, by introducing her to "dangerous" novels like La Nouvelle Héloïse - and to this, presumably, is attributed the fact that Julia allows herself to respond to Darlowitz when he finds he loves her. Volumes two and three tediously follow the distracted emotions of these two, as they teeter on the brink of adultery, Darlowitz using the same sort of arguments as those used by Appollonia - that one cannot feel right if one's sentiments are wrong:

.... O Julia, sweet enthusiasm of my life! If I loved you with guilty passion, could I express sentiments so pure, so expanded? (III, Letter LXVIII, 71)¹

Though neither Darlowitz nor Julia is ever really sure of this, they nevertheless continue to play with fire, putting self before duty, and are themselves the real cause of the consequent tragedy, not Appollonia. Julia is the first to break, leaving her home in shame and despair even though her lovemaking with Darlowitz has been purely verbal. At this his wife, already suspecting his defection, dies in premature childbirth - and Darlowitz shoots himself. And even this is not the end; The Passions has a fourth volume, devoted to the two major figures left, Weimar and Julia. Guilt-ridden, she asks no

1. Cf. Marianne Dashwood's " if there had been any real impropriety in what I did, I should have been sensible of it at the time, for we always know when we are acting wrong, and with such a conviction I could have had no pleasure." (Sense and Sensibility, I, XIII, 68).

forgiveness, and eventually loses her reason - while he is so proud that he cannot offer forgiveness, though he secretly arranges to have her cared for, and watches her unseen.

Up to this point there is really nothing at all to commend about the novel and much to deplore. The epistolary mode, already rather old-fashioned was the worst she could have chosen.¹ This is not because she uses it in a particularly amateurish way: though the letters are, admittedly, extraordinarily long, the technique was a convention, and was recognised as such, as Frederick Karl has pointed out.² Moreover, she does not use the device of letters from a number of correspondents merely to tell a story which could have been as well or better told by one narrator: the letters are used to reveal inner conflicts and the mental and emotional state of each. But this is just where the danger lay: the method allowed an emotional woman to wallow in the emotionalism of four characters all suffering from "sensibility too acute" and "powerful workings of [the] soul", (I, Letter II, 21). In addition, even allowing for the fact that the mode was a convention, certain aspects of the letters are just too artificial to be acceptable: the characters tell each other things that they could not help knowing, as when Appollonia's governess tells her of her childhood (i.e. Appollonia's) or when Rosendorf describes to Darlowitz what they were like when young; they at times refer to themselves by their names, rather than by the normal use of the pronoun "I" - and sometimes refer to themselves as "he" or "she": they at times write as though they were writing a journal rather than a letter - as when Darlowitz writes to Julia of herself, "Another day - and I have not seen her" (III, Letter LXVI, 50); and when writing to one correspondent, if they mention another person, they are quite likely to invoke him as though the letter were to him.

1. See Frank Gees Black, The Epistolary Novel in the Late Eighteenth Century, 110.

2. Frederick Karl, A Reader's Guide to the Development of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century, 113.

Suddenly, however, just over half way through the last volume, Charlotte Dacre changed to third person narrative - presumably because Julia, being mentally unbalanced, could no longer write letters, and she wanted to continue detailing her state of mind; and in this last section is a long sequence, (IV, "Conclusion", 290-340) describing the last days of Julia, which is infinitely better than any other part of the novel. To a reader exhausted and irritated by the sentimentalities of volumes one to three, the first descriptions of Julia's madness (beginning at IV, Letter XCI, 147) appear merely hackneyed, but gradually the reader is drawn into the quite credibly evoked description of her behaviour. She has been, to this point, portrayed as so virtuous that she could feel utterly wicked merely for loving in thought and word, another than her husband, with the result that one somehow expects her, even in her madness, to maintain such an attitude. It is with a shock of surprise, therefore, that when she is found to be kissing something she is drawing, the reader learns that it is a portrait of the dead Darlowitz, not her husband - and her immediate shredding of the picture and wild behaviour reinforces, more than any of her earlier self upbraidings, her agonised dilemma in loving another while still feeling fondness and respect for her husband. Quite skilfully the first flashes of returning reason are indicated - and fortunately Charlotte Dacre did not attempt to illustrate this so much in speech, (at which she was very weak indeed) but by her own brief comments - for example on how much greater must be the hell of madness for one who has flashes of sanity (IV, "Conclusion", 298).

In one of her sane moments, Julia asks the name of a place she sees in the distance, and is gripped with an obsession to go there, though she does not consciously remember that it is the place where she and her husband once lived, (and to which, in fact, her husband and children have now returned). With the obsession comes a cunning which replaces her former innocence, enabling her to steal and conceal a pen-knife, with which to release herself at night -

and a malevolence which directs her to kill her wardress, if need be, to escape. Foiled in one attempt, she succeeds in the second - and here Charlotte Dacre showed a restraint most unusual for her - for though Julia hovers over her keeper ready to kill her if she must, the sensationalism of murder is avoided.

The last sequence is the struggle of the dying woman to reach her former home, battling against a storm. That she should reach it only to die on the threshold is typically melodramatic, and that her husband should, unaware of her presence, be looking through the window as she lies dying on the step below, is contrivedly ironic; nevertheless the forces of nature and of human suffering have been so effectively combined that the ending is more moving than anything else in the novel. There is, of course, also an overt moral admonition - Miss Dacre would not have regarded any novel as suitably concluded without one. Yet for her this is comparatively sparing, being merely a wish that she might have

" impressed on the minds of those who have contemplated the picture ... the danger of listening to the delusive blandishments of sophistry; of yielding to the guilty violence of the Passions, or of swerving, even in thought, from the sacred line of virtue, and our duty."

(IV, "Conclusion", 340)

This conclusion to what seems to have been her last novel fittingly sums up the central concerns of Charlotte Dacre's work - the violence of "the passions" and the need to control them - the portraits of their violence lending more to the tone of the novels than the need for control. There are few characters in her novels, for there is little attempt to suggest a society within which the major figures move, and by which they are affected.¹ Her

1. In Zofloya, for example, though the hot-blooded nature of Italian society of the period is mentioned, that society is never realised.

plots all exist to allow her characters to agonise in the grip of intense emotion, her vocabulary sharing much in common with that of the Porters, but including far more repetition of words of the kind found, in their works, chiefly in the relatively infrequent "gothic" passages - words like "fatal", "hatred", "torture". As a result, though she was read throughout the nineteenth century¹ her literary reputation was so low that she, alone of the authors included in this study, was not considered worthy of inclusion in the Dictionary of National Biography. And yet, ironically, she seems to have been read and commented on by more twentieth-century critics than any of them. Walter F. Wright in his Sensibility in English Prose Fiction (1937) referred to her as having "recently been retrieved from oblivion." Montague Summers, in 1938 regarded her as "an important figure in the gothic line"; Edmund Blunden in 1946 saw her as "a more competent spinner of wild tales" than Shelley; G. Wilson Knight was prepared to write the foreword to the 1974 Arno reprint of Zofloya and John Murphy has, even more recently, put her in a list of what he called "such noted authors as Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, M.G. Lewis, William Godwin, Charlotte Dacre and Charles Brockden Brown."²

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1. See Sandra Knight Roth, Foreword to the 1974 Arno edition of The Passions, viii. No evidence is given, however, for this assertion, and the novels do not seem to have had new editions throughout the century.
 2. Walter F. Wright, op. cit., 114; Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest, 157; Edmund Blunden, Shelley, A Life Story, 32; John Murphy, The Dark Angel, 15.

No one, of course, except perhaps Devendra Varma and Miss Knight Roth has suggested that her writings have much intrinsic value. It is, for instance, too much to say that she "displays a fine insight into the psychology of love"¹ since there are many aspects of love on which she never touched. However, though her novels as totalities are weak, in the very weakness of her obsession with highly charged emotional scenes she was able to rise at times to a highly effective portrayal of the disordered mind, and to explore the irrational side of human behaviour, just as others were exploring the more rational. And though again it is necessary to moderate Devendra Varma's claim that

.... her type of writing precedes and points out the
later developments of the interior monologue or stream-
of-consciousness technique²

- nevertheless it seems certain that, by so frequently giving the inner reflections of her people, she strongly supported the tendency to a deeper psychological portrayal of character.

1. Devendra Varma, Introduction to the Arno edition (1974) of The Passions, x.

2. D. Varma, ibid, xiii.

XII

Conclusion

Such then, is the work of eight of the popular novelists who were writing at the same time as Jane Austen, at the centre of the period usually referred to as "Romantic". Romanticism being such a tangled concept, it is tempting to ignore this fact; yet to do so would be to shirk an important and interesting issue. If, therefore, to cut the Gordian knot, one accepts René Wellek's definition of the central elements of romanticism as being a lofty view of the role of the imagination in life and art, a concept of nature as an organism, and the use of imagery, symbol and myth to convey truths which the writer feels have come to him through the use of imagination in its highest sense,¹ then there is nothing at all romantic about four of the minor novelists considered in this study, and only slight tendencies to the romantic in the other four. Of this second group, Charlotte Dacre's Zofloya is allegoric rather than symbolic, the Porter sisters were only mildly touched by romanticism in their interest in past ages, and in their love for what they called "the wonderful, the wild,"² while Lady Morgan's romanticism, in her best work, belongs to that facet of it which was evidenced in a strong feeling for nationhood, for individual differences and for individual freedoms, but had nothing in the least transcendental about it. In not one is there found the vision of the unity of all life which Emily Bronte seems to have shared

1. René Wellek, "The Concept of Romanticism" in Comparative Literature, 1 (1949) 1-23, 147-173.

2. e.g. in Duke Christian of Luneburg I, V, 124. Possibly the most romantic passage in their novels is in Maria's The Fast of St. Magdalen (1818), when the Italian hero declares, in a sentence strongly prophetic of Shelley's Ode to the West Wind:

.... The painter loves to study the forms and colours of visible things; the poet wants but some awakening object to waft his soul to worlds invisible - some key-note to waken all his mighty music - and he finds it in the leaf-strewn path!

(FM II, XVI, 117)

with the romantic poets, or the painful search for some answer to the problem of the nature of God and the universe which seems to have occupied Charles Maturin in his Melmoth the Wanderer, as much as it did Samuel Taylor Coleridge in The Ancient Mariner. For the most part, their novels are works not of search, but of statement¹ - even dogmatic statement, of attitudes and values which are more commonly associated with the Victorian era than with the romantic age.²

A second point which emerges clearly is that, despite the great gulf in artistry which lies between Jane Austen's novels and those of these minor contemporaries of hers, statements about her like "the breach with contemporary prose fiction is absolute", and "she moved against the current", need to be qualified.³ Marilyn Butler's placing of her firmly in the line of conservative novelists of the period is a finding which this study would wish to confirm.⁴ Because the best literature of the period was, for the most part, highly romantic, Jane Austen, seen in the limited context of the great has seemed, and has often been called, a writer whose allegiances were clearly in the eighteenth century.⁵ But for every one who thought like Wordsworth, there were thousands who thought like Mary Brunton. Jane Austen was very much a woman of her time, and had a great deal in common in her attitudes with novelists who were popular in her own day.

Nevertheless, it is not difficult to understand why they made so much more impression than she on the early nineteenth-century reading public, for, at the most basic level, she seemed to fail to provide any sort of really

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1. This distinction between romantic and non-romantic writing was made originally, I believe, many years ago, in a lecture by Dorothy L. Sayers.
 2. Cf. Walter Allen, The English Novel, 142 "What we often think of as typically Victorian ... had become dominant years before the queen came to the throne."
 3. Lord Ernle, The Light Reading of Our Ancestors, 276; Annette Hopkins, "Jane Austen the Critic", PMLA 40 (1925) 398-425.
 4. Marilyn Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas.
 5. See Chapter IV, notes 1 and 2, page 128; notes 1, 2 and 3, page 129.

interesting story - anything that her readers might not experience in their own daily lives; and though the critics were asking for probability, the popular novel of the time - even those that were pseudo-realistic - usually contained much that was highly improbable.¹ It seems, in fact, significant that at least three of the leading literary figures of the age saw the public as having become so used to the extraordinary event - in life as well as in the novel - that it was taking more and more "gross and violent stimulants" to move it.² Moreover, publishers were still chary of works dealing with ordinary domestic incidents; even by 1846 Charlotte Bronte's The Professor was regarded as being too commonplace.³ Thus, as has been noted, highly unlikely events, lavish use of coincidence, melodramatic language and gesture, were found not only in the work of the circulating library novelists, but even in that of many of the most respected. Jane Austen found it all highly amusing⁴ - and herself continued to write only of the kinds of incidents which could be expected in the daily life she knew. For this, some reviewers, her family and friends, and a small but appreciative readership from the general public admired her - but in general the verdict was that she lacked imagination, that her fiction was commonplace or "vulgaire" as Mme. de Stael would have it.⁵

1. Hannah More's Coelebs and Mary Brunton's Emmeline were unusual in being completely probable.

2. See Wordsworth's Preface to the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads; T.M. Raysor, ed., Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, 340; W. Hazlitt's "Lecture on the English Novelists" in William C. Hazlitt, ed., William Hazlitt, Lectures on the English Poets and Comic Writers, p. 166.

3. See Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen Forties, 84.

4. As Anna Lefroy recorded: see Constance Hill, Jane Austen, her Homes and her Friends, 194-195. Her Plan of a Novel (1816?) in its burlesque indicates how much improbability in both character and incident was still accepted.

5. e.g. see review of Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, BC n.s. 9 (March 1818) 293-301, in Critical Heritage 79-84; Edith Coleridge ed., Memoirs and Letters of Sara Coleridge, I, 75 (for Wordsworth's verdict); Anne Mozley, ed., Letters and Correspondence of John Newman II, 223;

And not only this: her novels were also felt to be lacking in feeling. There had, of course, been a reaction against excessive sensibility, with its faintings, tears, fits and frenzies, a useful illustration of the change being seen in a comparison of Lady Morgan's St. Clair (1803) with her O'Donnel (1814), or Maria Porter's Octavia (1798) with her Don Sebastian (1809)¹. In the earlier of these works we see all the features which Jane Austen burlesqued in her Juvenilia. In Octavia, for example, the heroine, on hearing reports of a duel in which her lover is involved, first drops "senseless on the floor" (II, VII, 8) while her sister Antonia falls "into violent fits" (II, VII, 9). On Antonia's partial recovery, Octavia leans weeping upon her shoulder, "shuddering and shrieking at every moment" (II, VII, 10). On another occasion, thinking she has lost the love of her lover, Octavia, in the arms of a friend,

.... now wept, and now raved; at times breaking from her with tearless horror, and then rushing to her again, drowned in floods of affliction.

(III, XII, 53)

Such writing seems largely to have disappeared quite early in the century - but there still remained much that strikes the twentieth-century reader as excessive. Writing of Amelia Opie in a brief article in The Times in 1963 and finding her work still to have "charm", an anonymous critic, noting the great success of her Father and Daughter and the fact that Scott admitted weeping over it said:

.... I have read the story and cannot help wondering whether Scott and readers of his generation were unusually emotional, or whether I am unusually hard-hearted. At all events, I read it without a tear.²

1. And, of course, the change is much greater if one compares works written just after 1820 with these early works - e.g. see note on A.M. Porter's Honor O'Hara (1826) and on Lady Morgan's The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys (1827) in Appendix of Later Work.

2. Times, March 18 1963, p. 12.

This would be the general reaction today: but in the early nineteenth century... writers do seem to have had a public which enjoyed indulging in emotion, and most of the really popular novelists used incidents and language aimed (whether consciously or not) at allowing their readers to do this - in much the same way as do popular songwriters, of whose products Richard Hoggart has written:

.... their aim is to present ... as directly as possible a known pattern of emotions: they are not so much creations in their own right as structures of conventional signs for the emotional fields they open.¹

Jane Austen's contemporaries seem to have preferred sighs and tears to laughter - yet she chose to write comedy, her reluctance to indulge the taste of the majority of readers perhaps springing partly from a belief that much display of feeling was at worst insincere (as in *Isabella Thorpe*) and at best either indecorous (as in *Mrs. Musgrove*) or injudicious (as in *Marianne Dashwood*) - and partly from a realisation that most attempts to show emotion in the novels of the time were melodramatic and ridiculous.²

And yet, ironically, though perhaps only in *Marianne Dashwood* did she attempt to portray intensely passionate feeling, she did, in fact, raise the portrayal of feeling to a fine art. With her, feeling is never created by volubility; indeed she often signifies deep feeling in her characters by their inability to find words, by their glances and gestures. Nothing could be more skilful, for example, than the way in which without ever using a word like "trembling" she conveys to the reader *Anne Elliot's* sensation of tremulous daze as she meets *Frederick Wentworth* for the first time since, seven years earlier, she had refused to marry him:

1. Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy, 161.

2. It is, in fact, impossible to agree with Q.D. Leavis that "The critical reader is never in any novel before 1820 made uncomfortable by crudities of feeling as he is in reading Dickens, Charlotte Bronte, Kingsley" (Fiction and the Reading Public, 130).

.... a thousand feelings rushed on Anne, of which this was the most consoling, that it would soon be over. And it was soon over. In two minutes after Charles's preparation, the others appeared; they were in the drawing room. Her eye half met Captain Wentworth's; a bow, a curtsy passed; she heard his voice - he talked to Mary, said all that was right; said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy footing: the room seemed full - full of persons and voices - but a few minutes ended it. Charles shewed himself at the window, all was ready, their visitor had bowed and was gone; ... the room was cleared, and Anne might finish her breakfast as she could

Mary talked, but she could not attend. She had seen him. They had met. They had been once more in the same room!

(Northanger Abbey and Persuasion
III, VII, 59-60)

Such delicate skill in conveying emotion was never given due recognition in her own day. Even as late as 1830, the Edinburgh Review, while regretting the fact that she had never been as popular as she deserved to be (and suggesting, rightly, that this was because she was "too natural") nevertheless felt compelled to say that she had little "power to excite a deep interest and to cope with difficult situations and violent emotions and to display them successfully."¹ Charlotte Bronte thought her deficient in that "the Passions [were] perfectly unknown to her"; and even George Lewes and Julia Kavanagh, both of whom admired her greatly, thought she lacked poetry and passion, the ability to "speak the language of strong feeling".²

Consequently, since her novels seemed to lack excitement and emotion, many contemporary readers, like Crabb Robinson, found her just "not interesting" - while even towards the end of the nineteenth century Professor William Minto also admitted to finding her novels lacking in interest - though he courteously admitted that he believed this to be due to a defect in himself.³

1. Ed.R 51. (July 1830) 451, (Review of Mrs. Gore's Women as they Are).

2. C. Bronte, letter of 12.4.1850, G. Lewes, BEM 86 (July 1859) 99-113; both in Critical Heritage, 128 and 159. Julia Kavanagh, English Women of Letters 273. Robert Southey was one of the few who recognised her ability to convey feeling: see Introduction, p.8.

3. Edith J. Morley ed., Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers I, 282. On the other hand, he found Lady Morgan interesting, though full of faults (op. cit., I, 226; I, 282); William Minto, The Literature of the Georgian Era, 239. Examples are too numerous to detail.

There were novels of the period, however, which, also lacking passion and event, yet still managed to gain wide popularity, an outstanding example being Hannah More's Coelebs. But Coelebs and the novels which followed its pattern, could be widely read because they were so evidently "improving" that many people who still needed an excuse for reading novels and who baulked even at the impeccably uplifting romances of the Porters, could allow themselves the pleasure of reading them. Of course a high moral tone is present in all Jane Austen's novels - and the more perceptive of her readers even recognised their religious undertones. However, since, unlike many of her contemporaries - not only those who have been discussed, but others, like Laetitia Hawkins - she did not make any parade of her religious views, William Charles Macready probably spoke for the majority of readers when he indicated that he preferred Mary Brunton's novels to Jane Austen's because the former had a "far higher aim".¹ Nineteenth-century readers, looking for "instruction" in their novels, seem to have found quite lengthy passages of authorial moral comment not only acceptable, but even desirable; and Jane Austen's subtlety and tact in saying what she wanted to say through her story, with only the rarest of intrusions, was too modern for her day. As a result, though regarded as "amusing", Emma was not thought to be "instructive" and Northanger Abbey and Persuasion were seen as "good" but not "quite so improving as some others".²

These, of course, were comments by individuals - but they seem to reflect general opinion. As Irma Sherwood once commented, while noting that the creation of the novel was the work of the eighteenth century:

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1. Diary entry for 15th February 1813, in Macready's Reminiscences (1875) ed. Frederick Pollock, I, 412, in Critical Heritage 118.
 2. Critical Heritage, 70, 72, 80; from MR 80 (July 1816) 320; GM 86 (September 1816) 249; BC n.s. 9 (March 1818) 293-301.

.... To achieve a complete fusion between the critic-moralist and the creative artist was beyond its capacity.¹

It was, perhaps, because Jane Austen did this so early in the nineteenth century that her work as moralist was not fully recognised in her time.

And in addition to this, even when her novels were allowed to be "improving", the virtues she was seen to be promoting, those of the kind needed in day-to-day domestic life, must have seemed very trivial to those who believed, with Lady Shelley that

.... A novel, like poetry, should have for its hero a person superior to the common herd of men - one who evinces a higher tone of feeling ... Surely works of imagination should raise us above our everyday feelings, and excite in us those elans passageres [sic] of virtue and sensibility which are exquisite and ennobling and which, if they are not evanescent, would exalt our poor humanity in the scale of being.²

For the many who liked thus to glow with ardour for an ideal (at least in the comfort of their own homes) she offered next to nothing. Anne Romilly, for example, while saying of Mansfield Park that it was "natural" and would "amuse an idle hour very well in spite of its faults", nevertheless regretted that it had not "that elevation of virtue, something beyond nature, that gives the greatest charm to a novel"³ Indeed, so highly was this elevation of virtue regarded, that Jane Austen's novels were still being faulted for lacking it many years later, The Westminster Review saying of them:

.... They show us too much of the littleness and trivialities of life, and limit themselves so scrupulously to the sayings and doings of dull, ignorant, and disagreeable people, that their very truthfulness makes us yawn. They fall short of fulfilling the objects, and satisfying the necessities of Fiction in its highest aspect - as the art whose office it is "to interest, to please, and sportively to elevate - to take man from the low passions and miserable troubles of life into a higher region, to beguile weary and selfish pain, to excite a generous sorrow at vicissitudes not his own, to raise the passions

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1. From "The Novelists as Commentators" in The Age of Johnson, ed. Frederick W. Hilles, 125.
 2. Diary of Frances, Lady Shelley, ed. R. Edgcumbe, II, 64, in Critical Heritage, 14.
 3. Romilly - Edgeworth Letters, ed., Samuel H. Romilly, 92, in Critical Heritage, 12.

into sympathy with heroic troubles, and to admit the soul into that serener atmosphere from which it rarely returns to ordinary existence without some memory or association which ought to enlarge the domain of thought and exalt the motives of action."

Even Julia Kavanagh believed that "The grand, the generous, the devoted, escaped her, or at least were beyond her power."¹

And yet another requirement of the age must have seemed lacking in her novels —novelty, to the love of which The Gentleman's Magazine attributed the diseased taste of the time in literature - a claim echoed by Scott in 1820 ("Novelty is what this giddy-paced time demands imperiously") - and by Sir Egerton Brydges in the same year (" we are all for glare and novelty and wonder ").² In fact Jane Austen did offer novelty: hers were the examples par excellence of the new style of novel commented on by Scott in 1815 and Whately in 1821, a style of novel whose truth to nature demanded an impeccable artistry.³ But despite the increasing attention being given to "art" in the novel, readers (and novelists) were still more concerned with matter than with manner, and Jane Austen's developments in style and technique - developments so remarkable that even today she can appear deceptively "modern", were made little of.

Of course there was, in general, a movement towards a more apparently natural expression in both poetry and prose fiction, helped to no small extent by the simplicity of the language of hymns and pious tracts and tales. However, like the minor poets with regard to poetic diction, the novelists found it difficult to break the shackles of novel diction. (That it was such is clearly illustrated by a comparison of their letters or works of non-

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1. "The Progress of Fiction as an Art", Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review, n.s. IV (October 1853) 342-374, quotation from 358-359; Julia Kavanagh, English Women of Letters, 252.
 2. GM 75 (May 1805) 406; H.J.C. Grierson ed., Letters of Sir Walter Scott, 1819-21, p. 116; Preface to Sir Ralph Willoughby, 11.
 3. In reviews of Emma and Northanger Abbey and Persuasion. See Critical Heritage 63 and 87.

fictional prose with their novels). Even Maria Edgeworth, one of the most talented of the minor novelists of the age, at times made her characters glide, as though on castors.¹ Though found far more often in the work of the Porter sisters, and Charlotte Dacre, such language is found in all the novelists in this study. Jane Austen, however, consciously rejected it, as is obvious not only from her novels, but from a specific comment in a letter to her niece Anna:

.... Devereux Forester's being ruined by his Vanity is extremely good; but I wish you would not let him plunge into a "vortex of Dissipation." I do not object to the Thing, but I cannot bear the expression; - it is such thorough novel slang - and so old, that I dare say Adam met with it in the first novel he opened.²

Her objection is clearly stated: such phrases are stale, over-used, written without thought, whereas she herself obviously chose her words with care.³

Of course, since she was, despite her individuality in style; inevitably a woman of her time, one does, very occasionally catch echoes of the sorts of expressions which fill the novels of her contemporaries, as when Frederick Wentworth, on Louisa Musgrove's accident on the Cobb, is seen "staggering against the wall for his support" (Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, III, XII, 110) or sitting, head bowed, "as if overpowered by the various feelings of his soul" (Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, III, XII, 112) - or when Fanny Price thinks that she has "never known a day of greater agitation, both of pain and pleasure" (Mansfield Park, II, XIII, 308). Far more frequently, however, when she uses such time-marked expressions, it is ironically. For example, the opening words of Pride and Prejudice, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that" (or slight variants of this) are found quite frequently in novels of the period, though followed by a platitude rather than,

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1. e.g. see Lady Clonbrony in M. Edgeworth's The Absentee, Dent 1893 edition, ch. III, 34 and Mrs. Falconer in Patronage, II, XXVI, 145 (Dent 1893 edition).
 2. Jane Austen's Letters, 404, Letter of 28th September [1814].
 3. Cf. the way in which she made Henry Tilney carp about the use of "nice" in Northanger Abbey (I, XIV, 107-108).

as in Jane Austen, by a subtle joke, the following, from Mrs. Opie's Valentine's Eve being typical:

It is a maxim universally admitted to be true, that unlimited power is dangerous to the virtue and integrity of monarchs; and I believe it to be not less so to individuals in humbler life. (II, VIII, 257)

Similarly, Mr. Collins' advice to Mr. Bennet, with regard to Lydia and Wickham:

" You ought certainly to forgive them as a christian, but never to admit them in your sight, or allow their names to be mentioned in your hearing."

(Pride and Prejudice III, XV, 364)

is found repeatedly (again with slight variations) - but never with the piquant irony of such words coming from a minister of the church.¹

And not only is much of the language of the novels of 1800-1820 stale, the ready supply of novel phrases resulted also in verbosity - a failing about which critics were beginning to be querulous quite early in the period.²

The Annual Review, for example, complained thus in 1807:

.... Exuberance is the great fault of modern writing ... The writer who aspires to permanent excellence must be his own abbreviator: the shears of criticism are less merciful than those of self-esteem.³

Jane Austen was never verbose.

As in language, so in structure; in contrast to most of her contemporaries, Jane Austen made everything work economically, though unobtrusively, to her end, rejecting such irrelevant digressions as "an essay on writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparte"⁴ and long accounts of the past lives of characters, though vestigial traces remain in short and quite natural conversations, for example that between Colonel Brandon and Elinor Dashwood (Sense and Sensibility, II, IX, 205-211) or in Darcy's letter

1. e.g. see Amelia Opie's Simple Tales, I, 220, Tales of Real Life, I, 191, New Tales, III, 16; Mary Brunton's Self-Control, II, XIX, 138.

2. Of course there are isolated examples of commendable writing in all of the novelists studied, and a great deal in Lady Morgan's later work.

3. An.R. 6 (1807) 667.

4. Jane Austen's Letters, 300, letter of 4th February [1813].

to Elizabeth Bennet (Pride and Prejudice, II, XII, 196-203).¹ Nor are there any characters who are "introduced ... merely to be delineated"²; even the most minor can be found to have a function.

New skills are seen, too, in her portrayal of characters, infinitely superior creations to most in novels before hers. In her work we see the bringing to perfection of the dramatic method, attempted by all the novelists surveyed in this study, the refinement from it of the over-exaggerations which the stage of the time required, and the giving to each character an individual and very natural voice.³ Avoiding the playscript method of labelling the lines allotted to individual characters, she achieved an air of spontaneity by keeping their exchanges to credible lengths. As for her heroines, these she made live for her reader by allowing him even to share their thought processes - and to do this she did not turn to the artificial soliloquy or the clumsy epistolary mode, both methods often used by her contemporaries. Rather she concentrated on bringing to perfection a method which was also being tentatively essayed by one or two others - that of using the character's mind as a centre of consciousness while, by retaining third person narration, reserving the right to allow the reader to see things from a different point of view whenever this, for any reason, seemed desirable.⁴

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1. These were still being used after 1820 by Surr, the Porter sisters, and Lady Morgan. Charlotte Dacre, Elizabeth Hamilton and Mary Brunton wrote nothing after 1820. Mrs. Opie's Madeline (1822), her last novel, is, however, free from them.
 2. Jane Austen's Letters 32, letter of 25th November 1798.
 3. It is true that there are occasions in Sense and Sensibility when Elinor Dashwood's speech seems over-formal (e.g. in I, IV, 20) and when it is difficult to decide whether Jane Austen is deliberately making Marianne over-exaggerate, or whether she at times misses the right note for the character. Very occasionally, too, the dialogue in Pride and Prejudice has a mannered cleverness which savours of good stage comedy. This, however, is true of none of the other novels, and even the examples cited are natural compared with most of the dialogue of her contemporaries.
 4. This is a facet of her art which has been thoroughly discussed in earlier studies: see for example, Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and her Art 198-220; Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction 243-66; Norman Page, "Categories of speech in Persuasion", MLR 64 (1969) 734-741; Barbara Hardy, A Reading of Jane Austen, especially chapters one and seven. Marilyn Butler, in Jane Austen and the War of Ideas 262-4, has noted that Maria Edgeworth was a pioneer in this respect, and Mary Brunton was also. It seems likely, therefore, that there were others.

In her novels, then, it is through their personalities that her heroines are projected - and the long physical descriptions so popular with so many other novelists of the period are absent. Yet, paradoxically, it is surely significant that whereas few readers must not have clear mental images of Catherine Morland, Marianne Dashwood, and the rest of Jane Austen's heroines, those in the novels of her contemporaries tend, with few exceptions, to leave little or no impression - all seeming to be from a strictly limited number of moulds.¹

And the same is true of their male characters. Even though, unlike the Porter sisters, Surr and Lady Morgan, Jane Austen never made men the central characters in her novels, her men are solid and credible - even the anti-heroes like Willoughby and Wickham; but the idealised heroes of the Porters live in an atmosphere of Transylvania, Surr's men are transplanted straight from stage melodrama and Lady Morgan's heroes (though not her entire male casts) are merely puppets.

Finally, though all the minor novelists included in this study tended to have too many characters (a fault Mary Brunton seems to have been freeing herself from just before she died), only in Lady Morgan do these characters exist in relation to a society that is at all felt - and with Lady Morgan, while the society is felt, only her secondary characters live. Jane Austen, on the other hand, created living characters, central and secondary, who inhabit a very real world.²

Unfortunately, however, as a reviewer of Northanger Abbey and Persuasion pointed out in 1818, the time at which she wrote was not one in which work like hers could be widely appreciated; telling his readers that her novels

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1. However, in Adeline Mowbray, Emmeline and Zofloya we do find attempts to get away from the stereotyped heroine.
 2. It is, perhaps, pertinent to note that in the minor novels studied, an advance is seen in that the most hackneyed of the stock characters, the plausible seducer, the false friend, the villain, the careless guardian, remain only in certain novels of Amelia Opie, Mary Brunton and Charlotte Dacre - rather oddly the three whose portrayal of their major characters was most in-depth.

had

.... fallen ... upon an age whose taste can only be gratified with the highest seasoned food. This ... may be partly owing to the wonderful realities which it has been our lot to witness. We have been spoiled for the tranquil enjoyment of common interests, and nothing now will satisfy us in fiction, any more than in real life, but grand movements and striking characters. A singular union has, accordingly, been attempted between history, and poetry. The periods of great events have been seized on as a ground work for the display of powerful or fantastic characters: correct and instructive pictures of national peculiarities have been exhibited; and even in those fictions which are altogether wild and monstrous, some insight has been given into the passions and theories which have convulsed and bewildered this our 'age of Reason'

- he went on to detail what was wanted:

.... the prevailing love of historical, and at the same time romantic incident, - dark and high-wrought passions, - the delineations, chiefly of national character, - the pursuit of some substance, in short, yet of an existence more fanciful often than absolute fiction ... In this raised state of our imaginations, we cannot ... all at once descend to the simple representations of common life

Recognising this, however, the critic predicted, with accuracy, that Jane Austen's time would come, and that eventually "more permanent delight" would be gained from her "familiar cabinet pictures" than from even "the great historical pieces of our more eminent modern masters."¹ She is, today, with justice, the best known and most widely read and respected novelist of her time.

That being fully granted, it may now, however, be possible to look back, a little more generously than has been customary, at the contribution to fiction of some of her now largely forgotten contemporaries, for not all that they produced was dross. The age was a brilliantly fertile one, and while Jane Austen innovated and perfected techniques, others, while not entirely ignoring the novel as an art form were rather innovators in other directions.

1. BEM n.s. 2 (May 1818) 453-455. Review of Northanger Abbey and Persuasion, in Critical Heritage, 266-267.

Their work is not literature - yet in ways seen as exciting in their time they began to tap veins which were to be opened more fully later in the century, and to feed ideas and techniques into the mainstream of the novel, which worked towards its becoming the major literary form of the nineteenth century."

However, because their reputation was ephemeral, their contribution has been largely unrecognised by later generations. Kathleen Tillotson, for example, because she compares the novelists of the 1840's largely with Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Jane Austen and Scott, sees them as innovators:

.... I see the novelists of the forties as initiating rather than continuing, and am more aware of their legacy to succeeding novels than of their own inheritance from the novel's past.¹

Therefore she discusses the "problem" or "purpose" novel and the religious novel as innovations, observes that the social frontiers of the novel were extended, writes of "the new perception of the dignity of character in humble life," and sees a widening of geographical range, and the use of dialect, rendered more intelligible with glossarial footnotes.²

Yet, as has been noted, all of these innovations had their roots at least as far back as the first two decades of the century - and some of them seem to have been germinated by the evangelical movement. In some ways, its effects were stultifying - in the over-propriety that led to bowdlerisation, in the morbid lingering over death beds.³ In other ways, however, its influence was fruitful. Leaving aside the possible influence of the vocabulary, rhythms and imagery of its hymns on contemporary poetry, its support of Sunday

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1. Kathleen Tillotson, Novels of the Eighteen-Forties, 139. She did, however, suggest, with reference to the Brontës, that "the minor gothic novels and the periodicals [they] read as children would probably reward investigation."
 2. Op. cit., 119 et seq., 131 et seq., 73, 142, 90.
 3. Robert Mayo suggests that though Dickens showed intense dislike for professional pietism, he possibly, in early life, came under the influence of religious stories - and that at any rate he inherited an audience "prepared to be moved and edified" by the sufferings of Oliver Twist and David Copperfield, and the striking deaths of such characters as Little Nell and Paul Dombey (The English Novel in the Magazines, 362).

schools (meant to enable the poor to read the bible and tracts) encouraged reading of all kinds; and the possibility of making "the pleasure arising from a combination of interesting incidents conducive to the sacred impressions of virtue and religion" persuaded many, like Robert Dallas, to turn to writing fiction, who might never have done so. Much of what was written in the name of religion was valueless artistically - but it hastened the bestowal of the accolade of respectability on the novel as a form. Moreover, the evangelical movement was at least partly responsible for some of the innovations in prose fiction in the period: for greater simplicity of language, for more attention to the inner life, for concern with humble life, and (in order to display the noble life) a kind of historical romance which at least helped to produce an audience ready to receive Scott.¹

And there were still other innovations which owed nothing to the evangelical movement - such as Charlotte Dacre's explorations of the darker regions of the female mind, and Lady Morgan's attempts to portray the interaction of various classes in society. Lady Morgan's work suffered from the inevitable faults of doctrinaire writing - but in her struggle to transmute a large social and political problem into fiction, she opened new vistas for the novel.

With hindsight, then, the first decades of the nineteenth century can be seen as a time of fruitful experiment. It is not without significance that of the four novelists of that period who are still much read - Jane Austen, Scott, Peacock and Mary Shelley - all were working in different genres of the novel; but it should not be forgotten that there were also a number of other writers who, lacking the distinction to free themselves from the bondage of

1. R.C. Dallas, Aubrey 1804 (Preface xxi). With regard to the historical romance, cf. A.D. Hook, "Jane Porter, Sir Walter Scott, and the Historical Novel", Clio 2, 1976, 181-192, who asks of Waverley "would its triumph have been quite so universal" without The Scottish Chiefs having preceded it?

sensibility and the pressure to instruct, were yet attempting to make the novel an acceptable medium for the examination of life and ideas. In 1877, when their originality was still recognised, Jerom Murch said of such writers that they "gave a great impetus to the literature of their country."¹ And even today, it is possible to see that others could learn from their experiments and mistakes; their work has not been without its lasting effect. However, as another minor novelist of the age, Egerton Brydges, clearly saw,

.... The fame, which is slow in rising, is the most sure and the most lasting ... The difficulty is to draw notice to what is full of grace and order; when drawn, it does not recede again

.... I believe nothing but genius, put forth naturally and frankly, will survive.²

Jane Austen has survived.

1. Jerom Murch, Mrs. Barbauld and her Contemporaries, 55.

2. Egerton Brydges, Autobiography, 323; 28.

Appendix I

The nineteenth century reputation of the authors in the study, as indicated by their inclusion in general studies of the novel of the period.

(No attempt has been made to effect a comprehensive coverage of such studies, but it is felt that enough have been consulted to allow for a reasonably accurate impression. Memoirs and studies of individual authors are not included here, but feature in the relevant chapters.)

1820 "On the Female Literature of the Present Age", New Monthly Magazine, Vol. 13, March 1st 1820 and June 1st 1820.

Leaving aside those whose names are merely listed at the end of the second article, those discussed are Mrs. Radcliffe, Charlotte Smith, Elizabeth Hamilton, Mary Brunton, Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, Amelia Opie, Caroline Lamb, Jane Porter, Anna Maria Porter, Fanny Burney, Lady Morgan, and Jane Austen, who receives quiet praise - but a much smaller share of attention than is given to most of the others. Yet this is no mere "puffing" article; the writer tries candidly to discuss the weaknesses as well as the merits he sees in the writers discussed.

cc1825 "Charlotte Smith" by Sir Walter Scott. First published in his Miscellaneous Prose Works 1827. In Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction, ed. Ioan Williams. At the end of this essay (Williams ed. p. 190) Scott named as distinguished authors of his time Mme. d'Arblay, Maria Edgeworth, Susan Ferrier, Mrs. Opie, Jane Austen, Mrs. Radcliffe, Clara Reeve, Mrs. Inchbald, Mary Shelley, and Mrs. A.M. Bennett (Mrs. Bennett, though also admired by men like Coleridge and Macaulay, disappears almost entirely from nineteenth-century critical works). It is strange that he did not include Mrs. Hamilton, to whom he had referred most kindly in the Postscript to Waverley. It is understandable, for political reasons, why he did not include Lady Morgan, even though he had been favourably impressed by her O'Donnel (see chapter eight p. 334).

- 1833 Allan Cunningham, "Biographical and Critical History of the Literature of the Last Fifty Years". Athenaeum (November 16th 1833) 773-77.

There were three articles in this series, of which only that of November 16th is relevant here. Of novelists of 1800-1820, he finds worthy of discussion Scott, Ann Radcliffe, Lewis, Godwin, Fanny Burney, Elizabeth Hamilton, Maria Edgeworth, Jane and Anna Maria Porter, Maturin, Lady Morgan, Hannah More, Jane Austen.

- 1831-4 William Jerdan, National Portrait Gallery of Illustrious and Eminent Personages of the Nineteenth Century, 5 volumes.

Some idea of the esteem in which the Porter sisters were held may be gained from the fact that these expensively produced volumes (with portraits) which include George III, George IV, Princess Charlotte, Prince Leopold, Wellington, Nelson, Fox and Pitt, include, of literary characters, only Sheridan, Hannah More, Tom Moore, Wordsworth, Byron, Allan Cunningham, Francis Jeffrey - and the Porter sisters.

- 1834 William Lowndes, The Bibliographer's Manual of English Literature, 4 volumes.

Lowndes did not include authors like Miss Cuthbertson, Mrs. Meeke, or Regina Roche, who were popular but not critically esteemed, but along with Fanny Burney, Scott and Maria Edgeworth, included Mrs. Hamilton, Lady Morgan, Amelia Opie and Anna Maria and Jane Porter. Jane Austen was not considered important enough to merit mention.

- 1837 Leigh Hunt, "Blue Stocking Revels", The Monthly Repository, July 1837.

See Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt ed. H.S. Milford O.U.P. 1923 pp 176-92.

Apollo comes to earth to meet and "sup" with the women writers - including those no longer living. Of novelists writing between 1800 and 1820, Hunt included Mme. d'Arblay, Ann Radcliffe, Margaret Cullen, Maria Edgeworth, Elizabeth Hamilton, Barbara Hofland, Lady Morgan, Amelia Opie, Jane Porter, Regina Roche. The tone of the work is very teasing and light-hearted.

- 1838 Henry F. Chorley, The Authors of England.

In his "modern literary characters", he included Scott, Byron, Southey, Coleridge, Shelley, Moore, Lamb, Wordsworth, Felicia Hemans, The Countess of Blessington, Bulwer Lytton, Mary Russell Mitford, Thomas Campbell - and Lady Morgan.

- 1839 Charles H. Timperley, A Dictionary of Printers and Printing, with the Progress of Literature Ancient and Modern.

Timperley divided his lists of writers into periods, and of the novelists of 1800-1820 he found worthy of mention only Scott, Maturin, Brydges, Amelia Opie and Elizabeth Hamilton. Ann Radcliffe, Mme. D'Arblay and Hannah More are found in his list of writers of the second half of the eighteenth century.

- 1843 Chambers Cyclopaedia of English Literature

The number of pages devoted to each novelist is given in brackets: Fanny Burney (5), S. Burney (1 paragraph), Cumberland ($\frac{1}{2}$), Holcroft ($\frac{1}{2}$), Mrs. Radcliffe (4), Lewis (2), Godwin (6), Maria Edgeworth (2), Mary Shelley (2), Maturin ($1\frac{1}{2}$), Scott (4), Hope (2), Jane Austen (1), Amelia Opie ($\frac{1}{2}$), Mary Brunton (3), Elizabeth Hamilton (3), Hannah More ($2\frac{1}{2}$), Lady Morgan (1), Anna Maria and Jane Porter (1). High praise was given to Mary Brunton and Elizabeth Hamilton, and Jane Austen was said to be undervalued.

- 1843 Anne K. Elwood, Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England, 2 volumes.

Of novelists writing, between 1800-1820, Mrs. Elwood included Hannah More, Mme. d'Arblay, Elizabeth Hamilton, Mrs. Radcliffe, Jane Austen, Mary Brunton, and Anna Maria Porter. (The chapter on Anna Maria Porter also included Jane Porter.)

The omission of Maria Edgeworth is remarkable.

- 1845 George L. Craik, Sketches of the History of Literature and Learning in England.

In volume six Craik mentioned the prose fiction of the early nineteenth century very briefly, noting as among "the most brilliant and otherwise conspicuous writers of fictitious narrative" Maria Edgeworth, Amelia Opie, Lady Morgan,

Mary Brunton, Jane Austen, Mme. d'Arblay, Godwin and Maturin, with no differentiation as to stature. Scott, however, received attention separately.

- 1852 "Female Novelists", New Monthly Magazine 95 (May 1852) 17-23, in B.C. Southam ed., Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, 131-139.

Of the period are included, Ann Radcliffe, Fanny Burney, Anna Maria and Jane Porter. Mary Brunton ("the still popular authoress of Self-Control"), Maria Edgeworth, Mary Shelley.

- 1858 John Cordy Jeaffreson, Novels and Novelists from Elizabeth to Victoria.

Here it is interesting to note the proportion of attention given to various novelists of 1800-1820 - e.g. Scott, 53 pages; Amelia Opie, 15 pages; Maria Edgeworth, 7 pages; Jane Austen, 4 pages; Lady Morgan, 2 pages.

- 1859 David Masson, British Novelists and their Styles.

Of novelists of the period he included Holcroft, Mrs. Radcliffe, Mrs. Opie, Godwin, Anna Maria Porter, Jane Porter, Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Mary Brunton, Elizabeth Hamilton, Lady Morgan, and Maturin, seeing Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen as, among the lady novelists, "undoubtedly the first in talent" (188). Scott has separate consideration as "the father of the modern historical novel." (197)

- 1860 Chamber's Cyclopaedia of English Literature

The relevant section in the Cyclopaedia considers novelists of 1800-1830, but of those writing 1800-1820 no names are added to those appearing in 1843.

Maria Edgeworth gets slightly more attention, Jane Austen, Mrs. Opie, Lady Morgan and the Porters much the same as before, and Mrs. Brunton and Mrs. Hamilton slightly less - but still more than Jane Austen. Hannah More now appears as a "miscellaneous writer" of 1760-1800.

- 1862 Julia Kavanagh, English Women of Letters.

Including novelists from Aphra Behn, she stressed that she was writing only of novelists "such as have already stood the test of all merit, time."

(Introduction, "To the Reader"). Of novelists 1800-1820 she included only Mme. d'Arblay, Mrs. Radcliffe, Miss Edgeworth, Miss Austen ("not popular in her lifetime", 58), Mrs. Opie and Lady Morgan.

- 1867 Charles D. Cleveland, English Literature of the Nineteenth Century. (The first edition was published in 1852; the edition of 1867 had considerable alterations. Cleveland divided writers into "major" and "secondary". Of the period, he regarded Scott, Maria Edgeworth, and Amelia Opie as the major novelists (Mrs. Opie being said to have "talents of a superior order". (p. 463). On the secondary list are Jane Austen, Mary Brunton, Elizabeth Hamilton, Anna Maria Porter, Jane Porter.

- 1877 Jerom [sic] Murch, Mrs. Barbauld and her Contemporaries.

Murch dealt only with women writers. Of novelists he included Jane Austen, Mrs. Radcliffe, Maria Edgeworth, Lady Morgan, Mme. D'Arblay and Hannah More, and made brief but respectful mention of the Porter sisters, Mrs. Opie and Mrs. Hamilton, seeing such writers as giving "a great impulse to the literature of the country." (55) Speaking admiringly of Jane Austen, he said, "Perhaps her works never were and never will be popular." (22)

- 1882 Margaret Oliphant, The Literary History of England in the End of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century, 3 volumes (covering approximately 1790-1825).

Though Scott, Godwin, the Porters, Amelia Opie, Mrs. Radcliffe, Hope, D'Israeli and Hannah More feature in volume II, and Mrs. Hamilton and Lady Morgan are given brief notice in volume III, far more attention is given to Maria Edgeworth, and more still, now, to Jane Austen, who features as "the greatest and most enduring." (205)

- 1883 Anne Thackeray, A Book of Sibyls.

The "Sibyls" are Letitia Barbauld, Maria Edgeworth, Amelia Opie, and Jane Austen.

- 1889 Wilbur Cross, The Development of the English Novel.

Cross dismissed all novels from Humphry Clinker to Waverley in one chapter (III, pp 82-124) which included Jane Austen (114-124). Amelia Opie is given a passing word in his section on "novelists of purpose" which also included Godwin and Holcroft. Fanny Burney and Maria Edgeworth are listed as novelists of contemporary manners. In his list of gothic novelists are included Mrs. Radcliffe, Lewis, Brockden Brown, Shelley and Mary Shelley. Jane Porter is mentioned briefly, but not unkindly, along with Strutt, as a pioneer historical novelist. Lady Morgan has a fleeting mention in chapter five, "The Realistic Reaction" - and A.M. Porter is included only in the bibliographical notes.

1892 Catherine Hamilton, Women Writers, their Works and Ways.

Of novelists 1800-1820 are included Fanny Burney, Hannah More, Mrs. Radcliffe, Maria Edgeworth, Amelia Opie, Jane Austen and Lady Morgan. Mrs. Hamilton saw Jane Austen as the best writer of her age, and tried to account for the popularity of Mrs. Opie and Lady Morgan.

1894 Gertrude T. Mayer, Women of Letters.

Of novelists of the period are included only Elizabeth Inchbald, Amelia Opie, Lady Morgan and Mary Shelley.

1894 Walter Raleigh, The English Novel.

The last three chapters of the book deal with the period. Of those writing between 1800 and 1820, Chapter VIII includes Mrs. Radcliffe, Maturin, Godwin and Shelley; Chapter IX is chiefly on Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen, but among those ranked as "second rate" Raleigh named Mary Brunton as one of the best. He referred to Lady Morgan's "spirited sketches of Irish life", and E.S. Barrett's "admirable and diverting burlesque", The Heroine - but other minors are regarded as "purveyors of shoddy". Among these are T. Horsley Curties, Charlotte Dacre, Sarah Wilkinson, Mary Charlton, Agnes Musgrave, Anna Maria Bennett, Regina Roche, and Sarah Green. In Chapter X, on Scott, he made unflattering mention of Jane Porter, Joseph Strutt, Henrietta Mosse, John Agg and Samuel Ireland.

1894 William Minto, The Literature of the Georgian Era.

Though this is a work on a limited period, Minto did not see Mrs. Brunton, Mrs. Hamilton, Mrs. Opie and Anna Maria Porter, as worthy of mention. There is brief mention of Lady Morgan, Hannah More and Maturin - and a glance at Jane Porter - but chief attention is on Fanny Burney, Ann Radcliffe, Scott, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen.

1899 Walter H. Pollock, Jane Austen, her Contemporaries and Herself.

By this time only Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth and Susan Ferrier were regarded as (of female novelists) worth discussing. (Susan Ferrier was included in many of the works previously noted, but was not mentioned as most of her work comes immediately after the period under discussion.)

The last really respectful mention of Mary Brunton in these works is in Chamber's Cyclopaedia, 1860 edition; of Mrs. Hamilton and the Porter sisters in J. Murch's Mrs. Barbauld and her Contemporaries (1877) and of Mrs. Opie and Lady Morgan in G.T. Mayer's Women of Letters (1894).

Appendix II

Biographical Notes

The following brief biographical notes are intended chiefly to indicate the social and cultural background of the writers concerned. Other accounts of all but Charlotte Dacre can be found in The Dictionary of National Biography. All appear in A Critical Dictionary of English Literature, ed., Samuel A. Allibone (1858), and all but Charlotte Dacre and T.S. Surr in British Authors of the Nineteenth Century, ed., Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft (1936). Other sources of biographical information are given after the account of each author.

Mary Balfour Brunton 1st November 1778-19th December 1818.

The child of upper middle-class parents (her father being Colonel Thomas Balfour, her mother's brother Earl Ligonier), Mary Brunton was brought up quietly with her brother on the island of Burray,¹ Orkney, her only formal schooling being during a brief period as a boarder at a school in Edinburgh. At home, however, she learned French, Italian and music, and, after her marriage in 1798 to the Reverend Alexander Brunton (later Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Edinburgh), her husband read philosophy and literature with her, and encouraged her to learn German and Gaelic. References to various novels in her letters indicate that she enjoyed reading fiction - though her choice did not include the more sensational type of novel. Her life appears to have been uneventful, but very happy, her early death being due to complications following the birth of a much desired but still-born child.

Further Information

By far the best account of Mary Brunton's life is in the Memoir written by her husband, and published together with the fragment of her third novel, Emmeline,

1. Presumably as a result of a printer's error her husband's memoir gives Burra which is in the Shetlands. The DNB which gives Barra (in the Hebrides) is also inaccurate.

in 1819. Mrs. Elwood's account in Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England, and all later accounts seem to be based on this. The most recent is a short article by Margaret H. Bruce, "Mary Brunton (1778-1818): an Assessment", in Journal of Women's Studies in Literature, I (Winter 1979) 1-15.

Charlotte Dacre, 1783?-1815? 1816?

Though little is known of the life of this novelist, it is usually assumed that Charlotte Dacre was the real name of a writer who also used the pseudonym "Rosa Matilda". However, in his English Bards and Scotch Reviewers (1808) Byron, having made a scornful reference to Rosa Matilda (519-522), identified her in a footnote as the daughter of a Jew named King. This identification was rejected by Montague Summers (Essays in Petto 57-58) on the grounds that Coleridge preferred the identification of Rosa Matilda with Charlotte Dacre. Nevertheless Colburn, in his Biographical Dictionary of December 1815 (425) in identifying Rosa Matilda and Charlotte Dacre as one and saying she was born "about 1783" added that he understood that Charlotte Dacre was also an assumed name - while Roger Ingpen, in a note to one of Shelley's letters (The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley IX, 165) while describing King as a moneylender who "always contrived to live in the style of fashion" commented that he was also said to have been a writer and "the father of Rosa Matilda, otherwise Charlotte Dacre."

A solution to this problem would be forthcoming if the certificate of marriage of Nicholas Byrne, who owned and edited the Morning Post from 1803-1833, could be found, for, according to Colburn (Biographical Dictionary, 34) he was "Charlotte Dacre's" husband - and presumably her real name would appear on her marriage certificate. Unfortunately, however, records were not kept at Somerset House till 1837, and, despite fairly extensive searches, (listed below) covering the relevant period no marriage certificate has yet been discovered.

Research did, however, uncover some information about Nicholas Byrne's children. According to the parish register of St. Paul's Covent Garden, three children were baptised on June 8th 1811, offspring of Nicholas Byrne and his wife Charlotte. Oddly, these children's baptism had been long delayed, for they had been born in 1806, 1807 and 1809. Such late baptism, though not unprecedented, was most unusual, and seems to suggest some problem related to the faith in which the children were to be brought up. Nicholas Byrne's will reveals that these were his only children - or at least his only surviving children - and that he was a widower in 1829 when the will was made. Charlotte does not, in fact, seem to have lived long after 1811 if Montague Summers was correct in asserting that a pencilled note dated 1816 in Coleridge's copy of Byron said that she was by then dead (Essays in Petto, 57). She cannot, however, have died long before December 1815 when Colburn's Biographical Dictionary was published (it is dated 1816) since he writes of her as still living.

Since so little is known of Charlotte Dacre, it may, therefore, be relevant to add a note on her family. Her eldest son, William Pitt (so called because Byrne was a good friend of the politician, Pitt) was born 12th September 1806. In 1833 he inherited The Morning Post from his father, but was never interested in editing it, retaining "only the agreeable associations which a newspaper connexion supplies" (Athenaeum, April 7 1894, 446). He became a barrister, and in 1842 married Julia Busk, a writer (noted in DNB). He died on April 8, 1861, and a derelict fountain in Bryanston Square, London W1 remains as a fulsome memorial to his virtues. Montague Summers wrongly stated that it was he who was the husband of Charlotte Dacre (Essays in Petto, 57) and the misinformation is repeated in Sandra Knight Roth's MA thesis (noted below) and Devendra Varma's preface to Zofloya. The second son, Charles, born 6th November 1807, died of malignant cholera on 8th August 1833, shortly after his father's death. He, apparently, was a theatre critic (Times, 9th August 1833). The

youngest child, a daughter, Maria, born 12th July 1809, married in 1832, and a codicil to her father's will, reducing her legacy, reveals that the marriage took place without parental blessing. As for Nicholas himself, his ending was as bizarre as an event in one of his wife's novels, for he was murdered in his office. That his own paper carried no obituary is not surprising, since in failing to do so it was merely following journalistic tradition, but it is remarkable that no paper carried an account of the murder of such a prominent citizen. Harold Herd attempted to fathom the mystery in a chapter in his Seven Editors - but with no success, though he does suggest that the attack, coming shortly after the Reform Bill, which Byrne had opposed, might have been politically motivated.

Further Information

There is no other ^{known} source of biographical information on Charlotte Dacre, since Montague Summers' Essays in Petto (1928) is unreliable, and Sandra Knight Roth (Charlotte Dacre and the Gothic Tradition, unpublished Dalhousie thesis 1972) and Devendra Varma (Preface to 1974 Arno edition of Zofloya) rely on him. Everything in the two very brief entries in Colburn's Biographical Dictionary (1816) has been noted above. Information about Nicholas Byrne may be obtained from Wilfred Hindle's The Morning Post (1937) and (more fully) from Harold Herd's Seven Editors (1955).

It may be of use to anyone wishing to pursue enquiries about Charlotte Dacre, to know that the following searches have been made:

1. Micro-fische index to baptisms (and some marriages) for London, Middlesex and Surrey at the Mormon Library, 64 Exhibition Road, London SW7. This provided details of the baptism of Byrne's children in 1811 at St. Paul's, Covent Garden.
2. The Parish Register of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, revealed that the children of Nicholas and Charlotte had been born in 1806, 1807 and 1809.

It was, therefore, conjectured that the marriage had taken place before 1806 or (less likely) just before 1811.

3. Boyd's Marriage Index for London and Middlesex. There are no references to the marriage of Nicholas Byrne in the likely period.
4. Gentleman's Magazine, 1800-1813; 1833. Reports only the death of Charles (also reported in The Times).
5. Times Index for 1800-1811 (Marriages). No reference found.
6. P.C.C. Wills and Administrations, 1814-18, 1833, 1862. There seems to be no will for a wife of Nicholas Byrne. Nicholas Byrne's Will, and that of his son William were read.
7. Bishop of London's Marriage Licences, January 1803-September 1806.
8. Faculty Office Marriage Allegations, September 1804-September 1806; January 1808-June 1811.
9. Vicar General Marriage Allegations, September 1804-September 1806; January 1808-June 1811.
10. Marriage registers of St. Mary le Strand, St. Marylebone, St. Pancras, St. George, Hanover Square, and St. Mary, Paddington, for the likely period.

Elizabeth Hamilton, July 21st 1758-July 23rd 1816

Elizabeth Hamilton, known in later life as Mrs. Hamilton, though she never married, was born in Belfast in July 1758, the youngest of three children. Her father, a merchant, died of typhus fever in 1759, upon which it would seem that her mother faced financial problems, for in 1764 Elizabeth was taken to Scotland to be looked after by her father's sister and her husband, a Mr. and Mrs. Marshall, who gave her a comfortable and kindly home, and a good education at a school in Stirling. Charles, her only brother, joined the East India Company in 1772 and when, in 1786 he was sent home by Warren Hastings on extended leave, with a commission to translate the Moslem laws, Elizabeth

learned much from him about India, some of which she later used in her first novel, Translation of the Letters of a Hindoo Rajah (1796). Charles died in 1792, and for most of the rest of her life Elizabeth lived with her sister Katherine, becoming highly respected as a moral writer and eventually, in 1804, receiving a government pension for her services "to religion and virtue". Having lived, between 1792 and 1804 in various places in the south of England, she and her sister settled in Edinburgh in 1804. She died on July 23rd 1816.

Further Information

By far the best source is E.O. Benger's Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton (1818). Other accounts seem to draw entirely on this.

Amelia Alderson Opie, 12th November 1769-2nd December 1853

Amelia Opie was the daughter of Dr. James Alderson of Norwich, a humanitarian of liberal - even radical - political views. She seems to have had a very happy childhood, with eminently sensible and affectionate parents, to whom she was devoted. On her mother's death in 1784 she took over the running of her father's household, and through him became acquainted with the Godwin circle. It was even rumoured for a time that Godwin was in love with her. According to Jacobine Menzies Wilson and Helen Lloyd, however, (Amelia The Tale of a Plain Friend, 57) she fell in love with a married man (whose name is not given) and this was the reason why such an attractive girl married so comparatively late. It was not till 1798 that she married, her choice being John Opie, the brilliant artist son of a Cornish master-carpenter. Opie's first marriage, to a rich Jewess named Mary Bunn, had ended in his divorcing her by Act of Parliament for adultery, but this one, though childless was very happy, the "passing differences" referred to in the DNB relating only to Amelia's having a greater love of a social life than her husband. It was he who encouraged her to write, her first really successful work, The Father and Daughter, being published in 1801. He died, however, in 1807, after which she

returned to Norwich to live with her father, and spent a period of about three years in mourning. This over, she embarked on a very full and gay social life, moving in the highest society, and even becoming engaged to Lord Herbert Stuart, though this was soon broken off by mutual consent. (See Margaret Macgregor, Amelia Alderson Opie, Worldling and Friend, 56.) If she had ever held very radical political views, they did not appear in her work, and in 1814 one of the highlights of her year was the ball given in honour of the Duke of Wellington. Her long friendship with the Quaker Gurney family now resulted in her beginning to attend Quaker meetings, and in August 1825 she became a Quaker, unkind rumour suggesting that she did so because disappointed in the hope that her cousin Tom Alderson would propose marriage to her. It was likewise a matter of gossip in Norwich that she hoped to marry Joseph Gurney (See J.M. Wilson and H. Lloyd, op. cit., 210). After becoming a Quaker, she was required to give up writing fiction (Augustus G.K. L'Estrange, The Friendships of Mary Russell Mitford, 64), though she never disapproved of others writing or reading it. She was never bigotted, and friends reported that she wore her Quaker grey satin as elegantly as any of her former fashionable gowns. She remained active and alert till an advanced age, in 1830, for example, making an impromptu trip to Paris alone, to see how her friends were faring in the revolution of that year. She died on 2nd December 1853.

Further Information

By far the most scholarly secondary source of information on Mrs. Opie's life is Margaret E. Macgregor's Amelia Opie, Worldling and Friend (1933). This, had the writer lived, would have formed the first part of a doctoral thesis, and all sources are carefully documented. The book is almost entirely biographical; critical discussion of Mrs. Opie's work was to have formed the second part of the thesis. The bibliography, which lists the location of much manuscript material for a biography is invaluable. Much less scholarly in

every way is Amelia, The Tale of a Plain Friend by Jacobine Menzies Wilson and Helen Lloyd (1937). Though the authors claim to draw on more material than Miss Macgregor, they at times distort it - for example on page four, by quoting only part of a letter which gives the impression that Mrs. Opie was looking forward to revolution in England, whereas she merely thought she foresaw it - and went on to say that she felt "heart sick" at the possibility. (Another example of this kind is noted on page 452). Both this and Miss Macgregor's book draw largely on the earliest biography, Memorials of the life of Amelia Opie, by Cecilia L. Brightwell (1854) but also include material Miss Brightwell preferred to omit, for reasons of propriety. A good short account of Mrs. Opie's life can be found in Gertrude T. Mayer's Women of Letters (1894) and there are less comprehensive accounts in Anne Thackeray's Book of Sibyls (1883), W.L. Bond's "Amelia Opie, Novelist and Quaker", English 3, (1940-41) 62-66, and V.S. Pritchett's In My Good Books (1942) (a short chapter called "The Quaker Coquette").

Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan) 1780? (-82?)-10th April 1859

Lady Morgan always refused to disclose her age, and no date of birth can be given with certainty: Lionel Stevenson, her chief twentieth-century biographer favours 1776, while the DNB prefers 1783. The dates suggested here are based on her leaving school about 1798 to become a governess, at which time she was presumably not younger than sixteen or older than eighteen.

She was the elder of two daughters of Robert Owenson (formerly Mac Owen), an Irish actor manager and an ardent nationalist. Popular with people from all walks of life, he provided her with a home that was friendly, cultured, tolerant, "open to all creeds" (Memoirs I, 78). Though he seems to have lived a rather hand-to-mouth existence, Owenson was careful to see that his daughters had the best possible education; after the death of her mother in

1788, Sydney was sent first to the school of Madame Terson at Clontarf near Dublin, then regarded as possibly the best school in Ireland, and that to which the leading politician Henry Grattan sent his daughter, and later to a finishing school in Dublin (Memoirs I, 110). It seems necessary to stress this, since the bitter attacks on her for her political activities included personal insults about her education and upbringing, and the charges were so frequently repeated that they later tended to be accepted without question. This can be seen in Lionel Stevenson's essay, Vanity Fair and Lady Morgan (PMLA 48 (1933) 547-551) where he repeated the old charge that her childhood was spent "largely back-stage". By 1936, however having done further research for his biography The Wild Irish Girl, the tone of his comments was very different. Henry Chorley, writing in 1838, felt bound to "protest against the dishonest and personal acrimony" with which her political opponents had attacked her, and recorded that "her parentage almost ensured her the heritage of talent which has placed her where she now stands. Her father ... was an actor of great excellence in his particular walk; in Cumberland's opinion the Irish fine gentleman par excellence, and not merely thus distinguished in his own profession, but the author, we are told, "of some of the best Irish songs extant", (The Authors of England 51-52)

On leaving school, determined not to be a financial burden to her father, she became, for a time, a governess. Success as a writer, however, enabled her in 1803 to give up teaching - and after the publication in 1806, of The Wild Irish Girl, she became such a celebrity that in 1809 she was invited to live with Lord and Lady Abercorn as house-guest-companion. In 1812 she married Lord Abercorn's private physician, Sir Thomas Charles Morgan, a widowed Englishman with one small daughter.

The marriage was a long and happy one; socially the couple seem to have known most of the notable people of their day, Humphry Davy, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Paganini, Lady Caroline Lamb, Emma Hamilton, William Godwin, Monk

Lewis, Tom Moore, Mary Shelley, Jane Porter, Amelia Opie, Robert Browning and Thackeray, being only a few of the names with which Lady Morgan's memoirs are sprinkled; while politically, though both were Protestants, they made their home in Kildare Street, Dublin, a centre of activity in the cause of Catholic emancipation, - their efforts in this direction being rewarded when the Catholic Relief Bill was passed in April 1829.

In May 1837 the government, under Lord Melbourne, widower of Lady Morgan's late friend Caroline Lamb, granted her a pension of £300 a year, for her "merits literary and patriotic" (Memoirs II, 418). By this time, however, she had largely withdrawn from politics, and soon afterwards (in October 1837) left Ireland to live in London. Now struggling against the eye trouble which had beset her since the 1820's, she wrote no more fiction, and only one really new work, Woman and Her Master (1840), her other publications being largely collections of jottings and autobiographical sketches. Sir Charles died in August 1843, and she on 10th April 1859.

Further Information

Henry Chorley's brief monograph on her in his Authors of England (1838) is warm, admiring and a necessary counter to all the scurrilous untruths told by her political opponents about her origins.

W.J. Fitzpatrick's Lady Morgan, her Career Literary and Personal (1860), while enthusiastic, is not always reliable on points of detail. Lady Morgan's own Book of the Boudoir (1829), her The Book Without a Name (1841), and her Memoirs (1862) which are made up of her autobiography, diary and correspondence, edited by W. Hepworth Dixon and Geraldine Jewsbury, are the source of most later nineteenth and twentieth-century accounts. L. Stevenson's The Wild Irish Girl (1936) is the only modern full length biography, and includes letters and comments of contemporaries which do not appear in the Memoirs. E.R.R. Green's thesis, The Romantic Movement in Ireland in the Early Nineteenth Century (D.Phil., Oxford, St. Antony's 1952) gives ten very unsympathetic pages

to Lady Morgan. Astringent, but much fairer, is T. Flanagan's account in The Irish Novelists 1800-1850 (1959). More helpful still, is Joan Godfrey's Social Attitudes of Some Nineteenth Century Fiction Writers in Ireland (M.A. University of Keele, 1972): as far as the scope of her thesis allows, Miss Godfrey combines social and political background, and biographical detail, with brief but perceptive criticism of the novels. The introduction to Lady Morgan in France, edited by Elizabeth Suddaby and P.J. Yarrow (1971) provides a short biography. (The book is made up of the most interesting parts of Lady Morgan's writings about France.)

Jane Porter 1776-May 24th 1850

Anna Maria Porter, 1780-June 21st 1832

The daughters of an army surgeon, Jane and Anna Maria Porter spent their early years in Edinburgh, where their mother moved after the death of her husband in 1779. They had three brothers; John, born 1772, who became a colonel, and died in 1810; William, born 1774, who became a surgeon and physician; and Robert, born 1777, who became a distinguished artist, traveller, writer and diplomat, and was knighted by the Prince Regent in 1813. While, according to Jane, they were not rich (Introduction to the 1831 edition of The Scottish Chiefs xix), her account of their life style makes nonsense of biographical assertions that their mother was "a poor widow", (e.g. see Stanley J. Kunitz and H. Haycraft eds., British Authors of the Nineteenth Century, 501). On their father's side they could trace their ancestors back to Agincourt, and on their mother's to the Anglo-Saxon Barons of Blenkinsopp and Hilton, (GM (December 1832) 574). Thus, though her husband did not leave her well provided for, their mother, apparently was "relieved by the royal family and other persons of high distinction" (Henry Colburn's Biographical Dictionary, 281). In Edinburgh they lived well; their mother's friends included many eminent and intellectual people, and Walter Scott was one of their earliest playmates.

Like the Austens, the family were avid readers; Mrs. Elwood quotes Jane as saying of herself as a child:

.... my time, in conjunction with that of my dear brother and sister, was almost wholly spent in reading; the works of ancient and modern authors burying us, as it were, often from sunrise to sunset in a total abstraction from anything else. History and biography, from the sacred scriptures to Plutarch's Lives; from the black letter chronicles of England to Rapin and David Hume; and all poetry connected with the events they told of, from Greece's Homer to our British Shakespeare; (Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England II, 278)

Their own literary efforts began at an early age. Jane, Maria and Robert went to a highly regarded day school in Edinburgh, kept by George Fulton, a man remembered for his work in compiling dictionaries. Maria, apparently, was so intelligent that, according to an incredible story reported in her obituary notice (GM (December 1832) 575) and repeated by Mrs. Elwood (op. cit., II, 279) at the age of five she was placed at the head of a class which included a sixteen year old.

While the children were still young, the family moved to Northumberland, where they lived for a few years before moving to London, cc 1793. There they lived at 16, Great Newport Street, Leicester Square (a house once lived in by Sir Joshua Reynolds) - and were again part of a cultured circle. Maria published her Artless Tales by subscription when she was only thirteen, and in 1797 and 1798 the girls contributed to a short lived periodical called The Quiz, which was started by their brother Robert and Thomas Frognall Dibdin (see T.F. Dibdin, Reminiscences of a Literary Life (1836) I, 175-176). At this time their friends included Mrs. Barbauld, Hannah More, and Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton. Later they were to add Dr. Clarke (the Prince Regent's librarian), Princess Charlotte's governess, and many eminent artists. Their brother Robert seems to have been on intimate terms with Prince Leopold.

After 1803, Jane was celebrated as a novelist - and Maria soon became little less so. Nevertheless both continued to live quietly with their mother (moving first to Thames Ditton, then to a cottage at Esher bought for them by Robert) till her death in 1831, when they returned to London. Soon

after this, Maria died of a typhus fever, upon which (so close had the sisters been) Jane was, for a time, seriously ill. She recovered, and lived till 1850 - but her writing career was virtually over. Following the death of Robert in 1837, she seems to have been in rather straitened circumstances which were slightly relieved in November 1842 by a pension of £50 from the Literary Fund. She died in May 1850.

Further Information

Jane gave a good account of her early life (and that, of course, of Maria) in the preface to the 1831 edition of The Scottish Chiefs. Also valuable are the memoirs of both sisters in William Jerdan's National Portrait Gallery of 1834, since Jane was still alive, and, presumably, able to check the accuracy of the facts given. Herbert Vaughan, in From Anne to Victoria (1931) has a chapter on the family which, since his family were friends of the Porters, gives details unnoted elsewhere. The accounts of Anna M. Hall (Pilgrimages to English Shrines, second series 1853) and Samuel C. Hall (Book of Memories (1871) and Retrospect of a Long Life 1883) are at least based on first hand knowledge. Anne Elwood included a critical-biographical essay on both writers in her Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England (1843).

Thomas Skinner Surr, 1770-February 15th 1847

Material on Surr's life is scanty. His father, John Surr, was a London grocer, and his mother, Elizabeth, was the sister of an Alderman Skinner who became Lord Mayor of London in 1794. He went to Christ's Hospital School from 1778-1785, after which he became a clerk in the Bank of England. Later he married a Miss Griffiths, a relative of Richard Phillips, who published his Winter in London in 1806, and new editions of his earlier novels, George Barnwell and Splendid Misery, in 1807. His life seems to have been uneventful and when he died on February 15th 1847, his obituary in The Gentleman's Magazine merely noted that he had been "many years principal of the Drawing

Office of the Bank of England" (GM, April 1847, 448).

Further Information

The fullest account of Surr's life is to be found in the DNB. There are a few lines in Henry Colburn's Biographical Dictionary (1816) and in Notes and Queries, 5th series, vol. VII (1877) pp 48, 174, 255, 339. The DNB gives as an additional source Pantheon of the Age ii, 463, but the British Library has been unable to trace a copy of this.

Appendix III

Appendix of work published after 1820 by the authors in the study

Amelia Opie

Mrs. Opie's first publication after 1820 was Madeline (1822) of which Southey wrote that it was "a great favourite" in his circle, "and well deserved to be so." (C.L. Brightwell, Memorials, 190). And it is a better novel from the point of view of artistry than any other she wrote, less clumsy and more natural in style. Nevertheless, it is a traditional sentimental tale, and seems really much ado about nothing, telling of the love of a simple (and very pious) cottar's daughter for the local laird. The novel charts, largely by means of her journal, the various stages of their relationship, including a secret marriage, makes lengthy work of her doubts and despairs - and culminates in her not only being an acknowledged wife, but a countess.

Though Mrs. Opie was to live for another thirty one years, Madeline was virtually her swan song as a novelist. Margaret Macgregor (Amelia Alderson Opie, 85) merely on the authority of The Ladies' Monthly Museum 18 (1823) 284, attributed to her an anonymous novel of 1823, called Self Delusion, of which no copy can be found, and Jacobine Menzies Wilson and Helen Lloyd (Amelia, 211) followed her in this, though without acknowledging the anonymity of the work or the lack of any copy from which to judge authorship. In fact, in 1823 she was writing a novel called The Painter and his Wife, which she gave up when it was half finished, because of her growing association with the Quakers. (See C.L. Brightwell, op. cit., 192). From 1825, after she had been formally received into the Quaker society, though she continued to contribute verse to various annuals and magazines (M. Macgregor, op. cit., 96) all the prose works she produced were purely didactic. Illustrations of Lying in all its Branches (1825), for example, a book which reached a third edition in 1827 and was still being republished as late as 1882 begins by dividing lies into different kinds,

lies of vanity, of flattery, of convenience, of fear, of malignity, of benevolence, of wantonness, and practical lies (i.e. "lies acted not spoken" I, 2). The work then begins to supply an anecdote to illustrate each, but since each anecdote is given only a few pages, there is no time at all for character development, and it was in understanding the springs of human motivation that Amelia Opie had shown most promise. Moreover, early in the second volume (II, XI, 58) she relapsed into longwinded and repetitive moralising, under such headings as "Lying the Most Common of all Vices," and "Religion the only Basis of Truth."

1825 saw the publication of a collection of children's stories. Tales of the Pemberton Family, and in 1828 she produced a manual "showing how to defeat calumny", called Detraction Displayed. This seems to have been her last new prose work, though she still wrote verse, such as The Black Man's Lament of 1826, and Lays for the Dead of 1834.

Nevertheless, she continued for a time to be quite widely read. Various individual tales from her collections of tales were reprinted, and though there was no complete collected edition of her works in England, as there was in America in 1835, 1841 and 1848, in 1844 it was still considered to be a commercially profitable enough venture to produce new editions of The Father and Daughter, Adeline Mowbray, and a selection of her tales, in twelve volumes. Jacobine Menzies Wilson and Helen Lloyd (op. cit., 263) report that this caused her to be reproved by the Quaker Joseph Gurney, her reply being that, though, as a Quaker, she had promised not to write novels, this did not mean that she believed that they should not be read: " on the contrary, I believe simple moral tales the very best method of instructing the young and the poor " Her wide appeal had gone, however; taste had changed - and though she still had readers, she had, in 1849, to endure the ignominy of learning that it was only by selling them at cut price that the publisher of the twelve-volume edition of her works was able to get them off his hands.

Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan

After Florence Macarthy, Lady Morgan published three factual works, Italy (1821), which Byron thought excellent (see above, chapter 10, note 24), a biography, The Life and Times of Salvator Rosa (1824) and a short work on Absenteeism (1825) which had first appeared as articles in the New Monthly Magazine. Then came The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys (1827) which vies with Florence Macarthy as her best novel. Based on events leading up to the 1798 rebellion, this, in contrast to her earlier works, offers no solution to Ireland's problems, concentrating as much on the dilemma of individuals in the troubled situation as on the situation itself. There are several finely conceived and differentiated characters, and though the heroine is not one of them, the hero is, being for the first time a living creation. Unfortunately, however, the novel is blighted by having a first half full of complicated details of family background, and antiquarian lore.

This was her last outstandingly popular work. Her Book of the Boudoir (1829) was little more than a collection of chit-chat, and her second book on France, France in 1829-30 (1830) failed because she incurred the wrath of Colburn, to whom she owed so much, by giving it to another publishing firm, Saunders and Otley. Colburn took his revenge by advertising at half price all the copies of her books he had in stock, saying that he had declined the new work on France because he had lost money on her former works. He later publicly retracted this statement - but the damage was done.

Colburn's action probably also accounts for the comparative failure of her Dramatic Scenes from Real Life which was published in 1833. In them, she thought she had introduced an innovation in the novel by completely "throwing the heavy ballast of narrative overboard" (Preface vii) - but what resulted was rather a set of three plays for reading. Manor Sackville, the first and best, is over a volume in length, and deals, like so much of her earlier work, with relations between an English landlord and his agent and tenants.

Combining almost farcical humour with tragedy, it has dated far less in style than many of the plays written for the stage much later in the century, but before the advent of Shaw and Wilde. The other two "scenes" The Easter Recess and Temper are not nearly so good, but are better than much contemporary fiction.,

However, only one edition was called for, and Lady Morgan appears to have decided to give up fiction, intending her next work to be a factual one about the four-day revolution of 1830 in Belgium. In this, to her chagrin, she was forestalled by Mrs. Trollope, and had, therefore, to use her material in a novel, The Princess; or The Beguine - the decline in her reputation being seen from the fact that for it she was paid only £350 (Memoir II, 386). Its hero is an unhappily married middle aged politician who, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, takes refuge from his problems in a trip to Belgium, which has just thrown off Dutch rule. He (and the reader with him) is taken on a tour of Brussels and of Ghent, and is given much information about the history of art, and art appreciation. He learns all about the causes of the recent revolution, of how it was accomplished, and how Belgian national culture, long suppressed, is now awakening. There are obvious parallels with the situation in Ireland, and, as in The Wild Irish Girl, too many conversations which have the obvious aim of educating the reader. However, because the style is so completely different from that of the earlier novel, The Princess is still perfectly acceptable reading - though as the informative book it was originally meant to be, rather than as a novel. Indeed, one could well do without the absurd plot, in which the heroine, as in earlier novels, flits through the action in various disguises.

Her next work, Woman and her Master (1840) in which she began to trace the history of women from Eve, aimed to show the superiority of women to men, and the way in which they had been kept subject to them, but trouble with her eyesight, which had bothered her for years, seems now to have made writing

too difficult, and she gave up her task after reaching the time of the Roman empire. She lived for nineteen more years - but produced nothing else really new, except a treatise on the authenticity of St. Peter's Chair (1851). The Book Without a Name (1841) and Passages from my Autobiography (1859) were merely autobiographical snippets and Luxima (1859) which came out just before she died was merely a reworking of her The Missionary (1811).

Jane Porter

Jane Porter's first publication after 1820 was Duke Christian of Luneburg, (1824) (incorrectly cited in NCBEL as Luneberg) of which brief mention was made in chapter six. After this, she joined her sister in producing Tales Round a Winter Hearth (1826), her contribution being The Pilgrimage of Berenice which takes all of volume II, and has a short preface in volume I, called My Chamber in the Old House of Huntercombe. This tells of the finding of a manuscript in a house which was once part of the ancient priory of Burnham near Windsor. The priory was for the Order of St. Magdalen of Jerusalem, and the manuscript tells the history of the founder of the Order. Set eighteen years after the deliverance of Jerusalem by Godfrey de Bouillon in 1099, it is a sentimental and melodramatic tale of a character corrupted by frustrated ambition, its chief interest lying in its attempt to give some feeling of the landscape of the Holy Land. It is, in fact, more of a highly pious travel book than a historical tale.

Better is The Field of the Forty Footsteps (1828) which was published together with Maria's Coming Out. Again a volume in length, it is a quite credible story of a girl who, having been brought up a Cromwellian, finds herself with growing sympathies for the royalists, after coming into possession of documents which lead her to view them in a new and sympathetic light, one being a letter from a man who was with Charles I in his last hours. There are

scenes in London, at Cromwell's court, and others set in various parts of the country which convey a feeling of the unrest throughout the land. Here some feeling of period is evoked.

There is no more work which can definitely be attributed to Jane Porter, for she never admitted to being anything but the editor of Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative (1831) or the writer of the preface to Young Hearts (1834). Nor is either at all typical of her, the first being too plain and manly in style, the second too amateur for a writer of her experience. According to Henry Vaughan (From Anne to Victoria, 135) the Porter family monument credits William Porter with having written Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative - and this seems very likely. Written in a manner reminiscent of Defoe it cleverly assumes the style of the period in which it is set (1733-49) and claims to be the hero's account of his shipwreck in the Caribbean, his survival, and his building up of an island community.

If William Porter did write this novel, however, he shared one thing with Jane - a desire to propagate Christianity. Edward's wife weeps, because, in a storm, they go to bed without saying their prayers, while Edward baptises his negro workers into the Christian church and tries to give them religious instruction. And the authoress of Young Hearts was similarly pious, dedicating her novel to Lady Hamlyn Williams "who in the world is not of this world, to the Woman of Taste and the Christian Matron". A very ordinary tale of seduction, it is naively written, with stilted speech and clumsy plot devices (such as the overhearing of a soliloquy). In her preface, Jane Porter claimed that it was the work of a young friend, written to draw her out of her unhappiness (over the death of Maria, one must assume) in the discussing and correcting of it - and this is just the impression it produces. From this time till her death in 1850 she seems only to have written articles for journals - apparently to enable her to have funds for charitable purposes (see Samuel C. Hall, Book of Memories, 131).

Anna Maria Porter

The first two novels Maria Porter wrote after 1820 were The Village of Mariendorpt (1821), a tale of the Thirty Years War, and Roche Blanche (1822), a tale of political and religious strife in France in the late sixteenth century, centring on the rivalry between the Bourbons and the Guises. These showed a great improvement on anything she had written earlier, but were no preparation for the remarkable change found in her next publication,¹ three tales in Tales Round a Winter Hearth (April 1826) which she compiled together with her sister Jane. Each tale is completely different from the others: Lord Howth is^a quite delicate fantasy based on an Irish legend, telling of the devotion of a water rat for its protector; Jeannie Halliday, most unexpectedly is a tale of humble and rustic life, with an Enoch Arden theme - a Wordsworthian type of story of honour and love in simple hearts, in which the rustic characters are treated with as much dignity as those from a very superior stratum of society in her other fiction; and Glenrowan, while historical (being set in Scotland just before the '45) is very different from her longer historical tales, having very little plot, and relying chiefly on building up the melancholy atmosphere appropriate for an ending in which the hero is killed at Culloden (an event distanced by being reported).

And even more surprising is Honor O'Hara, which appeared in the autumn of the same year. A domestic novel, it is set twenty-nine years in the past merely because Maria felt more confident of reproducing the flavour of that period than that of the time at which she was writing (Preface). Much more important than the change of genre, however, is the change in style, for not

1. O'Hara, or 1798 (1825) attributed to her by NCBEL is by W.H. Maxwell. See English Catalogue of Books and BM catalogue under O'Hara, or 1798. Another novel, The Tuileries (1831) which is attributed to her by The English Catalogue of Books is likewise almost certainly, on stylistic evidence, not hers.

only did she abandon novel language, she even chose to produce comedy from the very tones and attitudes which had characterised her earlier novels. Honor (who is not at all burlesqued, but who has some over-romantic notions) meets a young man at a ball - and the extravagant terms in which he is described are now only the heroine's, given as her thoughts, and not as authorial narration. Honor thinks of his "forehead like Parian marble" and his "eyebrows of the blackest and finest marking", then goes on to reflect: "But his name was not romantic. Peter was actually unloveable! Gubbins was dreadful!" (I, IV, 236). Another female character tries to be very "correct": "There were no such vulgar words in her vocabulary as crying, thinking, walking, talking; everybody wept or ruminated or discoursed, with her" (I, I, 41).

And the difference in outlook is even more evident in her treatment of a very charming but very young man, who has just been disappointed in love. As Honor sits downstairs, she hears him in his room above:

.... the smothered sound of his not smothered groans gave infallible note that he was there; and though out of sight did not choose to be out of mind

At another time Honoria must have fallen back in her chair with suffocating laughter; there was something so ridiculous in such misery. (II, III, 127-8)

A consideration of the difference between this and the style of her earlier work makes it evident that the novel diction of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was deliberately affected. Unfortunately, however, the second half of the novel, written three years after the first, and after Maria had been temporarily blind, lapses into commonplace sentimentality.

Nevertheless, according to Maria, it was well received, and, therefore, for her next publication, Coming Out (1828) she decided to make "another effort in the same style" (Preface). She achieved, however, only the style of the second part of Honor O'Hara, and the novel is very, very dull, its chief interest lying in the fact that in it one again sees a reiteration of the

attitudes found in so many other novels of the period: there is much about the need for the kind of principle that springs from a christian education, and the heroine's lover is delighted at her dislike of Sunday drives and pleasure parties, since "... In common with all men (whatever be their own speculations on the one great question) he desired to have his wife impressed by the only principle which gives stability to virtuous habits and affections" (I, 406-407).

Apparently recognising that a domestic theme could not kindle her imagination enough to sustain her through a three-volume novel, for her next (which was also to be her last) she returned to a historical subject - but with her language now almost entirely free from "novel slang" and with a cast of characters who are almost all credible. Set in Cornwall in the 1680's, and covering the short reign of James II, The Barony (1830) is Maria Porter's most accomplished complete performance though it nowhere reaches the level of the first half of Honor O'Hara.

T.S. Surr

Of the novels attributed to Surr after 1820, only one actually seems to have been by him, Russell; or The Reign of Fashion (1830). By this period, though still devoted to the memory of George III (e.g. see II, V, 58), he seems to have become much more liberal in his political views, for example supporting catholic emancipation, and making it one of his most unpleasant characters who is "anxious above all things to have his heir protected from the contamination of French principles (as a liberal policy was then called ..." (I, III, 102). Russell is a work of little literary merit, though there are again some excellent scenes from fashionable life, such as that in I, III, called "All the World at Hyde Park Corner" which allows the reader to join the crowds gathering to watch the procession of coaches set off for the races

at Epsom, and to listen to the gossip of the day about Canning and Brougham and the rising writer Theodore Hook. There are also some interesting scenes in Parliament (Russell is an M.P.), and talk of the places to which the members go for meals. But the plot is extraordinarily complicated - and uninteresting - and is merely a thread on which Surr can hang fulminations not only against paper money, as in The Magic of Wealth, but here, without doubt, against evangelicals. Now, more than thirty years after his first attacks on the latter in George Barnwell, he seems to have decided that though, in its earliest stages evangelicalism was good, and though the ideals it put forward remained good, in practice evangelicalism had become corrupt. Some idea of the polemical nature of the novel can be gained from the following passage, which is merely a brief extract from a long harangue:

.... the Saints of the present day are a very different race of Saints to their predecessors in the time of Wesley and Whitfield [sic] when they were distinguished ... by the primitive simplicity and sanctity of their private lives.

How different are the characteristics of the modern Saints:
- No longer poor - no longer passive - no longer turning their backs on the world - they form in this aera the most wealthy - the most active - the most obtrusive and bold - and the most covetous and worldly minded party that has arisen in England since the days of Cromwell. (III, I, 2)

And he connected evangelicals with the paper money he hated so much, claiming that the largest part of those whom it had made wealthy were evangelicals (e.g. see II, XVIII).

Such, in fact, was his obsession with this subject, that it provided the entire subject of his only other published work, a pamphlet published, rather oddly, under two different titles, The Present Critical State of the Country Developed (anon., 1826) and Facts Relative to the Bank of England, the date of which has been variously conjectured as 1826 (NUC) and 1832 (BM).

Appendix IV

Brief résumé of the plot of Matthew Lewis's The Monk

The Monk tells of the handsome Ambrosio, a brilliant and admired preacher, who is a monk not from choice, but because he was left on the steps of a monastery as an infant. Cherishing the power and influence his position gives him, he is yet, it is soon obvious, tempted by the women in his congregation. Soon after the novel begins, he is seduced by a young woman calling herself Matilda, who has inveigled herself into the monastery in the guise of a novice monk. His passion for her, however, is soon sated, and he lusts after the beautiful and innocent Antonia. Encouraging him in his desires, Matilda calls up the devil, who appears as a lovely youth, and in various ways nourishes his passion. On one occasion, about to ravish the sleeping girl, he is interrupted by her mother, whom he kills. Eventually he does rape her, and then (in a vain attempt to prevent detection) murders her, not knowing that she is his sister, and that her mother, whom he killed, was also his mother. When he is in prison for his crime, "Matilda" who is no woman, but an infernal spirit, reveals that he can escape if he will sell his soul to the devil. This he does - but now Satan reveals himself in all his hideousness, and casts him from a mountain into an abyss, where he dies a lingering death.

The Monk also has a lengthy sub-plot, in which a nun in the convent to which Ambrosio is confessor becomes pregnant - and he, despite his own carnal exploits, condemns her to incarceration in the vaults, where her baby dies, and from which she is rescued just in time for her life to be saved.

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9. Unsigned articles and reviews from nineteenth century periodicals are too numerous to list, but are cited, with full details, where appropriate, as footnotes to the text, as are references to correspondence in the Times Literary Supplement.