

CHARLOTTE SMITH, 1749 - 1806:  
A CRITICAL SURVEY OF HER WORKS AND PLACE IN  
ENGLISH LITERARY HISTORY

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This thesis is entirely my own work and all my sources are acknowledged. It has not been submitted in candidature for any other degree at any other university.

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## ABSTRACT

This study traces Charlotte Smith's relations with the literary world of her day, assembling material from contemporary accounts and correspondence, her own writings, and subsequent scholarship. Letters not previously drawn upon add to our knowledge of Charlotte Smith's literary opinions and help clarify the publication history of her highly successful Elegiac Sonnets.

Charlotte Smith's immense popularity in the two last decades of the eighteenth century is confirmed in a survey of reprints of her works and articles about her in contemporary metropolitan and provincial periodicals. A wider range of Reviews than hitherto is drawn upon to give a developing picture of her critical fortunes, showing a slight decline in her popularity after the publication of her controversial novel, Desmond, in 1792.

Though she was a minor literary figure, Charlotte Smith is shown to be of significance in her influence on greater writers, such as Jane Austen, Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge and, possibly, Keats, Dickens and the Brontës. Some specific debts are indicated.

A full-length, chronological, critical account of Charlotte Smith's poetry, prose works and books for young people is provided. This stresses her innovative work in the fields of romantic landscape- and nature-description and her functional rather than sensational gothicism. It argues, however, that her didactic and satirical political writing - particularly on the French Revolution - and her predilection for colloquial dialogue and a greater realism in fiction, despite her adherence to a basically sentimental formula, have been undervalued in previous accounts. The prose works, poetry and children's books are related to the political and social conditions of her day. Charlotte

Smith's poetry is of interest in its 'pre-Romantic' movement towards freer form, its vivid particularity of natural detail and its personal vocabulary of meditation on Nature. In her books for young people, Charlotte Smith adhered fairly closely to the lucrative Moral Tale, despite her unease at its suppression of fantasy. Such works flowed naturally from her progressivist educational and social ideas. Her close interest in Natural History and poetry leavens these moralistic works. The study also indicates the limitations of Charlotte Smith's talent and her inability to maintain a constant realism owing to the exigencies of writing constantly for her living and her personal troubles.

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## INTRODUCTION

Charlotte Smith was one of the most admired novelists and poets in England during the last two decades of the eighteenth century. She came to rival Fanny Burney as the most respected novelist and only Ann Radcliffe challenged her pre-eminence before the turn of the century. The Reviews confirm the general lofty opinion of her literary powers. According to the Critical Review, in 1791,

In the modern school of novel-writing, Mrs. Smith holds a very distinguished rank; and if not the first, she is so near as scarcely to be styled an inferior.<sup>1</sup>

As regards her poetry, the British Critic, though not always a friend to Charlotte Smith, thought that

her poetic feeling and ability have rarely been surpassed by any individual of her sex. Her sonnets in particular will remain models of that species of composition.<sup>2</sup>

These remarks do not misrepresent the prevailing general opinion of Charlotte Smith during her literary career, as this study will confirm. She was praised by the Reviews, was the subject of panegyrics in verse in the magazines (which constantly printed extracts from her works), was anthologized during her lifetime and well into the nineteenth century, and influenced many of the foremost writers of her time and others subsequently.

1 Critical Review Second Series III (Nov. 1791), 318. References to the Critical Review throughout this study are to the First Series, 1756-90 (vols. I-LXX) unless stated otherwise. Similarly, references to the Monthly Review are to the First Series, 1749-89 (vols. I-LXXXI) unless otherwise indicated.

2 British Critic XXX (Aug. 1807), 170.

Yet today Charlotte Smith occupies a decidedly minor and even obscure niche in the history of the novel and is all but forgotten as a poet. At best, literary historians are grateful for her limited contribution towards saving the English novel from utter mediocrity in the barren period between its first flowering with Richardson and Fielding, and its growth to a triumphant maturity in the nineteenth century.

It would be idle to claim for Charlotte Smith a literary stature comparable to that she enjoyed during her lifetime in this study, but a renewed interest in her works in recent years suggests a reappraisal would not be out of place. This dissertation is first a study of Charlotte Smith as a literary phenomenon, in which her immense popularity with, and influence upon a wide spectrum of the reading public - ranging from the patrons of the circulating libraries and readers of provincial magazines to the leading writers of the day - will be examined. This investigation may make a modest contribution to our appreciation of the literary history of the late eighteenth century, offering some explanation of how such eminent novelists as Scott, Jane Austen, probably Dickens and Charlotte Brontë, and such poets as Wordsworth, Coleridge and, possibly, Keats could draw inspiration from Charlotte Smith.<sup>3</sup>

Though this study includes some facts about Charlotte Smith's life which have not previously been recorded, or have not previously been collated to present a comprehensive picture, it is not primarily a biography. A short outline of the writer's life follows, and the 'Chronology of Charlotte Smith' below may also be consulted.<sup>4</sup>

3 See Chapters 1-4 below.

4 See Appendix I below p. 444.

The latter chapters of this study comprise a critical survey of Charlotte Smith's works.<sup>5</sup> These are discussed, as far as possible, chronologically, in order to trace the author's literary development, although the poetry, prose works for adults, and books for young people are dealt with in separate sections, as it proved more convenient and illuminating to keep the forms and genres distinct. However, it has seemed profitable to conduct a more general critical consideration of Charlotte Smith's fiction in earlier sections of this study where it arises naturally from comparisons of her work with that of other writers, and in discussion of the reactions of others to her writings. So, for example, Charlotte Smith's techniques of satire, irony and parody, and her predilection for realism, are explored with reference to her fiction as a whole during discussion of her literary affinities to Jane Austen, and something is said of her tendency to gothicism and a romantic portrayal of nature during consideration of her literary relationship to Ann Radcliffe.<sup>6</sup>

### Charlotte Smith: Life and Sources

Though Charlotte Smith's life was not amply chronicled, yet a fair amount of material has survived. The principal biographical sources are an article in Richard Phillips's Public Characters published in 1807, the year after Charlotte Smith's death,<sup>7</sup> and a memoir written by Catherine Ann Dorset, Charlotte's sister, and communicated to Sir Walter Scott, who included it in his Miscellaneous Prose Works.<sup>8</sup> Nineteenth-century biographers and critics relied almost totally on one or both of these sources, stressing

5 See Chapters 4 and 5 below.

6 See Chapter 3 below.

7 Richard Phillips, Public Characters of 1800-1801 (London 1807), 44-67.

8 Sir Walter Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV (Edinburgh 1827), 3-63.

whatever aspects suited their purposes, and often adding deductions of their own where information was scanty.<sup>9</sup>

It was not until 1941 that substantial new biographical information on Charlotte Smith was assembled.<sup>10</sup> In that year Florence M. A. Hilbish's critical biography, Charlotte Smith, Poet and Novelist, appeared.<sup>11</sup> This compendious study explored genealogies, public records and contemporary documents and added much to our knowledge of Charlotte Smith's life and literary career. This is also the only full-length critique of Charlotte Smith's writings so far published. Hilbish also attempted to demonstrate, in some detail, how Charlotte Smith's life was closely reflected in her literary works, although much of this was necessarily speculative.

Hilbish seems to have ignored the Smith letters still extant. Most of these are now in the United States of America, but many have been studied and the results published. A. D. McKillop discussed the collection in the

9 An example is: Sir Egerton Brydges, Imaginative Biography (London 1834) II, 75-101. Brydges, an ardent admirer of Charlotte Smith, transformed Phillips's sober facts by a liberal application of sympathetic praise for Charlotte Smith, and denigration of her adversaries, though he claimed friends confirmed his view of her. Other biographical pieces based on Phillips and Dorset include:-

Clarke, The Georgian Era III (London 1834), 567.

Julia Kavanagh, English Women of Letters (London 1863), 187-93.

Elizabeth Lee, 'Charlotte Smith', Dictionary of National Biography LIII (London 1892), 27-9.

Viscount St. Cyres, 'The Sorrows of Mrs. Charlotte Smith', Cornhill Magazine XV (Nov. 1903), 686-96.

10 Although renewed interest had previously been stimulated by: James R. Foster, 'Charlotte Smith, Pre-Romantic Novelist' P.M.L.A. XLIII (1928), 463-74.

11 Florence May Anna Hilbish, Charlotte Smith, Poet and Novelist 1749-1806 (Philadelphia 1941).

Huntington Library in 1952,<sup>12</sup> but a more ambitious study of 197 Smith letters and notes held by libraries throughout the United States was undertaken, and recorded in a doctoral dissertation, by Rufus Paul Turner in 1966.<sup>13</sup> These two studies have supplemented the biographical material gleaned by Hilbish, and as a result we now have a comprehensive picture of Mrs. Smith's life within the limits of the material that has survived.

Charlotte Smith's life was full of vicissitudes and would make an interesting story even had she no literary significance. In an age of sensibility, such knowledge of her troubles as percolated through to the reading public must have made her a fascinating figure. Her life contains as many improbabilities as any of her novels, and she filled the role of distressed heroine perfectly, except in the rather vital fact of her not being unmarried and available to a suitable hero. What were, or were to become, stock incidents and devices in fiction were actually suffered by Charlotte Smith: a wastrel husband, a sojourn in a debtor's prison, a flight from creditors to France, long deprivation of an inheritance as the result of a complicated will. The difference in Charlotte Smith's case was that there was no happy ending.

She was born on the fourth of May 1749, probably in London, the eldest child of Nicholas Turner and his wife Anna, née Towers. Charlotte's father, a witty man with artistic leanings, was comfortably situated, his principal estates being at Stoke, near Guildford, and Bignor Park in Sussex. Charlotte had a younger sister, Catherine Ann, who as Mrs. Dorset became a novelist and writer of books for children, and a brother, Nicholas, who subsequently entered the ministry. Though her mother died in 1752 bearing

12 Alan Dugald McKillop, 'Charlotte Smith's Letters', Huntington Library Quarterly XV (May 1952), 237-55.

13 Rufus Paul Turner, Charlotte Smith (1749-1806): New Light on her Life and Literary Career (Los Angeles 1966). Unpublished Ph.D. thesis of the University of Southern California.

Nicholas, Charlotte's infancy and childhood were, by her own admission, the happiest and most secure days of her life. Mr. Turner travelled abroad to assuage his grief and Charlotte was placed in the care of her mother's spinster sister. This aunt took Charlotte from Stoke to Bignor some time before the child's seventh year and she attended school at Chichester. It was at Bignor that she conceived the lasting love for the countryside of the South Downs apparent in her sonnets and in her penchant for romantic descriptions of scenery (and nature in general) in her novels.

Some time before May 1757, Charlotte moved to London in order to attend a Kensington school where, by all accounts, she surpassed most pupils in writing, drawing and dancing. She was withdrawn from school in 1761 at the age of twelve and entered into society at that rather tender age. Her father married a Miss Meriton of Chelsea in 1764, and it was shortly after this that Charlotte took, or was persuaded into, the fateful step that marked the beginning of her misfortunes. On February 23rd 1765, she married Benjamin Smith, the son of a West India Merchant.

Charlotte Smith's marriage was a disaster. She was translated immediately from a leisured, artistic environment to the uncongenial business world and a depressing house in one of the darkest lanes of the City. Only the affection of her father-in-law, Richard Smith, relieved an existence she despised. In addition, her husband turned out to be an irresponsible ne'er-do-well, inept in business and given to hare-brained schemes which invariably failed and inexorably eroded his financial resources. We know that he was frequently unfaithful to Charlotte and shows no sign of ever having borne anything worth calling love towards her, yet this did not discourage him from fatherhood, since Charlotte gave birth to twelve children in all. She bore not only these children, but also the distressing conduct of her husband with considerable patience until 1787, when

they separated. She had been sorely tried by this time, having joined Benjamin for a time in the King's Bench Prison, Southwark, in 1783-84, where he was imprisoned for debt. This experience was made even more nerve-racking by the attempts of the inmates to blast their way out of prison with explosives. In the winter of 1784-85, Charlotte joined her husband in his flight from creditors to a gloomy chateau in Normandy. This cold winter sojourn was enlivened by the seizure of her new-born son, George Augustus, by priests who had determined he should be baptized a Roman Catholic, and who entered the chateau uninvited in pursuance of this purpose. By 1787, Charlotte had suffered enough, and a permanent separation took place.

Charlotte's father-in-law died in 1776 and had provided for the Smiths in such a way that the family should have been financially secure, even given the prodigality of Benjamin. Unfortunately, Richard Smith's will was a home-made affair, and its confusions and uncertainties gave rise to disputes and litigation which kept all benefit from Charlotte Smith and her children during her lifetime, eroded the fortune, and induced in her a bitterness against the English law and its practitioners which she could not help expressing frequently and with asperity in her writings. It is to this circumstance, however, that we owe most of these writings, for she had to ply her pen to feed her family. Unfortunately it was also the pressure of writing constantly and rapidly for her bread and butter which accounts for many of the flaws in her works.

Although additional sorrows were imposed upon Charlotte Smith by the deaths of five of her children and the worry of establishing the others in life, some of those who survived must have been a consolation to her, particularly Lionel, her tenth-born, who rose to be a colonial governor. She had less luck with her daughters. Anna Augusta, her eighth child and particular favourite, married a French emigré, the Chevalier de Faville, in 1793, but died shortly



after giving birth to a child in 1795. The ninth-born, Lucy Eleanor, married in 1797 and her husband, William Newhouse, required immediate financial support from Charlotte Smith to enable him to begin his medical studies. Lucy left him in 1801, but not before she had produced three more children to be fed and clothed in the Smith household. When one adds to this sorry story the fact that Charlotte Smith's first son died in infancy, her second aged eleven, and another in 1786; that her seventh child, Charles, after having lost a leg at the Siege of Dunkirk in 1793, died of yellow fever in Barbados in 1801, then indeed one is retailing a catalogue of woe.

Charlotte Smith became increasingly ill and immobile during her latter years, and she died at Tilford in Surrey on 28th October 1806 at the age of fifty-seven. She is buried at Stoke.<sup>14</sup> As Julia Kavanagh says, in elegiac mood:

There are lives that read like one long sorrow,  
and that leave little save sadness and disappointment  
behind them when they close in death.<sup>15</sup>

Foster, viewing the melancholy that pervades much of Charlotte Smith's work, especially her poetry, and perhaps suspecting a romantic cultivation of that quality and an over-indulged self-pity, composed a more astringent epitaph when he called her the 'bleeding Swan of Bignor Park'.<sup>16</sup>

Charlotte Smith's literary career really began with the publication of her Elegiac Sonnets in 1784, though she submitted poems to the Lady's Magazine as early as her fifteenth year. Her career ended only with her death and her last publications - Beachy Head and A Natural History of Birds - appeared posthumously in 1807. During this

14 This brief account of Charlotte Smith's life is compiled from the principal works cited above: Phillips, Dorset, Hilbish and Turner. A more detailed 'Chronology of Charlotte Smith' appears as Appendix I below (p. 444). Where biographical sources disagree as to the facts, I have adopted the view of the biographer who has most reasonably interpreted the fullest evidence available. I have indicated biographical uncertainties specifically in the body of this dissertation where they impinge on matters of literary interest under discussion.

15 Kavanagh, Op.Cit., 187.

16 James R. Foster, History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England. (London 1949), 239.

period, the fiction she wrote comprised nine full-length novels (all of at least three volumes), a short one-volume tale, and a collection of stories loosely connected. Her Elegiac Sonnets were added to constantly as new editions appeared, and she published two other books of poetry. In her latter years she concentrated on books for young people, publishing six such in all. The remainder of her output consisted of two translations and adaptations from the French, an account of a multiple shipwreck undertaken for charitable purposes, and, allegedly, a comedy entitled What is She?

Turner has shown that the novel D'Arcy (1793), sometimes ascribed to Charlotte Smith, is not her work.<sup>17</sup> A bibliography of Charlotte Smith's works appears below,<sup>18</sup> and the circumstances of publication of each work are outlined when the books are discussed in the body of the dissertation.

#### Charlotte Smith's Works: Criticism to Date

Criticism of Charlotte Smith's works has followed a predictable pattern. During her literary career she received constant and substantial attention in the Reviews, magazines, and the contemporary surveys of the republic of letters published in book form. A chapter of this dissertation is devoted to her treatment in the periodicals,<sup>19</sup> and others to the way her contemporaries saw her, from the

17 Turner, op.cit., 128-33.

18 See below, pp. 466-70.

19 See Chapter 2 below. Reviews of Charlotte Smith's works are discussed in the critical surveys of her writings in Chapters 4 and 5 below.

great poets and novelists of the day to the dabblers in literature.<sup>20</sup> Many of the reviews were mere notices of new works, with extracts from them forming the major part, and critical content slight. In the early years after Charlotte Smith's death, her work continued to receive widespread critical attention, but not of course in review-form. Now the norm was the short life-history, followed by what amounted to a bibliography of her works with brief critical notes appended. The most valuable contribution - a variation on this theme - was probably Catherine Dorset's *Memoir*, published by Scott, to which he added a critical essay devoted to Charlotte Smith's novels.<sup>21</sup> Charlotte Smith's works continued to find their way into print into the first half of the nineteenth century, particularly her poems, which were anthologized frequently.<sup>22</sup> These anthologies usually contained critical (though sometimes only biographical) prefaces to their selections of Smith poems. Charlotte Smith's novel The Old Manor House (1793) began to emerge as the most highly rated of her works of fiction with its adoption by Anna L. Barbauld as Volumes XXXVI and XXXVII of her 'British Novelists' series in 1810-20. Anna Barbauld provided the obligatory, though in this case very adequate biographical sketch and critical survey of Charlotte Smith and her works,<sup>23</sup> and doubtless helped introduce her fiction to a new generation of novel-readers, in addition to reminding more mature readers of an old favourite.

20 See Chapters 1, 3 and 4 below.

21 Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 3-63.

22 These anthologies are identified in Chapter 4, p.174.

23 Anna L. Barbauld (ed.), The British Novelists XXXVI-XXXVII (London 1810).

By mid-century however, memories of Charlotte Smith had faded substantially, and her popularity dwindled, if one is to judge by the paucity of critical attention and lack of new editions of her works. It seemed that history had judged her to be an ephemeral writer. Charlotte Smith held a precarious foothold - or footnote - in histories of English literature, but little more. Only in the histories dealing specifically with women's contribution to English literature was she likely to be given as much as a few pages or even a chapter, and, indeed, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries it is in such works that one is most likely to find something on Charlotte Smith.<sup>24</sup>

In the twentieth century, Charlotte Smith's works have enjoyed a modest revival. This is doubtless due as much to the intensity and comprehensiveness of literary scholarship during this period as to any intrinsic merit. American scholars and critics have been mainly responsible for this renewed attention to Charlotte Smith. James R. Foster published an important article giving a number of her novels new consideration, and drawing attention to what he called the 'pre-Romantic' nature of her fiction in 1928.<sup>25</sup> A notable English contribution was J. M. S. Tompkins's Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800 in 1932, which contained illuminating remarks on Charlotte Smith, as well as on her

24 The best are: Julia Kavanagh, English Women of Letters (London 1863); Clara Whitmore, Women's Work in English Fiction from the Restoration to the Mid-Victorian Period (London 1910); B. G. MacCarthy, The Later Women Novelists 1744-1818 (Oxford 1947).

25 James R. Foster, 'Charlotte Smith Pre-Romantic Novelist', PMLA XLIII (1928), 463-475. Foster later gave Charlotte Smith a chapter, and related her works to other 'pre-Romantic' novels in his History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England (London 1949).

literary milieu.<sup>26</sup> However, the only extensive critical study of Charlotte Smith published to date did not appear until 1941. Florence M. A. Hilbish's Charlotte Smith, Poet and Novelist has been referred to earlier in this Introduction with regard to Charlotte Smith biography, and students of Charlotte Smith's writings are no less indebted to this work as a critical study. However, there remain things to be said, and though Hilbish's pioneer criticism is by no means adulatory, it does tend to give Charlotte Smith the benefit of some critical doubts. The work remains though a thorough, wide-ranging and impressive contribution.

Charlotte Smith also found a place in many 'special studies', though in such works she is seen necessarily only in one aspect. She appears briefly in many histories of the Gothic Novel,<sup>27</sup> The Didactic Novel<sup>28</sup> and the Novel of Sensibility.<sup>29</sup> She also appears in twentieth-century studies of other, greater writers, as a clear influence, and some such works will be referred to in the course of this dissertation.

26 Joyce M. S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 (London 1932).

27 See: Sir Ernest A. Baker, The History of the English Novel V (London 1934), Chapter 5; Kerala-Krishna Mehrotra, Horace Walpole and the English Novel (Oxford 1934); Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest (New York 1938).

28 See: Allene Gregory, The French Revolution and the English Novel (New York 1915); Sir Ernest A. Baker, op.cit., Chapter 9; Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century (Baltimore 1934); Robert B. Heilman, 'America in English Prose Fiction, 1780-1800', Louisiana State University Studies, no. 33 (Baton Rouge 1937).

29 See: Edith Birkhead, 'Sentiment and Sensibility in the Eighteenth Century Novel', Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association XI (1925), 92-116; Sir Ernest A. Baker, op.cit., Chapter 6;

Finally, it may be mentioned that if Charlotte Smith's fiction has been a little more read in recent years, this is in large measure due to the appearance of two of her novels - The Old Manor House and Emmeline - in the 'Oxford English Novels' series. It is gratifying that Mrs. A. H. Ehrenpreis provided such excellent introductions - particularly in the case of The Old Manor House - to these editions.<sup>30</sup> In this dissertation I have used the earliest editions available to me - the first wherever possible - of Charlotte Smith's works, except in the case of these two novels. Here I have used the 'Oxford' editions for the purposes of quotation and reference, as they are readily accessible, and Mrs. Ehrenpreis's carefully prepared texts, with explanatory notes appended, are superior to all others.

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Winfield H. Rogers, 'The Reaction against Melodramatic Sentimentality in the English Novel', PMLA IXL (1934), 98-111;  
 Walter Francis Wright, Sensibility in English Prose Fiction, 1760-1814, University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature 22, nos. 3-4 (Urbana 1937);  
 R. P. Utter and G. B. Needham, Pamela's Daughters (London 1937).

For more general treatments of Charlotte Smith in twentieth-century works, see:

George Saintsbury, The English Novel (London 1913);  
 Walter Allen, The English Novel (Harmondsworth 1954);  
 Lionel Stevenson, The English Novel - a Panorama (London 1960);  
 W. L. Renwick, The Oxford History of English Literature (ed. F. P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobrée), IX (Oxford 1963);  
 R. Harrison Steeves, Before Jane Austen (London 1966).

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30 Ehrenpreis, Anne Henry (ed.), The Old Manor House (London 1969) and Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle (London 1971).

## CHAPTER ONE

## RELATIONS WITH MINOR LITERARY CONTEMPORARIES

The reader of Charlotte Smith's Elegiac Sonnets soon detects their intended tone of pensive melancholy, but he also receives irresistibly a closely-related impression of loneliness and isolation. So often is the speaker wandering in an unpeopled landscape at times and seasons when others are indoors, that one tends to forget that Charlotte Smith must have spent much of her time amidst her ample brood of children and that the 'solitary wanderer' of her poems is in part a literary convention. Yet one's remembrance of her family does not really dispel the impression of Charlotte Smith's isolation, for frequently she seems to be struggling for their rights and well-being against a world indifferent when not actively hostile. Lonely resistance to the raging storm is one of her characteristic images: even the flower beaten by wind and rain tends to be solitary, and when the poet imagines sonnets as spoken by another, he too is alone against the elements. In fact, the despairing lover all but rejoices in his distinction from all other creatures:

Swift fleet the billowy clouds along the sky,  
 Earth seems to shudder at the storm aghast;  
 While only beings as forlorn as I,  
 Court the chill horrors of the howling blast.  
 Even round you crumbling walls, in search of food,  
 The ravenous Owl forgoes his evening flight,  
 And in his cave, within the deepest wood,  
 The Fox eludes the tempest of the night.  
 But to my heart congenial is the gloom  
 Which hides me from a world I wish to shun....<sup>1</sup>

Although Charlotte Smith's novels give a much less pronounced impression of solitariness than the Sonnets, since they necessarily embody imagined human relationships, they too

1 Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems Vol II (London 1797),  
 Sonnet LXVII.

play their part in suggesting a profound and abiding loneliness in their author. In the early novels especially, much of the tension and interest of the tale arises from the essential isolation of the heroine even in the midst of society or the life of a great house. If one had to distil the essential Charlotte Smith heroine, one might characterize her as an orphaned young woman of discrimination and sensibility who finds herself penniless and without prospects in the grudging and unsympathetic guardianship of relations who are grossly inferior to her in everything but wealth and rank. Amidst vulgarity and mercenary values, she battles to retain her integrity and avoid marriage with the rich but coarse suitors favoured by her guardians. Even the hero who shares her fine perceptions and feelings seems unattainable, and circumstances invariably conspire to remove him from the action for a volume or two, so there seems no help or relief for the heroine's embattled isolation. Here again, one must not underestimate the force of literary convention, but the loneliness of Charlotte Smith's heroines is peculiarly intense and recurrent and there are other ways in which isolation is conveyed in the later novels. An impressive characteristic of The Banished Man, for example, is its evocation of the desolate aftermath of war: a small party moves across a vast landscape of ruined villages, shattered fortifications and corpse-strewn battlefields where all is unliving save the solitary group and occasional miserable survivors.<sup>2</sup>

In the light of all this, Charlotte Smith's varied correspondence and wide circle of acquaintances comes as a mild shock to the reader, however clearly his reason tells him it is impossible for a recluse to support a family, struggle for legal and financial rights and publish highly popular literary works. It was no doubt inevitable, given her celebrity, that Charlotte Smith should have met many of the literary figures of

2 The Banished Man. A Novel (London 1794) I. See below pp. 373-6.



her time; and few of the great writers, as well as a host of minor literatti, did not either meet, correspond with, or refer to Charlotte Smith at some time during her career. Yet one's impression of her essential isolation is not destroyed by this knowledge, for most of her literary relationships were no deeper than passing acquaintances, which rarely developed into anything more enduring.<sup>3</sup> She developed no friendship with a really major figure, and her letters show her regular correspondents were only of marginal literary interest: Joseph Cooper Walker and Samuel and Sarah Rose, for example. This dearth of profound literary friendships makes the respect in which she was held by most of the major literary figures no less impressive, and such respect needs to be accounted for on literary grounds: I attempt this in later chapters.<sup>4</sup> This chapter deals with relationships with minor figures, though it is confined to those of some literary significance. It shows Charlotte Smith's place in the general literary milieu of her day, assembling material hitherto only partially available in other biographical accounts.

3 See Turner, op. cit., 174-88. McKillop derived a similar impression of Charlotte Smith's isolation from his study of her letters held by the Huntington Library: 'Charlotte Smith was probably the most popular contemporary novelist in the English-speaking world of the early 1790's, but the letters testify to the fact that she lived and worked in comparative literary isolation.... But Mrs Smith would have been glad of more literary companionship if she had had opportunity and leisure .... she never had the margin of time required for a full personal and literary correspondence.' (McKillop, op. cit., 247.) Turner quotes from a letter of 7th October 1801 to Joseph Cooper Walker in which Charlotte Smith laments her absorption in family matters: '... I am hardly ever able too see any of those friends whose pursuits and ideas are so unlike those which which I am surrounded that they have but little pleasure in seeking me.' (Turner, op. cit., 51.)

4 See below, Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

## I

William Hayley and his Circle

An exception to the paucity of lasting and mutually beneficial literary friendships was Charlotte Smith's relationship with the poet and biographer William Hayley and his circle. This chapter examines mainly the personal relationship with Hayley and also with other minor figures, including the Didactic Novelists, and their response to her, as it appeared at the time. Further critical discussion is reserved for Chapter 5 below and this chapter should be read in conjunction with that later material.

In a sense all Charlotte Smith's literary relationships derive from her friendship with Hayley, for he helped her get her first book published, set her on the road to fame, became the nearest thing to a patron that she ever had and introduced her to his circle of literary and artistic friends (including William Cowper, whom Charlotte Smith so much admired). Biographers of Charlotte Smith quite rightly stress the importance of this relationship and something of its nature and progress can be gleaned from the various biographical accounts.<sup>5</sup> But it will be useful here to provide the fullest possible chronological survey, adding such details as have been derived from other sources, before indicating the web of acquaintance which grew from this relationship.

In 1784, Hayley's literary reputation was such that his agreeing to Charlotte Smith's dedicating her Elegiac Sonnets to him helped persuade Dodsley to publish the work and Charlotte Smith herself to have high enough hopes of its success for her to agree

5 See Phillips, op. cit., 53; Catherine Dorset in Scott, op. cit., 25, 39; Hilbish, op. cit., 103, 107, 131, 151, 155-8, 224; Ehrenpreis, The Old Manor House, ix, xi-xii; Turner, op. cit., 89, 98-101, 140, 169-70.

to publication at her own expense. She had been discouraged previously by Dodsley's pessimism regarding the prospects of such a publication, and further disheartened by Dilly's refusal to publish on any terms.<sup>6</sup>

Charlotte Smith had not yet entered the literary world nor met Hayley, though his house at Eartham was only seven miles from Bignor Park. Phillips tells how she made herself known to him 'through the interposition of an acquaintance.'<sup>7</sup> Charlotte Smith was in fact extremely diffident about approaching Hayley - 'Tho we are near neighbours I have not the courage to address myself directly to him', she wrote to Dodsley on May 4th 1784 - and relied on others to break the ice.<sup>8</sup> She submitted only a few pieces to him initially, and then the sonnets as a whole when the earlier offerings had been favourably received. John Sargent, a neighbour and friend of Hayley,<sup>9</sup> was then persuaded to approach the Eartham poet about the dedication.<sup>10</sup>

The Elegiac Sonnets were published on 10th May 1784,<sup>11</sup> but Catherine Dorset remarks that she believed that Charlotte Smith's 'personal introduction' to Hayley did not take place 'till some time afterwards.'<sup>12</sup> The first meeting probably took place on 28th September 1784 in rather curious circumstances. On that day, Hayley's attention was drawn to 'three strange ladies in the garden' who turned out to be 'the veteran Charlotte Collins, with Mrs Smith and her daughter.'<sup>13</sup>

6 Phillips, op. cit., 52-3; Turner, op. cit., 98.

7 Phillips, op. cit., 53.

8 Turner, op. cit., 99.

9 For information on the Hayley-Sargent friendship, see Merchard Bishop, Blake's Hayley. The Life, Works, and Friendships of William Hayley (London 1951), 83, 197, 206, 329, 344, 346.

10 Turner, op. cit., 99.

11 Hilbish op. cit., 104.

12 In: Sir Walter Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 25.

13 Bishop, op. cit., 84.

Hayley, who prided himself on his medical skills, later explained the situation thus:

Our tender sister of Parnassus had been seized with spasms in her stomach, which had obliged her to quit her horse and creep, like a wounded bird, through the garden.

I played the physician with some success; and by a seasonable medicine soon restored the sick Muse ... I insisted on their taking a poetical dinner, to which they consented after many apologies.<sup>14</sup>

An unduly suspicious biographer might suspect, in view of the rapid recovery and restored appetite of the 'sister of Parnassus', that this meeting with Hayley had been engineered. Be that as it may, it marked the beginning of a long friendship with Hayley, and the Eartham poet became a staunch admirer of Charlotte Smith's works, as is clear from a letter of 16th September 1788 from Joseph Cooper Walker to Bishop Percy:

Mr Hayley .... observes that 'Emmeline, or the Orphan of the Castle', by Charlotte Smith, considering the situation of the author, is the most wonderful production he ever saw, and not inferior, in his opinion, to any book in that fascinating species of composition.<sup>15</sup>

The trust that Charlotte Smith had in Hayley's literary judgement at this time may be gauged from her allowing him to revise one of her novels in manuscript. He was stimulated by his dissatisfaction with Charlotte Smith's ending to evolve one of his own. She subsequently re-wrote her ending, so Hayley, during the winter of 1788-89, expanded his version to a four-volume epistolary work, The Young Widow.<sup>16</sup> I have experienced some difficulty in identifying this Smith novel. The first volume of Emmeline was in manuscript by the beginning of June, 1787,<sup>17</sup> and the novel was published in April, 1788.<sup>18</sup>

14 Ibid., 84-85.

15 John B Nichols, 'Correspondence of Joseph Cooper Walker Esq., MRIA', Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century (London 1848) VII, 708.

16 Bishop, op. cit., 114-15.

17 Turner, op. cit., 106.

18 Ehrenpreis, Emmeline, xix.

If Hayley revised this work, then he waited until the end of 1788 before beginning the novel it stimulated, which is not wholly improbable.<sup>19</sup>

However, the Smith novel in question may have been Ethelinde. The first volume, at least, was ready for transcription for the press in early February 1789,<sup>20</sup> and the finished novel was published within a year of Emmeline;<sup>21</sup> that is, before the end of April, 1789. One would suppose that the novel would be in manuscript during the late autumn and the winter of 1788-89; may have been read and revised by Hayley, and the end re-written by Charlotte Smith in time for publication in the spring. Whichever novel it was, we can have no idea of the nature and extent of Hayley's revisions, nor to what degree Charlotte Smith accepted them, though her re-writing of the ending suggests conscientious and acceptable revision. There is no evidence that any other Smith novels were revised in this way, though one might regret that Hayley did not scrutinize the hastily-written parts of the later fiction.

The friendship with Hayley reached its zenith in the summer of 1792, when Charlotte Smith joined William Cowper (with Mrs Unwin) and the artist George Romney with Hayley at Eartham. Those present considered this a notable assemblage of artistic talent, for all the men recorded appreciative comments on the occasion, but Charlotte Smith scored a particular success and bulks large in the accounts. Cowper noted, in a letter of 13th August 1792, to Samuel Rose:

My friend's house is brimful. Mrs Charlotte Smith is here, an amiable agreeable woman, interesting both by her manners and her misfortunes.<sup>22</sup>

19 McKillop thinks the novel in question was 'probably Emmeline!', though he gives no reason. See McKillop, op. cit., 247 n.

20 Turner, op. cit., 108; McKillop, op. cit., 242.

21 Turner, op. cit., 108; McKillop, op. cit., 136.

22 Thomas Wright (ed), The Correspondence of William Cowper (London 1904) IV, 273.

Charlotte Smith left on about the 19th August, but she had enjoyed the visit sufficiently to return to Eartham on the 28th.<sup>23</sup> She had long admired Cowper, and the main purpose of her visit, according to Hayley, was to 'seize an opportunity' of making his acquaintance. Once arrived,

She exerted her talents most agreeably to excite his wonder, and conciliate his esteem; for happening to have begun one of her novels, *The Old Manor House*, she devoted the early part of the day to composition in her own apartment, and entertained the little party at Eartham by reading to them in the evening, whatever the fertility of her fancy had produced in the course of a long studious morning.<sup>24</sup>

Romney was distinctly impressed:

Mrs Smith is writing another Novel, which, as far as it is advanced, is, I think, very good. She began it while I was there, and finished one volume. She wrote a chapter every day, which was read at night, without requiring any correcting. I think her a woman of astonishing powers. She has two daughters grown to womanhood, a son in the East Indies, and another at Winchester school;<sup>25</sup> and she supports them almost wholly by her writing.<sup>26</sup>

Romney also remarks that Charlotte Smith read works by Cowper to the company.

The guests and their host evolved a full programme of daily activities in which Charlotte Smith played her part:

She and the two poets were employed every morning from eight o'clock till twelve in writing, when they had a luncheon, and walked an hour; they then wrote again till they dressed for dinner. After dinner they (Hayley and Cowper) were employed in translating an Italian play on the subject of Satan /Andreini's *Adamo*<sup>27</sup>; about twenty lines was the number every day. After that they

23 Ibid., 285.

24 William Hayley, The Life of George Romney, Esq. (Chichester 1809), 179-80.

25 This son, hitherto unidentified, was probably Lionel, who was aged fourteen at this time. Charlotte Smith wrote earlier to the Headmaster of Winchester about Lionel's academic progress. (Letter of August 31st /1791? to Joseph Warton, British Library ms. Add. 42561, fo. 230.)

26 Letter of 10th September, 1792, from George to John Romney, Memoirs of the Life and Works of George Romney (London 1830), 226.

27 Ehrenpreis, The Old Manor House, xii.

walked or played at coits; then tea, and after that they read till supper time. This was their general plan of each day. I mention this on an example of the most rational employment of time, and of the greatest industry.<sup>28</sup> Romney, 'who had long admired her genius, and pitied her troubles,' was delighted to find that Charlotte Smith's creative powers had not been dimmed by those misfortunes and 'testified his esteem' by executing a portrait of her in coloured crayons, though Hayley thought this inferior to his 'more studied portrait of Cowper.'<sup>29</sup>

If Charlotte Smith's ambition was to please Cowper, she succeeded triumphantly according to Hayley, who was pleased that his friend shared his high opinion of this 'admirable lady' who

had a quickness of invention; and a rapidity of hand, which astonished every witness of her abilities. Cowper repeatedly declared, that he knew no man, among his early associates in literature, who piqued themselves on rapid composition, who could have composed so rapidly and so well. The exquisite faculties of the unhappy Charlotte were naturally quick; and perhaps their natural quickness was heightened by a laudable ambition of shining before such a judge of talents as Cowper who possessed in the highest degree, both acuteness and candour. It was a recreation, peculiarly sweet after a busy morning, to hear the novelist read the new pages of her work; for she read, as she wrote, with simplicity and grace.<sup>30</sup>

It is apparent from these accounts that Charlotte Smith's artistic inspiration blossomed in this genial climate, and critics generally have agreed that not only is The Old Manor House her best work, but that the first volume written at Eartham is the best of the four. One can only regret that there were not frequent repetitions of this visit, whereby Charlotte Smith might have been removed for a time from her exhausting family duties and problems, to the betterment of her writing.

Charlotte Smith subsequently sent Cowper a pre-publication copy of The Old Manor House, which pleased him no less than the

28 John Romney, op. cit., 226.

29 Hayley, op. cit., 180-81.

30 Ibid., 180.

'cask of the best Holland gin' that arrived from elsewhere at the same time.<sup>31</sup> For a time she and Cowper were on friendly terms and corresponded. A letter to Hayley of January 29th 1793, demonstrates that Charlotte Smith and her troubles had made a deep impression. It also indicates that Hayley was rendering her continuing assistance:

... poor Mrs Smith has engrossed much of my thoughts and my compassion. I know not a more pitiabale case. Chained to her desk like a slave to his oar, with no other means of subsistence for herself and her numerous children, with a broken constitution, unequal to the severe labour enjoined by her necessity, she is indeed to be pitied. It is easy to forsee that notwithstanding all your active benevolence, she will and must ere long die a martyr to her exigences. I never want riches except when I hear of such distress.<sup>32</sup>

Charlotte Smith confirms that the relationship with Hayley remained close, despite her necessarily spending much time at home with her family. She visited Eartham in February 1793, after having written to Joseph Cooper Walker that 'domestic duties and domestic troubles' prevented her seeing Hayley for more than ten weeks:

But we have frequent communication by letter as he is my literary Cynosure, and I shall by the stage of tomorrow send your last obliging favour for his perusal.<sup>33</sup>

McKillop has published an extract from a Smith letter in the Huntington Library which again demonstrates that Hayley was very much Charlotte Smith's literary mentor for a time; but, more interestingly, that his efforts in the detailed correction of Charlotte Smith's poetry may have been assisted by Cowper:

The Poem which I am about is in Blank verse & is to be entitled "The Emigrants." Mr Cowper is to correct it under the auspices of Mr Hayley who thinks many parts of the first book which is nearly done, very capital. But indeed I always fear the partiality of his friendship. The Book is to consist of two parts, about a thousand or twelve hundred lines, and will be published here; if I can get peace to finish it about the beginning of May. It

31 Letter of January 19th 1793 to Lady Hesketh in: Wright, Correspondence of Cowper IV, 357.

32 Ibid., 363.

33 McKillop, op. cit., 248.



is not a party book but a conciliatory book, & Mr Hayley thinks there is some very good drawing in it.<sup>34</sup>

This long poem was published the same year, and Charlotte Smith duly dedicated it to Cowper, stressing that it might never have been written but for the consolation and inspiration she had derived from The Task and Cowper's confidence in her poetic abilities. This might be thought to suggest that Cowper had indeed read the poem in manuscript, helped Hayley correct it, and delivered a favourable opinion upon it; however, this is not necessarily so, as Cowper's comments are rather ambiguous. He wrote on July 25th 1793 that he had awaited Charlotte Smith's 'most acceptable present' of a copy of the poem with impatience.

It came this morning about an hour ago; consequently I have not had time to peruse the poem, though you may be sure I have found enough for the perusal of the Dedication. I have in fact given it three readings, and in each have found increasing pleasure.<sup>35</sup>

The letter also expressed Cowper's gratitude that the delicacy of Charlotte Smith's praise had precluded embarrassment on his part, and rather tardily thanked her for her earlier present of a copy of The Old Manor House (containing 'his two most agreeable old friends, Monimia and Orlando'), and her 'charming sonnets'.

In October 1793 Hayley was staying with Cowper at Weston, and he was able to draw on his host's assistance in his role of literary advisor to Charlotte Smith. She was contemplating a second volume of Elegiac Sonnets (which did not in fact appear until 1797) and feared that it could not possibly emulate the resounding success of the first volume. Cowper wrote on 26th October to reassure her that her 'two counsellors' thought she might expect a handsome financial return if she made her second volume 'a suitable companion to the first, by

34 Ibid., 248-9.

35 Wright, op. cit., IV, 430-1.

embellishing it in the same manner.<sup>36</sup> There are indications in this letter that Charlotte Smith suspected that Hayley's concern for her interests was diminishing, and had confided her fears to Cowper, probably in the hope that Hayley would assure him the contrary was true. If so, she was not disappointed:

... I can assure you, if that may at all comfort you, that both my friend Hayley and myself most truly sympathise with you under all your sufferings; neither have you, I am persuaded, in any degree lost the interest you always had in him, or your claim to any service of whatever kind that it may be in his power to render you. Had you no other title to his esteem, his respect for your talents and his feelings for your misfortunes must insure to you the friendship of such a man for ever. I know, however, that there are seasons when, look which way we will, we see the same dismal gloom enveloping all objects. This is itself an affliction, and the worse because it makes us think ourselves more unhappy than we are; and at such a season it is, I doubt not, that you suspect a diminution of our friend's zeal to serve you.<sup>37</sup>

This letter concludes with a moving expression of sympathy for Charlotte Smith's troubles:

I was much struck by an expression in your letter to Hayley, where you say that 'you will endeavour to take an interest in green leaves again.' This seems the sound of my own voice reflected to me from a distance, I have so often had the same thought and desire. A day scarcely passes at this season of the year when I do not contemplate the trees so soon to be stript, and say, perhaps I shall never see you clothed again; every year as it passes makes this expectation more reasonable, and the year, with me, cannot be very distant when the event will verify it. Well - may God grant us a good hope of arriving in due time where the leaves never fall, and all will be right.<sup>38</sup>

36 Charlotte Smith had previously changed her publisher from Dodsley to Cadell for the fifth edition of Volume One of the Elegiac Sonnets, and had told Cadell on June 3rd 1787 that she would make no final arrangements as to the format until she had spoken to Hayley. (See Turner, op. cit., 100-101. Turner seems confused as to whether this was Volume Two, or a new edition of Volume One. For discussion of this see Appendix II below.)

37 Wright, op. cit., 461-2.

38 Ibid., 462.

Cowper could do little in his own relatively straitened circumstances to help Charlotte Smith in a practical way, but here expresses a solidarity in suffering and a shared mortality exactly calculated to mitigate her feelings of isolation and sense of suffering a unique fate.

The friendship with Hayley did indeed cool in time, and he is not the only man to be hailed as a saviour by Charlotte Smith on his appearance, only to be the subject of her disillusion later. (Lord Egremont in the matter of her legal battles over her father-in-law's will was another.) The reasons for this drifting apart are rather obscure: Hayley helped Charlotte Smith in a variety of ways, but perhaps the trouble that arose in the financial field was the main factor. Bishop remarks that Hayley had applied on her behalf to Cadell, their joint publisher. Charlotte Smith, always desperate for money, was in the habit of trying to extract advances from her publishers, sometimes before the parts of her work they related to were written.<sup>39</sup> Possibly she had enlisted Hayley's assistance and pleas on her behalf, then abused his confidence and good faith. This certainly seems implied by his letter to Cadell of April 12th 1793:

You astonish me by the mention of two drafts upon you by our unfortunate friend, immediately after your liberal aid, in consequence of my first application to you on her behalf. - I had not the least suspicion of such a circumstance; and so far from wondering at your being hurt by it, I confess myself not a little chagrined on the occasion - Humanity will lead us both to reflect, that the necessities of this wretched sufferer have

39 See McKillop's discussion of William Davies's sharp refusal to accept a bill at ten days on his firm, drawn by Charlotte Smith on September 24th 1794 on the strength of her promise that she would submit a remaining part of the ms. of Rural Walks within a week. Davies's adamant refusal suggests previous unhappy experiences with the author in similar circumstances. (McKillop, op. cit., 245.)

been extreme. - She must have literally wanted bread.<sup>40</sup>

It should be noted that this letter precedes Cowper's assurances of Hayley's friendship quoted above and suggests Charlotte Smith was probably right to detect less enthusiasm in Hayley for herself and her concerns.

Charlotte Smith herself confirmed that, notwithstanding Cowper's remarks, the close relationship with Hayley ended at about this time, in a letter of 30th April 1794 to Joseph Cooper Walker:

One great charm that Sussex once had, was the society and friendship of Mr Hayley - That I have lost, and the nearer I am to the possibility of being restor'd to it, the more I regret that it cannot be restored.<sup>41</sup>

Charlotte Smith had planned to use the Romney portrait of herself as the frontispiece to her second volume of sonnets, but Hayley had expressed his reluctance 'either to have it copied in his house, or to part with it for that purpose', she reported to Walker on March 25th 1794.<sup>42</sup> Possibly it was this incident that convinced Charlotte Smith that she had lost the ready and genial cooperation of Hayley. The Huntington letters to Walker confirm Charlotte Smith's regret and disappointment, in the beginning, at the cooling of the friendship, and later her increasing bitterness:

40 Bishop, op. cit., 172. McKillop comments on 'a curious passage' in Charlotte Smith's letter of December 16th 1792 to Joseph Cooper Walker, which 'seems to refer to Hayley as a trustee of the Smith estate; he is censured in this capacity along with her brother.' It is known that Charlotte Smith's brother, Nicholas Turner, and George O'Brien Wyndham, third Earl of Egremont, took over from the original trustees of the Richard Smith estate in 1798, but there is no evidence that the trustees included Hayley. If it was so, then it is not surprising that the relationship with Hayley cooled, for Charlotte Smith quarrelled with all the other trustees at one time or another. (McKillop, op. cit., 251.)

41 Quoted by Turner, op. cit., 140.

42 Quoted by McKillop, op. cit., 249. (The picture was ultimately bequeathed by Hayley to Charlotte Smith's children: see Bishop, op. cit., 344.)

I have now little or no communication with Mr Hayley, whose present mode of life & pursuits are I believe, incompatible with the trouble he formerly took in correcting my writing and in other friendly offices.<sup>43</sup>

By May 1796 she never saw Hayley and seldom heard from him, and said she felt the loss of friendship 'severely' in her literary pursuits.<sup>44</sup> Subsequently she commented disparagingly on his publications and unsympathetically on his personal affairs.<sup>45</sup>

By April 14th 1801 she admitted she was 'mortified by the total cessation of a literary commerce' from which for so long she had 'derived so much pleasure and advantage'.<sup>46</sup> Her unfavourable comments on Hayley's effusive and fulsome praise of his friends and biographical subjects may have been sharpened by the knowledge that she was no longer amongst its recipients.<sup>47</sup>

On the basis of his examination of Smith letters in the United States, Turner remarks that Charlotte Smith was never able to explain Hayley's coolness, and offers the following comments on the relationship after 1796:

... although there was occasional contact, either through writing or an infrequent visit of the briefest sort, Mrs Smith reports that his response had grown cold and artificial. Toward the end of her life, Mrs Smith grew somewhat bitter about this estrangement when she recalled that she had remained loyal to Hayley, sometimes to her own discredit, in the years after his fame had declined and other poets were laughing at him.<sup>48</sup>

Turner quotes Charlotte Smith's final recorded observation on the relationship with Hayley in a letter to Sarah Rose of April 26th 1806, some six months before she died:

In the days of our intimate friendship when I was the dear Muse & had not stiffend /sic/ into Sister of Parnassus or sunk into Poor Charlotte; he used to laugh, & say if I lived longest I should write his life & if he lived longest he wd. write mine.<sup>49</sup>

43 Ibid., 250. Letter of 1794?

44 Ibid., Letter of 29th May 1796.

45 Ibid., Letters of 9th January 1799 and 18th May 1800.

46 Ibid., Letter of 14th April 1801.

47 Ibid., 251. Letter written in 1804, and letter to Sarah Rose of 25th April 1806.

48 Turner, op. cit., 169.

49 Ibid., 169-70.

Hayley's Epitaph on Charlotte Smith seems to show he had forgiven her:

Blest were thy Tomb, could Friendship deck the Stone  
With verse as sweetly plaintive, as thy own!<sup>50</sup>

One regrets from a literary point of view that the friendship had in fact cooled, not because Charlotte Smith could have learned much from Hayley, but because the support and refuge he had afforded her when they were close had created the conditions for her best work, and she never subsequently wrote anything of comparable quality to the first volume of The Old Manor House.

Many of Charlotte Smith's letters referring to Hayley were addressed to the Rev Joseph Cooper Walker, a regular correspondent (and friend of Hayley). It is probable that Walker was another literary friend introduced by Hayley and, like Hayley, he seems to have combined the role of literary advisor with that of sympathiser. Also like Hayley, he provided useful assistance, though not in the field of the criticism and revision of her works. Walker seems to have helped Charlotte Smith with the publication of a number of her works in Ireland, just as Hayley did in England. He was useful as a man 'on the spot' to keep an eye on her interests in Ireland, and played his part in operations designed to forestall Irish piracies of Smith works.<sup>51</sup> He wrote promptly to Charlotte Smith regarding the ascription of

50 Hayley composed a 'little hasty Tribute' in verse to the memory of Charlotte Smith and sent it, with some diffidence, to Walker on 8th December 1806. In the accompanying letter, he expressed his fear that his verses would not satisfy her relations, and his hope that her sister would compose 'a better inscription.' Perhaps he remembered his jesting promise to Charlotte Smith to write her biography: if so, he did not wish to take it seriously now. For the letter and full text of the 'Epitaph', see Turner, op. cit., 89.

51 See McKillop, op. cit., 238, 243-4. McKillop comments on Charlotte Smith's sending of instalments of The Old Manor House, in the form both of advance sheets and manuscript, to Ireland in late 1792 in order that the Dublin bookseller John Rice might bring out the novel on its English publication date. Walker acted as intermediary in these transactions, transmitting the sheets to Rice.

the novel D'Arcy to her ('C. Smith') when it was published in Dublin in 1793, and it was in a letter to him of 20th January 1794 that she disclaimed its authorship.<sup>52</sup> Walker must have pursued the matter in Ireland, for Charlotte Smith expressed her regret on 29th May 1796 that he had derived 'so much trouble' from the work.<sup>53</sup> In 1797, when Volume Two of the Elegiac Sonnets was published by subscription, she acknowledged Walker's applications on her behalf.<sup>54</sup> It seems to have been a combination of admiration for her works and sympathy for her troubles that motivated Walker to render her considerable and continuing assistance. She constantly reported on the doings and condition of her large family and herself in letters to Walker, and his admiration for her work is exemplified by his letter of 3rd August 1791 to Bishop Percy:

We are all now engaged with Mrs Smith's new novel of 'Celestina.' It is certainly a work of no common merit. The Sonnets are charming.<sup>55</sup>

The first Smith letter to Walker so far traced was written on 16th December 1792, so that possibly Walker's admiration led to a meeting or the opening of a correspondence with Charlotte Smith, with Hayley preparing the way.

The friendship with Hayley extended Charlotte Smith's literary acquaintance, but it also brought her at least one foe. Anna Seward was constantly hostile to Charlotte Smith and her writings, but it is illuminating to examine her comments upon her sister poet - not because enmity has its fascination, but because Anna Seward's dislike made her a stern critic, and she is the representative voice of those few who did not join in the chorus of praise for her rival.

52 Transcribed in Turner, op. cit., 130-2. 133.

53 Ibid., 132. Extracts from the Smith letters to Joseph Cooper Walker appear in McKillop (see note 51 above) and, more extensively, throughout Turner's dissertation, which may be consulted for a good indication of the nature of this correspondence and relationship, based upon some nineteen of Charlotte Smith's letters to Walker written between 20th January 1792 and 12th August 1804.

54 Preface to Volume II.

55 John B Nichols, Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century (London 1848) VII, 715.

It seems obvious from the bitter intensity of her criticism that Anna Seward had personal reasons for her hostility to Charlotte Smith. She was something of a protégée of Hayley before Charlotte Smith's triumph at Eartham in August and September 1792, and indeed she had stayed at Eartham herself ten years earlier. The visit had been the culmination of a mutually admiring correspondence and the pleasant flattery of verses from Hayley praising her own. Anna Seward had thus for a time been Hayley's favourite female poet, but by 1786 it was clear that 'the fervour of their friendship had cooled during the years,' as her biographer puts it.<sup>56</sup> Charlotte Smith's rise to favour with Hayley began of course with the dedication of her Elegiac Sonnets to him 1784, and it seems probable that Anna Seward saw his growing coolness to her as a consequence. Bishop is no doubt correct when he deduces that she was jealous of Charlotte Smith's proximity to the highly esteemed 'Bard of Eartham'.<sup>57</sup> Catherine Ann Dorset, writing closer in time to the occurrence of these events, tactfully avoided naming her sister's rivals, but after mentioning that Desmond 'brought a host of literary ladies in array against her, armed with all the malignity which envy could inspire!', she went on to refer to a group which certainly included Anna Seward:

She /Charlotte Smith/ had been in habits of intimacy for the two or three last years with Mr Hayley, (as well as with his lady,) then at the height of his poetical reputation, but this was a distinction not to be enjoyed with impunity. His praise was considered as an encroachment on the rights of other muses, (as he was accustomed to call his poetical female friends.) each of whom claimed the monopoly of his adulation. In the present day the prize would scarcely be thought worth contending for.<sup>58</sup>

Anna Seward certainly thought that Hayley's liking for Charlotte Smith as a person predisposed him to a favourable

56 Margaret Ashmun, The Singing Swan, An Account of Anna Seward (London 1931), 169.

57 Bishop, op. cit., 85.

58 In Scott, op. cit., 39.



opinion of her works, and her protests here have in them some of the self-righteous, aggrieved petulance of a supplanted favourite:

I fancy this lady has been so fortunate as to engage yours and Mrs Hayley's benevolent amity; that it draws a veil over all the defects, and magnifies every grace of her compositions; but you will remember, that I have not had the pleasure of knowing Mrs Smith and therefore read her works with the same indifference I do those whose authors died before I was in existence. 59

She went on to remark, perhaps defensively, that 'my very foes acquit me of harbouring one grain of envy in my bosom'. 60

But there is another reason why Anna Seward must have thought herself fated to have her glory always dimmed by Charlotte Smith's. In my examination of the treatment of Charlotte Smith in the Gentleman's Magazine below, I draw attention to her many poems printed in that periodical, and the even more numerous verses submitted by readers in praise of her poetic talents.<sup>61</sup> Anna Seward was close to being the resident female poet of the Gentleman's in the last twenty years of the eighteenth century, and even a cursory glance at that periodical will demonstrate the ubiquity of her poetical contributions. Only Charlotte Smith shows as anything approaching a rival; but she had the additional glamour of a fascinating and romantically distressed private life, which drew more sympathetic and adulatory verses than did ever Anna Seward's more pedestrian circumstances. If Anna Seward turned to the European or the Universal Magazines, relief was incomplete, for she would occasionally find Charlotte Smith's verses there too. Furthermore, she never enjoyed a poetic success on the scale of the Elegiac Sonnets.

That reviewers saw Charlotte Smith and Anna Seward as rivals, is suggested by a comparison of their talents in the Anti-Jacobin Review. This unpleasant periodical was hostile to

59 Letter of 11th January 1789 to Mrs Hayley in: Letters of Anna Seward (Edinburgh 1811) II, 216.

60 Ibid. See my caveat on p.17 above that this chapter treats of literary enmities as the personal affairs they seemed at the time: for discussion of the underlying political and ideological differences, see Chapter 5.

61 See below, pp. 73-5.

Charlotte Smith on account of the radical politics in her fiction,<sup>62</sup> and one might expect the reviewer to pronounce Anna Seward the superior poet. This indeed he did, though Charlotte Smith's popularity was too great for him to dismiss her unreservedly. This reviewer, in noticing Anna Seward's Original Sonnets,<sup>63</sup> printed three sonnets from each poet.<sup>64</sup> The stimulus to this comparison probably came from his noticing that both women had written sonnets with the same title: 'On the Sea Shore'. Although he thought the sonnet-form not worthy of a great deal of attention, he could not ignore the examples produced by these two ladies:

... who could be disgusted with the sonnet, from a Seward or a Smith? Mrs Smith is, indeed, monotonous, her grief is, at first, charming. It melts upon the ear, and soothes the heart. But, from its unvaried querulousness, it, too soon, loses its effect. Yet are her poems flowing and melodious.

Miss Seward is more elegant and impressive; her manner is more dignified. She has less ease but more energy. And in point of variety, whether we consider the subject, sentiment or numbers, Miss S. has an evident advantage over her sister-poet.

On the whole we scruple not to adjudge the palm of poetic genius to the delightful muse of Lichfield.<sup>65</sup>

Apparently, such favourable comparisons did not reassure Anna Seward, who recognised Charlotte Smith as her arch-rival both for the favour of a poet she admired and in the public prints. The uneasy feeling that she might be yielding her pre-eminence in both sharpened her critical edge marvellously when she examined Charlotte Smith's works.

Her antipathy to Charlotte Smith extended to the field of literary form. Anna Seward was a champion of the 'legitimate' sonnet and disliked Charlotte Smith's blithe indifference to rules of composition derived from Italian models. I shall

62 See below, pp. 55-6.

63 Anna Seward, Original Sonnets on Various Subjects: and Odes, Paraphrased from Horace (London 1799).

64 Anna Seward's 'On a lock of Miss Sarah Seward's hair', 'Petrarch to Vaucluse' and 'On the Sea Shore'; and Charlotte Smith's 'To Friendship', 'From Petrarch' ('Ye vales and woods...') and 'On the Sea Shore'.

65 Anti-Jacobin Review (November 1799), 329-30.

discuss this disagreement in its wider context of the late-eighteenth century 'Battle of the Sonnets' below, and draw on Anna Seward's comments there,<sup>66</sup> but the intensity of the dispute may be gauged from her reaction to the Gentleman's Magazine's extravagant claims for Charlotte Smith's Elegiac Sonnets.<sup>67</sup> Writing to Miss Weston on July 20th 1786, Anna Seward attempts urbane superiority which, however, quickly modulates to bitter scorn:

Yes, truly, dear Sophia, our public critics are curious deciders upon poetic claims. Smiled you not to see the reviewer of verse, in a late Gentleman's Magazine, gravely pronouncing, "that it is trifling praise for Mrs. Smith's sonnets to pronounce them superior to Shakespeare's and Milton's? O! rare panegyrist ...

You say Mrs. Smith's sonnets are pretty; - so say I; pretty is the proper word; pretty tuneful centos from our various poets, without any thing original. All the lines that are not the lines of others are weak and unimpressive; and these hedge-flowers to be preferred, by a critical dictator, to the roses and amaranths of the two first poets the world has produced!!! - It makes one sick.<sup>68</sup>

Few would disagree that the reviewer's judgement was comically at fault here, but Anna Seward's comments three years later confirm a strong animus against Charlotte Smith that had little to do with her desire that the names of the great English poets should not be taken in vain:

I forget if I ever spoke to you about Mrs. C. Smith's everlasting lamentables, which she calls sonnets, made up of hackneyed scraps of dismality, with which her memory furnished her from our various poets. Never were poetical whipt syllabubs, in black glasses, so eagerly swallowed by the odd taste of the public.<sup>69</sup>

The Seward letters to Hayley and his wife which mention Charlotte Smith are of particular interest in the light of the relationships discussed above. Anna Seward is noticeably more controlled in her language in this correspondence - the sneers are often implied rather than overt - and she is constantly anxious that the Hayley's should believe her

66 See below, pp. 170-9.

67 See below, p. 72.

68 Letters of Anna Seward I, 162-3.

69 Ibid., II, 287. Letter of 9th July 1789 to Theophilus Swift.

criticisms of Charlotte Smith to be inspired by a disinterested concern for literary values. She is thus forced into detailed literary criticism which, though almost invariably hostile, often expresses the genuine critical objections of her day in a particularly clear and decisive manner. Yet she contrives to make such criticisms imply a coarseness of sensibility - indeed, a positive vulgarity - in Charlotte Smith which no doubt was designed to open the eyes of the Hayleys to her own superior accomplishments and discernment. She attacked, for instance, the occasional colloquialisms many critics discerned in Charlotte Smith's writing. Anna Seward makes the point thus in discussion of Emmeline:

At the conversational vulgarisms, I own I wonder extremely, as Mrs. Smith's poetry, though feeble, is not inelegant, and I understand she is a woman of education.

When Emmeline first says of the fainting Adelaide, "She is coming to," I concluded the press had accidentally omitted to add the word "herself;" but in a page after, the same kitchen-phrase is repeated by Emmeline, "yes, she is certainly coming to." In another place we find "Emmeline grew white at the intelligence." White; instead of pale, I have often heard servants say, but never a gentleman or a gentlewoman.<sup>70</sup>

Anna Seward was adept, in her letters to the Hayleys, at insinuating this tone of innocent surprise at Charlotte Smith's crudities. Her criticism of Emmeline begins disarmingly with a short sentence of praise for Charlotte Smith's 'scenic descriptions', but we are soon informed that the work is a 'vapid drama' and a 'weak and servile imitation of Cecilia'. Interestingly, Anna Seward precedes Jane Austen in making a particular objection to the heroine, though she writes with none of the good humour of the later novelist:<sup>71</sup>

... I felt disgusted by the manners of the heroine, which in her situation, it was so utterly impossible she should

70 Ibid., 215-16. Letter of 11th January 1789 to Mrs Hayley.

71 This is assuming that, in the first chapter of Northanger Abbey, Jane Austen was indeed thinking in particular of Emmeline, though no doubt she had in mind also a whole breed of naturally genteel heroines.

have acquired. Emeline's /sic/ advantages were infinitely fewer than Caroline's de Lichfield ... /Emmeline does not have/ that wild, artless, engaging simplicity ... It is the last thing we can dispense with in her who had conversed only with peasants, excepting one honest, yet inelegant old woman; an old steward, as homespun; and a vulgar-minded cunning attorney.

No intuitive strength of understanding, no possible degree of native sensibility, could have enabled her to acquire the "do me honour" language of high-life, and all the punctilious etiquette of its proprieties, with which she receives the old and young lord at the castle.<sup>72</sup>

The criticism of Charlotte Smith's vulgarity of conception in her characterization continues with remarks on another character in Emmeline:

Then how sickening is the boundless vanity with which Mrs. Smith asserts that herself, under the name of Mrs. Stafford, is "a woman of first-rate talents, cultivated to the highest-possible degree."

So far from giving proofs of these self-imputed, peerless talents, Mrs. Stafford does not speak a single word, does not write one letter, to which moderate talents, with but a tolerable education, might not be competent.<sup>73</sup>

Charlotte Smith rather prided herself upon her French, but Anna Seward saw her use of it in her fiction as merely proof of her vulgarity:

The parade the author makes with her knowledge of a language, in which every boarding-school miss is instructed; the frippery of its interlarded phrases, and her frequent vulgarisms in our own language, combined to make me dislike the style, as much as I had disliked the unnatural manner in which several of the characters are drawn.<sup>74</sup>

One might think that there was sufficient adverse criticism for one letter here, but Anna Seward could not resist a lofty dismissal of Charlotte Smith's writing in the field in which they were rivals; the sonnets. Her scorn for mediocrity might be more impressive had she not appended her own questionable list of immortals:

72 Letters of Anna Seward II, 213-14.

73 Ibid., II, 215.

74 Ibid. For discussion of Emmeline see below p. 257.

... Surely it belongs to a native love of justice to feel a little indignant, and to enter one's protest when compositions of mere mediocrity, such as I own I think Mrs. Smith's Sonnets, are extolled far above those of real genius. These same sonnets have been more extolled than the classic elegance and refined grace of Mrs. Barbauld's poems; than the correct and perspicuous good sense of Miss More's ...; than the wit and attic spirit of Mrs. Piozzi's writings; and greatly more than the sublime and beautiful creations of our Helen Williams's imagination.<sup>75</sup>

Hayley would have been obtuse indeed not to detect some bias in this letter.

A further letter from Anna Seward some two weeks later makes it plain that he had been unimpressed by her criticism of the sonnets and had remonstrated, telling Anna Seward how much Charlotte Smith admired her writings:

Reproving me for not liking Mrs. Smith's sonnets, and trying to enlist my vanity against my want of taste for them, makes me fear that my dear Bard suspects me of speaking rather from grudging spleen, than from involuntary opinion. He has never had cause to think me capable of envious coldness.<sup>76</sup>

Anna Seward redoubled her attack on the Sonnets in this letter, returning to a favourite criticism. This was of Charlotte Smith's tendency to use lines from other poets in her verse, sometimes without either acknowledgement or enclosure within quotation marks. Charlotte Smith's defence, when the first edition of her sonnets was criticized for this, was to say that she had assumed her readers would know their English poets sufficiently well to make acknowledgement unnecessary and, in any case, some of the borrowings were unconsciously made. She said she would make clear such borrowings in subsequent editions, which indeed she did. Predictably, Anna Seward was disinclined to take a charitable view and made Charlotte Smith's lack of originality, after her vulgarity, the second great criticism of her sister-poet's works. She noted some such borrowings, and did all she could to magnify them into major plagiarisms. She went much too far

75 Ibid., 216-217.

76 Ibid., II, 223. Letter of 29th June 1789 to William Hayley.

when she affected to trace the influence of lines from other poets - not verbatim plagiarisms but approximate echoings - and implied that Charlotte Smith was profiting dishonestly from her predecessors.<sup>77</sup> But if one is to condemn poets because their imaginations transform images from others, long and deeply buried in memory, then who shall 'scape whipping? In the letter to Hayley, Anna Seward referred to a number of alleged plagiarisms:

I do not find in her sonnets any original ideas, any vigour of thought, any striking imagery - but plagiarism, glaring and perpetual; - whole lines taken verbatim, and without acknowledgement from Shakespeare, Milton, Young, Pope, Gray, Collins, Mason, and Beattie.

When I see an author reduced to crib an whole line from Mason's Elegy on Lady Coventry, and two whole lines from Shakespeare, to make up a little poem, which contains only fourteen lines, I cannot help concluding that the imagination is barren. Yet it is even so with the eighth sonnet in Mrs. Smith's first edition. I have not seen the second edition, but am told that she has in that put the quotation marks so disingenuously withheld in the first publication.<sup>78</sup>

Charlotte Smith herself was quite capable of pouring verbal vitriol on those she disliked, but she emerges from the rivalry with Anna Seward with credit. She enjoyed Anna Seward's poetry and apparently praised it to Hayley, as is evidenced by Anna Seward's cold refusal to moderate her criticisms in the light of her sister-poet's benignity:

That lady's opinion of my works, if indeed she professes to like them, does me honour, but cannot change the nature of my perceptions.<sup>79</sup>

The only disparaging reference by Charlotte Smith to Anna Seward that I have seen occurs only incidentally during some caustic comments upon those who, 'like a Chacal on the carcass', gain from writing potted biographies of recently deceased literary figures,

77 In a letter of 6th October 1788 to the Reverend Berwick, Anna Seward listed three alleged plagiarisms - from Pope, Collins and Beattie - commenting on the 'injudicious imitation' involved. See: Letters II, 163-4.

78 Letters II, 224. For discussion of the Elegiac Sonnets see below p. 165.

79 Ibid., 223.

... for that seems most lucrative & most the rage  
 ... as witness Miss Seward, & all Mr. Phillips' late  
 puttings forth.<sup>80</sup>

Anna Seward was driven to other methods of trying to discredit Charlotte Smith in the eyes of the Hayleys. On 5th October 1793, she hurriedly despatched a letter to Mrs Hayley, having received the previous day 'an odd though ingenious letter' from a Mr Geary of Leominster, exhorting her to vindicate Hannah More's character from the 'malevolent aspertions' Charlotte Smith had cast upon it in Desmond 'under the title of Mrs. Manby.'<sup>81</sup> There is no evidence that Charlotte Smith intended Mrs Manby, 'the patron of an inferior literary circle', specifically as a caricature of Hannah More, and indeed Hilbish quotes from Rural Walks to suggest Charlotte Smith admired her poetry.<sup>82</sup> But Anna Seward did not trouble to reflect on the credibility of the charge before writing her letter:

I have not read Desmond, and this is the first hint that has reached me of any such attack. If it is so, Mrs. Smith has done very unwisely as well as unjustly; but Hannah More wants no champion; her virtues and talents stand far above the reach of such senseless calumny,

"which will pass by her as the idle wind, which she respects not".<sup>83</sup>

If Hannah More herself knew of and resented the supposed libel by Charlotte Smith, she left no record of her displeasure. But there was indeed some friction between the two ladies when they met. Charlotte Smith made no effort to disguise the fact that she did not share Hannah More's conservative piety and staunch royalism, and the latter was 'extremely scandalized' with her:

80 Letter of 30th July 1804 to Sarah Rose. Quoted by Turner, op. cit., 12.

81 Letters III, 329. Either Mr Geary or Anna Seward transferred Mrs Manby to Desmond from her true home. She appears in Volume IV of The Old Manor House.

82 Hilbish, op. cit., 161-2.

83 Letters III, 329. See Ashmun, op. cit., 194-5, for an account of Anna Seward's opinion of Hannah More.



... finding she was reading Shakespeare, I asked her if she was not delighted with many parts of King John? 'I never read the Kings, ma'am,' was the totally characteristic reply.<sup>84</sup>

Charlotte Smith obviously was not to be overawed by Hannah More, and the meeting might seem to suggest sufficient mutual dislike for Charlotte Smith indeed to have guyed her in the character of Mrs Manby. However, a convincing argument against this has been proffered by Mrs Ehrenpreis.<sup>85</sup>

Hannah More was not enthusiastic towards Charlotte Smith's fiction. An implied distaste, at least, is suggested by her comments in November, 1809 on the Life of Mrs Elizabeth Carter published the previous year.<sup>86</sup> Hannah More was dissatisfied with the Life, which had 'laboured to make her [Mrs Carter] a woman of the world' and had ignored her interest in the great poets of the day: her opinions on books in the Life were 'confined to Mrs West's and Charlotte Smith's novels' with the result that

Every novel-reading Miss will now visit the circulating library with a warrant from Mrs Carter.<sup>87</sup>

If Hannah More's opinion of Charlotte Smith has survived but uncertainly, the same is not true of all the bluestockings she knew, and one may deduce that the set did not find her wholly unexceptionable, if Elizabeth Carter's opinions may be taken as representative. In the early years of Charlotte Smith's literary career, both Mrs Carter and Mrs Montague joined in the general approval of Emmeline, and Elizabeth Carter seemed to be au fait with Charlotte Smith's private circumstances, though the two women never met.<sup>88</sup>

84 William Roberts, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More (London 1834), 234.

85 See A H Ehrenpreis, The Old Manor House, 542-3 (Note to p 507). Mrs Ehrenpreis also dismisses a suggestion that Mrs Manby was based on Elizabeth Inchbald, and puts forward Hannah Cowley (1743-1809) as the likely candidate.

86 Montagu Pennington, Memoirs of the Life of Mrs Elizabeth Carter (London 1808).

87 Roberts, op. cit., 305-306. Letter of 30th November 1809 to Mr Knox.

88 Pennington, op. cit. I, 442.

I am glad to find you are pleased with the "Orphan of the Castle." I heartily wish it was fashionable enough to be of any essential benefit to the author, who has been obliged to purchase her freedom from a vile husband, by giving up part of the little fortune she had left; so that she has at present little more than a hundred a year to support herself and six or seven children.<sup>89</sup>

Even unfavourable comments on the politics in Desmond did not at first turn Elizabeth Carter against Charlotte Smith. She wrote to Mrs Montagu on July 22nd 1792:

A friend has sent me a copy of Mrs Charlotte Smith's "Ode to a Poppy". It is very beautiful, and, I am told, the best thing in her new novel; but perhaps my informant is prejudiced against it, from its being too favourable to democratical principles.<sup>90</sup>

But with the onset of ill-health Elizabeth Carter's literary activities were diminished, and her tastes apparently narrowed:

she was glad to have recourse to any novel, or modern romance, provided the tendency, or moral, of it was good. These she read with much pleasure, especially if removed from real life, from the delineation of which she did not derive much satisfaction. ... of Mrs Charlotte Smith's work in general she highly disapproved; and was indeed hardly willing to give her credit for the genius, which she was generally allowed to possess; the reason of which was, that she thought their morality at least very defective, and in some of them positively bad. Upon the same principles she was very partial to all Mrs West's publications, both in prose and verse, as not only displaying a very considerable, and indeed very remarkable, share of genius, under so many disadvantages, but as being calculated to do much good in the world, and as having the morality of them founded upon the only unerring basis, that of religion.<sup>91</sup>

Charlotte Smith rarely wrote to theological ends - to point a religious moral or offer orthodox Christian consolation - and her persistent secularity, noticed unfavourably by others,<sup>92</sup> was calculated to recommend her to Hannah More, even less, if anything, than to Elizabeth Carter.

89 Montagu Pennington, Letters from Mrs Elizabeth Carter, to Mrs Montagu, between the years 1755 and 1800 (London 1817) III, 295. Letter of 30th June 1788.

90 Ibid., 333.

91 Life of Mrs Carter I, 440-1.

92 See below, p.210. Pennington's footnote on Charlotte Smith suggests his own clerical status may have led him to exaggerate Elizabeth Carter's disapproval of her: 'This lady's misfortunes are now ended by the hand of

## II

The Didactic Novelists

It is an indication of Charlotte Smith's representativeness of the major fictional strains of her time, that she fits as comfortably into the essentially apolitical world of Hayley<sup>93</sup> as into the group of literary revolutionists and novelists of doctrine. The latter included as its leading figures Robert Bage, Thomas Holcroft, Elizabeth Inchbald, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, and lesser figures such as Mary Hays, Dr John Moore and Amelia Opie.

These writers are often discussed as a group by literary historians despite their artistic and even political heterogeneity. Though some were intimate friends and met or corresponded frequently, they did not form a closely-knit coterie, but rather, at most, a broad literary movement. All were contributors to a trend or development in fiction in the 1780's and '90's: the tendency of novels to include within their scope the discussion, dissemination and exemplification in character and action of certain political and social ideas. However, there were distinctive differences within the group: some were philosophical and abstract in their approach and some practical and untheoretical; some were radical and jacobinical, others reformist and ameliorative; some produced novels conceived primarily as vehicles for propaganda; others introduced politics intermittently and incidentally.

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death; but her works remain behind. Would that authors would consider the awful responsibility they incur when they publish, for the evil which perhaps they do, or the good which they might have done.'  
 (Life of Mrs Carter I, 441.)

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93 Bishop refers to Hayley's 'pronounced Whiggish views' and a contemporary wrote of his being 'bigotted' in his Whiggism, but in comparison to the didactic novelists his politics are unobtrusive in his life and works (Bishop op. cit., 120,81.)

These differences of emphasis perhaps help explain why there is no generally agreed term to describe the kind of fiction produced by this broad movement. The works concerned are variously referred to as 'didactic', 'doctrinaire', 'novels of purpose', and 'tendenz fiction', and the stances of the authors as 'radical', 'revolutionist', 'jacobinical', 'democratic', 'liberal' or 'philosophical'.

I mention this assortment of descriptive tags in order to draw upon those that seem useful in indicating Charlotte Smith's contribution to this movement. She has more affinities with Bage than with Holcroft and the Godwins. She is a revolutionist in her support for the French Revolution in its early stages, and for its original ideals throughout her career, but she is no revolutionary in the sense of one who advocates root-and-branch change and violent action. Her approach is essentially pragmatic, reformist and ameliorative with no desire for a dissolution of the existing political and social structure. Charlotte Smith does not begin with theoretical models of the essential nature of man and the ideal society,<sup>94</sup> from which to evolve appropriate institutions to replace those existent: her instinct is to respond to obvious particular abuses and injustices by amending, improving and purifying the existing social and political fabric. Thus, in the specific example of marriage, it does not occur to Charlotte Smith to recommend its abolition, as it did to Holcroft from time to time when it seemed to him that it necessarily involved treating people as property. Charlotte Smith's response was to search for the agents of corruption of an institution basically sound, and argue for their removal; if Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act, the undue influence of parents in the arrangement of marriages, the unequal standards of fidelity and devotion demanded from husband and wife, and the undertaking of marriage

94 Except possibly in The Young Philosopher (1798).

purely for reasons of economics and social status all were removed, then marriage based on love, friendship, respect and mutual help would be an admirable institution.

Similarly, in a more purely political area, Charlotte Smith is 'democratic' only in so far as she despises position and power based on birth alone, with no reference to qualities of character and proved abilities. She does not usually wish to abolish distinctions, ranks, élites if they can give a respectable account and acceptable justification of themselves.<sup>95</sup> Charlotte Smith is, in fact, a liberal, and much less radical than Holcroft or Godwin. She writes novels of doctrine insomuch as some of them reveal and analyze political abuses, argue for reforms, and present political views, both espoused and disapproved, and are designed to persuade the reader towards the approved views. Yet, in the case of most of Charlotte Smith's works, it would be as misleading to call them novels of doctrine as, say, Gothic novels. Perhaps Hilbish's term 'novels of purpose' is more applicable by virtue of its very imprecision, since the term may be stretched to cover instruction in manners and etiquette as well as in political and larger social matters. If 'novel of purpose' adequately implies some didactic intention accompanying the desire to write an interesting and entertaining tale, then it is applicable to most of Charlotte Smith's output. So, though a work such as Holcroft's Anna St Ives is very much a novel of doctrine in that everything is created to the end of political philosophy and didacticism, Charlotte Smith's The Old Manor House is meant to do other things than philosophize and teach, though it contains doctrinal elements intermingled with its traditional attractions of adventure, suspense, romantic love, and some

95 An exception is Desmond (1792) where enthusiasm for the early days of the French Revolution did lead Charlotte Smith for a time to approve all its aspects, including the abolition of titles.

comedy of manners. Desmond and, to a lesser extent, The Young Philosopher are the only Smith novels in which, as in the works of Godwin and Holcroft, the novel-form is valued mainly as a vehicle of propaganda.

It is a commonplace of the literary historians that the sentimental novel with a strong moral purpose required no radical shift to modulate to the novel of doctrine. Moral didacticism relating to the conduct of individuals was already an established ingredient of novels, especially the works of the more earnest women novelists, and the increased political activity of the period from the American War to the French Revolution and its aftermath, and the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau (and Paine in England) were together factors in precipitating the didactic novel. Yet the women writers who attempted the transition incurred much criticism from conservative readers and critics. It was one thing for a woman to instruct her female and even male readers in conduct, etiquette and manners within a domestic setting, but quite another to venture into the larger and hitherto largely masculine world of political and social affairs. Charlotte Smith's insistence on expressing her liberal opinions probably lost her more readers than any other single factor, and she became a figure frequently referred to in the arguments that raged on the subject of the proper place of women.

Though the didactic novelists differed considerably there are certain causes and grievances which were widely shared. Charlotte Smith was anything but unique in her support for the American and French Revolutionists, her dislike of privilege based merely on birth, her preference for a simple mode of life to one of opulence and display, her desire to preclude the development of prejudice and insensitivity by means of more enlightened education and parental attitudes, and her conviction that prison reform was imperative. She also regretted constantly what she saw as corruption and self-seeking in government and the legal system which impeded the working of an intrinsically just Constitution, and which resulted in vain

wars for the nation and injustices for the citizen. Charlotte Smith rather concentrated on those iniquities which had affected herself: she had been, after all, a misused wife, had seen the inside of a debtor's prison and had struggled to expedite legal processes which she thought were unjustly delaying the realization of her children's financial rights. Yet it would be unfair to imply a lack of genuine altruism simply because she was in part stimulated to protest by experience at first hand of the evils she attacked. Certainly she acquired a shrewd professional eye for trends in fiction, but the risks entailed in entering the controversial area of didactic fiction were at least as great as the potential rewards and she must have been aware of the fact.<sup>96</sup>

The principal influence on Charlotte Smith as far as her didactic fiction is concerned is Rousseau, and her works are full of nature-loving heroes and heroines who, whilst not noble savages, resist the glitter and corruption of the fashionable world. Her urge to reform education, which will be referred to below from time to time, is also very Rousseauesque.

Hilbish thinks that Thomas Holcroft was a 'considerable influence' on Charlotte Smith: they share a tendency to 'didacticism against pride of birth, duels, prejudices and governmental interference' and to introduce 'the Rousseauistic

96 Nor did Charlotte Smith climb on a bandwagon already well under way. Although Bage had published 'Mount Henneth (1781), Barham Downs (1784) and The Fair Syrian (1787) before the writing of Desmond (1792); Man As He Is (1792), Hermesprong (1796), Holcroft's Anna St Ives (1792) and Hugh Trevor (1794), Godwin's Caleb Williams (1794) (and Wollstonecraft's Rights of Women (1792)) were still to come.

hero who sacrifices self-interest to service'.<sup>97</sup> Yet, as I have suggested above, Holcroft was more radical in analysis and suggested cures. Hilbish sees Robert Bage as closer in spirit to Charlotte Smith (though his satire tends to be gentler): 'Both authors oppose marriage enforced by parents. Both hurl vigorous denunciations against specific evils in the body politic and use the plot ... to express political and philosophical doctrines.'<sup>98</sup> Bage's Hermsprong, Or Man As He Is Not (1796) foreshadows Charlotte Smith's The Young Philosopher (1798) in some respects: both include characters who spend formative years in uncorrupted North America, and Hermsprong 'compares with Delmont [the hero of The Young Philosopher] in his conflicts with prejudiced persons and his philanthropic activities.'<sup>99</sup> Both heroes are sturdily and rather serenely independent of prevailing conventions. In Barham Downs (1784) and Man As He Is (1792), Bage compares England unfavourably with America and, in the latter novel praises the French Revolution, like Charlotte Smith in The Old Manor House (1793) and Desmond (1792). Bage followed Charlotte Smith's desire for educational reform and her upholding of the dignity of women. Both writers also attacked the corruptions of the established church.

Both Charlotte Smith (in Marchmont, 1796) and William Godwin (in Caleb Williams, 1794) mounted direct literary attacks on the British Constitution. Charlotte Smith places Marchmont 'in a position somewhat analagous to Caleb Williams':

97 Hilbish, op. cit., 512. For Hilbish's discussion of Charlotte Smith's relationship to the didactic novelists see pp 510-20. For further discussion of of this relationship see: Sir Ernest A Baker, The History of the English Novel (London 1934) V, Chapter 9; James R Foster, History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England (London 1949), Chapter 8; Allene Gregory, The French Revolution and the English Novel (New York 1915); Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century (Baltimore 1934).

98 Hilbish, op. cit., 513.

99 Ibid., 514.



Both present man preying on man with impunity. The hero of each is a victim of power, violence, and intrigue. Caleb, a person of the lower class, is at the mercy of a murderer, an aristocrat; Marchmont, a member of untitled nobility without wealth, is in the power of a robber, a social inferior, an attorney of the law. Both of these petty potentates use the forces of society and law against an afflicted individual. Marchmont, the sole heir of his ancestor's debts, is hounded by the law, like the innocent Caleb, to escape the debtor's prison.<sup>100</sup>

Both characters learn that their country's laws are completely subservient to the powerful.

Hilbish sees Charlotte Smith as having 'many things in common in life and in theory' with Elizabeth Inchbald: 'authorship for self support and for those dependent on them, sympathy for the unfortunate, scorn for the pretensions of the wealthy, and a thesis of political and social equality'. Both were revolutionists 'not so much of theory and conviction as of humanitarian sympathies',<sup>101</sup> and both satirized lawyers and the clergy. The Young Philosopher may be as indebted to Elizabeth Inchbald's Nature and Art (1796) as to Bage's Hermsprong.

Such mutual 'influences' must remain speculative rather than certain, and it should not be forgotten that contemporary writers of a didactic and reformist bent are bound to share concerns, select certain obvious evils for attack, and even sometimes produce broadly similar fictional situations to illustrate them. The development of didacticism and political ideas in Charlotte Smith's works are examined in critical detail, below, principally in Chapter 5.

It remains to indicate Charlotte Smith's relationships with the didactic novelists, in the sense of personal acquaintance rather than literary indebtedness, where such existed, and to trace her part in the controversies that such novelists provoked.

Hilbish writes that, from the point of view of literary form, Charlotte Smith's usual 'subordination of theory to plot

100 Ibid., 515.

101 Ibid., 517.

removes her from within to the edges of the Revolutionary circle.'<sup>102</sup> The same seems to be true of actual acquaintance with these writers, and lack of surviving evidence for many such contacts tends to confirm the impression of Charlotte Smith's comparative literary isolation suggested earlier in this chapter. Allene Gregory writes rather vaguely that her connexion with the little circles of Radicals in London probably did not extend beyond a mere acquaintance with one or two of them,<sup>103</sup>

and Hilbish, referring to Holcroft and Charlotte Smith, states that

it is probable that the authors met and exchanged views in the same London literary circles,<sup>104</sup>

quoting uncertain evidence in Gregory and Dorset.<sup>105</sup> However, it is certain that Charlotte Smith knew William Godwin and his successive wives. Probably the relationship sprang from her didactic writings. The references to an acquaintance do not occur before September 1797,<sup>105a</sup> and Mary Wollstonecraft's reviews of Charlotte Smith's early novels in the Analytical Review (written before her marriage to Godwin) suggests that the two women had not met at that time.<sup>106</sup>

A letter from Coleridge to Godwin of 21st May 1800, from

102 Hilbish, op. cit., 297.

103 Gregory, op. cit., 214.

104 Hilbish, op. cit., 512.

105 Gregory, op. cit., 54, 85; Scott op. cit., 38. Mrs. Dorset states that in 1791-92 Charlotte Smith was chiefly at Brighton, where she formed acquaintances with 'some of the most violent advocates of the French Revolution, and unfortunately caught the contagion, though in direct opposition to the principles she had formerly professed, and to those of her family.'

105a A letter from Elizabeth Inchbald to William Godwin of 10th September 1797, after the death of Mary Wollstonecraft, seems to imply that Charlotte Smith knew the Godwins (C. Kegan Paul, William Godwin I, 277.) Gary Kelly writes that Charlotte Smith was 'a close friend' of Godwin by 1798 (The English Jacobin Novel (Oxford 1976), 228).

106 That is, before August 1792; the month Mary Wollstonecraft reviewed her last Smith novel (Desmond) until 1797, when she reviewed Marchmont. Her first Smith review was of Emmeline in July 1788. See below pp.77-85 for discussion of these reviews.

Nether Stowey, confirms that the latter was by that time sufficiently well acquainted with the itinerant Charlotte Smith to know where she might be found:

To Mrs. Smith I am about to write a letter, with a book-be so kind as to inform me of her direction.<sup>107</sup>

The relationship with Godwin continued throughout the remainder of Charlotte Smith's life, for Godwin's second wife, Mary Jane (née Clairmont), visited her at Tilford in Surrey, shortly before the novelist's death. Charles Lamb reported the visit to Wordsworth on 26th June 1806:

The Baby [i.e. Mrs. Godwin] has been on a visit to Mrs. Charlotte Smith, Novelist and morals-trainer, but is returned. A ludicrous thought struck me. These two ladies have both, as you may have seen, great bxttxms. I fancied on their first meeting and salutation, while the ladies were bowing and kissing, the two bxttxms saluting and doing the honour of a first meeting independently ...<sup>108</sup>

It is interesting to note that the friendship of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft with Charlotte Smith was established by 1797, before The Young Philosopher appeared. Their encouragement helps explain Charlotte Smith's renewed confidence in proclaiming her liberal ideas after her post-Terror defensiveness in The Banished Man (1794). Mary Wollstonecraft's 1797 review of Marchmont (1796) differs from her previous notices in its sympathetic reference to Charlotte Smith's private circumstances. It is very tolerant of her 'alluding to her domestic sorrows' and execration of and contempt for 'the man to whom she attributes them.'<sup>109</sup> Knowledge of Charlotte Smith's circumstances and friendship with her ensured sympathy from a champion of women's rights who had suffered at the hands of Gilbert Imlay.

107 Earl Leslie Griggs, The Collected Letters of S.T. Coleridge (London 1956) I, 589. Charlotte Smith was in fact at Hastings during this month (Turner, op. cit., 92).

108 E.V. Lucas (ed.), The Letters of Charles Lamb to which are added those of his Sister (London 1935) II, 14. The coy 'X's' are Lamb's.

109 Analytical Review XXV (April 1797), 523.

The didactic novelists may vary in degree of radicalism, but contemporary supporters and detractors tended to see them as a distinctive group to be praised or execrated collectively. This is particularly true of the female writers who stirred the controversy as to how far a woman might desert her traditional circumscribed role and still retain her 'femininity'. Charlotte Smith's venturing into the discussion of politics and the French Revolution provoked strong reactions. Lois Whitney, discussing the didactic novelists, has suggested that

Charlotte Smith's novels ... deal more directly with reforms in France and their consequences than the other novels of this group.<sup>110</sup>

In addition to this interest in the Revolution, Charlotte Smith was tireless in her attempts to dispel the traditional enmity between England and France, and Englishmen's prejudices against their Gallic neighbours. No doubt she considered that her residence in Normandy in 1794 had given her an insight into French conditions which particularly qualified her to speak. Certainly, she was often identified with the Revolutionary cause, if one is to judge from a 'British Dinner' given at White's Hôtel in Paris (much patronized by British and American visitors), on 18th November 1792. This dinner was held to 'celebrate the victories of the French arms.' Thirteen toasts were drunk, mostly in acknowledgements of the various victories and the revolutionary political movements; and an English lady, probably Helen Maria Williams, sang to the air of the Marseillaise.<sup>111</sup> The eleventh toast of this stirring affair was to

The Women of Great Britain, particularly those who have distinguished themselves by their writings in favour of the French revolution, Mrs Smith and Miss H M Williams.<sup>112</sup>

110 Lois Whitney, Primitivism and The Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century (Baltimore 1934), 258.

111 John G Alger, Paris in 1789-1794, Farewell Letters of Victims of the Guillotine (London 1902), 325-6.

112 Ibid., 326.

Interesting curiosities are the poems provoked by the venturings of Charlotte Smith and the other woman writers into hitherto exclusively masculine matters. In 1792, before the Revolution had taken a drastic turn for the worse, George Dyer wrote an enthusiastic ode 'On Liberty', in which Charlotte Smith was seen as fighting for freedom shoulder-to-shoulder with Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Mary Hays. Dyer addressed Liberty thus:

Or dost thou, sweet enthusiast! choose to warm  
 With more than manly fire the female breast?  
 And urge thy Wollstonecraft to break the charm  
 Where beauty lies in durance vile opprest?  
 Then will I from my Jebb's fair pages prove,  
 That female minds might teach a patriot throng;  
 Or "on the Loire's sweet banks" with Williams rove;  
 Or hear thee warble in Laetitia's song;  
 Or see thee weep in Charlotte's melting page;  
 And from Macaulay learn to scourge a venal age.

Or dost thou, near Maria's early tomb  
 Clad like the muse of sorrow, drop a tear.  
 Oh! I will kiss that sacred drop, and roam  
 To strew the cypress on Maria's bier  
 Or I will hear thee, fair Melpomene,  
 In my own Charlotte's pensive notes complain  
 Faithful to thee, though pensive ...<sup>113</sup>

But the supporters of the liberal ladies had no monopoly of indifferent verse. Thomas Mathias's Pursuits of Literature (1794) condemned Charlotte Smith's novels for their faulty plot-construction, but praised her 'great poetical powers and pathos'.<sup>114</sup> Richard Polwhele was inspired by this survey in verse of contemporary literature to produce a verse-satire of his own in 1798. The Unsex'd Females is as unrestrained in its disapproval of the radical women writers in this time of reaction against the Revolution as Dyer's poem had been

113 George Dyer, Poems (London 1792), 36-7. In a footnote (p 37) Dyer refers to Mary Hays as 'an admirer and imitator of Mrs Charlotte Smith'.

114 Thomas J Mathias, The Pursuits of Literature (London 1794). See Hilbish op. cit., 251, 423.

enthusiastic. Charlotte Smith was again yoked with her radical sisters, but this time for execration:

See Wollstonecraft, whom no decorum checks,  
 Arise, the intrepid champion of her sex;  
 O'er humbled man assert the sovereign claim,  
 And slight the timid blush of maiden shame.  
 She spoke - and veteran Barbauld caught the strain,  
 And deemed her songs of love, her lyrics vain;  
 And Robinson to Gaul her fancy gave,  
 And traced the picture of a Deist's grave,  
 And charming Smith resigned her power to please  
 Poetic feeling and poetic ease;  
 And Helen, fir'd by freedom, bade adieu  
 To all the broken visions of Peru;  
 And Yearsley, who had warbled nature's child,  
 Midst twilight draws her minstrel ditties wild

Now stole the modish grin, the sapient sneer;  
 And flippant Hays assumed a cynic leer.<sup>115</sup>

Polwhele included Charlotte Smith in his condemnation with some reluctance. In a footnote he praised her sonnets warmly:

The sonnets of Charlotte Smith, have a pensiveness peculiarly their own: It is not the monotonous plaintiveness of Shenstone, the gloomy melancholy of Gray, or the meek subdued spirit of Collins. It is a strain of wild, yet softened sorrow, that breathes a romantic air, without losing, for a moment, its mellowness. Her images, often original are drawn from nature: the most familiar, have a new and charming aspect. Sweetly picturesque, she creates with the pencil of Gilpin, and infuses her own soul into the landscape. There is so uncommon a variety in her expression, that I could read a thousand of such Sonnets without lassitude.<sup>116</sup>

As a novelist, Charlotte Smith's Ethelinde and Emmeline 'place her above all her contemporaries, except Mrs D'Arblay and Mrs Radcliffe', Polwhele thought.

But why does she suffer her mind to be infected with Gallic mania? I hope, ere this, she is completely recovered from a disorder, of which, indeed, I observed only a few slight symptoms.<sup>117</sup>

115 Richard Polwhele, The Unsex'd Females: A Poem (London 1798), 17.

116 Ibid., 18.

117 Ibid.

The respectable ladies ranged by Polwhele against the unsex'd females are predictable: Mrs Montagu, Mrs Carter, Mrs Chapone, Anna Seward, Mrs Piozzi, Fanny Burney, Lady Diana Beauclerk and Hannah More. His analysis of the faults of the unsex'd females is of relevance to Charlotte Smith's works in its extraordinarily prudish closing ten lines. Polwhele attacks the '... female band despising NATURE'S law':

As "proud defiance" flashes from their arms  
 And vengeance smothers all their softer charms  
 I shudder at the new unpictur'd scene,  
 Where unsex'd woman vaunts the imperious mien;  
 Where girls, affecting to dismiss the heart,  
 Invoke the Proteus of petrific art;  
 With equal ease, in body or in mind,  
 To Gallic freaks or Gallic faith resign'd,  
 The crane-like neck, as Fashion bids, lay bare,  
 Or frizzle, bold in front, their borrow'd hair;  
 Scarce by a gossamery film carest,  
 Sport, in full view, the meretricious breast;  
 Loose the chaste cincture, where the graces shone,  
 And languish'd all the Loves, the ambrosial zone;  
 As lordly dames inspire dramatic rage,  
 Court prurient fancy to the private stage;  
 With bliss botanic as their bosoms heave,  
 Still pluck forbidden fruit, with mother Eve,  
 For puberty in sighing florets pant,  
 Or point the prostitution of a plant;  
 Dissect its organ of unhallow'd lust,  
 And fondly gaze the titillating dust;  
 With liberty's sublimer views expand,  
 And o'er the wreck of Kingdoms sternly stand;  
 And, frantic, midst the democratic storm,  
 Pursue, Philosophy! thy phantom form.<sup>118</sup>

Presumably lines 17-22 of this extract were meant to be taken seriously, with no implications of ironic, sportive humour; no tinge of mock-outrage. The panting images of sexual desire and fascination with sexual organs are much more revelatory of Polwhele's 'purient fancy' than the unhealthy avidity of the unsex'd females. The passage is interesting to students of Charlotte Smith not merely because it illustrates how absurdly

extreme could be the attitude that woman must exhibit, or at least affect, an innocence in sexual matters, but because it shows that even her books for children must have been scandalous in some quarters. Charlotte Smith's botanizing in the cause of the education of children in the appreciation of nature seems an admirable and spotlessly innocent undertaking to the modern reader: it is surprising to learn that some would have regarded it as a subversive attempt to corrupt young people (particularly, one imagines, the girls). Possibly Polwhele was really worried by the connexion between the cult of Nature and Rousseauesque political notions, or perhaps he genuinely thought that a child's knowledge of reproductive processes might lead to precocious sexuality. Polwhele suggests that he did fear this in a footnote that hardly mutes the risibility already created:

But how the study of the sexual system of plants can accord with female modesty, I am not able to comprehend he says, adding darkly: 'I have, several times, seen boys and girls botanizing together.'<sup>119</sup>

Predictably, the Anti-Jacobin Review was equally emphatic in its condemnation of the didactic women writers, and as usual it made itself objectionable and deprived its arguments of much of their force by its resorting to insult and invective in the process. In his Life of Godwin, Ford K Brown traces the growing attack on 'the philosophers', reaching its peak in 1797-98. He remarks that the Anti-Jacobin Review vigorously attacked the 'literary and moral disciples of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft':

There was many a notice of "the voluptuous dogmas of Mary Godwin and her more profligate imitators." "The trash of Mrs Robinson," "... the vicious and detestable stuff that has issued from the pen of M—y H—s;" "the effusions of Mrs Charlotte Smith who had merely "conceived a very high opinion of the French philosophers;" and

119 Ibid., 8.



"that most impudent, malignant and audacious heap of absurdity by Mrs Inchbald, called Nature and Art."<sup>120</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Anti-Jacobin reviewed Polwhele's poem enthusiastically ('at once politically useful and poetically beautiful'), and transcribed that part of it in which Charlotte Smith is mentioned.<sup>121</sup>

### III

#### Miscellaneous Minor Contemporaries

Robert Southey admired Charlotte Smith's works, though her literary influence on him seems to have been minimal. They became acquainted in 1801, and no doubt Southey, like Hayley and Cowper earlier, played some part in relieving Charlotte Smith's isolation and bolstering her literary self-confidence. Southey wrote to Miss Barker on 21st October 1801, indicating the part Charlotte Smith's works had played in the development of his sensibility:

Give me an introduction to Charlotte Smith; that is, send me her address, and tell her that I will call. I wish to see her, for she is a favourite novelist with me, far above more popular names, and also by a very odd association the cause of my present situation. I took in when a boy a periodical work with prints of ruins. There was a view

120 Ford K Brown, The Life of William Godwin (London 1926), 155. The reference to Charlotte Smith appeared in the Anti-Jacobin Review (Aug 1798), 161. Brown is unjust when he brackets Charlotte Smith with Mrs Yearsley, Mrs Barbauld, Mrs West, Mrs Robinson, Miss More and Mrs Opie as 'contemporary imitators and assailants' of Godwin's fiction (p 83). Charlotte Smith had published Desmond (1792), her most radical work, before Godwin's first works to create a stir - Political Justice (1793) and Caleb Williams (1794) - were published.

121 Anti-Jacobin Review (May 1799), 27-33. Polwhele, an antiquarian and assiduous self-advertiser, was a contributor to the Anti-Jacobin Review.

of the ruins at Christchurch in Hampshire. Those said ruins are introduced either in "Celestina" or the "Old Manor House"; I think in the latter. One summer I went to the sea; and, for no earthly reason else but the remembrance of that print and that novel.<sup>122</sup>

On 2nd December, Southey wrote to Charles Danvers that 'Our Cintra Friend Miss Barker' had called to see him, but only en route to the admired novelist:

She is coming to spend the winter with Charlotte Smith in London and I expect her to be pleasantly intimate at that house.<sup>123</sup>

The next day Charlotte Smith wrote to Southey, and according to McKillop's summary of the letter (now in the Huntington Library), she conveyed a suggestion from the newly-arrived Miss Barker that the Smith and Southey families might jointly occupy a house in Buckingham Street for the coming season.<sup>124</sup> This scheme did not come to fruition, but Southey did meet Charlotte Smith at this time. On December 21st, he wrote again to Danvers referring to the meeting. Though he expressed his 'uncomfortable surprise' at finding Charlotte Smith looking 'so old and broken down,' he was charmed by her, as were so many of her acquaintances at the beginning. Southey found her 'more humanised, more akin to common feelings, than most literary women,' which he attributed to her having a large family.

Though she had done more and done better than other women writers, it has not been her whole employment - she is not looking out for admiration and talking to show off. I see in her none of the nasty little envies and jealousies common enough among the cattle. What she likes, she likes with judgement and feeling, and praises warmly.<sup>125</sup>

122 John W Warter (ed), Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey (London 1856) I, 179.

123 Kenneth Curry (ed), New Letters of Robert Southey (New York and London 1965) I, 262.

124 McKillop, op. cit., 252.

125 Warter, op. cit., I, 184.

In another letter, he described Charlotte Smith as one of the 'Living Remarkables', 'a woman of genius, good sense, and pleasant manners'. Though Southey wrote 'I am increasing my knowledge'<sup>126</sup> of Charlotte Smith, the acquaintance did not develop sufficiently to lead to a lasting correspondence. Perhaps Charlotte Smith, with four years to live, was no longer equal to forging new relationships. In any case, Southey was not far from the shedding of his radical politics by the time of her death, and perhaps had less sympathy with her works than in his early days.

Anna Seward seemed determined always to find fault with Charlotte Smith and her works, but Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges erred on the other side. Although he was 'totally unacquainted with Mrs Smith from any other source than her writings,'<sup>127</sup> he it is who may be relied upon to attempt rebuttal of every criticism of those writings and their author and to provide countervailing eulogies. The sentimental Brydges was affected more than most by Charlotte Smith's complaints about her harrassed life and invariably took her part, never questioning her claims to be the innocent, injured party: all this even though he based his brief biography of Charlotte Smith<sup>128</sup> on a single account - Richard Phillips's article in his Public Characters of 1800 - 1801 - and her own prefaces, and little else but current literary gossip and hearsay.<sup>129</sup>

126 Letter of 6th February 1802, to John Rickman in: Curry, op. cit., I, 269.

127 Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, Censura Literaria (London 1815) VII, 79.

128 Ibid., 69-84. ('Memoirs of Mrs Charlotte Smith.')

129 Jane Austen confirms that Brydges's literary judgement and taste is not to be accepted uncritically, if his own works are any guide. Writing of Brydges's Arthur Fitz-Albini: a Novel, she says: 'My father was disappointed - I am not, for I expected nothing better ... Every sentiment is completely Egerton's. There is very little story, and what there is is told in a strange, unconnected way. There are many characters introduced apparently merely to be delineated.' (R. W. Chapman (ed), Jane Austen's Letters to her Sister Cassandra and Others (London 1952), 32.)

Yet Brydges' claims for Charlotte Smith's immense popularity and his discussion of the criticisms typically made of her work accord remarkably with what I have found to be indicated by the periodicals of the time and the comments of her contemporaries. Charlotte Smith had, he says, 'an exquisite superiority of genius, which for two and twenty years has charmed the world',<sup>130</sup> but such large and general assessments are less interesting than his comments on individual works. Even allowing for some exaggeration, his account confirms the stir created by the appearance of Emmeline in 1788, and indicates that it was the romanticization of character and setting which, added to the Burneyan comedy of manners and conventional plot of a young woman's difficulties in love, made the novel so fascinating:

All that part of the public, who, though they were disgusted with the usual contents of a circulating library, yet had fancy and feeling enough to judge for themselves in spite of prejudice, received this enchanting fiction with a new kind of delight. It displayed such a simple energy of language, such an accurate and lively delineation of character, such a purity of sentiment, and such exquisite scenery of a picturesque and rich, yet most unaffected imagination, as gave it a hold upon all the readers of true taste, of a new and most captivating kind. The simple charms of Emmeline; the description of the Old Castle in Wales; the marine scenery in the Isle of Wight; the character of Godolphin; and many other parts possessed a sort of charm, which had not hitherto been imparted to novels.<sup>131</sup>

Brydges tackles one by one the criticisms most often levelled at Charlotte Smith and answers them all - to his own satisfaction at least.<sup>132</sup>

The fact that Brydges specifically defends Desmond confirms that this novel aroused harsher criticism than any other Smith work. Quite justly, Brydges points out that the hero of that novel does nothing to disturb the platonic nature

130 Censuria Literaria VII, 74.

131 For discussion of Emmeline, see below p. 257.

132 See Censuria Literaria VII, 80-4.

of his relationship with the married Geraldine, and concludes that 'the world' had objected because it could never 'preserve its innocence' in similar circumstances.<sup>133</sup>

One can only agree with Brydges's answer to those who complained that Charlotte Smith took no pains to intrude religious didacticism at convenient points in her works: 'Are novels then to be tried by the rules of a sermon?' Charlotte Smith's heroines do, on the whole, exemplify virtue, he thinks, and it may be left to divines to demonstrate that such conduct is an essential attribute of the religious life. Brydges is hard on those who demand that the novelist should end her works with a pious observation.<sup>134</sup>

Brydges sees that the allegations of immorality and indifference to religious concerns in Charlotte Smith's works are often stimulated by political antipathy. He also thinks they derive from those readers too coarse to appreciate her fine characters, or perhaps those sufficiently perceptive to be stung by their superior virtue:

... her touches of character were too nice; they were too exquisite for the apprehension of some; while to many, they laid open the obliquities of the heart, or the head, with too keen a pen. The broad caricatures, and glaring colours of common novels, which excited the heavy attention of ordinary readers, were too extravagant to touch the generality of those irritable beings, who shrunk at the sharp incision of Mrs Smith.

For want of these glaring colours, and farce-like personages, some taxed her with want of fancy, and some with a departure from real life. The reverse appears to be the truth!<sup>135</sup>

The only concession Brydges makes to Charlotte Smith's critics is to agree that she sometimes 'spoke with too much bitterness of the privileged orders; and of the abuses of ancient institutions,' but he considered that her own bitter

133 Ibid., 81-2. For discussion of Desmond, see below p 306.

134 Ibid., 82.

135 Ibid., 83.

experiences should induce the reader to forgive her reformist excesses.<sup>136</sup> Brydges's piece concludes with rapturous praise of Charlotte Smith's poetry.<sup>137</sup>

Brydges undoubtedly played a part in keeping Charlotte Smith's reputation fairly high in the early years after her death. It may also be that Jane Austen's attentions to her works were encouraged by Brydges's enthusiastic championing of Charlotte Smith, and his influence in the Austen circle.<sup>138</sup>

Anna Laetitia Barbauld's inclusion of The Old Manor House in her 'British Novelists's series in 1810 possibly did more to introduce Charlotte Smith to a new generation of readers than did all Brydges's eulogies.<sup>139</sup> Anna Barbauld provided a biographical and critical preface, the information on Charlotte Smith's life again deriving principally from Phillips.

Anna Barbauld considered that 'the natural bent of Mrs Smith's genius' was more to poetry than to any other literary form, on account of 'an ear and a taste for harmony, an elegant and correct style,' though she followed the established custom of criticising its excess of woe.<sup>140</sup> Anna Barbauld's remarks on the fiction and minor works are brief but complimentary. She preferred Charlotte Smith's early work, stating Emmeline and Celestina to be 'the more finished', with the latter especially notable for its plenitude of 'beauties of description'.<sup>141</sup> Although Desmond, The Wanderings of Warwick and Montalbert are mentioned by name, they are quickly despatched with the 'many others' in a summarising comment:

136 Ibid.

137 Ibid., 83-4.

138 See Alan D Mc Killop, 'Allusions to Prose Fiction in Jane Austen's Volume the Third', Notes and Queries 196 (29th September 1951), 429; and Frank W Bradbrook, Jane Austen and her Predecessors (Cambridge 1966), 124-36.

139 Anna L Barbauld, The Old Manor House (London 1810) (Vol XXXVI of 'The British Novelists'.)

140 Ibid., ii-iii, v.

141 Ibid., vii.

They all show a knowledge of life, and facility of execution, without having any very strong features, or particularly aiming to illustrate any moral truth. The situations and scenery are often romantic; the characters and the conversations are from common life.<sup>142</sup>

Charlotte Smith's typicality and representativeness, which gave her works an immediate appeal in her day, was now beginning to tell against her, as her novels in retrospect began to merge with the mass of fiction written in her lifetime. Anna Barbauld sets the tone of subsequent Smith criticism by adopting the reservations and the points of praise of her predecessors. In addition to those already indicated she complains that Charlotte Smith's novels have weaknesses and occasional flatness due to their having been written for reasons of financial exigency, and that they are not as truly the 'spontaneous offspring of her mind' as are her poems.<sup>143</sup> Also, the 'strain of her politics' is often obtrusively present.<sup>144</sup> She praises Charlotte Smith for being a pioneer in the use of elaborate scenery which by this time many readers associated primarily with Ann Radcliffe:

... there is much beauty in the descriptive scenery, which Mrs Smith was one of the first to introduce. Descriptions, of whatever beauty, are but little attended to in a novel of high interest, particularly, if introduced, as they often are, during a period of anxious suspense for the hero or heroine; but are very properly placed, at judicious intervals, in compositions of which variety rather than deep pathos, and elegance rather than strength, are the characteristics.<sup>145</sup>

Charlotte Smith was already beginning to take her place in the middle rank of merely competent novelists:

... though not of the first order, [her novels] hold a respectable rank among that class of publications. They are written in a style correct and elegant; they show a knowledge of life, and of genteel life ...<sup>146</sup>

Anna Barbauld's edition is a modest landmark too in that it indicates the emergence of The Old Manor House as the novel

142 Ibid., vii-viii.

143 Ibid., vi.

144 Ibid., vii.

145 Ibid., vi-vii.

146 Ibid., vi.

considered Charlotte Smith's best. Mrs Barbauld gave no reason for her choosing it for re-publication in preference to the others, save that it was 'said to be the most popular of the author's productions.'<sup>147</sup>

In the early years after the death of Charlotte Smith, her surviving contemporaries saw her increasingly as an exemplary representative of the good old literary days of the late eighteenth century. Her controversial politics and personal complainings lost their irritating edge: she even seems to become regarded as exemplifying stalwart and enduring English qualities. I indicate elsewhere the power of Charlotte Smith's poetry to divert and console English readers overseas,<sup>148</sup> and the same was true, apparently, of her fiction. In distant Bombay, Sir James Mackintosh was agreeably surprised by his reading of what may well have been Anna Barbauld's edition:

To soothe before court, and to refresh after it, I indulged myself in reading a novel of Charlotte Smith's called the 'Old Manor House', which I had never read before, or had totally forgotten. It interested me beyond its reputation, and, I was going to have said, beyond its power; I have seldom felt greater anxiety about the issue of events, which are improbable enough.<sup>149</sup>

And Mary Russell Mitford became increasingly fond of Charlotte Smith's works in her latter days. In a letter of 13th December 1812, she had regretted the lack of 'amiable', 'interesting and excellent' and 'producibile' young men in novels: neither Richardson, Maria Edgeworth, Fanny Burney nor Charlotte Smith ever managed to create a héros de roman whom it was possible to admire.<sup>150</sup> Yet in a letter of 29th November 1854 she looked back nostalgically on Charlotte Smith's writings, and incidentally revealed that her style had served a famous

147 Ibid., vii.

148 See below, pp. 74-5.

149 Robert J MacKintosh (ed), Memoirs of the Life of the Right Hon Sir James MacKintosh (London 1835) I, 105.

150 A G L'Estrange (ed), The Life of Mary Russel Mitford Related in a Selection from her Letters to her Friends (London 1870) I, 217.



barrister as a model for his own speeches:

I have been also reading some old novels which I loved in my youth ... I have been revelling in old associations and good English. Did you ever read any of Charlotte Smith's novels? Except that they want cheerfulness, nothing can exceed the beauty of the style. Whenever Erskine had a great speech to make he used to read her works, that he might catch their grace of composition.<sup>151</sup>

In the eyes of one reader at least, Charlotte Smith's colloquialisms, so despised by Anna Seward, were not evident or had lost their power to offend.

## CHAPTER TWO

## CHARLOTTE SMITH AND THE PERIODICALS

The study of Charlotte Smith's treatment in the contemporary literary periodicals provides eloquent testimony of her popularity and an insight into the tastes of her day. Perhaps most illuminating are the Reviews, where one might expect (but does not always find) a continuous and developing criticism and a temperature chart of Charlotte Smith's literary standing, and I shall refer to the Reviews later in this chapter. Other kinds of periodicals also contain matter on Charlotte Smith: poems from her collections, extracts from her fiction, biographical articles, effusions in verse in her praise. Although I shall concentrate below on a representative selection of periodicals published in London for metropolitan and national consumption - particularly the Gentleman's Magazine - I shall also touch upon the way Charlotte Smith was treated by the provincial periodicals. To survey the still-available provincial magazines with anything like comprehensiveness would require a dissertation in its own right.

I am indebted in the first section of this chapter to Robert D Mayo's admirable study, The English Novel in The Magazines, 1740-1815, as much for its confirmation of the view that one cannot hope to assess a writer's place in the literary history of the period justly without extensive reference to the periodicals, as for those parts of his study dealing specifically with Charlotte Smith.

## I

Reprints of Charlotte Smith's Fiction in the Periodicals

It is notoriously difficult to identify the composition of the 'reading public' of the late eighteenth century, and this is as true of Charlotte Smith's audience as that of any other popular writer. Did, for example, those readers who devoured her Elegiac Sonnets also help to make her early novels the resounding success they were? Or did the fact that many assumed poetry to be a form superior to the novel mean that there was some differentiation in readership? In practice, one tends to deduce the readership from the works themselves - the attitudes, interests and subjects there evident - and the embourgeoisement of fiction in the latter years of the eighteenth century has customarily been taken to imply an ever-growing middle-class readership with, in the case of the women especially, time on its hands.

Certainly a survey of the magazines does little to damage this hypothesis, and in the case of Charlotte Smith indicates a remarkably varied readership. She was admired by the leading literary figures of her day - and by the leading national literary periodicals - but extracts from her works also found their way into rather obscure provincial periodicals and one would postulate a slightly less sophisticated, more local readership for such periodicals as the Weekly Entertainer of Sherbourne and the Caledonian Magazine, or Aberdeen Repository. Charlotte Smith was also a frequent guest in a variety of periodicals aimed specifically at women readers, which often combined literary material with earnest advice on manners, dress and morals, and revelations as to how the beau monde comported itself. Such periodicals included The Lady's Magazine, The Lady's Monthly Museum and the Belle Assemblée.

It seems reasonable to conclude that Charlotte Smith appealed to a wide spectrum of the reading public and, in addition, so far as is indicated by the frequency and length of extracts from her works in the periodicals, within that spectrum she was second to none in popularity. Mayo provides a catalogue of 1375 magazine novels and novelettes published between 1740 and 1815, in The English Novel in The Magazines, and from a study of these concludes that in the closing years of the eighteenth century, Charlotte Smith and Dr John Moore succeeded Johnson, Goldsmith, Henry Brooke and Henry Mackenzie, as the most drawn-upon authors of detached episodes reproduced in Miscellanies.<sup>1</sup> (By 'detached episodes' he means long extracts from novels - either inset stories or discrete parts - offered as self-contained works of fiction.)<sup>2</sup> Such episodes were a regular feature of many periodicals after 1766,<sup>3</sup> but Charlotte Smith's works also appeared in the form of abridgements or long epitomes - in the Universal Magazine for example<sup>4</sup> - where they stood out as being conspicuously superior to the 'original fiction' also offered. This widespread use of extracts from Charlotte Smith's fiction again reflects her enormous popularity. Mayo considers that the editors were in part influenced by 'the example, feeble as it was, of the main organs of literary opinion'<sup>5</sup> - that is the principal Reviews in the main - but the Reviews themselves reflected as well as partly created, public preferences.

1 Robert D Mayo, The English Novel in the Magazines 1740-1815 (London 1962), 249.

2 Ibid., 247.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 182.

5 Ibid., 247.

The Smith works most often chosen by Miscellany editors to provide detached episodes were The Romance of Real Life (1787), Ethelinde (1789), Celestina (1791) and Desmond (1792), and Mayo found that the most widely reprinted episode by any author, of all those he traced, was 'The Affecting History of Caroline Montgomery' from Ethelinde.<sup>6</sup> One cannot ignore the simple possibility that Charlotte Smith was drawn upon frequently because she was fond of including inset narratives that could easily be detached. However, she was not unique in this respect, and Mayo prefers to account for the popularity of this piece by its literary merits:

... in its brevity and its simple outlines, the 'History of Caroline Montgomery' contrasts sharply with the more involved and pretentious fable in which it is enclosed. In these respects it is typical of most interpolated histories in the eighteenth century novel, and in these respects also, so it happens, it strikingly conforms to the indigenous tradition of magazines and novelettes since the days of the Female Spectator and the Adventurer.<sup>7</sup>

As regards Caroline herself,

both her person and her story have a quality of 'romantic enthusiasm' which the earlier essay-writers would have disallowed. ... But her history is otherwise very close to the models afforded by a long line of magazine precedents, being a case history or edifying 'picture of life'<sup>8</sup> presented in the form of a first-person chronicle.

So Charlotte Smith's works provided inset narratives chosen by editors as much for their traditional characteristics as their innovations. Yet they must have helped extend her readership and popularise the novels from which they were drawn.

Inset narratives from Charlotte Smith's novels often appeared initially in the better-known Miscellanies whence they were pillaged by more obscure publications, though no doubt in some cases the editors discovered them independently.

6 Ibid., 249

7 Ibid., 252

8 Ibid.

So 'The History of Caroline Montgomery' first appeared in the Universal Magazine in December 1789, whence it found its way into at least seven other periodicals, the last being the Edinburgh Magazine in December 1791.<sup>9</sup> Usually the authorship was acknowledged, but sometimes not. 'The Interesting History of the Count de Bellegarde', from Celestina, appeared over Charlotte Smith's name in the Universal in four parts from September to December 1791, but when used subsequently by Monthly Extracts in January 1792 (cut from 20,000 to 15,000 words), it appeared anonymously. However, this was rare, and would not have interfered seriously with the dissemination of a wider public acquaintance with the works and name of Charlotte Smith. A further refinement in plagiarism occurred when this last-mentioned narrative was seized upon by the

9 The reference here, and for the other inset narratives and periodicals mentioned subsequently in this section, are best given by means of a table of such narratives by Charlotte Smith and the periodicals in which they appeared. This has been compiled from Mayo, 'A Catalogue of 1375 Magazine Novels and Novelettes', op. cit., 448, 449, 465, 481, 516, 535, 574:-

- I 'The History of James le Brun'. From The Romance of Real Life (1787).
  - i Political Magazine and Parliamentary, Naval, Military, and Literary Journal XIV (Jan-Feb 1788).
  - ii Hibernian Magazine, or Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge (Feb-May 1788).
- II 'The Pretended Martin Guerre'. From The Romance of Real Life (1787).
  - i Edinburgh Magazine, or Literary Miscellany VI (Aug 1787).
  - ii Caledonian Magazine, or Aberdeen Repository I (Sept-Oct 1787).
  - iii Weekly Miscellany of Instruction and Entertainment (Glasgow) III (Nov-Dec 1790).
- III 'The Affecting History of Caroline Montgomery'. From Ethelinde, or The Recluse of the Lake (1789).
  - i Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure LXXXV (Dec 1789 (supp.)).
  - ii New London Magazine VI (Jan-March 1790)
  - iii Hibernian Magazine (Jan-March 1790).
  - iv Caledonian Magazine IV (Jan-March 1790).
  - v Weekly Entertainer, or Agreeable and Instructive Repository (Sherbourne) XV (Feb-March 1790).

Tell-Tale or Universal Museum as late as 1803 and appeared in the form of a disguised redaction as 'The Castle of the Pyrenees'.

The other Charlotte Smith narratives traced by Mayo in the magazines were 'The Distressful Situation of Geraldine' from Desmond (1792), and 'The History of James Le Brun' and 'The Pretended Martin Guerre' from The Romance of Real Life (1787). In addition to these, of course, extracts from Charlotte Smith's works often appeared in the Reviews: no other novelist of her day had more of his fiction disseminated in ways other than its original mode of publication.

Charlotte Smith was also introduced to a wider public in the less prestigious periodicals by means of biographical and critical sketches largely composed after her death. One might anticipate the obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine, but the amount of attention she was given in lesser publications is remarkable. A typical example is The Lady's Monthly Museum which, in its own words, was 'an assemblage of whatever can tend to please the fancy, interest the mind, or exalt the character of the British fair'. It provided a four-page critical survey of her works in May 1799, with as many biographical deductions as could be gathered from those works, though the writer lamented the fact that 'of her parentage, education and domestic connections we have no authentic

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- vi European Magazine and London Review XVII (May-June 1790).
  - vii Scots Magazine (Edinburgh) LII (May-June 1790).
  - viii Edinburgh Magazine XIV (Dec 1791).
  - IV 'The Interesting History of the Count de Bellegarde' From Celestina, a Novel (1791).
    - i Universal Magazine LXXXIX (Sept-Dec 1791).
    - ii Monthly Extracts, or Beauties of Modern Authors II (Jan 1792).
    - iii Weekly Entertainer XIX (Feb-Apr 1792).
  - V 'The Castle of the Pyrenees'. From Celestina, a Novel (1791). (Disguised redaction of IV above.)
    - i Tell-Tale, or Universal Museum I (1803).
  - VI 'The Distressful Situation of Geraldine'. From Desmond, a Novel (1792).
    - i Monthly Extracts III (Aug 1792).
-

information'.<sup>10</sup> In 1808 the magazine announced 'an important review of female literature', in which it intended to survey no fewer than twenty-four women (and later ten men) novelists, including Charlotte Smith. The editor would be

cautiously selecting such only as are fit to meet the female eye; omitting all those, which, while possessing every advantage of style and interest, can in any degree tend to corrupt the heart, or mislead the ardent imagination of youth.<sup>11</sup>

The opportunity was taken to admonish authors for impropriety, and to beg them to consider

before they commit the effusion of a wild imagination to paper, whether their invented tales be such as they could with confidence put into the hands of their own children; whether the character of their hero or heroine is the model of what they would chuse as their companion for life; or whether the sentiments they are about to inculcate are compatible with Christian piety, integrity, and domestic duty.<sup>12</sup>

Despite these exacting and indeed paralyzing conditions, the editor found him - or herself able to include and recommend William Godwin and Thomas Holcroft. Charlotte Smith herself had not always been found wholly unexceptionable, but a brief biographical and critical account duly appeared in Volume V of the magazine.<sup>13</sup> The same volume also contained a sonnet by Charlotte Smith in its 'Appollonian Wreath' section, as a tribute in lieu of an obituary.<sup>14</sup> Other even more ephemeral periodicals gave Charlotte Smith similar attention.<sup>15</sup>

10 The Lady's Monthly Museum; or Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction XI (May 1799), 337.

11 Ibid., (New Series) IV (Jan-June 1808), 19.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., V (July-Dec 1808), 30.

14 Ibid., 53.

15 See for example: The Belle Assemblée, or Bell's Court and Fashionable Magazine I (Nov 1806), 531-33.



## II

The Gentleman's Magazine

I turn now from reprints of Mrs Smith's fiction in the magazines, and from the fostering of her literary reputation by ephemeral Miscellanies, to a survey of her literary progress in possibly the greatest of eighteenth-century Miscellanies. This came to seem necessary during research into her treatment by the Reviews. One may judge the literary response of contemporaries from the Reviews - what they saw as Mrs Smith's characteristic strengths and weaknesses and what kind of a writer she seemed - but it is the business of Reviews to notice everything save the obviously trivial (and even that not always excepted). One needs to turn to a periodical not wholly literary, but prestigious and authoritative, to help gauge the impact of a writer on the educated classes of her day. The Gentleman's Magazine seemed the obvious choice.

Yet care still must be exercised to avoid the drawing of erroneous conclusions. Because no Charlotte Smith novel after Emmeline (1788) was noticed by the Gentleman's, one might be tempted to conclude that Mrs Smith's popularity as a novelist waned somewhat in the 1790's. Indeed, I believe this to be true, but it would be a conclusion unwarrantably drawn from her treatment in this respect by the Gentleman's, since that periodical tended to ignore novels in general in the 1790's, as the volume of new fiction swelled in inverse proportion to its quality. The Gentleman's, by now rather an antiquarian's magazine, had enough material contending for space in its pages without allocating it to works of dubious worth, so it tended more and more to the established respectability of works of history, archeology, science and theology in its reviewing. Poetry was quite another matter, and verse both by and dedicated to Charlotte Smith continued to appear at intervals until her death in 1806.

The Gentleman's either missed Charlotte Smith's Elegiac Sonnets when they appeared in 1784, or did not consider them worthy of notice. By April 1786, however, four editions had been published, and the Gentleman's made up for lost time by printing three of the sonnets at the suggestion of a 'valuable correspondent'.<sup>16</sup> Charlotte Smith was now an established literary figure, and the Gentleman's introduced what were to become two characteristics of the reviewing of her verses in the literary periodicals generally: sympathetic speculation on the private situation of a lady who could write poems so full of melancholy and misfortune, and extravagant praise of the poems themselves. Charlotte Smith had become both 'interesting' and the rage. After expressing the hope that the misfortunes Charlotte Smith often hinted at were 'imaginary', since otherwise 'we must have perused her very tender and exquisite effusions with diminished pleasure',<sup>17</sup> the writer continued with an opinion that may seem startling until one remembers the low estimation in which earlier sonnets were held:

A very trifling compliment is paid to Mrs Smith, when it is observed how much her Sonnets exceed those of Shakespeare and Milton. She has undoubtedly conferred honour on a species of poetry which most of her predecessors in this country have disgraced.<sup>18</sup>

What this pronouncement tells us of the poetic taste of the late eighteenth-century will be discussed in Chapter 4, which deals with Charlotte Smith's poetry in more detail, but one wonders if this could have been written by Nathan Drake. In his Literary Hours Drake praised Charlotte Smith's sonnets, considered that the works of 'our miscellaneous poets' show 'vast superiority . . . . over those of the Elizabethan period',<sup>19</sup> and thought

16 Gentleman's Magazine, 1786 (i), 333-4.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Nathan Drake, Literary Hours, or Sketches Critical and Narrative (London 1800), 199. (Second edition).

the sonnets of Shakespeare are buried beneath a load of obscurity and quaintness, nor does there issue a single ray of light to quicken, or to warm the heavy mass.<sup>20</sup>

Alternatively, perhaps Drake was encouraged in his opinions by such articles as the one of Charlotte Smith's sonnets in the Gentleman's. Be that as it may, the inclusion of Smith sonnets in the Gentleman's was to recur periodically, later supplemented by her poems written in other forms.<sup>21</sup>

The July 1786 issue of the Gentleman's shows that Charlotte Smith was sufficiently famous and interesting for her to be the victim of public rumour. The Gentleman's incurred some embarrassment by printing a premature obituary of Charlotte Smith.<sup>22</sup> The Gentleman's duly apologised and recovered its blunder by appending what it considered an appropriate sonnet: 'Does she not dwell above the starry sky?'<sup>23</sup>

Rumours of Charlotte Smith's death were apparently recurrent, for in December 1795 a reader contributed a sonnet 'On the reported Death of Mrs Charlotte Smith', although the Gentleman's, once bitten, refrained from committing itself to an obituary on this occasion.<sup>24</sup>

If the popularity of Charlotte Smith is indicated by the appearance of her poems from time to time in the Gentleman's, it is revealed still more clearly by the frequency with which verses in her praise were submitted by aspiring sonneteers and those sympathetic to her melancholy personal circumstances. As a contributor, she is one of many, but as a recipient of poetic accolades she has hardly a rival, and only Anna Seward can begin to compete with her. It seems apparent that in an

20 Ibid., 108.

21 See: Gent. Mag., 1786 (ii), 713; 1785 (i), 307; 1792 (ii), 1038; 1793 (ii), 655.

22 Gent. Mag., 1786 (ii), 619.

23 Gent. Mag., 1786 (ii), 713.

24 Gent. Mag., 1795 (ii), 1040.

age of sensibility Charlotte Smith had become, in today's jargon, a 'cult-figure'. People loved to feel for her and to sympathize with this lonely poet, bravely producing sonnets in the face of darkly hinted though imperfectly specified troubles. These poems were usually sonnets similar in tone to Charlotte Smith's own, often relying on her device of contrasting a fresh, vigorous spring with her own melancholy lassitude and fading fortunes, or of choosing something from Nature - perhaps a tender flower or a sweet-sounding bird - which must bear the batterings of stormy weather as the poet must suffer blighting misfortune. The following is a typical example, anonymously contributed to the September 1789 issue of the Gentleman's Magazine:

TO CHARLOTTE SMITH

Of thee, fair mourner, o'er whose downcast face  
 Fortune has spread the sickly tints of grief;  
 Whilst Poetry, to give thee sweet relief,  
 Essays with warblings mild thy woes to chase,  
 An emblem meet my search for roving finds.  
 Among the infant spring's first opening flowers,  
 Drooping its head, and wet with chilling showers,  
 The snow-drop trembles in the ruffling winds  
 Yet seems its simple form in fancy's eye  
 More lovely, since in rudest season born.  
 How piteous such a flower should bide the scorn  
 Of every surly storm that passes by!  
 How far more piteously surly storms should blow  
 'Gainst thee, whose song is echo to thy woe!<sup>25</sup>

Apparently this poem appealed so strongly to one 'T' that he made one or two minor improvements and submitted it for a further airing in the November 1791 issue.<sup>26</sup> It is odd that the editor reprinted it.

The example above is one of many. Poems in praise of Charlotte Smith came from both sexes and from England and abroad: from 'a Lady of Fifteen';<sup>27</sup> from 'Junius' offering religious consolation;<sup>28</sup> from 'Eyles Irwin, Esq.' in Canton,

25 Gent. Mag., 1789 (ii), 839.

26 Gent. Mag., 1791 (ii), 1047.

27 Gent. Mag., 1785 (ii), 991.

28 Gent. Mag., 1790 (ii), 649.

attesting to Charlotte Smith's poetic power even over those 'On Tygris' banks or Petrea's steril way'.<sup>29</sup> She was not unappreciated at the ancient universities: 'S.S.T.' of 'Oxon.' wrote the premature obituary mentioned above, and 'C.L.T. Etonensis, Christs College, Cambridge' submitted a poem in Latin for 'Charlotta Smyth'.<sup>30</sup>

The only sour notes to mar this chorus of sympathetic admiration in the Gentleman's Magazine were delivered by a rather carping communication, alleging a minor plagiarism in the Sonnets, in September 1786<sup>31</sup> (a charge not infrequently levelled at Mrs Smith elsewhere), and an indignant notice of Charlotte Smith's free translation of the Abbé Prévost's Manon Lescaut (1786). The reviewer considered the latter

a scandalous imposition on the Circulating Libraries, or rather on the too numerous Novel readers; as this Manon is, word for word, the same story as appeared 19 years ago intituled, Le Chevalier de Grioux.<sup>32</sup>

He had not grasped that no deception was intended; that this was a new translation of a famous French novel. But in any case, this does little to counter one's impression of a general admiration of Charlotte Smith's poetry running through the Gentleman's for some twenty years.

The Gentleman's bade farewell to Charlotte Smith with a short, though handsome obituary: she had retained 'her excellent qualities to the last'.<sup>33</sup> The editor later added the information that she was descended 'from the Sidneys and Earls of Leicester',<sup>34</sup> a claim that I have found evidence for nowhere else and which is not confirmed, though sometimes repeated, by subsequent biographers. A long additional

29 Gent. Mag., 1794 (ii), 1035.

30 Gent. Mag., 1799 (i), 236.

31 Gent. Mag., 1786 (ii), 757.

32 Gent. Mag., 1787 (i), 167.

33 Gent. Mag., 1806 (ii), 991.

34 Gent. Mag., 1806 (ii), 1073.

obituary appeared in the Supplement at the end of 1806.<sup>35</sup> Even in death Charlotte Smith could command extensive space in the magazines.

The Gentleman's was not exceptional in its reprinting Charlotte Smith's poetry. The European Magazine occasionally transcribed her verses,<sup>36</sup> and to the Universal Magazine belongs the distinction of printing the only poem by the adult Charlotte Smith I have found which did not previously appear in one of her published collections of verse.<sup>37</sup>

### III

#### The Reviews

The plenitude of notices of Charlotte Smith's works in the Reviews is daunting to the student though eloquent of her immense popularity. No Review of significance wholly ignored her and most reviewed the great majority of her works, though some were less warmly disposed to them (and her moral and political views) than others. It is pre-eminently in the Reviews that one can chart the progress of Charlotte Smith's literary career and manner in which her contemporaries responded to her writings. I summarise the response of the Reviews chronologically in the Chapters below dealing with the Poetry and Prose works.<sup>38</sup> The notice afforded a Smith work was not invariably based on purely literary considerations, but, predictably, depended to a degree on the political standpoint of the Review and predilections of the reviewer. I have therefore studied a wider range of

35 Gent. Mag., 1806 (ii), 1247.

36 See for example: The European Magazine XX (July 1791), 71; XX (Dec 1791), 463-4; XXIX (Mar 1796), 201; XXXII (Oct 1797), 264.

37 The Universal Magazine LXXXIV (June 1789), 331.  
See below p. 167.

38 See below, Chapters 4 and 5.

of Reviews than has previously been drawn upon in studies of Charlotte Smith's works and trust that a correspondingly more accurate overall picture of her critical fortunes emerges. In pursuit of a balanced view, I have drawn upon periodicals sympathetic to Charlotte Smith's reformist politics (such as the Analytical Review) and those hostile (such as the British Critic and Anti-Jacobin Review), as well as the prestigious Monthly and Critical Reviews.<sup>39</sup> The Reviews confirm that Charlotte Smith was at her most popular in the early years of her career with the publication of the Elegiac Sonnets (1784) and her first three novels; that the moral earnestness and the political didacticism of Desmond (1792) alienated some readers; and that thereafter, though she remained a leading writer, her works no longer had the attraction of novelty and she never quite managed to regain her early very high level of popularity.

### The Analytical and Monthly Reviewers

One may identify, tentatively, certain of the Analytical reviewers of Charlotte Smith's works and, more certainly, those of the Monthly.<sup>40</sup> Quite a number were involved - eleven different reviewers noticed Charlotte Smith's works in the Monthly - but some reviewed a number of works. Thus, in

39 The Reviews drawn on for notices of Charlotte Smith's works are: The Analytical Review, The Anti-Jacobin Review, The British Critic, The Critical Review, The English Review, The European Magazine, The Monthly Magazine. The Monthly Review.

40 The identifications of reviewers in this section are based upon, in the case of the Analytical, Ralph M Wardle, 'Mary Wollstonecraft, Analytical Reviewer' PMLA LXII (Dec 1947), 1000-1009; and in the case of the Monthly, Benjamin C Nangle, The Monthly Review: First Series, 1749-1789 and Second Series, 1790-1815. Indexes of Contributors 2 vols (London 1934, 1955).

the Analytical, it seems that Mary Wollstonecraft reviewed five of the novels and John Aikin five publications of various kinds. In the case of the Monthly, the principal reviewers of Charlotte Smith were William Enfield (6 novels) and Andrew Becket (3 works). Arthur Aikin, George Griffiths, Jabez Hiron and Lockhart Muirhead reviewed two works each, while Edmund Cartwright, Thomas Denham, Samuel Rose, and Ollyett Woodhouse contributed one Charlotte Smith review each.<sup>41</sup>

The most interesting figure in this list is Mary Wollstonecraft of the Analytical, who reviewed five Charlotte Smith novels, four of which were published successively. One might anticipate a strong basic sympathy on Mary Wollstonecraft's part for a sister writer of reformist, and for a time, revolutionist outlook. Charlotte Smith exemplified woman suffering the bonds of a disastrous marriage, but proving herself capable of doing 'all that becomes a man' in providing for a family. That women needed 'rights' and were capable of meeting the responsibilities attendant on them Charlotte Smith was a shining vindication. However, there is a complication here in that, however bitter her attacks on legal, political and some social institutions, Charlotte Smith studiously avoided suggesting she disapproved of the institution of marriage, and accepted the role of dedicated wife and mother for many years with martyr-like resignation. She was moderate in her references to women's rights in her works, however confidently she claimed and asserted them in practice in her life. Mary Wollstonecraft reviewed mainly her apolitical early novels and I suspect she knew at that

41 The Monthly and Analytical reviewers of Charlotte Smith's works, where known, are identified in the text or in footnotes during discussion of their notices in Chapters 4 and 5.



time only as much of Charlotte Smith's private life and opinions as was common literary knowledge and gossip.<sup>42</sup>

Mary Wollstonecraft certainly did not recognise Charlotte Smith as a kindred spirit from her first three novels, Emmeline, Ethelinde and Celestina. Like the novels themselves, the Wollstonecraft reviews were thoroughly apolitical, but they had a critical astringency and penetration surpassing anything in the rival Reviews. Of all the reviewers of the early Smith works, Mary Wollstonecraft gives the least impression of being swept away in the rising tide of Charlotte Smith's popularity. There are certain threads running through these three reviews and that of Desmond: Mary Wollstonecraft admired most of all Charlotte Smith's picturesque descriptions of nature and her skill in the portrayal of manners. The principal faults she finds consistently in Charlotte Smith comprise an inability to convey the passions convincingly, a tendency for her heroes, heriones and 'ideal' characters to be colourlessly unconvincing, and a consequent tendency of her enslavement by novelistic conventions to seduce young readers from the paths of reason and sobriety of conduct. She was particularly severe on what was derivative in Charlotte Smith's novels. Thus, in Ethelinde

Many of the incidents are very novel-like, or rather introduced for effect; - mere stage tricks.<sup>43</sup>

and in Celestina she was sorry to observe that the writer's invention was

still fettered by her respect for some popular modern novels. For ... she too frequently, and not very happily, copies, we can scarcely say imitates, some of the distressing encounters and ludicrous embarrassments which in Evelina & c. lose their effect by breaking the interest.<sup>44</sup>

42 See above, p.p. 49-50.

43 Analytical Review V (Dec 1789), 485.

44 Ibid. XI (Aug 1791), 409.

Mary Wollstonecraft was disapproving of Mrs Stafford in

Emmeline:

We do not understand what the author means, when she talks of a mind originally elegant; and indeed the word elegant, the real import of which few novelists seem to comprehend, is too often introduced, as are all the decorations, the drapery of woe, grief personified, hair freed from confinement to shade feverish cheeks, tottering steps, inarticulate words, and graceful attitudes, are mentioned when the scene is to be pathetic. We cannot avoid animadverting on this practice, so universal among writers who tread in a beaten track, and catch the subordinate beauties of the authors they labour to imitate. 45

Mary Wollstonecraft's objections to Charlotte Smith's adhering too conventionally to previous models were not purely artistic. She no doubt did value originality, but was more concerned that novels written to accepted sentimental patterns combined to induce distorted pictures of life and unreasonable expectations of it in impressionable readers. In summarising Emmeline, she excluded one emotional section altogether, explaining her reasons in a footnote:

Such an exhibition of violent emotions and attitudes follows as we cannot describe or analyse; yet we fear the description will catch the attention of many romantic girls, and carry their imaginations still further from nature and reason. 46

Mary Wollstonecraft's dislike of such sentimental features stems from her rationalistic radicalism, which displays certain crucial differences from Charlotte Smith's liberal ideological stance. These differences are characterized below in Chapter 5.<sup>46a</sup> This section deals principally with Mary Wollstonecraft's reservations on the effect of Charlotte Smith's novels on the sensibilities and conduct of readers and provides a general survey of her reviews of Charlotte Smith's works: it should be read in conjunction with the later discussion. Here, we may remark that it is surprising at first glance that Mary Wollstonecraft should share with the conservative male reviewers the suspicion that novels were a dangerous influence on frivolous and impressionable female minds. But some distinctions must be made to differentiate Mary Wollstonecraft from the conservatives: the latter are concerned usually that the social and domestic status quo may be threatened; that young ladies may glean romantic notions from their reading at variance with their duty to

45 Ibid. I (July 1788), 328-9n.

46 Ibid., 33n.

46a See particularly pp. 2351-2350 below.

parents and amenability to parental views. There is also the fear that some novels may encourage intrusion into civic responsibilities and activities customarily a masculine preserve. Mary Wollstonecraft would hardly concur in the latter objection and, as regards the former, her concern is that immersion in a make-believe world of romance prevents the development of an intelligent and perceptive appreciation of one's environment. If young women thus demonstrate the frivolity of their minds, they cannot expect to be taken seriously outside a purely domestic setting.

Mary Wollstonecraft's objections therefore are to 'escapist' novels as a whole, and to Charlotte Smith's fiction in so far as it makes concessions to this kind of novel:

Few of the numerous productions termed novels, claim any attention; and while we distinguish this one, we cannot help lamenting that it has the same tendency as the generality, whose preposterous sentiments our young females imbibe with such avidity. Vanity thus fostered, takes deep root in the forming mind and affectation banishes natural graces, or at least obscures them. ... We must observe, that the false expectations these wild scenes excite, tend to debauch the mind, and throw an insipid kind of uniformity over the moderate and rational pursuits of life, consequently adventures are sought for and created, when duties are neglected, and content despised.<sup>47</sup>

Celestina was, as a whole, 'very defective and unnatural' despite the fact that 'many lucid parts are scattered with negligent grace'. These saving portions keep the attention of the mature reader, who otherwise

would turn, knowing something of the human heart, with disgust from the romantic adventures, and artificial passions, that novel-reading has suggested to the author. It were indeed to be wished, that with Mrs Smith's abilities, she had sufficient courage to think for herself, and not view life through the medium of books.<sup>48</sup>

47 Ibid., 333.

48 Ibid., X, 409.

Mary Wollstonecraft wrote little that was specifically complimentary about Emmeline despite her acknowledgement of its superiority to the general run of novels. Her only real praise came at the end of the review, following closely aspersions on Charlotte Smith's Adelina: a character 'as absurd as dangerous' who indulged 'useless sorrow' which was rather the offspring of romantic notions and false refinement, than of sensibility and a nice sense of duty.<sup>49</sup>

Mary Wollstonecraft was all for resilience and against languishing: 'Mrs Stafford, when disappointed in her husband, turned to her children'.<sup>50</sup> No doubt she would have considered the author herself far superior to her character, Adelina. Even the concluding praise was mere qualification of a criticism:

We have not observed many touches of nature in the delineation of the passions, except the emotions which the descriptions of romantic views gave rise to.<sup>51</sup>

The praise in the review of Ethelinde was much warmer, mainly because the novel contained more of the descriptions of nature Mary Wollstonecraft so admired in Emmeline. The novelist was able

to catch all those alluring charms of nature which form such enchanting backgrounds to the historical part of the pictures she displays in these volumes, and gives them sentiment and interest.<sup>52</sup>

The Lake District scenery was particularly well done, she thought. Charlotte Smith was admired also for writing 'like a gentlewoman' in that her ladies of quality were translated from life and were not

the sickly offspring of a distempèred imagination, that looks up with awe to the sounding distinctions of rank, and the gay delights which riches afford.<sup>53</sup>

49 Ibid., I, 333.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., V (Dec 1789), 484.

53 Ibid.

Mary Wollstonecraft was decidedly more impressed by Charlotte Smith now, but found it necessary to repeat many of her criticisms formerly applied to Emmeline. The characters were sometimes false and 'theatrical attitudes are exhibited instead of impassioned expressions'. Elsewhere, minutiae distract from the main line of the story:

... everything is described with that minutest exactness, which distinguishes a mind more inclined to observe the various shades of manners than the workings of passion or the inconsistencies of human nature.<sup>55</sup>

Again the principal characters worried Mary Wollstonecraft. Ethelinde was the 'twin sister' of Emmeline, and though the former was supposed to be 'all perfection - nature's masterpiece', the reviewer showed her preference for spirit and resilience when she remarked disappointedly that Ethelinde was 'too often sick', 'appears a frail woman' and

... we cannot help wishing that Mrs Smith had considered how many females might probably read her pleasing production, whose minds are in a ductile state; she would not then have cherished their delicacy, or, more properly speaking, weakness, by making her heroine so very beautiful and so attentive to preserve her personal charms, even when grief, beauty's cankerworm, was at work.<sup>56</sup>

The review concluded with an appreciation of the 'easy, unaffected style', of the writing. Mary Wollstonecraft was not exempt from the general tendency of reviewers to mention Charlotte Smith's 'few grammatical errors', but she was untypical in that she listed none of them, thinking it pointless when there were 'charms in the language which cold correctness will never reach'<sup>57</sup> to enjoy.

The review of Celestina contained less criticism and more transcription than formerly. A number of criticisms were made, indicated above, but Mary Wollstonecraft again admired

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

those minor characters 'forcibly sketched from nature'. Charlotte Smith's errors, noticed in this and in previous novels, apparently did not detract from the fineness of her sensibility and Mary Wollstonecraft was not exempt from the fashionable appreciation of writers whose sensibility caused the reader to savour his own:

There is a degree of sentiment in some of her delicate tints, that steals on the heart, and made us feel the exquisite taste of the mind that guided the pencil.<sup>58</sup>

Charlotte Smith's fourth novel, Desmond, was, owing to its undigested portions of political doctrine, a failure in a way which her first three, however conventional, were not.<sup>59</sup> Yet Mary Wollstonecraft saw it only in terms of a refreshing contrast to the trivialities of the preceding three in its touching for the first time on the great public issues of the day and not merely on private lives within a narrow domestic or restricted social circle.

Mary Wollstonecraft obviously appreciated Charlotte Smith's satirical treatment of conservatives, and the fairly uncomplicated narrative:

The subordinate characters are sketched with that peculiar dexterity that shoots folly as it flies; and the tale, not encumbered with episodes, is a more interesting, as well as a more finished production than any of her former ones.<sup>60</sup>

It takes a profound interest in and sympathy for the doctrine in the novel to see the work as 'finished' and Mary Wollstonecraft did indeed appreciate not only the libertarian politics, but the effective expression of them, when she remarked that

The cause of freedom is defended with warmth, whilst shrewd satire and acute observations back the embodied arguments.<sup>61</sup>

The reviewer was so agreeably surprised by this political awareness and libertarian fervour in a writer who had seemed

58 Ibid., X (Aug 1791), 409.

59 See below, p p. 306-7.

60 Analytical Review XIII (Aug 1792), 428.

61 Ibid.

little more than an imitator of Fanny Burney that she omitted to search out the characteristic faults this time, apart from remarking that Charlotte Smith had 'more knowledge of the world than of the human heart'.<sup>62</sup> The review concludes with genial praise. Charlotte Smith's power to evoke landscape was international in scope; she needed only to 'wave her wand' and vineyards of France were before the mind's eye.<sup>63</sup>

Mary Wollstonecraft did not review another of Charlotte Smith's novels until Marchmont (1796): she had been in France and, briefly, in Sweden. It is unfortunate she did not write on The Banished Man before this nor The Young Philosopher after, for it would be interesting to have a record of her reaction to the cooling of Mrs Smith's libertarian enthusiasm in the former and its transfiguration to liberal idealism in the latter.

By the time of Marchmont's publication, Mary Wollstonecraft had acquired more knowledge of Charlotte Smith's distressed circumstances and had recognised her as something of a kindred spirit having suffered considerably herself. A sympathetic tone quite different from the detachment of the early reviews now pervaded the notice, and Mary Wollstonecraft was quite willing to excuse the acrimony with which Charlotte Smith regarded her husband. She approved of the intention of 'showing the misery which unprincipled men of law may bring on the innocent', even if Marchmont was 'spun out in the beginning and wound up too hastily at the conclusion'.<sup>64</sup> This tolerant attitude came at a time when most other reviewers were disenchanted and were finding Charlotte Smith's shrill insistence on her own troubles tedious. Mary Wollstonecraft's reviews of Charlotte Smith's works were as sturdily independent at the end as at the beginning.

62 Ibid., 429.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid., XXV (April 1797), 523

The other Analytical reviewer to deal with a number of Charlotte Smith's works was John Aikin, though he reviewed both novels and poems, whereas Mary Wollstonecraft kept to the fiction. Charlotte Smith was something of a literary property of the Aikin family. John's sister, Anna Barbauld, subsequently wrote a critical preface to The Old Manor House, and his son Arthur was reviewing Charlotte Smith's works in the Monthly while his father (also at times a Monthly reviewer) contributed to the Analytical, though unfortunately we are never confronted with the fascinating coincidence of father and son reviewing the same work in different Reviews, in the case of Charlotte Smith's publications.

Samuel Rose, the Monthly reviewer who noticed Charlotte Smith's last novel, The Young Philosopher (1798) in March 1799, was, or was to become acquainted with the author and involved in her personal affairs. Rose shared the authorship of the notice with Thomas Wallace, who, contributed the last two paragraphs.<sup>65</sup> The origins of the acquaintance with Charlotte Smith are obscure, but the seventeen letters from her to Sarah Rose, Samuel's wife, and one to Rose himself, discovered by Turner in the United States, show that a friendship existed after about 1800, especially with Sarah.<sup>66</sup> Mrs Rose seems to have filled the role of confidante to Charlotte Smith in these later years. In letter after letter Charlotte Smith discusses her troubles with Sarah, confiding such intimate details as the infidelity of her husband.<sup>67</sup> Samuel seems to have acted for Charlotte Smith in legal and financial matters. (He had been called to the bar in 1796.) Turner quotes from a letter of February 14th, 1804 from Charlotte Smith to Sarah showing that Samuel was concerned in the financial settlement of the marriage of Charlotte Smith's daughter, Anna Augusta, to the Chevalier de Faville.<sup>68</sup>

65 Monthly Review XXVIII (March 1799), 346.

66 Turner, op. cit., 184-7.

67 Ibid., 33.

68 Ibid., 39.



On September 10th, 1804, she wrote to the same correspondent that another daughter, Charlotte Mary, could not get 'even the interest of the money, awarded to her by Mr Rose, twelve months since'.<sup>69</sup> Turner tells us that Samuel Rose also received monies arising from a loan to Charlotte Smith by de Faville, and applied them to paying her bills as she directed.<sup>70</sup>

One need not penetrate the intricacies of these arrangements to discern the importance of the Roses to Charlotte Smith in her latter years; but whether the friendship existed at the time of Rose's review of The Young Philosopher is unclear. The date of the first Smith letter to the Roses that has been found is uncertain, though it was probably written (to Sarah) sometime during 1800.<sup>71</sup> The next letter to Sarah seen by Turner was not written until (probably) 1803,<sup>72</sup> and it is not until 1804 that we have a dated letter to Sarah Rose.<sup>73</sup> She then received letters regularly from Charlotte Smith until the death of the latter. The one letter to Samuel Rose so far discovered was not written until September 11th, 1803, and contained an exposition by Charlotte Smith of her financial position vis-a-vis her husband, and remarks on the state of her children's affairs.<sup>74</sup>

One can discern two avenues by which Charlotte Smith may have met the Roses possibly before this review was written. On the one hand, Rose knew William Hayley, Charlotte Smith's one-time patron then literary friend; on the other, Charles Burney Senior corresponded with Charlotte Smith as early as 1793. His son Charles was a pupil and then a master at the

69 Ibid., 73.

70 Ibid., 77.

71 Ibid., 184.

72 Ibid., 185.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid., 32, 45, 51, 72.

school run by Samuel Rose's father, and this Burney son married Sarah Rose (Samuel's sister, not his wife). The Burneys were interested in Charlotte Smith's writings and misfortunes and she could have come to the notice of Samuel by way of his sister and her Burney husband.

Rose's portion of the review expressed his appreciation of Charlotte Smith's previous novels, though it confessed that her latest offering had not given as much pleasure. Rose thought that the characters were 'not so well supported', though he hastened to except Mrs Glenmorris and Lady Kilbrodie. He then remarked that Charlotte Smith was not consistent in her political opinions throughout Desmond, The Banished Man and The Young Philosopher.<sup>75</sup> At this point his contribution ended and that of Thomas Wallace began.

The periodicals discussed above clearly indicate Charlotte Smith's popularity, but there is other corroborative evidence which may conveniently be appended here.

Most of Charlotte Smith's works justified further editions - Hilbish records fourteen editions and reprints of the Elgiac Sonnets during their author's lifetime<sup>76</sup> - and many required a second printing within a year or so of initial publication, or prompted Irish editions.<sup>77</sup>

Sales figures are not available for all Charlotte Smith's works, but from those of her letters Turner discussed we know that some two thousand copies of Emmeline (1788) were sold within little more than a year of publication;<sup>78</sup> that Cadell

75 Monthly Review, XXVIII (March 1799), 346.

76 Hilbish op. cit., 581.

77 The works concerned were: Elgiac Sonnets, Emmeline, Ethelinde, Celestina, Desmond, The Emigrants, The Old Manor House, The Banished Man, Rural Walks, Montalbert, Rambles Farther, Marchmont, Minor Morals, The Young Philosopher, What is She?

78 Turner op. cit., 107. The first edition of 1500 copies was sold in a matter of months. (See Catherine Dorset in Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 38.)

and Davies paid £20 to Charlotte Smith for a second printing of 500 copies of the relatively unsuccessful Banished Man (1794) instead of the anticipated £40 for a second edition of 'the usual number'<sup>79</sup> - which perhaps implies that a 'normal' second edition of a Smith Novel was 1,000 copies; that Low printed 1,050 copies of Marchmont (1796) and was left with 70 only on his hands.<sup>80</sup> Emmeline, with a first printing of 1,500 copies, compares favourably with the 2,000 - copy first edition of Fanny Burney's Cecilia (1782). It has been suggested that only when 'an author's star was in the ascendant did a publisher venture to order 2,000 copies in a first edition ... The usual first printing of a novel at this time ... was 500.'<sup>81</sup> When Emmeline was published, Charlotte Smith was a popular poet, but had published no novels previously.

Richard D Altick writes that in the 1770's novels usually cost 3 shillings per volume bound, 2s 6d in paper wrappers and 2 shillings in sheets for country libraries, and thus could 'seldom be purchased except by the relatively well-to-do'.<sup>82</sup> Reading costs increased further during Charlotte Smith's career: 'If the prices of books were high before 1780, they were prohibitive afterward to all but the rich'<sup>83</sup> - though since books could be privately borrowed, bought second-hand, or acquired from circulating libraries, the actual readership of a novel was usually much greater than the total sales of new copies. The prices of Charlotte Smith's novels, ascertainable from the Reviews and publisher's advertisements, confirm that the cost of fiction was rising, though not outrageously steeply in her case.<sup>84</sup> Her novels

79 Ibid., 140.

80 Ibid., 146-7.

81 Richard D Altick, The English Common Reader (Chicago and London 1963), 50.

82 Ibid., 51.

83 Ibid., 52.

84 Volumes of Charlotte Smith's novels were priced as follows (Bound copies):-

would be beyond the pocket of Altick's 'ordinary man',<sup>85</sup> though she undoubtedly reached many a reader not amongst 'the rich' by means of circulating libraries and extracts from her works in magazines.

Charlotte Smith was convinced that she enjoyed a popularity which justified higher financial rewards than she received for her works. She retained the copyright of Emmeline, at least until June 1789<sup>86</sup> (by which time the sales

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Emmeline (1788) 12 mo. 3s.  
Ethelinde (1789) 12 mo. 3s.  
Celestina (1791) 12 mo. 3s.  
Desmond (1792) 12 mo. 3s.  
The Old Manor House (1793) 12 mo. 3s 6d.  
The Banished Man (1794) 12 mo. 3s.6d. (Some Reviews say 3s.).  
Montalbert (1795) 12 mo. 4s.  
Marchmont (1796) 12mo. 4s.

The Young Philosopher (1798) 12mo. 4s.  
 The prices of volumes of the poetry rose rather more steeply. Dodsley's first 4 to. edition of the Elgiac Sonnets (1784) cost 2s. and his 1786 4 to. third edition 3s. Cadell's 1789 small 8 vo. 5th edition cost no less than 10s 6d., though the slimmer companion Volume II of 1797 was priced at 6s. The very slim 4 to. Emigrants (1793) cost 3s 6d and the posthumous 12 mo. Beachy Head (1807) 6s.

Of the other prose works, the 12 mo. Manon Lescaut (1785) and The Romance of Real Life (1787), also in 12 mo., cost 3s per volume. In the case of The Wanderings of Warwick (1794), the price was 4s. for the one 12 mo. volume, and the first three 12 mo. volumes of The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer (1800?-1802) cost 4s 6d each, volumes IV and V being more expensive at 5s each.

The books for young people were cheaper, but also rose in price. The 12 mo. Rural Walks (1795) and Rambles Farther (1796) cost 2s 6d per volume. In 1804, Conversations Introducing Poetry (12 mo.) cost 3s 6d per volume, and in 1807, A Natural History of Birds (12 mo.) was similarly priced.

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85 Altick, op. cit., 52.

86 Turner, op. cit., 107.

of 2,000 copies would have brought £1200 in to Cadell), but subsequently almost invariably sold the copyright of her works - partly to secure advances from publishers - at prices she thought would have been low in normal circumstances. She received £200 for the copyright of The Banished Man<sup>87</sup> and the same sum for The Young Philosopher,<sup>88</sup> and looked covetously at Ann Radcliffe's £100 per volume for The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), commenting with fair accuracy that she could expect only 50 guineas per volume for her novels.<sup>89</sup> Her books for young people rewarded her even less amply as regards the sale of copyright: Cadell considered that the £100 given for the two volumes of Rural Walks had been over-generous and offered only £50 for Rambles Farther.<sup>90</sup> Charlotte Smith's letters contain envious references to the ample profits of her publishers: Bell, she said, had 'cleared £400 by The Old Manor House',<sup>91</sup> and even the less successful Marchmont made Sampson Low £120 despite his inability to sell all the copies.<sup>92</sup>

It would seem then that Charlotte Smith was a remarkably popular novelist in the early years of her career and, though less so in comparison to a rising star like Ann Radcliffe, still outselling the average novelist and poet after 1792-93. The rising cost of her works in the later years of her career may have slightly reduced her sales, or at least stopped further expansion, but I suggest elsewhere that other factors were mainly responsible for a slight slackening of her popularity.<sup>93</sup>

87 Ibid., 138

88 Ibid., 148.

89 Ibid., 161-3.

90 Ibid., 155.

91 Ibid., 128.

92 Ibid., 146-7.

93 See above, p. 77.

## CHAPTER THREE

CHARLOTTE SMITH'S INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY  
AND SUCCEEDING NOVELISTS AND CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH FICTION

Charlotte Smith's literary career extended over some twenty-four years, but this study has indicated already that she was most popular in the early stages, before the publication of Desmond in 1792. Thanks to her Elegiac Sonnets she was established as one of the most highly regarded poets of the 1780's, and the three novels Emmeline (1788), Ethelinde (1790) and Celestina (1791) made her probably the most successful novelist of this brief period. It was not merely the controversial nature of Desmond and the palling of novelty that checked Charlotte Smith's popularity in the 1790's, but the appearance of Ann Radcliffe on the literary scene. It will be as well to start this chapter therefore with Charlotte Smith's literary relationship to the author of The Mysteries of Udolpho.

## I

Ann Radcliffe

Though Ann Radcliffe had published The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne in 1789, her reputation was established by A Sicilian Romance (1790), The Romance of the Forest (1791), The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) and The Italian (1797).

Had there never been an Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte Smith might well have secured a more prominent place in the history of fiction, for Ann Radcliffe developed certain elements in Charlotte Smith's fiction to such a degree that she became their exemplar par excellence. Chief among these were the romantic ( or 'atmospheric' or 'symphonic') portrayal of nature and a distinctive kind of Gothicism - the supernatural expliqué. Charlotte Smith's early heroines - refined, unerringly adhering to the proprieties, of formidable sensibility, yet not without minds and the character to resist emotional blackmail and physical threats - also provided Ann Radcliffe with models to refine to higher levels of unbelievability.<sup>1</sup>

Not surprisingly, comparisons of the two novelists abound in literary studies dealing with the period,<sup>2</sup> and it is needless to repeat here discussion readily available elsewhere. It may however be worth reasserting

1 See Baker, History of the English Novel V, 188; Hilbish op.cit., 525.

2 See for example: Baker, History of the English Novel V, 186 - 205; Foster, 'Charlotte Smith, Pre-Romantic Novelist' PMLA XLIII (1928), 463 - 74; and History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England (London 1949), Chapter IX; Hilbish, op. cit., 521 - 32; Lord Ernle, The Light Reading of our Ancestors (London 1927), 299; Lionel Stevenson, The English Novel: A Panorama (London 1960) 163 - 4; C.F. McIntyre, Ann Radcliffe in Relation to Her Time (London 1920), 92 - 5.

the fact that the credit for introducing nature-description into English fiction in anything more than a rudimentary and incidental way must go to Charlotte Smith, notwithstanding the merest snatches of such writing gleanable from Smollett and Fielding, and French novelists in translation, such as Prévost. Admirers of Ann Radcliffe sometimes suggest that not only did she develop the portrayal of nature in fiction to the highest level of artistic accomplishment attained in her day, but also that she inaugurated the whole business. Baker, Hilbish and Foster have refuted this claim convincingly.<sup>3</sup>

Charlotte Smith did not, of course, initiate Gothic fiction: such writers as Smollett in Ferdinand Count Fathom (1753), Frances Sheridan in Sidney Bidulph, (1761), and Thomas Leland in Longsword, Earl of Salisbury (1762) had prepared the way, and full-blown Gothic novels - Walpole's The Castle of Otranto (1764) and Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron (1778) - had been published before Charlotte Smith entered the literary scene. However, Charlotte Smith did employ suggestions of supernatural events in her fiction - often evoked through her descriptions of gloomy natural scenes combined with Gothic architecture and other properties - only to provide subsequent explorations in natural terms: again a technique developed to what one rather reluctantly calls perfection by Ann Radcliffe.<sup>4</sup>

3 Hilbish identifies these Radcliffeans and argues against their claims: op. cit., 519 - 32. See also Baker, op. cit., 187 - 9, 191 - 2; and Foster, PMLA, 468, 473; Pre-Romantic Novel 265, 267.

4 See Hilbish, op. cit., 521 - 7 for a detailed account of Ann Radcliffe's Gothic debt to Charlotte Smith. Also Foster, Pre-Romantic Novel, 262 - 7.



The influence of Charlotte Smith's fiction on Ann Radcliffe is another matter very adequately discussed elsewhere. Ann Radcliffe's admirers counter by detecting instances of Charlotte Smith's borrowing from her sister novelist. Here it is necessary only to point to the fact that Charlotte Smith had published two novels containing nature-description and at least some traces of Gothicism before Ann Radcliffe's first novel appeared in 1790 and well before her first real success, The Romance of the Forest, in 1791. After this date, Charlotte Smith undoubtedly was encouraged by Ann Radcliffe's successes to enhance and extend these elements in her fiction. Certainly she made also some specific borrowings, but Ann Radcliffe continued to take from her too. Charlotte Smith's initial influence on Ann Radcliffe is clear, but the unravelling of the strands of mutual influence after that is largely speculative, though Baker, Hilbish and Foster have attempted the task.<sup>5</sup>

It is noticeable that comparisons of the two novelists are usually made without much close reference to the works involved, and in my survey of Charlotte Smith's fiction below,<sup>6</sup> I compare some examples of nature-description and Gothicism in her works with those in Ann Radcliffe's, to demonstrate what they have in common and what distinguishes them. This suggests that although Charlotte Smith was perhaps more varied in her descriptions of nature and Gothic effects, Ann Radcliffe's refinement of some elements of the Smith novels gave her works an edge of intensity and power which make her romantic descriptions of nature and her Gothic passages definitive in their way.

5 See Baker, op. cit., 188, 194, 197 - 8; Hilbish, op. cit., 521 - 7, 529 - 32; Foster, PMLA, 473; Pre-Romantic Novel, 262 - 7.

6 See below, pp. 290-8.

## II

Maria Edgeworth; Colloquial Speech  
in Charlotte Smith's Fiction.

Maria Edgeworth, it seems, never met or corresponded with Charlotte Smith. She is recorded in Hare's Life as making a brief reference to a lesser Smith work - Minor Morals (1798) - where she praises the 'beautiful little botanical poem called the "Calender of Flora"'.<sup>7</sup> Probably, if she bothered to look at one of Charlotte Smith's books for children, she also saw some of the novels and books of poetry, but this is slender evidence indeed on which to claim Charlotte Smith as an 'influence'. I do no such thing here, but it will be in order to point out that Maria Edgeworth's portrait of Thady in Castle Rackrent (1800), with its significant step towards a realistic presentation of the colloquial vigour of the speech of ordinary people, coloured by occupation and locale, was not without precedents in Charlotte Smith's fiction.

One cannot claim for Charlotte Smith that she took the step of allowing a 'low' character to dominate any of her tales, however. Her central characters and her narrators are always educated, polished, and middle - or upper-class.

7 Augustus J. C. Hare, The Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth (London 1894) I, 69.  
Letter of 29th January 1800 to Miss Ruston.

Nevertheless, a number of minor characters are allowed their say - family retainers, servants and inkeepers usually - and an attempt is made to have them say it in language at least approximating to the speech they might be expected to use in real life. Joanne Altierri has remarked the conventional distinction in the eighteenth-century novel between the speech of the hero and heroine ( and those moving in their social milieu) and that of minor characters from the lower classes.<sup>8</sup> The speech of the former is always controlled in its syntax and vocabulary (even during passionate utterance); always contrived, and constructed by the writer conventionally rather than realistically appropriate to the situation in which they speak and to the matter expressed. It is artificial in more than one sense, and only servants and country folk are allowed ' a relaxed syntax and a normal diction'; the rest invariably speak 'properly'.

Charlotte Smith is remarkable for the frequency with which she allows this relaxed syntax and normal diction a place in her novels and its degree of truth-to-life when it does appear. As Miss Altieri says,

Charlotte Smith's servants are a decided improvement. They show the author capable of a racy, energetic dialect that well conveys not only rank, but something of a personality, and a live one.

8 Joanne Altieri, 'Style and Purpose in Maria Edgeworth's Fiction', Nineteenth Century Fiction XXIII (December 1968), 265-78. See also: Joan Platt, 'The Development of English Colloquial Idiom during the eighteenth Century', Review of English Studies II (January 1926), 70-81 and (April 1926), 189-96.

9 Altieri, op. cit., 272. Miss Altieri uses as an example the maidservant Betty in The Old Manor House.

The convention that only low characters speak relaxedly was of course nothing new. Miss Altieri claims it dates at least from the Renaissance separation of high and low characters by their forms of speech, is common in Shakespeare, and is evident in the eighteenth-century drama - particularly in sentimental comedies - as well as the fiction of the period.<sup>10</sup>

Charlotte Smith's contribution is best indicated by quotation of an example of her 'high' diction, typical of the sentimental novel of her day, followed by instances of her more realistic dialogue. She was as capable as anyone of making her nobler characters speak late-eighteenth century 'novelese', most usually when she was pushing along a conventional sentimental plot uncritically. Rosalie, the heroine of Montalbert, has married without the permission of Mrs Vyvian, whom she takes to be a loving protectress:

'I might hope, perhaps, (continued Rosalie) to be forgiven for everything, but the presumption of becoming part of your family - of marrying a very near relation of your own.'

Rosalie might have continued her confession without interruption for another hour, Mrs Vyvian heard no more, but sunk back in her chair to all appearance lifeless.

However, she recovers to engage in a taxing conversation:

'It is now I feel in all its severity, the punishment I have deserved: long has the dread of it pursued me - long has it embittered every moment of my wretched existence - but at length it overtakes, it crushes, it destroys me ..... Miserable girl! - the unfortunate young man, to whom you believe yourself married - is - gracious God! - do I live to tell it - is your brother!'

- 'My brother! - (cried Rosalie) - Heaven defend me - My dear Madam - Mrs Vyvian! - '...

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 276.

'You are my daughter, (said Mrs Vyvian), the unhappy child of an unfortunate man, whose very name I never suffer to escape my lips ... Destined from your birth to be an outcast - to appear a stranger even to your mother - I guiltily indulged myself with a sight of you, till Vyvian, my son, victim of my crimes -----'

'Vyvian! (cried Rosalie, not knowing what to believe) - it is not Vyvian, but Montalbert, who is my husband.'

'Montalbert! - and am I not then the wretch I thought myself? - O Heaven! hast thou yet mercy upon me!'

A handful of staple plot-resources and themes of the eighteenth-century novel - secret marriage, apparent incest, concealed maternity - combine here to induce a highly contrived confrontation which is the sheerest melodrama.

The piece is reminiscent of the scenes in Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones where one is more aware of Fielding the dramatist than the novelist. Charlotte Smith's identifications of the speakers in parentheses have the effect of stage-directions, which she is anxious should not interrupt the dramatic action. The stagey dialogue derives from an uncritically accepted literary notion of how people ought to speak under emotional stress. The reader easily imagines the gestures that must accompany the exchange - hands wrung or clasped to the brow or heart - which again derive from the exaggerated movements of a dramatic performance. Even the breaks and pauses in the speech, meant to indicate distraction, do not truly reflect the incoherence of deep emotion, for they do not disturb radically the nicely-chosen vocabulary and complex sentence-structure of the speakers (complex, that is under the harrowing circumstances).

The whole scene is conventional in that it indicates to the reader familiar with the sentimental novel the emotions of the protagonists and the response required from him, without actually embodying, creating or conveying those emotions: there is nothing of the disturbing effect of realism, only the eliciting of an automatic response to a standard formula.

When Charlotte Smith was fully engaged with her writing and not merely free-wheeling, her sharp eye and acute ear enabled her to create character with a realism that compels the reader's nod of assent, though her attempts to capture the diction of lower-class characters very often are motivated by some satirical intention other than a desire to reproduce comical turns of phrase. In Desmond, the landlord of a Ross-on-Wye inn cannot understand his French guest, the Duc de Romagnecourt, and complains to Desmond:

I'm quite floundered for my share, and know no more of what he'd be at than my little Nan there in the cradle. - I wish, for my share, folks would speak English; for why - such lingo as these foreigners use is of no service in the world, and only confounds people, ready to drive them crazy - Then they gabble so plaguy fast, <sup>12</sup> that there's no catching a word by the way ...

He begs Desmond to speak to the Duc and his party on his behalf, if he ' would not think it too great a condescension, seeing they are Frenchmen.' <sup>13</sup>

12 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 269.

13 Ibid., 270.

Here the inkeeper's impatience at the unreasonableness of the French in speaking their own language forms a small part of Charlotte Smith's larger design of illustrating the absurdity of prejudices against foreigners, on a national scale, which runs through Desmond, and the landlord's words are not merely to amuse.

The servant Abraham in Montalbert is portrayed with an affection which quite discourages any thought that he is there merely to be mocked for his English:

'Ah! Miss - Miss! - you can't guess whose [sic] come?'  
 'No! no! Abraham - do pray tell me?'  
 'I've a good mind not, for your giving me such a dance after you. (Abraham had seen her grow up from infancy, and was no observer of forms). However, I'll tell you for once: 'tis both our young masters; 'tis Mr William from Oxford and Mr Francis from London - both - both on um be comed to be present at the wedding, and a rare time we shall all on us have on't I warrant too.'<sup>14</sup>

Where her servants aspire to gentility, however, Charlotte Smith is quite merciless in using their diction as a weapon to mock their pretentiousness. In the case of the housekeeper of Sir Audley Dacres in Marchmont, the author's description combines with the housekeeper's speech to make up a satirical portrait. She is 'a portly woman' and

A round, broad face, and two black bushy eye-brows shading her goggle eyes; with a snub nose, fortunate counterpart to a treble chin, and a mouth, the real dimensions of which she seemed to evade discovering, rendered her no very amiable figure.<sup>15</sup>

14 Montalbert I, 114.

15 Marchmont I, 121-2.

One might suppose this rather cruel description to be sufficient mockery, but the housekeeper's diction is satirized too. She tells Althea that her mistress and Sir Audley are 'necessitated to dine out' that day; a 'partickeller frind' has given a ball, but Althea may console herself in the 'small liberry'.<sup>16</sup>

But any pretentiousness or overbearing behaviour on the part of the masters and mistresses are the targets of Charlotte Smith's mockery too, and she often employs the vigorous colloquiality of lesser mortals to make the mockery more trenchant. In The Young Philosopher it is plain that Charlotte Smith is in full support of the farmer's wife, Mrs Jemmatt, in her resentment of the uninvited appearance in her house of two ladies to question her about her lodgers. Mrs Jemmatt later protests thus:

'I wonder,' cried she, 'what gentlefolks means by coming in that manner, calling one to account, as if one was afore the justices. I'm sure that Mrs Nixon mid'nt be so curious after other folks affairs. She'd have enough to do to look after her own, if every one did as they ought; but there, if such as she once gets among your quality, they thinks themselves as great as if they were quality too, wheras Mrs Nixon is'n't a bit better born nor bred than I be, for all her husband was a lawyer, and scraped up a sort of fortune by such tricks as them there lawyers always play; ruining poor folks. But she's got a little money, forsooth, and creeps into favour at great houses, and so she takes upon her to use "good woman" and "dame" and such like sayings to them that be as good as herself.'

16 Ibid; 122. Charlotte Smith's italics.

17 The Young Philosopher (London 1798) I, 235-6.



One might suspect that one or two phrases here (perhaps 'ruining poor folks') were not used by such women as often as their social superiors might have imagined, but overall Mrs Jemmatt is convincing, and Charlotte Smith has added to her reality by making her more resentful of the socially-climbing Mrs Nixon than the better-born but ruder Mrs Crewkherne.

The satirical effects, drawing on colloquial dialogue, are sometimes complex. In The Young Philosopher Charlotte Smith contrives at one point to mock simultaneously aristocratic pride of birth, the superstition of servants, and the excesses of the Gothic novel. Laura Glenmorris's foster-mother, Lady Mary, convinces herself she is descended from Geoffrey Plantagenet, second son of Henry II, by 'a French lady of family in Armagnac'.<sup>18</sup> Laura cannot imagine why Lady Mary strives so hard to be accepted as 'the descendant of some elevated ruffian, by a damsel of doubtful reputation!' as if 'the simple offspring of the humblest cottager was not a thousand times more respectable'.<sup>19</sup> Lady Mary discovers some rusty arms and armour in a room giving onto 'a gloomy high-roofed gallery' of the family seat, Sandthwaite Castle,<sup>20</sup> and decides that an old sword was 'the weapon undoubtedly used by Geoffrey Plantagenet himself,' and hangs it in the entrance hall in great state.<sup>21</sup> As a result of this talk of ancestors and the activity in previously neglected lumber-rooms, the servants begin to imagine that Geoffrey and his associates haunt the room where the sword was stored:

18 Ibid;II, 37

19 Ibid., 38

20 Ibid., 35

21 Ibid., 39

The upper housemaid was of the opinion that there was money hid there, and told a very true story, how her mother's great uncle had found, in one of his fields, a sort of a house under ground, where there was a pavement of comical shaped bricks, all blue, and yellow, and red, making the figures of snakes and birds, and a pot full of money, with some heathen gods upon it, which he sold to a silversmith at Liverpool, and which was supposed to be hid by the fairies, "or such like spiritous creturs." "As to fairies," cried my father's man, (a person of erudition and consequence from London) "the stories of them there sort of inwisabel beings, and such, appearing, is all nonsense and stuff, and nobody believes such things now a days; as to this Geffry somebody, that my lady makes such a talk about, I wonder what he was? - Some Lord or Duke I warrant, or she would not claim a cousinship to him - I suppose such another as Duke Humphry, - but for my part I should like to see one of them grim goblins rise up out of a churchyard now, or under the great hollow yew tree by the old chapel wall, with saucer eyes, and spitting wild fire out of his nostrils - Egad, nothing would divert me more."

"How can you talk so, Mr Malloch," said my Lady Mary's own woman, a person of infinite delicacy and superior feelings, who only occasionally condescended to hold converse with the rest. - "I'm surprised you have so little notion of propriety. I assure you, people of consequence do believe in spirits, and if you would but read some sweet books I met with just before I came from town, which I got from the circulating library, I'm sure you would never be such an infidel. You can't think how frightful the stories are - all about tapestry waving in the wind, a bloody dagger, and voices calling at midnight, howlings in the air, and dark passages and coffins full of bones, and poor young ladies got among these alarming objects; quite shocking, I'll assure you."

"Cursed fee fa fum nonsense," cried Malloch, "I heard a very good judge of them there things say so. - But I cannot stay prating about them now, I must go up to old Hogen Nogen - he is the most frightful thing in this house (this was the name his servants gave my father, from their idea that he was a Dutchman) and I wish this Jeffry Plantagenet, or Jeffry Belzebub, would fly away with him and his dammed old place together; and if they took Lady Mary into the bargain so much the better."

The resuscitation of Geoffrey Plantagenet continued to make part of the conversation of the house, till folly begot folly, and all the stories of spectres and spirits that were remembered by any of the servants, or could be collected in the neighbourhood, were at length related with exaggerations every night at the second table, growing more terrific as they reached the servants hall, and in proportion as the evenings grew dark and long, till at length there was hardly a maid who would go to turn down the beds, or a stable boy who would venture to attend his horses alone.<sup>22</sup>

The passage succeeds quite well as a comic demonstration of the way a little knowledge and a great deal of superstition may mingle undifferentiated in the uncultivated mind. The breathless credulity of the woman is balanced nicely by the robust scepticism of Malloch. But, as in so many eighteenth-century novels, it seems impossible to introduce characters from the lower classes without condescension creeping into the novelist's treatment. Charlotte Smith sins less than

22 Ibid., 40-44. Lady Mary's maid seems to be a prototype of Catherine Morland of Northanger Abbey, albeit of a different social class, in her confusion of reality with the world of Gothic novels: Catherine approached her reading with a similar earnest credulity. Possibly Charlotte Smith aimed this passage at Ann Radcliffe's novels, particularly The Mysteries of Udolpho, as well as the flood of Gothic sensationalism inundating the circulating libraries.

most in this respect and her Rousseauistic interest in the uncorrupted primitive gives her a ready respect for honest simplicity, but her success in creating credible low characters should not be exaggerated. It is true that she can often capture colloquial phrasing and speech-rhythms, and even vary them from minor character to minor character by the introduction of idiosyncrasies of speech which give a measure of individuality and life to her creations. Yet though such characters may sometimes rise above the merest types, they are never multidimensional, never fully rounded, always presented in a narrowly circumscribed role.

Charlotte Smith's writing exemplifies what it is in the characterization of the late eighteenth-century novel that is so inadequate compared with the creations of the great nineteenth-century novelists. The sentimental tradition limits the realism of characters who hold the centre of the stage, who must meet conventional expectations of diction and action, cater for at least some desire for romantic escape in the reader, and possess gentility (even if only 'natural' aristocracy). The lower classes are allowed to speak naturally, but they may never play more than supporting roles and are introduced often only to meet the immediate satirical need, didactic purpose, or simply the plot requirements of the novelist. There are no Adam Bedes in late eighteenth-century fiction: Godwin's Caleb Williams is not a gentleman, but he speaks like one on the whole, and his being of a lower social class than is usual for a central character of the time simply facilitates his hounding by Falkland. The initial interest in his position in society soon gives way to the cultivation of the excitement and suspense of the chase.

It would be misleading, however, to leave the impression that Charlotte Smith never allows her gentlefolk or educated characters any realism in their language. It is the hero and heroine, and their circle of friends and sympathisers, who are the prime exponents of novelese; but Charlotte Smith is likely to allow her gentlefolk to speak colloquially when she dislikes them and brings them under the satirical microscope. When she is portraying haughty and insensitive aristocrats, hypocritical clergymen, knavish lawyers or impudent parvenus, dialogue becomes as colloquial or idiosyncratic as one could wish. There may even be a Dickensian tendency to push language beyond individuality to caricature. This happens in the case of Appulby Gorges of The Young Philosopher, a lawyer who is 'very reluctantly brought to the point' and replies in his 'odd north country snapping sort of croak' that all must be

'right, proper and legal' (legal is a favourite word with Sir Appulby) and he hoped, and believed, and supposed that the whole would be arranged, concluded and finished in a short time, as should be legal and proper, and proper and legal, according to the different demands, claims and expectations of the several persons and parties to be interested in, or benefitted thereby, according to their said several claims, liens, demands, and rights, be the same more or less, lying and being in the estates, fortunes, assets and effects ... or any other property, wheresoever and whatsoever, of his late, dear and honourable friend the Earl of Castledanes, as by his last will and testament, recourse being had thereto, shall or may, or will more fully appear.<sup>23</sup>

Charlotte Smith had a keen ear for jargon, contemporary cant and fashionable expressions, which she lost no opportunity to pillory. Mrs Winslow, in the same novel as Sir Appulby, describes everything of which she approves

23 Ibid., III, 57-8.

as 'elegant' or, if particularly impressed, 'supremely elegant', to which Charlotte Smith draws attention by italicising its every appearance.<sup>24</sup> There is some irony in Charlotte Smith's amusement at a word frequently applied to herself by admirers, and for which Mary Wollstonecraft took her to task when she used it in all seriousness in the phrase 'a mind originally elegant.'<sup>25</sup> But such inconsistencies are typical of Charlotte Smith in her dialogue: she is content often to follow novelistic speech conventions uncritically, yet her keen ear, sense of verbal absurdity and instinct to parody and caricature all suggest she should have been incapable of writing with mechanical conventionality.

### III

#### Sir Walter Scott

On March 16th 1826, Scott wrote in his Journal:  
 In the evening, after dinner, read Mrs Charlotte Smith's novel of Desmond - decidedly the worst of her compositions. 26

This may have been Scott's first reading of Desmond, but it seems more likely he was reacquainting himself with Charlotte Smith's works in preparation for his revision of a critical piece on her writings first sent

24 See Ibid., I 25, 138.

25 See above, p. 80.

26 The Journal of Sir Walter Scott 1825-32 ('New Edition'), (Edinburgh 1891), 156.

to James Ballantyne in September, 1825. This was intended as a Preface to be included in the 'Ballantyne's Novelists Library' series, though it never appeared as such. Scott seems to have been busy revising his article within a year of this Journal entry, for on January 18th 1827, he says he

Wrought chiefly on a critique of Mrs. Charlotte Smith's novels, and proofs.<sup>27</sup>

The revised article duly appeared appended to Catherine Ann Dorset's Memoir of her sister later in 1827.<sup>28</sup>

I suggest that Scott's perusal of Desmond in 1826 was in fact a re-reading of the novel, not only on the grounds that he had previously written a critique of her works, but also on the basis of the character who gave his name to Scott's first novel, and the whole subsequent series - Waverley - who, I think, was based upon Charlotte Smith's Waverly in Desmond. There is no novelty in this claim: Saintsbury referred in the Cambridge History of English Literature to a suggestion by W. P. Ker that 'that curious person Charlotte Smith' gave Scott the name 'Waverley' and Hilbish accepted this in her study of Charlotte Smith.<sup>29</sup> As early as 1847, though, Leigh Hunt had indicated slyly Scott's borrowing in his whimsical 'Novel Party', which various fictional characters are imagined as attending:

Desmond's friend Waverley (sic) asked us after his celebrated namesake. We told him he was going on very well, and he was very like his relation; a compliment which Mr. Waverley acknowledged by a bow.<sup>30</sup>

27 Journal, 342.

28 Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 4-63.

29 Quoted by Hilbish, op.cit., 254. See: George Saintsbury, 'The Prosody of the Nineteenth Century', CHEL XIII, 239n.

30 Leigh Hunt, Men Women and Books (London 1847), 110.

This Scott derivation from Desmond is not, however, universally acknowledged. W. S. Crockett casts in rather obscure backwaters in his efforts to extract Waverley's parentage, and adds a footnote coincidentally containing a reference to Charlotte Smith, unrelated to the Desmond matter:

The title Waverley was derived from the Abbey of Waverley, nr. Farnham in Surrey. Scott is said to have visited at Moor Park in the neighbourhood, and to have been taken with the prettiness of the name. But there is no evidence to show that Scott had ever been at Farnham - he knew Charlotte Smith, the novelist, who lived at Tilford House there. Probably Scott found the name in the British Museum in the Annales Monasterii de Waverleia, which no doubt he consulted in the course of his investigations into the history of the Cistercian Order. It was at Waverley that the Cistercians first settled in England in 1128.<sup>31</sup>

No doubt Scott indeed had heard the name 'Waverley' elsewhere, but there are aspects of the characters themselves which suggest that Charlotte Smith's Waverly, despite the difference in Scott's spelling of the name, had made an impression and played a part in the conception of his hero. This becomes more convincing a claim when it is remembered that, though Waverley was published in July 1814, Scott had written the first six chapters as early as 1805, when Charlotte Smith was still writing. In 1805, twelve years had elapsed since the publication of Desmond, but critics still referred to it sometimes in assessing Charlotte Smith's works. Desmond is unlikely to have faded from Scott's memory by 1805, especially from the depths that feed the creative imagination.

A comparison of the two characters demonstrates Scott's superiority. Charlotte Smith's Waverly is a decidedly minor character; indeed he hardly exists in his own right,

31 W. S. Crockett, The Scott Originals. An Account of the Notables and Worthies the Originals of Characters in the Waverley Novels (London and Edinburgh 1912), 7 n.



but principally in the reports of the other protagonists of Desmond. Waverly seems to have two functions in the novel: first as a type of the indecisive, vacillating, unreliable and impressionable man, and second as a device whereby the plot may be complicated and the principal characters involved in difficult situations arising from these flaws of his temperament.

Waverly is the brother of the unhappily-married heroine of Desmond, Geraldine Vernay. At the outset of the novel Lionel Desmond, who is to visit Europe that summer, is asked by Geraldine to keep a watchful eye on Waverly to keep him from youthful errors. She tells Desmond that Waverly suffers from an 'uncommon indecision of mind' and has been 'spoilt' in his upbringing.<sup>32</sup> As befits a character who is merely a type, Waverly's surname indicates his character: he is a 'waverer', as he reveals in his first meeting with Desmond.<sup>33</sup> Throughout the remainder of the novel he demonstrates his vacillating character. He fails to keep his appointment to accompany Desmond to France, having decided at the last minute to remain in England, but subsequently crosses the Channel after all.<sup>34</sup> In France he is soon relieved of his money by 'a sort of sharpening chap', the Chevalier de St. Eloy, whose family nevertheless manage to persuade him to marry one of their daughters.<sup>35</sup> It falls to Desmond to extricate him from the results of his weakness, which he is unable to do except at the cost of severe wounds received in a duel with St. Eloy. Waverly returns to England, but the reader later learns that despite the trouble his feebleness causes others, he manages to make a good marriage.<sup>37</sup> There are some rather interesting comments

32 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 3.

33 Ibid., 13.

34 Ibid., 45, 59.

35 Ibid., 168.

36 Ibid., 175-77.

37 Desmond (Second London Edition, 1792), III, 105-106.

made on this match by Fanny Waverly (sister to Waverly and Geraldine, and, unlike her brother, a character of real life and sparkle). The parents of Waverly's prospective wife are intriguing to secure an Irish peerage for their new son-in-law, and Fanny refers sarcastically to the preamble to the patent, which no doubt will praise Waverly for his good services to his country:

. . . in the plentiful showers of new coronets which daily fall, one, I doubt not, will find its way to his head; but, I suppose, a great difficulty will be to determine what title he shall assume. - Every pretty name, and words of elegant termination, in ville and wood, and ton, and ford, and bury, and wick, seem to be already monopolized and engaged: but, if he were not my brother, I should venture to propose the very proper appellation of Baron Weathercock.<sup>38</sup>

Scott's jocular discussion of his choice of the name 'Waverley' is curiously reminiscent of this passage, which, if he did draw inspiration from Charlotte Smith's Waverly, may not be wholly coincidental:

The title of this work has not been chosen without the grave and solid deliberation which matters of importance demand from the prudent. Even its first, or general denomination, was the result of no common research or selection, although, according to the example of my predecessors, I had only to seize upon the most sounding and euphonic surname that English history or topography affords, and elect it at once as the title of my work, and the name of my hero. But alas! what could my readers have expected from the chivalrous epithets of Howard, Mordaunt, Mortimer, or Stanley, or from the softer and more sentimental sounds of Belmour, Belville, Belfield, and Belgrave, but pages of inanity, similar to those which have been so christened for half a century past?<sup>39</sup>

One would not insist on a connection with the passage from Desmond, but this does demonstrate the pains Scott

38 Ibid., 106.

39 Sir Walter Scott, Waverley (Harmondsworth 1972), 33. (Penguin edition, ed. Andrew Hook.) Scott's title was Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since.

took to draw attention to his hero's name at the beginning of Waverley. He 'explained' his choice thus:

I have ... like a maiden knight with his white shield, assumed for my hero, WAVERLEY, an uncontaminated name, bearing with its sound little of good and evil, excepting what the reader shall hereafter be pleased to affix to it.<sup>40</sup>

Scott's main purpose was no doubt to alert his reader to the fact that he was to expect a new kind of novel in Waverley, for he proposes - in order to reject - titles which would have branded the work as another sentimental or gothic novel, or scandalous sketch of the fashionable world. However, his drawing attention to the name does encourage the reader to ponder its significance despite the author's contention that he 'affixes' none.

Scott is correct in suggesting that his hero is different from those in the common run of novels. He does not rest content with the simplistic type-figure that is Charlotte Smith's Waverly: the man whose uncertainty has no origins, or significance beyond itself, but exists merely to be displayed for the amusement and disapprobation of the reader, and for the complication of the plot and embarrassment of the hero. The indecision, inconsistency and 'wavering' of Waverly is not transferred gratuitously to Scott's hero, but dramatizes in a single character two apparently irreconcilable views of life and society of the Age of Scott, and within Scott himself: the opposition of certain romantic and emotional impulses to rationalistic values. Scott's divided allegiance - his emotional response to that in Scotland's past which was colourful and heroic, and his intellectual assent to the order, security and material benefits of post-union Scotland - has become a commonplace of contemporary Scott criticism, and the genre he created to reflect his divided consciousness - the historical novel - is itself something of an uneasy

40 Ibid.

alliance of the old Romance and the new, more realistic novel, and reflects the conflict. Andrew Hook has elaborated this view, and his remarks help indicate what it is in Waverley that is a development into deeply-rooted ambivalence and two-sidedness of the simple inconsistency of Charlotte Smith's character:

Through his portrayal of Waverley, Scott is able to suggest how the conflict between romance and realism is not so much a struggle between competing literary modes as an essentially moral issue. Waverley's behaviour, the few decisions that he comes to in the course of the novel, flow out of the romantic side of his temperament. Waverley's romanticism - and this perhaps is its value - makes him open to experience, ready to venture where the prudent man would have drawn back; but Scott makes it clear that this openness is also a source of weakness and indecision, making Waverley too impressionable, too easily imposed on.<sup>41</sup>

Scott's hero has two traditions, two ways of life, forming the very substance of his character and Scott makes this plain in the early chapters, first roughly sketched out in 1805.

This takes Waverley a long way from Charlotte Smith's character in Desmond, but her Waverly was probably one agent of fermentation in Scott's imagination, and a factor in his ultimately creating a character to personify the tensions and ambivalences in himself and his time.

There is another specific instance of Scott's indebtedness to Charlotte Smith, if Leigh Hunt is correct in an undeveloped suggestion which does not seem to have been clarified to date. At Hunt's 'Novel Party', the guests continue their conversation with Charlotte Smith's Waverly:

We related to him the sea-side adventure of Waverley's friend, the Antiquary; at which the other exclaimed, "Good God! how like an adventure which happened to a friend of our acquaintance?"

41 Andrew Hook's Introduction to Waverley, 23. See this Introduction, pp. 9-27, for a fuller discussion of the significance of Waverley.

Only see what coincidence will take place!" He asked us if the Antiquary had ever noticed the resemblance, and was surprised to hear he had not. "I should not wonder at it," said he, "if the incident had been well known; but these Antiquaries, the best of them, have strange grudging humours, and I will tell him of it," added he, "when I see him." Mr. Waverley [sic] anticipated with great delight the society of his namesake with his numerous friends, though he did not seem to expect much from the female part of them.<sup>42</sup>

It is possible that Waverley's 'friend of our acquaintance' is a hero of some other novelist than Charlotte Smith, but it seems obvious that Hunt suspected Scott of basing his 'adventure' on an episode in another of her novels. I believe he had in mind The Young Philosopher. In Chapter Two of the second volume, Glenmorris and his wife-to-be, Laura, elope from her unsympathetic parents. Laura and her family are living at Sandthwaite Castle in north Lancashire:

The country it stood in was wild and gloomy, and from its gothic windows there was a view of the Irish Channel, and an immense extent of land, covered only at times by the tide, which took off the bold grandeur of a sea view, and left only ideas of sterility, danger, and desolation in its place.<sup>43</sup>

Glenmorris and Laura flee onto these sands, at dead of night, as they appear to offer an easier escape route than the wild hinterland. However, the sound of the sea is soon uncomfortably close and it seems they are about to be overtaken by the incoming tide. When all seems lost, they hear an approaching horse. Glenmorris stops the rider who 'rudely and surlily' says he is going to the village of Kenthwaite, if he can reach it before he is

42 Leigh Hunt, op.cit., 110. Hunt's referring to the Antiquary, Jonathan Oldbuck, as though he were the central figure in the 'sea-side adventure' is misleading. It was Sir Arthur Wardour and his daughter Isabella who suffered the experience of being cut off by the tide: Oldbuck did play a part, but as a rescuer. See Scott, The Antiquary Chapter VII.

43 The Young Philosopher (London 1798) II, 30.

overtaken by the rising water. The rider seems disposed to leave the lovers to their fate and attempts to repel Glenmorris with a 'great stick', but Glenmorris manages to detain him and, in return for a promised reward and in fear of Glenmorris's pistols, he takes them - all on the one horse - to Kenthwaite. They reach safety just before the water rises sufficiently to force the horse to swim. The rider's reluctance is due to his being a smuggler. None of them would have been saved if the man

had not been one of those employed during the day in conducting passengers across these dangerous sands, and who therefore knew, even when covered with water, the places which were to be avoided.<sup>44</sup>

This incident is briskly but only briefly described by Charlotte Smith, despite its obviously being included to add some spice of adventure to the novel. The explanation of her failure to make the most of it may be, in part, that she previously had imbued the escape from the castle itself with a considerable tension of possible imminent discovery and frustration. A crescendo of mounting suspense in the adventure on the sands immediately subsequent to the escape from the castle would perhaps surfeit the reader. However, it must be said also that it is a comparison with Scott's story-telling skills in The Antiquary that makes Charlotte Smith's treatment seem perfunctory and bloodless. Simply, Scott is the better raconteur; is more

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 70-75. Presumably Charlotte Smith imagined the incident as taking place somewhere on the sands of Morecambe Bay, though apparently she never visited the region. 'Thwaite' is common as an element of place-names in North Lancashire and Cumbria, and the River Kent discharges into Morecambe Bay. Travellers regularly crossed the Bay at low tide as the most convenient route between North Lancashire and Furness, and local guides were employed that they might avoid the treacherous areas. This incident seems to illustrate Charlotte Smith's readiness to rely on guide-books, and works of local history for 'settings', to give some variety from the places with which she was personally acquainted.

adept in extracting from a roughly similar situation the maximum of adventure and suspense. Scott arranges his material so as to produce an episode far more effective than the incident in The Young Philosopher which may well have inspired him, but certain similarities in the two adventures remain, which probably prompted Hunt to surmise Scott's indebtedness to Charlotte Smith.

Scott chooses a location with a different topography from Charlotte Smith's for his episode. The broad sands of The Young Philosopher are replaced by a narrower beach stretching below what is innocently described at the outset as 'a picturesque ridge of rocks'. (67)<sup>45</sup> Glenmorris and Laura need only gain the land and leave the sands to escape the encroaching tide: the suspense is generated by the uncertainty as to whether, in the darkness, they will cover the distance before the tide overwhelms them. Scott provides the additional element of precipitous cliffs blocking a retreat inland. However, it is not merely the geography of the situation that tightens the reader's apprehensions. Scott allows the reader hints and omens of impending disaster so he is placed in the uncomfortable position of having his worst fears for Sir Arthur and Isabella Wardour all but realized: he deliberately prepares the ground and raises the tension. There is nothing comparable in the Charlotte Smith episode: there one is on the sands with the protagonists before there is the slightest apprehension of danger, and the threat is as sudden and unexpected to the reader as to Glenmorris and Laura. However, just as the Wardours have not 'computed' correctly the state of the tide, neither has Glenmorris in

45 References in parentheses in this section are to Scott, The Antiquary (London 1955), Chapter VII (Everyman Edition).

The Young Philosopher:

The moon now lent us her first light; we saw her sinking in the sea, and Glenmorris, while we stopped to listen if any noise came from the Castle threatening pursuit, was alarmed by the murmur of the tide, which seemed to be nearer covering the sands than he had calculated.<sup>46</sup>

Here the waning of the moon adds to the insecurity of the lovers in that the darkness makes them uncertain as to how imminent is their danger. Scott's episode takes place a little earlier in the day, as evening passes into night, and, as the darkness gradually intensifies, so does the Wardours' danger. Charlotte Smith is able to draw on the universal fear of the unseen pursuer, while Scott relies on a gradual, imperceptible transition from light to dark, calm to storm, security to danger, to induce a similar growth of tension in the reader.

Both novelists utilize an ominous quietness, where the sea laps with a deceptive innocuousness, but there is no development of a storm in The Young Philosopher going hand in hand with the growing fear and horror of the protagonists. Charlotte Smith, prior to her episode, mentions sea-birds flying over the sands merely as a detail of natural history, or at most to set off the vast expanse of the sands. In Scott, the birds are harbingers of the coming tempest, escaping from it as the earth-bound Wardours cannot.(69)

A remarkable similarity between the Smith and Scott episodes is the way both writers' protagonists are reluctant to voice their growing 'disquietude and fear', but reveal it in their actions and bearing. Glenmorris is alarmed by the proximity of the tide:

Without communicating to me [Laura] the extent of his fears, I observed him very anxious that we might quicken our pace - I ran rather than walked;

46 The Young Philosopher II, 71.



but notwithstanding our utmost exertions the tide gained so fast upon us, that Glenmorris became soon terrified, even to agony, especially as he found that it would hardly be possible for me to continue much longer the haste I now exerted myself to make.

His ardent and rapid imagination represented me as perishing among the rising waters, while unable to save me he was to stand an helpless spectator of my death. - With an emotion that communicated quite a convulsion to his whole frame, he grasped my arm within his, and I heard him murmur, "I can always, however, escape the misery of surviving her."<sup>47</sup>

In Scott, it is Isabella who can hardly bring herself to speak and acknowledge the danger of which both she and her father are conscious.

At this point, in both novels, a third party intervenes, apparently offering an unexpected hope of salvation. Charlotte Smith's smuggler-guide on horseback provides the increased pace necessary to escape the tide, though there are moments of despair when he proves to be hostile and prepared to leave Glenmorris and Laura to their fate. However, Glenmorris's decisiveness and pistols ensure salvation. In Scott, it is Edie Ochiltree who approaches the Wardours from the direction of Halket Head, towards which they are hurrying.(70)

Charlotte Smith's Sandthwaite episode may then, have given rise ultimately to Scott's 'sea-side adventure', though there is no evidence that Scott consciously recollected and deliberately transformed it for his own purposes. Ironically, Charlotte Smith herself probably derived the episode from an anecdote in Gray's Journal in the Lakes (1769) apparently unnoticed by Hunt. There is no doubt that she had read Gray's Journal, for her heroine Ethelinde makes sure to take the volume with her as she wanders about the

47 The Young Philosopher II, 71-2.

Vale of Grasmere. However, Charlotte Smith probably did not have the volume before her as she wrote Ethelinde, for she misquotes Gray.<sup>48</sup> Charlotte Smith, it seems, never visited the Lakes and their environs, and it is clear that she drew on Gray for her descriptions of Grasmere in Ethelinde and of North Lancashire and the Furness region in The Young Philosopher.<sup>49</sup> Gray mentions a part of the expanse of sand that is Morecambe Bay, covered by sea only at full-tide (p. 272), and also describes a view of 'Cartmell-sands' (p. 270), 'with here and there a passenger riding over them, (it being low water).' Gray mentions the River Kent flowing into the bay (p. 269: cf. Charlotte Smith's 'Kenthwaite'), which Gilpin called the Kennet.<sup>50</sup>

- 48 Charlotte Smith tells the reader that Ethelinde pursued her way 'now over "eminences covered with turf, now among broken rock".' (Ethelinde I, 58.) Gray actually wrote: 'bays with bold eminences: some of them rocks, some of soft turf' ('Journal in the Lakes, 1769', The Works of Thomas Gray in Prose and Verse ed. Edmund Gosse (London 1884) I, 265.). All quotations from the 'Journal' in this section are taken from the readily accessible Gosse edition, though Charlotte Smith would have seen the 'Journal' in W. Mason's Poems of Mr. Gray (York and London), first published in 1775. Although Mason's text is not free from corruptions, it does not differ materially from Gosse's version in the passages quoted here.
- 49 I can find no correspondences between Charlotte Smith's descriptions of landscape and William Hutchinson's Excursion to the Lakes, in Westmoreland and Cumberland, August 1773 (London 1774), for example. It is possible however that she derived some details for the setting of Sandthwaite Castle - 'wild and gloomy' - from William Gilpin's Observations on the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland (London 1786). He describes the country between Garstang and Lancaster as 'bleak and unpleasant', with stunted vegetation (p. 74).
- 50 Gilpin, Observations, 78.

The passage in the Journal which I believe provided Charlotte Smith with the idea for her episode on the sands, arose from Gray's visit to the village of Poulton:-

An old fisherman mending his nets (while I enquired about the danger of passing those sands) told me in his dialect a moving story. How a brother of the trade, a cockler (as he styled him) driving a little cart with two daughters (women grown) in it, and his wife on horseback following, set out one fine day to pass the Seven Mile Sands, as they had frequently been used to do: for nobody in the village knew them better than the old maid did. When they were about half way over a thick fog arose, and as they advanced, they found the water much deeper than they expected. The old man was puzzled, he stopped, and said he would go a little way to find some mark he was acquainted with. They staid a little while for him but in vain. They called aloud, but no reply, at last the young women pressed their mother to think where they were, and so on. She would not leave the place, she wandered about forlorn and amazed. She would not quit her horse, and get into the cart with them. They determined, after much time wasted to turn back, and give themselves up to the guidance of their horses. The old woman was soon washed off and perished. The poor girls clung close to their cart, and the horse, sometimes wading, and sometimes swimming brought them back to land alive, but senseless with terror and distress and unable for many days to give any account of themselves. The bodies of their parents were found soon after (next ebb); that of the father a very few paces distant from the spot where he had left them.<sup>51</sup>

One might point to the reliance on the horse for salvation in Charlotte Smith's episode, but I do not suggest that Gray's account did more than supply her with topographical suggestions and the germ of her adventure on the sands.

Scott may have been beholden to Charlotte Smith in these minor matters, but the balance of indebtedness probably favours her. Scott played a large part in keeping her literary memory alive when he elicited Catherine

51 Journal, 272-3.

Dorset's memoir of her sister and published it in his Miscellaneous Prose Works.<sup>52</sup> I have found no evidence that he ever met Charlotte Smith, though he did visit her sister shortly after the publication of her memoir.<sup>53</sup>

Scott's critical references to Charlotte Smith also no doubt induced a number of his readers to explore her fiction. He frequently writes of her works appreciatively, though not uncritically, and she is one of the group of 'lady novelists' who influenced his fiction, though it is difficult to distinguish particular Smith influences from the general stimulation these predecessors provided.

To Scott, Charlotte Smith was one of the few writers to have rescued the Novel from mediocrity in the period following Fanny Burney's early successes.<sup>54</sup> At different times he coupled her with Ann Radcliffe,<sup>55</sup> Maria Edgeworth<sup>56</sup> and Jane Austen<sup>57</sup> as the leading novelists of this phase. Scott blamed the decline in the quality of fiction on 'overcropping':

The public was indeed weary of the protracted embarrassments of lords and ladies who spoke such language as was never spoken,<sup>58</sup>

52 See above, p.3.

53 On May 21st 1828, when Scott was staying at Brighton. Catherine Dorset seems to have shared some of her sister's characteristics, not least the lack of a 'literary manner' noted by Southey (see above p.57). Scott describes Catherine Dorset as 'a fine stately old lady - not a bit of a literary person, - I mean having none of the affectation of it, but like a lady of considerable rank. I am glad I have seen her.' (Journal, 599).

54 See Scott's Quarterly review of C. R. Maturin's Fatal Revenge, reprinted in: Ioan Williams, Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction (London 1968), 205.

55 Ibid., 118.

56 Ibid., 206.

57 Ibid., 428.

58 Ibid., 205-6.

but he excepted gladly any novelist who made at least a partial attempt at realism. And Charlotte Smith's writing, even when she dealt with conventional sentimental material, had the power to engage the jaded reader:

... let us be just to dead and to living merit. In some of the novels of the late Charlotte Smith we found no ordinary portion of that fascinating power which leads us through every various scene of happiness or distress at the will of the author; which places the passions of the wise and grave for a time at the command of ideal personages; and perhaps has more attraction for the public at large than any other species of literary composition, the drama not excepted.<sup>59</sup>

There is no doubt that Charlotte Smith's novels played their part in the genesis of the more romantic elements of Scott's fiction - gothic effects without (usually) an actual supernatural element,<sup>60</sup> and highland landscape,<sup>61</sup> for example - but it was her attempts to convey the manners and general social flavour of her time that particularly impressed him. In his introduction to St. Ronan's Well Scott wrote that he was venturing on what was for him a new style of composition: he would attempt to 'give an imitation of the shifting manners of our own time, and paint scenes the originals of which are daily passing round us.' He thought he had some 'formidable competitors' in this field:

The ladies, in particular, gifted by nature with keen powers of observation and light satire, have been so distinguished by these works of talent a catalogue might be made, including the brilliant and talented names of Edgeworth, Austen, Charlotte Smith, and others, whose success seems to have appropriated this province of the novel as exclusively their own.<sup>62</sup>

59 Ibid., 206.

60 See Scott's comments on 'a fine sense of natural terror drawn with a masterly hand' in The Old Manor House. (Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 55.)

61 See particularly Laura Glenmorris's Scottish adventures in The Young Philosopher, though no doubt many factors conspired to persuade Scott

Scott's most substantial consideration of Charlotte Smith's fiction is to be found in the critique he appended to Catherine Dorset's memoir, and it is here that he confirms that he admired her principally for the more realistic elements in her novels. Scott wrote at greater length on other women novelists whom he admired, but none did he respect more than Charlotte Smith, an author

from whom we ought to acknowledge having received more pleasure than from others whom we have had an opportunity of reviewing in greater detail.<sup>63</sup>

He differed from Catherine Dorset in finding Charlotte Smith's prose works rather than her poetry her claim to an enduring fame, and, with Anna Barbauld, effected that shift of critical interest to the novels from the poetry that seemed to contemporaries her especial glory:

The elegance, the polish, the taste, and the feeling of this highly gifted lady, may no doubt be traced in Mrs. Charlotte Smith's poetry. But for her invention, that highest property of genius, her knowledge of the human bosom, her power of natural description, her wit, and her satire, the reader must seek in her prose narratives.<sup>64</sup>

Scott considered Charlotte Smith's characterization her strength, and plotting her weakness, an analysis with which few of her contemporary and subsequent readers have radically disagreed. However, it is the realism of the lesser characters - those introduced to display contemporary

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that Scotland was rich in literary possibilities: one would not underestimate Macpherson's Ossian in this regard. Perhaps Charlotte Smith's rival in romantic descriptions of scenery, Ann Radcliffe, also made some impression on Scott with her Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne.

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62 Williams, op.cit., 428.

63 Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 49.

64 Ibid., 50.

manners and human idiosyncrasy - that he mainly discusses, rather than the 'ideal' heroes and heroines. The former are 'conceived with truth and force', though none 'bears the stamp of actual novelty.'<sup>65</sup> Charlotte Smith

is uniformly happy in supplying them with language fitted to their station in life; nor are there many dialogues to be found which are at once so entertaining, and approach so nearly to truth and reality.<sup>66</sup>

She was, he considered, less able to catch readily 'the evanescent tone of the highest fashionable society.'

Scott remarks subsequently that this is no loss, 'considering the care which is taken in these elevated regions to deprive conversation of everything approaching to the emphasis of passion, or even of serious interest'.<sup>67</sup>

It is clear that Scott would have been encouraged in his creating a remarkable gallery of colourful supporting characters in the Waverley novels by Charlotte Smith's example. Perhaps his exploitation of the literary possibilities of Scottish dialects was similarly stimulated by her example in attempting minor characters who speak 'language fitted to their station in life', though Maria Edgeworth's Castle Rackrent would be a more potent influence. One can see why Scott considered Mrs. Rayland of The Old Manor House 'without a rival'.<sup>68</sup> She is an anachronism, with an essentially feudal conception of society and a withering contempt for the new bourgeois order, with its commercialism and nouveaux riches. Mrs. Rayland's aristocratic hauteur, yet rather pathetic irrelevance to the times of her old age, are suggestive of many a Scott character.

Scott's simultaneous distrust of and fascination with the romantic is discernible in his rather contradictory

65 Ibid., 58.

66 Ibid., 59

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., 54

remarks on Charlotte Smith's characters. He appreciates her realism, her eye and ear for the nuances of people's conduct and speech, yet he makes what he admits may be a 'boarding-school objection'<sup>69</sup> to the failure of the principal characters and denouement of Emmeline to accord quite with romantic perfection. Emmeline marries the meritorious but rather staid Godolphin in preference to the 'fiery, high-spirited, but noble and generous Delamere.'<sup>70</sup> Yet Scott's objection can be sustained on literary grounds and need not be attributed merely to an attachment to romantic conventionalities. His complaint is that Charlotte Smith has been unable to realize her virtuous man as completely as her flawed lover. Nevertheless, Scott's remark that prudence had replaced passion as the virtue and 'in some sense the vice'<sup>71</sup> of his time is again eloquent of his ambivalence towards the romantic past, in literature as well as life.

In discussing Ethelinde, Scott returned to his praise of Charlotte Smith's realistic treatment of manners and conduct. He detected a caustic quality in her satire which was inimical to his customary sympathetic tolerance of the weaknesses and absurdities of his own characters:

Mrs. Smith's powers of satire were great, but they seldom exhibit a playful or light character. Her experience had unfortunately led her to see life in its more melancholy features, so that follies, which form the jest of the fortunate, had to her been the source of disquiet and even distress. The characters [whom she satirizes]. . . to be found in her work, are so drawn as to be detested rather than laughed at; and at the sporting person and at others less darkly shaded, we smile in scorn, but without sympathy.<sup>72</sup>

Scott identified Charlotte Smith's unsatisfactory plots as her most obvious weakness, as did many of her contemporaries. Unlike some of them however, he did not

69 Ibid., 52.

70 Ibid., 51.

71 Ibid., 52.

72 Ibid., 53.



consider the indication of the inconsistencies, uncertainties, and arbitrary turns in her plots as damning criticism.

Whilst agreeing that the plot of the typical Smith novel bears the appearance of having been hastily run-up, as the phrase goes, without much attention to probability or accuracy of combination,<sup>73</sup>

he tended to think that perfection of plot construction was of less importance than the 'fine things' that the plot enabled the novelist to bring in.

And truly, if the fine things really deserve the name, we think there is pedantry in censuring the works where they occur, merely because productions of genius are not also adorned with a regularity of conception, carrying skilfully forward the conclusion of the story, which we may safely pronounce one of the rarest attainments of art.<sup>74</sup>

Charlotte Smith became a professional writer in the sense that she found it increasingly necessary to write for her own and her family's subsistence, and not only or always to satisfy an artistic impulse. Yet she lacked an attribute associated with the highest levels of professionalism: the ability to produce consistently an artefact not seriously flawed in any important aspect. Scott well knew the pressures to be borne by the professional novelist who must write his allotted number of words almost daily, and I would suggest that his respect for Charlotte Smith was enhanced by his recognition of her as a fellow-professional. He was aware, too, that she maintained her literary output during years of difficulty and sadness in her private life - in financial matters, as in the case of Scott, but also in other aspects of life in which the Scottish writer was relatively untroubled. He was thus willing to forgive her some shortcomings in the intricacies of plot-construction, was quick to indicate the misfortunes in her life which would have silenced a lesser novelist, and produced an apology for the imperfections and the melancholy evident in her works which feelingly indicates

73 Ibid., 56.

74 Ibid., 58.

the trials of the professional writer. It is perhaps as much a plea for a sympathetic understanding of his own difficulties as for those of Charlotte Smith:

... it must be considered, that the works on which she was obliged, often reluctantly, to labour, were seldom undertaken from free choice. Nothing saddens the heart so much as that sort of labour which depends on the imagination, when it is undertaken unwillingly, and from a sense of compulsion. The galley-slave may sing when he is unchained, but it would be uncommon equanimity which could induce him to do so when he is actually bound to his oar. If there is a mental drudgery which lowers the spirits and lacerates the nerves, like the toil of a slave, it is that which is exacted by literary composition when the heart is not in unison with the work upon which the head is employed. Add to the unhappy author's task, sickness, sorrow, or the pressure of unfavourable circumstances, and the labour of the bondsman becomes light in comparison.<sup>75</sup>

#### IV

#### Jane Austen

The influence of Charlotte Smith on Jane Austen has received considerable attention in recent years, encouraged by indisputable references to Smith novels, and other less certain allusions - mainly in the way of parody and burlesque.

The certain references occur in Jane Austen's juvenilia and indicate that she admired Charlotte Smith's early novels. In The History of England (1790-93), discussing the reign of Edward VI, Jane Austen compares the Duke of Somerset to other figures, fictional and historical:

This Man was on the whole of a very amiable character, & is somewhat of a favourite with me, tho' I would by no means pretend to affirm

75 Ibid., 61-2.

that he was equal to those first of Men Robert Earl of Essex, Delamere, or Gilpin.<sup>76</sup>

Delamere, from Charlotte Smith's Emmeline, obviously had made a strong impression on the imagination of the young Jane Austen, for a further reference to him occurs during her discussion of the reign of Elizabeth I. Robert Devereux, Lord Essex, is compared to Delamere:

This unfortunate young Man was not unlike in Character to that equally unfortunate one Frederic Delamere. This simile may be carried still farther, & Elizabeth the torment of Essex may be compared to the Emmeline of Delamere.<sup>77</sup>

Jane Austen's Catharine or The Bower (1792?) includes a conversation between her heroine, Kitty, and Camilla Stanley (who 'professed a love of Books without Reading'<sup>78</sup>), in which Camilla is satirized for her views on Charlotte Smith's novels:

"You have read Mrs. Smith's Novels, I suppose?" said she [Kitty] to her companion -. "Oh! Yes, replied the other, and I am quite delighted with them - They are the sweetest things in the world -" "And which do you prefer of them?" "Oh! dear, I think there is no comparison between them - Emmeline is so much better than any of the others -" "Many people think so, I know; but there does not appear so great a disproportion in their Merits to me; do you think it is better written?" "Oh! I do not know anything about that - but it is better in everything - Besides, Ethelinde is so long -" "That is a very common Objection I believe, said Kitty, but for my own part, if a book is well written, I always find it too short." "So do I, only I get tired of it before it is finished." "But did not you find the story of Ethelinde very interesting? And the descriptions of Grasmere, are not the [y] Beautiful?" "Oh! I missed them all, because I was in such a hurry to know the end of it . . ."79

76 Jane Austen, 'The History of England', Volume the Second, in: R. W. Chapman (ed.), The Works of Jane Austen (London 1969) VI, 143.

77 Ibid., 146. Jane Austen was, of course, making fun of the absurdity of comparing historical and fictional characters here.

78 Jane Austen, 'Catharine or The Bower', Volume The Third, in Chapman, op.cit., 198.

79 Ibid., 199.

It is clear that Jane Austen knew Ethelinde well, for the joke here is that descriptions of Grasmere appear also at the end of the novel.<sup>80</sup>

Encouraged by this evidence of Jane Austen's familiarity with the works of Charlotte Smith, critics have suspected her of satirizing those works when she came to analyze and reject the excesses and absurdities of the fiction upon which she grew up. Northanger Abbey is the crucial Austen novel in this regard: its burlesque of Gothicism seems aimed principally at Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho,<sup>81</sup> but it has been suggested that the mockery of the sentimental heroine in the early chapters of Northanger is aimed particularly at Charlotte Smith's Emmeline. Catherine Morland's unremarkable childhood and lack of facility in acquiring 'accomplishments' is, it is suggested, a satirical step-by-step contrast with Emmeline's spontaneous and brilliant precocity.<sup>82</sup> It has been suggested too that Isabella Thorpe may be intended as an ironical contrast to Mrs. Stafford and Augusta Delamere in Emmeline.<sup>83</sup>

80 Mrs. Ehrenpreis thinks that Camilla Stanley - and also Isabella Thorpe of Northanger Abbey - owe something to the flirtatious Clarintha Ludford in Ethelinde. She also remarks that Charlotte Smith is the only contemporary novelist referred to by name in the juvenilia. She was obviously a favourite novelist in the years before Northanger Abbey. See A. H. Ehrenpreis, 'Northanger Abbey: Jane Austen and Charlotte Smith', Nineteenth Century Fiction XXV (Dec. 1970), 346.

81 See A. H. Ehrenpreis's introduction to the Penguin edition of Northanger Abbey (Harmondsworth 1972), 11-13.

82 It was Mary Lascelles who first suggested that Jane Austen had Emmeline in mind when she described Catherine's childhood, though she admitted that Emmeline was a good representative of a common literary type (Jane Austen and Her Art (Oxford 1939), 60.). Mrs. Ehrenpreis finds the comparison 'irresistible' (Northanger Abbey, 15), and Marvin Mudrick too thinks Catherine Morland 'a close parody' of Emmeline (Jane Austen: Irony as Defence and Discovery (Princeton N. J. 1952), 40.).

83 Henrietta T. Harmsell, Jane Austen: A Study in Fictional Conventions (London 1964), 18.

There are other things in Northanger Abbey which remind one of Charlotte Smith's novels. Forerunners of John Thorpe are common in her fiction. The best example is Middleton Winslow of The Young Philosopher (1798). It would be interesting to know when the various parts of Northanger Abbey were first written. A case has been made for a version of the novel having been drafted as early as 1794, but Cassandra Austen says it was 'written about the years 98 & 99'.<sup>84</sup> If Jane Austen read The Young Philosopher soon after publication and Cassandra was correct in her claim that the novel was being written about that time, then Winslow could indeed have suggested some of John Thorpe's traits. Winslow, like Thorpe, is obsessed with horses and carriage-driving. He is 'heartbroken' by the loss of his curricle and injury to his horses in an accident, and has an exaggerated idea of their quality:

"If Goldfinch," he said, "did recover, it would be impossible to match him as he was matched with Wildair - he did not believe, nay he was sure, there was not a third horse like them in all England."<sup>85</sup>

George Delmont, the hero of The Young Philosopher, is surprised that Winslow attaches so much importance to the subject, which he thinks unworthy of 'a man of sense':

he loved a fine horse and understood his properties, but had no idea of considering the loss of such an animal in such a light as it appeared to Winslow, who spoke in terms, and with an appearance of despair, such as Delmont thought could reasonably be excited only by a great family misfortune, while of the injury sustained by Miss Goldthorp he seemed not to think at all.<sup>86</sup>

84 See A. H. Ehrenpreis's introduction to the Penguin Northanger Abbey, 9.

85 The Young Philosopher (London 1798) I, 28. cf. Thorpe's boasting of his abilities in curricle driving in Chapter 7 of Northanger Abbey.

86. Ibid., 28-9.

It is indeed tempting to suggest that the latter syllable of Miss Goldthorp's name, slightly amended, found its way into Northanger Abbey as the surname of a boastful and insensitive young man, suggested by Winslow. However, unless more detailed information on the composition of Northanger Abbey should come to light, the matter cannot be settled.

Miss Goldthorp herself is reminiscent of Catherine Morland in some respects, and of Isabella Thorpe in others. Steeped in romances, she is much given to playing the heroine:

Miss Goldthorp was a young lady naturally of a very tender and susceptible nature, and who, notwithstanding her aunt boasted of the care she had taken to prevent it, was very deeply read in romance and novels, by some one or other of the heroines of which she occasionally "set her mind," so that with a great versatility of character she rarely appeared in her own.<sup>87</sup>

As a result, she has become addicted to 'restless coquetry' and treats her unprepossessing suitor, Middleton Winslow, with a lack of enthusiasm directly proportionate to the proximity of other eligible young men. She sees herself as being of great consequence, and is very grateful to George Delmont for saving her from Middleton's runaway curricle for the world's benefit:

When she had seen him, she was tempted to imagine that heaven had performed a miracle in her favour, and sent an hero to her rescue, such as fables feign when they tell of demigods and knights endowed with supernatural powers. - Soft was her voice, and modulated to the tenderest notes of grateful sensibility, while she thanked him in chosen and studied words for his interposition - She sat up in an easy chair, in an elegant dishabille, and cast on him, from among the laced plaits of an elegant close cap, eyes of the most languishing gratitude. All this had been settled before she discovered that the young man to whom she was so much obliged was one of the handsomest men in England. During the few moments he staid with her she became distractedly in love with him . . .<sup>88</sup>

87 The Young Philosopher I, 110.

88 Ibid., 109.

Miss Goldthorp's education demonstrates that Charlotte Smith did not always give her characters the untutored genius of Emmeline. Her 'accomplishments' barely surpass Catherine Morland's in unmitigated unremarkableness, though Catherine at least was free of her hypocrisy:

Miss Goldthorp was one of those young women, of whom it is common to say, that they are "highly accomplished;" that is, she had made some little progress in the various branches of female education, which usually pass under the name of elegant accomplishments. Conscious of knowing something, she assumed credit for a great deal; and in consideration of her fortune, credit was given her for all she pretended to. On the pianoforte she was said to possess wonderful execution; and certain it is, that both on that and on the harp she made a very loud noise, and rattled away with the most perfect conviction that her auditors were amazed at her facility. She spoke French with the same undoubting confidence, and therefore spoke it fluently if not with extreme correctness; besides which, she occasionally interlarded her conversation with words or short sentences in Italian, and had thence acquired the reputation of a very elegant Italian scholar. She often made her friends presents of most beautiful pieces of her own painting and embroidery, and they would have been equally wanting in taste and in gratitude had they questioned whether these productions, which Mrs. Winslow pronounced to be supremely elegant, were really the works of her own hands, or whether she had been assisted in them by her masters, or certain indigent young women who sometimes attended her with fashionable works.<sup>89</sup>

89 Ibid., 137-8. Charlotte Smith's dissatisfaction with the customary education of young ladies continued. In The Banished Man, Ellesmere expresses contempt for what were normally considered 'accomplishments'. D'Alonville asks him what then he does admire: 'Oh! not what are called so by courtesy; not playing a dozen lessons on a harp or a piano-forte, which interrupt a conversation, and tire the unfortunate hearers to death; not painting a rose and an hearts-ease, which, if one did not know them by prescription, might as well be a piony and an auricula; not speaking a few phrases of French with a broad English accent, and calling every foreigner Mounshere . . . Oh! deliver me from such accomplishments.' (The Banished Man II, 94-5).

Literary historians have examined other Jane Austen novels for Smith influences. McKillop detects an anticipation of Lady Catherine de Bourgh of Pride and Prejudice when Lady Montreville imperiously commands Emmeline to desist from marrying her son Delamere in Emmeline, and he thinks that Ethelinde's brother's convincing himself that his sister has no real need for a newly-acquired fortune is reminiscent of the selfish Dashwoods in the second chapter of Sense and Sensibility.<sup>90</sup> Francis Pinion considers that the themes of love at first sight and tyrannical parents in the early Love and Freindship 'originate from Mrs. Smith as much as any other author',<sup>91</sup> but Mudrick points out that Charlotte Smith was only one of a number of authors dealing with such themes.<sup>92</sup> Mudrick also remarks Jane Austen's spoofing the exotic and varied origins desirable in heroines in Love and Freindship.<sup>93</sup>

Laura writes to Marianne:

My Father was a native of Ireland and an inhabitant of Wales; my Mother was the natural Daughter of a Scotch Peer by an Italian Opera-girl - I was born in Spain and received my Education at a Convent in France.<sup>94</sup>

Mudrick thinks that Jane Austen again is thinking of Emmeline in referring to Laura's cloistered but intellectual upbringing and exotic ancestry.<sup>95</sup> However, Celestina

90 A. D. McKillop, 'Allusions to Prose Fiction in Jane Austen's Volume the Third', Notes and Queries 196 (29th September, 1951), 428-9. Repeated by Francis B. Pinion, A Jane Austen Companion. A Critical Survey and Reference Book (London 1973), 172.

91 Pinion, op.cit., 172.

92 Mudrick, op.cit., 5. The other novelists mentioned are Sarah Fielding, Charlotte Lennox, Frances Sheridan, Henry Brooke, Clara Reeve, Frances Brooke and Sophia Lee.

93 Ibid.

94 'Love and Freindship', Volume the Second, in Chapman, op.cit., 77.

95 Mudrick, op.cit., 5 n.



could have been an inspiration too. The heroine of that novel spends her childhood in a convent in Provence, and is of mysterious and foreign parentage.<sup>96</sup>

In his study of Jane Austen and Her Predecessors, Frank Bradbrook suggests that the discussion by Emmeline and Delamere of The Sorrows of Werter may have prompted Jane Austen's mock-condemnation of a character in Love and Freindship on the grounds that he had not read Goethe's work, and was not blessed with auburn hair.<sup>97</sup> Bradbrook also draws attention to certain phrases in Charlotte Smith's novels which recur in the Austen works, and some clichés and vulgarisms which Jane Austen mocks.<sup>98</sup>

Most critics who refer to Jane Austen's indebtedness to Charlotte Smith stress the contribution of the former to the development of the novel as a serious artistic form, and her rescuing it from sentimental and Gothic excesses. This is right and proper, for it is impossible to read the mass of novels of the 1780's and 90's without developing an increased appreciation of and admiration for Jane Austen's timely rehabilitation of the form. Yet it is unfortunate for Charlotte Smith's literary reputation that this emphasis tends to leave the impression that she was in the main a 'negative' influence on Jane Austen: that is, that she showed Jane Austen what to avoid in her fiction. Jane Austen's fondness for the novels of her predecessors is then seen as merely a nostalgic remembrance of the absurd and transitory tastes of adolescence, and the very real positive influence of Charlotte Smith

96 See Celestina, Chapter 1.

97 Frank W. Bradbrook, Jane Austen and Her Predecessors (Cambridge 1966), 103.

98 Ibid., 103-4. Harrison Steeves has noticed that the phrase 'Pride and Prejudice' appears twice in Charlotte Smith's The Old Manor House, though it is also to be found in Fanny Burney's Cecilia, Sophia Lee's The Recess and twice in Robert Bage's Hermesprong. (Before Jane Austen (London 1966), 342n.)

is underestimated. Yet the brief outline above of Jane Austen's indebtedness to Charlotte Smith includes such positive influences as well as material seized upon to satirize and parody. Dr. Bradbrook, though he too sees Charlotte Smith's works mainly as a stimulant to Jane Austen's propensity to burlesque, mentions her influence on what there is of the picturesque in Jane Austen.<sup>99</sup>

And A. D. McKillop has pointed out that the discussion of Ethelinde and Emmeline in Catharine or The Bower indicates that Jane Austen evidently 'believed that Mrs. Smith's novels at least deserved more intelligent readers than Camilla Stanley.'<sup>100</sup>

A further comment in McKillop's article indicates the direction in which I would like to go in discussing Charlotte Smith's positive influence on Jane Austen:

... there is at times a comedy of manners and a vein of critical realism in Charlotte Smith which might command Jane Austen's interest.<sup>101</sup>

Charlotte Smith had strong views on the excesses of run-of-the-mill novels of her day and was herself quite capable of burlesque and parody, and of a sober social realism. Indeed, her satiric vein led some contemporaries to see Jane Austen as a novelist of the same school. Annabella Milbanke, the future Lady Byron, at first 'had supposed Pride and Prejudice to be the work of a sister of the prolific novelist Charlotte Smith,'<sup>102</sup> and Sir Walter Scott names Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen and Charlotte

99 Bradbrook, op.cit., 50-51.

100 McKillop, op.cit., 429.

101 Ibid.

102 Quoted in: B. C. Southam (ed.), Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage (London 1968), 7-8.

Smith in the same breath as 'gifted by nature with keen powers of observation and light satire.'<sup>103</sup>

Charlotte Smith's novels and prefaces demonstrate that she did not - any more than did Jane Austen - accept uncritically the sentimental and Gothic conventions. Both novelists had a strong commonsensical appreciation of the absurd in fiction, as in life, and an urge to satirize it. But whereas Charlotte Smith was quite capable of mocking such conventions in one chapter and adopting them the next, Jane Austen was consistent in her avoidance of them and showed herself a novelist of genius in her ability to develop a realistic form in eloquent contrast. Yet it was not simply a difference of talent: Jane Austen had also the leisure to work out what she wished to avoid in the juvenilia, and to develop her own form and conventions in relatively protected circumstances, whereas Charlotte Smith had to write for her living. The limitations of her talent and the exigencies of producing one three- or four-volume novel after another prevented her from ever evolving a radically new kind of novel, and constantly betrayed her into adopting the conventionalities she mocked. Besides, there were ideological constraints on Charlotte Smith's jettisoning completely sentimental conventions, which did not operate on the conservative Jane Austen. It is partly Charlotte Smith's liberal opinions and, especially, adherence to Rousseau, that prompted her to draw idealized heroes and heroines to contrast with her rich and privileged idle aristocrats and gentry, and with her vicious place- and professional men, spawned by a corrupt social and political order. Heroines nurtured close to nature and outside society, and displaying considerable

103 Introduction to St. Ronan's Well (1st February 1832). Reproduced in: Ioan Williams (ed.), Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction (London 1968), 428.

natural sensibility, arise inevitably from her political philosophy. The result was a sharp satirical eye for those characters with whom she was politically out of sympathy, but a tendency to desert reality and create didactically-inspired heroes and heroines idealized to support her political views. Jane Austen's strength was that though her lack of radical politics allowed her to see the excesses of sensibility, she was sufficiently objective and just to expose mercilessly social snobbery and the tyranny of the socially strong, albeit mainly in a domestic setting.

There is no knowing what kind of novels Charlotte Smith might have produced had she been in easier circumstances and had she not regarded poetry as her true vocation, but it can be shown that Jane Austen could have had her doubts about sentimental and romantic conventions confirmed by Charlotte Smith's attacks on them in her fiction.<sup>104</sup>

To establish at the outset Charlotte Smith's strong sense of the absurdity of sentimental excesses, one can do no better than reproduce her high-spirited parody of such writing in Desmond:

The beautiful, the soft, the tender Iphigenia, closed not, during the tedious hours, her beauteous eyes while the glorious flambeau of silver-slippered day sunk beneath the encrimsoned couch of coral-crowned Thetis, giving up the dormant world to the raven-embrace of all overclouding night - When, however, the matin loving lark, on russet pinions, floating amid the tiffany clouds, that variegated, in fleecy indulation, the grey-invested heavens, hailed with his soul-reviving note, the radiant countenance of returning morn; the sweet, the mild, the elegantly unhappy maid, turned towards

104 Other writers may of course have had a similar influence: Fanny Burney is the most obvious. Yet the Burney novels would also probably suggest things to avoid.

the roseate-streaming East, those sapphire messengers, that expressed, in language of such exquisite sensibility, every emotion of her delicate soul; and, with a palpitating sigh, arose - She clad her graceful form in a close jacket of Nakara satin, trimmed with silver, and the blossoms of the sweet-scented pea, intermixed; her petticoat was of white sattin, with a border of the same; and on her head, half hiding, and half discovering her hyacinthine locks, she carelessly bound a glowing wreath of African marygolfs, and purple China-aster, surmounting the whole with a light kerchief of pink Italian gauze, embroidered by herself in lilies of the valley - She then approached the window, and in a voice whose dulcet gurglings emulated the cooings of the enamoured pigeon of the woods, she sighed forth the following exquisitely expressive ode . . . '105

The parody here is more exuberant than subtle, but the description of Iphigenia's apparel - of exotic origin and botanically-varied nature - is reminiscent of Jane Austen's description of Laura's exotic upbringing in Love and Freindship,<sup>106</sup> and of the good-humoured mockery of the minor works generally. Charlotte Smith's satirizing of the ability of heroines to 'sigh forth' impromptu verses at romantically appropriate moments perhaps reveals a capacity for self-mockery, for it was she who made this convention popular in her earlier novels. It may well be that she regarded Desmond as a new departure, and had come to a more serious conception of what a novel ought to be than when writing her earlier fiction.

The above parody occurs during a discussion of the effects of novels on readers, and this is a subject to which Charlotte Smith constantly refers in her prefaces, when she is not lamenting her domestic problems. However much she might claim she regarded herself primarily as a poet, she was in fact a staunch defender of the dignity and

105 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 272.

106 See above, p. 134.

seriousness of the novel-form, and argued her case persistently in a manner that could only have impressed the Jane Austen who wrote a similarly eloquent defence in Northanger Abbey.<sup>107</sup>

It is true that Charlotte Smith did not discuss the desirability of greater realism in novels until Desmond, though there are minor characters in those of her novels definitely associated with Jane Austen - Emmeline and Ethelinde - who have little of idealization about them. Charlotte Smith's distaste for exoticism undoubtedly grew in proportion as her own circumstances impressed on her a progressively bleaker view of life. Her growing interest in revolutionary activity in France and conviction of the need for reform at home also added to her impatience with extreme sentimental conventions.

Charlotte Smith felt no need to append prefaces to her earliest novels, but Desmond is a different matter. There she felt constrained to excuse her hero's passion for a married woman, where convention dictated that such attachments, however common in real life, should be avoided.<sup>108</sup> She also justified her inclusion of political arguments as realistic:

As to the political passages dispersed through the work, they are for the most part drawn from conversations to which I have been a witness, in England and France, during the last twelve months.<sup>109</sup>

She gave notice that she would not be bound by the convention that women novelists should not concern themselves with certain areas of life - again principally politics.<sup>110</sup>

The preface to The Banished Man also declares an adherence to realism:

107 Northanger Abbey, Chapter 5.

108 Preface to Desmond, i.

109 Ibid., ii.

110 Ibid., iii.

I have in the present work, aimed less at the wonderful and extraordinary, than at connecting by a chain of possible circumstances, events, some of which have happened, and all of which might have happened . . .<sup>111</sup>

More interestingly though, she interrupted this novel to present the reader with an address - entitled 'Avis au Lecteur' - at the beginning of the second volume. This clearly shows her unease with Radcliffean Gothic excesses, and also confirms her capacity for self-criticism and self-mockery. The wry recognition that a professional writer must to some extent give the public what it wants bears out my suggestion above that Charlotte Smith's instincts for realism were often frustrated by the exigencies of writing for her living:

"There was, an please your honour," said Corporal Trim, "There was a certain king of Bohemia, who had seven castles."

A modern novelist, who, to write "in the immediate taste," has so great a demand for these structures, cannot but regret, that not one of the seven castles was sketched by the light and forcible pencil of Sterne: for if it be true that books are made, as he asserts, only as apothecaries make medicines, how much might have been obtained from the King of Bohemia's seven castles, towards the castles which frown in almost every modern novel?

For my part, who can no longer build chateaux even en Espagne, I find that Mowbray Castle, Grasmere Abbey, the castles of Rock-March, the castle of Hauteville,, and Raylands Hall, have taken so many of my materials to construct, that I have hardly a watch tower, a Gothic arch, a cedar parlour, or a long gallery, an illuminated window, or a ruined chapel, left to help myself. Yet some of these are indispensibly necessary; and I have already built and burnt down one of these venerable edifices in this work, yet must seek wherewithal to raise another.

But my ingenious contemporaries have fully possessed themselves of every bastion and buttress - of every tower and turret - of every gallery and

<sup>111</sup> Preface to The Banished Man (London 1794), xi.

gateway, together with all their furniture of ivy mantles, and mossy battlements; tapestry and old pictures; owls, bats and ravens - that I had some doubts whether, to avoid the charge of plagiarism, it would not have been better to have earthed my hero, and have sent him for adventures to the subterranean town on the Chatelet mountain in Champagne, or even to Herculaneum, or Pompeii, where I think no scenes have yet been laid, and where I should have been in less danger of being again accused of borrowing, than I may perhaps be, while I only visit

"The glympses of the moon."<sup>112</sup>

Charlotte Smith followed this with a report of a conversation with 'a friend' who had read the first volume, and who agreed with a maxim much favoured by the author herself: 'Que rien n'est beau que le vrai.' The friend advises that the state of affairs in France gives sufficient scope for adventure and horror without resorting to Gothicism. Charlotte Smith should aim at a novel 'bearing such a resemblance to truth as may best become fiction.'<sup>113</sup> Some badinage follows on the dearth of a love-interest thus far in The Banished Man; the friend advising that the 'generality of novel readers' will not tolerate this omission.

Charlotte Smith then takes her leave of novel-writing (prematurely, as it turned out) with the following:

In the various combinations of human life - in the various shades of human character, there are almost inexhaustible sources, from whence observation may draw materials, that very slender talents may weave into connected narratives: but in this as in every other species of composition, there is a sort of fashion of the day. Le vrai, which you [the friend] so properly recommend, or even le vrai semblance, seems not to be the present fashion. I have no pleasure in drawing figures which interest me no more than the allegoric personages of Spencer: besides, it is time to resign the field of fiction before there remains for me only the gleanings, or before I am compelled by the caprice of fashion to go for materials for my novels, as the authors of some popular dramas have recently done, to children's

112 The Banished Man II, iii-iv.

113 Ibid., vi.



story books, or rather the collection which one sees in farm houses, the book of apparitions; or a dismal tale of a haunted house . . .<sup>114</sup>

Charlotte Smith continued to write novels only in part directed by her French maxim: it was left to Jane Austen, anything but a 'slender talent', to weave 'the various shades of human character' into 'connected narratives' which managed to defy some popular expectations and yet succeed.

Yet Charlotte Smith's respect for social realism was genuine, as was her anxiety that the novel should be something more than an insipid diversion for empty-headed young ladies. In Desmond, the vivacious and intelligent Fanny Waverly complains that her mother forbids her to read novels, which, it is decided, 'convey the poison of bad example in the soft semblance of refined sentiment.'<sup>115</sup> All novels that are not insipid are proscribed because of their immoral tendency:

One contains an oblique apology for suicide; a second, a lurking palliation of conjugal infidelity; a third a sneer against parental authority; and a fourth against religion; some are disliked for doctrines, which, probably, malice only, assuming the garb of wisdom, can discover in them; and others, because their writers have either, in their private, or political life, given offence to . . . prudery.<sup>116</sup>

Thus Fanny finds she is 'reduced to practise the finesse of a boarding-school miss, and to hide these objectionable pages.'<sup>117</sup> Alternatively, she tells us,

I must confine myself to such mawkish reading as is produced "in a rivulet of text running through a meadow of margin"<sup>118</sup> in the soft semblance of letters "from Miss Everilda Evelyn to Miss Victorina Villars . . ."<sup>119</sup>

114 Ibid., x-xi.

115 Desmond I, 259.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid., 260.

118 Misquotation of '. . . a neat rivulet of text shall meander through a meadow of margin' from Sheridan's School for Scandal I, i.

119 Ibid.

Charlotte Smith obviously shared Sheridan's contempt for ephemeral and insipid fiction, for she allows her heroine, Geraldine, a prolonged confirmation of the justice of Fanny's complaints and a reply to those who would emasculate the novel. Geraldine points out that to proscribe all novels in any way contentious would exclude both Richardson and Fielding. Novels do not, on the whole, glorify vice, but in any case it is absurd to keep them from young people so long as they are free to read 'circumstances more inimical to innocence' retailed daily 'in the public prints'. Besides, most novels of that time were too fatuous to do any real damage;

. . . those wild and absurd writings that describe in inflated language beings that never were, nor ever will be,

cannot have an influence on even the silliest reader.<sup>120</sup>

Geraldine then parodies such novels,<sup>121</sup> commenting thus:

Now do you think, my dear Fanny, that either good or harm can be derived from such a book as this? - Loss of time may be, with justice, objected to it, but no other evil . . . A sensible girl would throw it away in disgust, a weak one would enthuse momentarily and then forget it completely in the next fatuity of the day.<sup>122</sup>

Geraldine finds it hard to understand why the drama should escape the censure unreasonably heaped upon the novel. In most contemporary plays, 'harlequin tricks and pantomimical escapades... are accepted in place of genuine wit.'<sup>123</sup> Geraldine seems to see the better kind of novel as giving a more serious and accurate picture of life than did the older form.

Geraldine's defence is not as eloquent as Jane Austen's in Northanger Abbey - she apologises for rather than

120 Ibid., 271.

121 See above, pp. 138-9.

122 Desmond I, 272-3.

123 Ibid., 274.

exalts the form - but she does support it as one surreptitious method of conveying information on life to those not given to study and thought:

There is a chance, that those who will read nothing, if they do not read novels, may collect from them some few ideas, that are not either fallacious or absurd, to add to the very scanty stock which their usual insipidity of life has afforded them.<sup>124</sup>

There are indications that Charlotte Smith was uneasy with the fulsome protestations of love, and over-sentimental exchanges of devotions that such young ladies expected to find in their novels. Her determination not to pander to such expectations in The Banished Man is striking, and when D'Alonville declares his love to Angelina 'off stage' as it were, one might be reading Jane Austen herself:

The conversations then which decided that D'Alonville was an accepted lover, by the woman he adored, and the parting of persons thus mutually attached, when one was going to a country from whence there were so many chances that he might never return, shall be passed over . . .<sup>125</sup>

Jane Austen seems to have followed Charlotte Smith's precedent in giving little space to proposal scenes, and it may be that she did so for the same reasons: such scenes were hackneyed and almost impossible to free from sentimental conventions. Charlotte Smith writes:

One great objection to novels is the frequent recurrence of love-scenes; which readers of so many descriptions turn from as unnatural, or pass over as fulsome; while, to those who alone perhaps read them with avidity, they are said to be of dangerous tendency.<sup>126</sup>

124 Ibid., 275.

125 The Banished Man, III, 56.

126 Ibid. This last objection - presumably that love-scenes were likely to lead to some loosening of sexual restraint - was not one that much impressed Charlotte Smith. In Montalbert, again in the interests of greater realism, she anticipated objections to the heroine's secretly pledging herself to D'Alonville, by implying that she was making Rosalie behave as a young woman probably would in reality in such circumstances. The alternative, she claimed would be to create as heroines 'such faultless monsters as the world ne'er saw.' (Montalbert I, 176-7.)

Charlotte Smith's predilection for realism finds its way even into her books for children: she obviously hoped to prepare the young as appreciators of more serious fiction. In Rambles Farther she draws attention to the gap between pastoral conventions and rural reality: 'choruses of shepherds and nymphs, are with us never heard', and 'assemblies of rural felicity' never take place, 'for in our times, neither young nor old, who are capable of work, can lose a day of labour.'<sup>127</sup> She may regret the absence of the cheerful and picturesque ideal, but it is the rude reality that must be recognized; Mrs. Woodfield muses on her own disillusionment, before her young charges:

Even at this distance of time I well recollect how greatly disappointed I was when, being about eleven or twelve years old, I was first shown a shepherd. Having taken my ideas from songs where Strephon meets Phillis and presents her with a lamb dressed with roses and woodbines, or from Chelsea China figures, which at that time adorned many apartments, I had supposed a shepherd to be a personage elegantly attired, in a pea-green jacket, a silk hat crowned with hyacinths, followed by a beautiful little dog, his crook ornamented with ribands, and charming the echos by the sound of his flageolet: instead of which I saw a stout rough-looking clown, whose hair seemed bleached in the pinching storms to which he was exposed; he was clad in a coarse jacket of tanned leather, very much patched; concealed, however, partly by a thick white woollen great coat; his hat was tied on with a red handkerchief, and he was followed by an ugly shagg-ear'd dog, whose continual and hoarse barking constituted all the music of this rude and solitary pair.

I said to myself; How is it possible this can be a shepherd? Where then are the beings described by Pope, by Shenstone, by Hammond, and Lord Littleton; the Paridels, Damons, and Corydons? Alas! such, in a thousand more material instances, is the mortifying difference between the pictures of life we are shewn and the sad realities we are obliged to accept.<sup>128</sup>

127 Rambles Farther (London 1796), 120.

128 Ibid., 121-3.

Charlotte Smith's impulse to parody and burlesque derived from her intermittent discernment of the gap between rude - but human - reality, and the enervated ideals demanded by sentimental conventions. In her portraits of affectation, hypocrisy, prejudice and moral corruption, the satire stems from her awareness of the failure of human beings to attain the standards they profess, or to pursue the ideals to which they ought to strive. By virtue of this impulse to satirize, Charlotte Smith has her modest but secure place in that tradition of the novel of which Fielding was her greatest predecessor and Jane Austen her most distinguished immediate successor. At its lightest this impulse finds expression in a comedy of manners reminiscent of Fanny Burney; at its most earnest it produces the harsher political and social satire of the didactic novel, and also its tendency to mere propaganda or overwrought caricature. Charlotte Smith's weakness was that her sense of realism often deserted her when she came to provide positive characters and values by which to place what she satirized - her heroes and heroines are either variations on the standard sentimental recipe or mouthpieces for fine philosophy - but her particular variety of social satire forms a bridge between Fanny Burney and the more elegantly incisive Jane Austen.

There is a chapter of The Young Philosopher in which Charlotte Smith modulates from a scene reminiscent of Fanny Burney's treatment of the vulgar, socially-climbing Branghtons to a section which again anticipates Northanger Abbey. This concerns a 'pretender to gentility' Mr. Brownjohn and his wife. The vulgarity of the Brownjohns is established first, then Charlotte Smith reveals Brownjohn's social aspirations leading to his discomfiture. The scene is of similar effect to that in Northanger

Abbey where John Thorpe, trying to cut a fine figure as a driver, is deflated by having his untruths and inconsistencies brought out by Catherine's brother. In Charlotte Smith's episode, Mrs. Brownjohn mentions a barely-avoided accident in order to ensure that her listeners are aware that she possesses a coach. She remarks that she never would have heard the last of it from her husband had the vehicle been damaged:

- "No, faith," cried the attorney, "that you would not; - not that I mind the coach so much, though it cost me an hundred and sixty guineas without the harness - but I can't bear to have my horses hurt, and women never have any mercy on horses. - That there pair of horses, by G—, and the third at grass in Hertfordshire, that I bought of Sir Miles Whisker cost me upwards of three hundred guineas. - But Mrs. Brownjohn thinks no more of 'em than if they were dray-horses. - She is utterly insensible of their value, and minds them there sort of things no more than the pump at Aldgate. Why now Bagshaw, (addressing himself to a tall awkward young man, who looked somewhat like a groom out of place) I'll tell you what; that brown horse, by Spanker, you saw me upon the last time we hunted; don't you remember you said you'd give me a cool sixty for him. - Well, Sir, I offered him and forty guineas to boot, for a bay gelding, a match for these three, and, by G—, my Lord refused the offer." "Lord who?" said the macquignon in a surly tone. "Lord - why Lord - Lord Maccuragh, he as we used to hunt with along o' the Brighton hounds."

"He was a cursed fool," said the grumbling voice, "not to take you at your word."

"I was staying two or three days at his house in Essex," continued Brownjohn, "and he and I —"

"He has no house in Essex," said a pert-looking young man, at the other end of the table, "I happen to know, for my uncle Crockham serves his lordship with wine - and his house is in Surry." - "Aye he has a house in Surry," said Brownjohn, "but this is an hunting box where he only goes now and then."

"'Tis in the hundreds then I'll swear," said the gentleman groom, "and he goes a hunting of widgeon, for I'll be d——d if he has an house in any other part of Essex."

Brownjohn persisted, and the other contradicted. - One was undaunted in lying, the other obstinate in maintaining an insignificant truth. - They were very noisy and very rude to each other; and would perhaps have quarrelled, if the attorney had not had an interest in keeping his client in general good humour, and if the client had not been deeply indebted to the attorney.<sup>129</sup>

This masculine disputation and mild cursing is not quite Jane Austen's material, but the satirical method employed is typical of her: the characters are allowed to speak and damn themselves, the reader's response being directed - fairly unobtrusively - by the narrator, and the writer then confirms the reader's diagnosis by an incisive summing-up of the remainder of the conversation. The final paragraph confirms the reader's analysis of Brownjohn and his friends, but its neatly antithetical structure gives the additional pleasure of a decisive dismissal.

It would be absurd to claim Charlotte Smith as the discoverer of the potency of this satirical antithesis in prose, but she does at times achieve an unlaboured deftness from which Jane Austen may have learned. Examples are legion, but one might refer to a novel it is certain Jane Austen knew. The 'vapid and vacant' Mr. Davenant of Ethelinde is the despair of his guardian, Sir Edward Newenden:

Sir Edward had been taught to hope that he might be rendered a useful if not a brilliant member of society. But his guardian soon found, that the same easiness of disposition which would, if he had fallen into good company only, have rendered him respectable, now laid him open to the influence of numberless debauched and dissipated young men, who without having more sense, had more vivacity than himself. Of these he became the copyist; and committed folly with no other hope and to no other end than to obtain the suffrage of fools.<sup>130</sup>

129 The Young Philosopher III, 125-7.

130 Ethelinde (London 1789) I, 24-5.

Often Charlotte Smith's satire is directed against political and judicial abuses and social inequalities, and she does not remain within the confines of domestic life and manners as, on the whole, does Jane Austen. Yet there remains much that seems prototypal of Jane Austen's characters and situations. Mrs. Winslow of The Young Philosopher is reminiscent of Mrs. Bennett of Pride and Prejudice in her taking refuge in 'nerves' as an unconscious response to her husband's essential contempt for her:

. . . but lately, poor woman, she has fallen into what she calls her nervous ways, and instead of retorting she performs a fit, and really it is piteous to see her; though luckily her fits are of a sort that are miraculously cured by cards and company.<sup>131</sup>

A particular target of Charlotte Smith was the clergyman who disgraces his cloth. Sometimes she makes such characters monsters, but when she restrains her ire, the intellectual shortcomings, indifference to charitable duties to social inferiors, and undue deference to worldly patronage of her clerics indicate that such characters as Mr. Collins of Pride and Prejudice are not entirely without precedent:

Mr. Lessington [of Montalbert] was one of those men who have just as much understanding as enables them to fill, with tolerable decency, their part in the theatre of the world. He loved the conveniencies of life, and indulged rather too much in the pleasures of the table. His less fortunate acquaintances (a race of people to whom he was not particularly attached) knew that Mr. Lessington was not a man to whom the distressed could apply with any hope of receiving anything but good advice. Those who were more fortunate had for the most part a very good opinion of Mr. Lessington. If he was exact and somewhat strict in enacting his dues, he was also very regular in the duties of his office; and if he did not feel much for the distresses of the poor, he never offended . . . the ears of the rich, by complaints which those who overlook the labourers in the vineyard are always so unwilling to hear.<sup>132</sup>

131 The Young Philosopher I, 159.

132 Montalbert I, 127-8.



This tart dismissal, effective by virtue of its very reasonableness and balance, nevertheless contains an indication of one weakness among those which, at the end of the day, make Charlotte Smith's satire less effective than Jane Austen's. The word 'overlook' is italicised - presumably to ensure that the pun is noticed - and this is symptomatic of a certain lack of confidence in the reader on Charlotte Smith's part. An exchange from Desmond underlines the point. Fanny Waverly reproaches Verney for his indifference to his wife:

"Have you seen your wife, Sir?" said Miss Waverly very gravely - "Yes, my dear Miss Frances," replied he in a drawling tone of mimicry, "I have seen my wife, looking for all the world like Charity and her three children over the door of a hospital. -"

"She should not only look Charity," retorted Fanny smartly, but feel it, or she would never be able to endure your monstrous behaviour."

"Pretty pettish little dear," cried he "how this indignation animates your features - Anger, Miss Fanny, renders you absolutely piquant - My wife now - my grave, solemn, sage spouse, is not half so agacant with charity and all her virtues."

"That she possesses all virtues, Sir, must be her merit solely, for never woman had so poor encouragement to cherish any - when one considers that she suffers you, her charity cannot be doubted: her faith, in relying on you, is also exemplary; and one laments that so connected, she can have nothing to do with Hope -"133

The italicising of words for stress is obtrusive and largely unnecessary, and the biblical allusion at the end is hardly so obscure as to need signalling in the same way.

Jane Austen's dialogue, however wittily astringent and epigrammatic, is eminently believable, but Charlotte Smith's passage reads rather more like a literary notion of what a sophisticated exchange should be. Verney is very much a stock gentleman - villain in his use of French

to express his worldly amusement at the earnest Fanny, and Fanny's responses are more elaborately ingenious than incisive and probable.

There are other reasons for Charlotte Smith's inferiority to Jane Austen in the satirical portrayal of character. Charlotte Smith too often shows a personal animus in her portraits of lawyers and clergymen which cannot carry the same conviction as artistic detachment. In addition, there is too much of the descriptive and too little of the dramatic in her satirical revelation of character. Jane Austen's impulse always is to let her characters reveal themselves in conversation and action, but Charlotte Smith all too often prefers lengthy authorial analysis and comment. My quotations of dialogue from Charlotte Smith's works above are misleading if they convey an impression of an unflinching use of dialogue to reveal character: my purpose has been only to show that she could sometimes rise to satirical writing from which Jane Austen may have learned.

## V

### Charles Dickens

Of the many books suggested as possible sources for Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities, Charlotte Smith's Desmond (1792) has perhaps received the least attention. The only writer to have mentioned Desmond in this connexion is Hilbish, who thinks that its 'inspiration . . . upon Charles Dickens seems certain'.<sup>134</sup> I would agree that there are remarkable correspondences; and it seems to me that there is evidence in the Tale additional to that adduced

134 Hilbish, op.cit., 558.

by Hilbish that Dickens read Desmond, and may well have been influenced by Charlotte Smith's novel in what is probably the best-known scene in the Tale, if not in his works as a whole: the 'final words' of Sydney Carton upon his arrival at the guillotine.

Charlotte Smith collected material for Desmond, her fourth novel, while writing her previous novel Celestina (1791) and she spent most of this period at Brighton, where she met 'many distinguished and literary people some of whom were the most violent advocates of the French Revolution; and from them she caught the contagion of . . . radical opinions'. The result was what Hilbish calls 'a kind of social treatise': a didactic novel containing 'the germ of the novel of purpose; later made effective by Dickens'.<sup>135</sup>

The hero of the novel, Lionel Desmond, a young man of sensibility and advanced views, travels through France and records his experiences in a series of letters, mostly to his older, more conservative friend Bethel, and it becomes obvious that this travelogue element of the novel exists in order that Desmond (who plainly speaks for Charlotte Smith) may correct English misapprehensions as to the situation in France and argue for the Revolutionary cause. The pro-Revolution views of the author are conveyed partly through Desmond's reports of a series of arguments between, on one side, enlightened Frenchmen and Englishmen, and on the other, benighted reactionaries, whose moral shortcomings and selfish motives are always readily apparent; and partly through sketches of the places Desmond visits, which show the benefits brought by the Revolution. Paris is not in anarchic tumult; in the provinces, the peasants on the estate of Desmond's enlightened friend, Montfleuri, enjoy liberty and rural bliss, and

135 Hilbish op.cit., 144-6.

agriculture flourishes; but the lands of his old, conservative uncle, the Count d'Hauteville, and the Church estates, are inefficiently managed, and are the scene of peasant misery and discontent.<sup>136</sup>

There seems to be no recorded reference to Charlotte Smith by Dickens. But the numerous reviews of Desmond and the appearance of three editions in the first year of publication suggest a heavy initial demand which must have left many copies surviving in private hands and circulating libraries well into the nineteenth century. Charlotte Smith's popularity did not die with her; on the contrary it survived for half a century afterwards. Between Charlotte Smith's death in 1806 and that of Dickens in 1870 there appeared editions of her works in at least twelve separate years, many in the formative period of Dickens's life, and continuing as late as 1863. It seems likely that many copies of Desmond would be retained and read well into Dickens's lifetime, and not unlikely that he read the novel while still young, though there was no copy in his library at the time of his death. Charlotte Smith's works were held in sufficiently high esteem to be included in such popular reprint series as Anna Barbauld's 'British Novelists' (1810 and 1820), 'Whittingham's Pocket Novelists' (1820-22) and the 'British Poets' (1851).

Hilbish has suggested that, in Desmond, the relation of Montfleuri to his uncle, the Count d'Hauteville, with their respective and opposed ideas concerning the new, more democratic system in France, 'strikingly suggests a similar relationship between Charles Darnay and his uncle, the Monseigneur Evrémonde in A Tale'.<sup>137</sup> She also refers to the story told to the hero of Desmond by a Breton

136 For a fuller summary and critical account of Desmond, see below pp. 306-31.

137 Hilbish op.cit., 558-9.

peasant complaining of archaic and overbearing aristocratic privileges which effectively deprive him of any rights on his own land and mean 'he has no right to any taste or attachment contrary to the sentiments of his lord'. Hilbish thinks this is 'fundamentally suggestive of the abduction of Madame Defarge's sister by Monsieur Evrémonde on the same principle in Dickens's Tale'. The Montfleuri and Hauteville - Darnay and Evrémonde parallel is certainly striking, though I think the Breton peasant - Defarge influence less convincing. It has been suggested with equal plausibility that the incident of Dr. Manette's being taken to attend a dying woman in a mysterious chateau was inspired by Scott's Rokeby,<sup>138</sup> though this admittedly is only one element in the episode in Dickens, and the indebtedness to Scott in this particular is not inconsistent with the claim that the misuse of the woman generally was suggested by Desmond. Hilbish herself admits that the incident 'may be no more than a universally known fact of the condition of French peasants at this period of history'.

Hilbish sees another remarkable correspondence between a description in Desmond and a dramatic scene in the Tale as being too close to be explained away as conventional lore of the Revolution, and as being conclusive evidence of indebtedness. This is the incident of the running-down of a poor man's child in the streets of Paris by the recklessly-driven carriage of the indifferent 'Monsieur the Marquis' - Darnay's uncle, Evrémonde - in Book Two, Chapter Seven of the Tale.

The hero of Desmond discusses similar incidents. In a letter dated July 19th, 1790, Desmond is anxious to refute English allegations of disorder in Paris following the Revolution. Paris now has 'an excellent police' and

138 J. A. Falconer, 'The Sources of A Tale of Two Cities', Modern Language Notes XXXVI (Jan. 1921), 7.

the utmost care is taken of the lives of the commonality [sic], of whom a great number perished yearly in Paris by the furious manner in which the carriages of the noblesse were driven through the streets, where there are no accommodations for the foot passengers - and where the proud and unfeeling possessors of those splendid equipages . . . have been known to feel their rapid wheels crushing a fellow creature, with emotions so far from those of humanity as to have said, 'tant mieux, il y a toujours assez de ces geux /gueux/'.<sup>139</sup>

In a footnote, Charlotte Smith relates a true story of this kind, where a young Englishman, after an accident involving a cabriolet in the Rue St. Honore, shouted in horror to his French friend that he had killed a man. But 'the charioteer drove on; saying with all possible sang froid - "Eh bien, tant pis pour lui".'

The similarity here to the incident in the Tale is so remarkable that it is not surprising that Hilbish thinks it 'seems certain to have been the foundation of Dickens's dramatic portrayal of an identical incident in Saint Antoine'. She is aware of Dickens's acknowledgement of Carlyle's French Revolution as a source for A Tale of Two Cities; and also, as she puts it 'an obscure work', but she does not make it clear whether by this she means Louis Sébastian Mercier's Tableau de Paris, which was first produced anonymously in 1781, but extended and finished at Neuchâtal by 1788, after trouble with the French authorities. Mercier tells us, with some pride, that by this time it had grown to twelve volumes.<sup>140</sup> The eight volume 'Nouvelle Édition, Corrigée et augmentée', published in Amsterdam in 1782, could well have been the one seen by Dickens. Hilbish does not seem to be aware of the extent of the influence of this specifically-acknowledged source.

139 Desmond, a Novel (Dublin 1792) I, 63.

140 W & E Jackson, The Picture of Paris before and after the Revolution (London 1929), 2. (A Nouveau Tableau de Paris was published in 1790). I have used this modern translation for quotation purposes.

This 'curious book . . . tiresome enough in its literal dictionary-like minuteness', which gave 'full authority' for Dickens's marquis,<sup>141</sup> also displays its author's impatience with reckless carriage-driving in Paris. Chapter XXIX of the first volume, entitled 'Gare! Gare!', begins:

Mind the carriages! Here comes the black-coated physician in his chariot, the dancing-master in his cabriolet, the fencing master in his diabie - and the Prince behind the six horses at the gallop as if he were in open country.

The humble vinaigrette slips between two coaches and escapes by a miracle. Young people on horseback . . . are impatient and show ill-humour when the crowd, which suffers from the mud they splash, retards their progress. Both carriages and riders cause many accidents, to which the police show perfect indifference.

Mercier has yet more vivid phrases for the indifference of the carriage-owners and the sufferings of those run down:

The threatening wheels of the overbearing rich drive as rapidly as ever over stones stained with the blood of their unhappy victims, who expire in horrid tortures without sight of the wished-for reform; and that because every office-holder keeps his carriage and in consequence disdains the pedestrian. The lack of side-walks makes every street a danger.<sup>142</sup>

It is clear that Dickens's carriage incident resembles these passages in Mercier, but they may have been transmitted via Charlotte Smith's Desmond. She spent the winter of 1784 in Normandy, where she began a translation of the Abbe Prévost's Manon Lescaut, and it is not unlikely that she read an early edition of the Tableau there. The 1782 edition of the Tableau included these strictures on reckless carriage-driving; they were not first introduced in the post-Revolution revised editions, and could well have provided material for Desmond.

141 Letters to John Foster and Bulwer Lytton in: W. Dexter, The Letters of Charles Dickens (London 1938) III, 117, 162.

142 Jackson, op.cit., 13-14.

The case for believing that Desmond influenced Dickens is strengthened by his apparently following Charlotte Smith in adapting a passage from Milton's Areopagitica (1644) to apply to the French Revolution. Within three pages of the description of reckless carriage-driving in Desmond, one is confronted by a quotation strikingly evocative of some words attributed to Sydney Carton as he awaits execution in the Tale (Book Three, Chapter Fifteen). Charlotte Smith tells us that now the reckless aristocracy has been curbed in Paris, 'people of fashion' will lament the new situation and stay away, but 'the philosopher, the philanthropist, the citizen of the world' will say:

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and floating birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.<sup>143</sup>

Milton's peroration and Carton's final words have a general but insistent resemblance in their shared belief that a regenerated populace - 'a brilliant people' or 'a puissant nation' - will find it possible, in a moment of crisis, to rouse itself from former passivity and assure a liberated future. 'Those who love the twilight' are specified in Dickens as 'Barsad, and Cly, Defarge, The Vengeance, The Jurymen, the Judge, long ranks of the new oppressors'. The obvious similarity is the repeated 'Methinks I see' in Milton and the many-times iterated 'I see' in Dickens. The similarity is not so much a matter of phrase-by-phrase detailed resemblance, as comparable overall movement of sentiment and occasional significant

143 Desmond I, 64.



ideas and phrases: one would not suggest anything like plagiarism by Dickens; simply absorption of what he could use in the works of his predecessors, which appears in his work transformed to suit his particular artistic purposes. Certainly, though, Carton's 'final words' have the feel of a set piece about them - a certain artificiality not wholly accounted for by the dramatic requirements of the situation in which they occur - which encourages one to think that they were inspired by another work. Dickens may well have been prompted to use this Areopagitica-like patterning for Sydney Carton's vision because he had seen the passage from Milton used in a context broadly similar to his own, in Desmond.

There is no evidence that Dickens read Areopagitica itself: he seems never to have referred to it in his letters or elsewhere in his novels; it was not in his Library when he died, though Paradise Lost and the Poetical Works were.<sup>144</sup> Whether he had read it elsewhere or not, I think it likely he remembered the carriage incident in Desmond, and this memory led him later to remember and adapt the Areopagitica passage.

## VI

### Charlotte and Emily Brontë

When Anna Barbauld's edition of The Old Manor House appeared in 1810, neither Dickens nor the Brontë sisters were yet born. But their births occurred during the subsequent decade and, as in the case of Dickens, I suspect

<sup>144</sup> Reprints of the Catalogues of the Libraries of Charles Dickens and W. M. Thackeray, Etc. (London 1935), 75.

that at least one or two of Charlotte Smith's novels formed a part of the reading of the sisters in their formative years. It is even more difficult than in the case of Dickens to establish this and demonstrate specific influences on the novels of Charlotte and Emily Brontë, yet two Brontë scholars mention Charlotte Smith in relation to Charlotte and Emily.<sup>145</sup>

In neither case is the writer more confident than I in claiming a definite influence: Nelson Bushnell can only show how Charlotte Smith's novel was readily accessible to Charlotte Brontë, whilst admitting that there is 'no objective proof of her reading it', and Inga-Stina Ewbank simply and en passant contrasts some aspects of Wuthering Heights with Charlotte Smith's technique in The Old Manor House. In both cases the writers are concerned to demonstrate how the two Brontë sisters drew on situations and narrative conventions of their more humdrum predecessors, exalted them artistically, and turned them to more profound purposes. Nevertheless, both were led to name Charlotte Smith rather than others of her contemporaries, and I believe that Charlotte Smith's novels played their part in the line of fiction that was ultimately to justify itself in Jane Eyre and, triumphantly, in Wuthering Heights.

Bushnell instances two minor episodes in The Old Manor House concerning separated lovers which have 'counterparts' in Jane Eyre; but though they may serve his purpose of demonstrating Charlotte Brontë's artistic superiority,

145 Nelson S. Bushnell, 'Artistic Economy in Jane Eyre: a contrast with The Old Manor House', English Language Notes V (March 1968), 197-202; and Inga-Stina Ewbank, 'Their Proper Sphere': A Study of the Brontë Sisters as Early-Victorian Female Novelists, (London 1966). For an account of Charlotte Brontë's transformation of the Gothicism of her predecessors, see: Robert B. Heilman, 'Charlotte Brontë's "New Gothic"', Victorian Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism (ed. Austin Wright), (New York 1970), 71-85.

neither are particularly convincing as evidence of literary influence, and need not be summarized here.<sup>146</sup>

However, Bushnell then deals with an episode in The Old Manor House which is strongly suggestive of certain events in Jane Eyre. In Chapter Twelve of the latter novel, Jane first meets Rochester on a frost-bound road, when his horse slips on a sheet of ice and he falls to the ground. In Chapter Eleven of Volume Four of The Old Manor House, the hero, Orlando, enjoys a similiarly wintry reunion with his long-lost Monimia. The frost, 'now set in with great severity', makes the road very difficult for Orlando's horse, and 'a sheet of ice' (the same phrase as in Jane Eyre) forces him to dismount. The almost-bare vegetation of the roadside and hedgerows is remarked: the 'pale and sallow mistletoe' partly relieves the 'scanty appearance of foliage'. As darkness begins to overtake the fine, clear evening, 'even the robin, solitary songster of the frozen woods, had ceased his faint vespers to the setting sun, and hardly a breath of air agitated the leafless branches.' It is all remarkably reminiscent of the Jane Eyre scene, where the bare hedgerows are emphasized by the striking image of birds perched in them looking like odd withered leaves. There is in both accounts a use of nature in a state of hushed expectancy, a frost-bound stillness, which heralds a vital moment in the lives of both protagonists. Bushnell is right to emphasize the artistic superiority of the Jane Eyre episode, though he does protest rather too much at Charlotte Smith's inadequacies in order that Charlotte Brontë may shine the more brightly in contrast. The growing gloom of Charlotte Smith's episode, when Orlando leaves the road and meets Monimia swathed in a long black cloak near ivy-mantled ruins, may be conventionally Gothic, but it is not gratuitous. The cold gloom reflects Orlando's misery at losing his

<sup>146</sup> See Bushnell, op.cit., 197-8.

beloved, and the sudden and heartfelt joy he feels on rediscovering her in this unpromisingly bleak environment is like the breaking of the grip of a deadening frost. Certainly, Charlotte Brontë (and, much more, Emily) transforms Gothicism from a rather trivial literary fad to a telling means of intensifying the presentation of human passion, and of exploring human psychology in its heightened states,<sup>147</sup> but there were hints in this direction in the work of earlier novelists, not least Charlotte Smith.

Miss Ewbank's reference to Charlotte Smith consists in pointing out that she devotes many a page to trivial plot machinery - to the engineering of complicated arrangements so that her lovers may exchange messages and enjoy secret meetings, for example - which Emily Brontë excludes, contenting herself with brief comments that such time-honoured fictional episodes were arranged 'by some means.' Miss Ewbank makes no suggestion that a Charlotte Smith novel determined Emily Brontë to avoid such details, and I have found no evidence linking the two novelists in this way.

147 Bushnell is correct to claim that the Gothic colouring (present in this episode in Jane's half-mistaking Rochester's dog, Pilot, for the legendary supernatural 'Gytrash') is organically absorbed into Jane Eyre and colours the whole Jane-Rochester relationship. It certainly helps convey the adolescent intensity of Jane's feelings for Rochester and her attitudes to him. The Gothicism in The Old Manor House is more sporadic and mechanical.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE POETRY

<u>Elegiac Sonnets</u>	1784
<u>The Emigrants</u>	1793
<u>Elegiac Sonnets, Volume Two</u>	1797
<u>Beachy Head and Other Poems</u>	1807

Charlotte Smith's poetry is less admired today even than her fiction, yet the modest part it played in the transition from Augustanism to Romanticism - and its influence on such poets as Wordsworth, Coleridge and, possibly, Keats - seem little less significant than the role of her fiction in the history of the English novel. Charlotte Smith was inclined to think of herself as a novelist by financial necessity, but a poet by choice and talent. Literary historians as a rule have disagreed, but in enumerating the weaknesses of her verse, they have tended to underestimate her poetic influence. This chapter therefore traces the place of Charlotte Smith's poetry in the general development of English verse in the late eighteenth century, and its specific influence on some of the great poets, in addition to attempting a critical appraisal of her work. Before proceeding to a chronological survey of the poetry, it will be useful to indicate briefly its quality and special characteristics.

The comparisons with Wordsworth's poetry made from time to time below emphasize the mediocre quality of the bulk of Charlotte Smith's verse and the very limited achievement represented even by the best. She is much more at home in the company of such minor figures as Anna Seward, W. L. Bowles, Thomas Warton the Younger and Helen Maria Williams as regards the general quality of her

verse, though she has more to recommend her to a modern reader than her early mentor, William Hayley. Her better passages may be considered in relation to Gray, Collins, Goldsmith and the early Crabbe without too pronounced a sense of incongruity. More will be said of these figures below.

Generalization about the development of English poetry from the Augustans to the Romantics, especially in the 1780's and 90's when Charlotte Smith produced most of her poetry, is notoriously hazardous because the period displays the complexities, hesitations and eddyings typical of a transitional phase. In the case of Charlotte Smith, we shall see innovations preparing the way for the first generation of Romantic poets, particularly those especially concerned with Nature, but also evidence of her formal and linguistic debt to Augustanism. She displays a strongly 'modern' tendency to emotion and sensation in her poetry - conveyed through description of the natural world and examination of the sensibility of the poet herself - with a retention of many of the devices and assumptions of Augustan forms previously developed to convey more impersonally 'classical' or urbanely 'artificial' material.

The tendency to greater feeling and sensation in poetry, which is seen perhaps most clearly in the poet's attitude to nature, may be traced as far back as Thomson's Seasons (1726-30), which seem to treat of a world different from that of Pope's pastorals. A crucial difference is Thomson's choice of blank verse and his debt to Spenser: this reaching-back beyond the epigrammatic Augustan heroic couplet to iambic pentameter was to prove vital to the development of future meditative nature poetry. Thomson's successors continued to evince a desire to infuse descriptive poetry with feeling until the 'Graveyard' poets linked it with a predilection for sober moralizing and religiosity, thus marking a more distinctive departure from Augustan brilliancy and wit. Charlotte Smith is in direct line of descent from this group - not just (as is shown below)<sup>1</sup> in their fondness for midnight thoughts on death

1 See below, pp.184-5.

and the tomb, but more generally in their readiness to dwell upon their own sensibility and emotion. In Young and Blair classical self-effacement and the instinct for a measure and order that checks the individual's expression of his unsteady and irregular inner life begins to give way to greater self-expression. The poetry of feeling does not limit itself to nature but reaches back beyond Augustan rationalism to times of (it was thought) greater piety and the fuller expression of emotion. So medieval ruins, old romances and ballads, legends and popular traditions which are capable of stirring the imagination and emotions with apprehensions of a varied and highly-coloured past national life are prized. The literature of the past seems to indicate an honest simplicity of character and more 'natural' mode of life than is apparent in the artificial refinement of Augustan art.

The ablest exponents of the poetry of sentiment in this generation are Collins and Gray. However, they are a stage closer to the Augustans than Charlotte Smith in, for instance, Collins's adherence to the form of the Pindaric Ode and greater tendency to allegory and personification, and in Gray's disciplined concern for verbal precision and harmonious form - a classical lucidity and sense of proportion which orders and shapes his sentimental meditations and emotion - suffused landscapes. As regards Charlotte Smith's penchant for the tender evocation of nature, such poets as Jago and Shenstone were probably also influential forerunners.

William Cowper was an acknowledged inspiration for Charlotte Smith's The Emigrants and he is a more substantial link than she in the chain that leads to Wordsworth. Charlotte Smith derived the form of The Emigrants from Cowper's The Task, thus playing her part in the gradual adaptation of the blank verse of Milton to the descriptive-meditative iambic pentameter of Wordsworth. Cowper's verse in The Task, simple but eloquent, and concerned with domestic virtues in a fresh countryside, encouraged Charlotte Smith to attempt a similar strong simplicity in her descriptions of nature and instilled in her a confidence to proclaim the virtues of an industrious rural life:

Cowper's concern for the unfortunate finds a ready echo in Charlotte Smith's poetry. What Charlotte Smith, like the young Wordsworth, did not adopt, were Cowper's theological purposes - piety is present in her work only as a vague and intermittent tendency to locate a beneficent or healing spirit in Nature. She falls far short of the intensity of Wordsworth's sense of the moral or spiritual relationship of man and nature and rarely displays his concern to ponder and elucidate the connection, but her absorbed, reverent attitude to Nature in parts of The Emigrants and some of her sonnets is a modification of Cowper's orthodox piety that edges her nearer to Romanticism.

A poetic predecessor who might seem to deserve mention - and whose works in all probability did encourage Charlotte Smith to try to avoid viewing the countryside and its inhabitants through the tinted lenses of the pastoral tradition was George Crabbe. Crabbe, however, is a good example of how classical tradition inherited from the Augustans interrupted the steady flow towards the poetry of sentiment. His grimly factual descriptions of rural misery in The Village are impatient alike of decorative pastoralism and the sentimentalizing of the countryside and country life. His terse couplets avoid the gentle, meditative melancholy of sentimental blank verse.

If Charlotte Smith thus belongs to a sentimental poetic movement gradually displacing classicism in its Augustan manifestations and preparing the Romantic ground, how is this to be reconciled with her kinship (to be explored later)<sup>2</sup> in her fiction with the radicals of her day, with their insistence on reason as the test of all human institutions and their admiration for the art and social organization of the Roman Republic, with its stoical, patriotic self-denying virtues? Another question that might seem awkward is how the sentimental impatience with classical literary forms and attitudes is to be squared with the revival of admiration for classical art and architecture much in evidence during Charlotte Smith's

2 See below, Chapter 5, pp. 235f - 235r.



writing lifetime. I suggest elsewhere that Charlotte Smith's adherence to reason was not in fact complete and that this distinguishes her from some of her radical contemporaries,<sup>3</sup> but the real solution to the paradox lies in recognition of the ambiguity of the term 'classical', which allows it to be attached to sets of attitudes which are in fact largely mutually antagonistic. A distinction must be made between the Augustan ethos which achieved its poetic fulfilment with the works of Pope, and a subsequent neo-classicism which developed from the Enlightenment in France and was in many respects hostile to the values of the Age of Pope.

When Coleridge, looking back to his schooldays and first venture into print, sums up his early objections to the Augustans, he is reflecting a spirit of dissatisfaction that had been developing with the growth of sentimental literature. Whether his criticisms of Pope are wholly just is not as important in this instance as the fact that he is articulating the rationale of later poets striving to shed Augustan influences. In discussing the verse of 'Mr. Pope and his followers' in the Biographia Literaria, Coleridge says he saw that

the excellence of this kind consisted in just and acute observations on men and manners in an artificial state of society as its matter and substance - and in the logic of wit conveyed in smooth and strong epigrammatic couplets as its form.

The whole was a 'sorites ... of epigrams', but

Meantime the matter and diction seemed to me characterized not so much by poetic thoughts as by thoughts translated into the language of poetry.<sup>4</sup>

Later poets saw the diction, forms and subject matter of the Augustans as stemming from the society which the latter had inhabited: urbane but artificial; over-sophisticated and rationalistic at the expense of feeling and imagination, aristocratic and sometimes glitteringly frivolous. Its

3 See below, Chapter 5, pp. 235m - 235p.

4 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (Everyman Edition, 1965, London and New York), 9.

architectural style, particularly abroad, had been the roccoco, from which apparent extravagance a later generation turned to the severe purity of classical styles, or to the spiritual aspirations of gothic. Its preference in nature poetry was for elegant pastorals largely unrelated to rural reality and often of vaguely Arcadian setting. Later poets (Charlotte Smith included) turned more and more to actual scenery of a specifically national or local character, simply described but suffused with feeling. Coleridge criticizes his own early poems as tainted with the Augustan inheritance when he writes of their 'swell and glitter' and 'an excess of ornament, in addition to strained and elaborate diction.'<sup>5</sup>

The Augustan writer is not distinguished from the sentimentalist, romantic, or later neoclassical man of reason by his basing much of his work on classical models and his admiration for ancient Greece and Rome, but by his selection of classical writers deserving of admiration and by the elements of classical writings that he selects for approval and imitation. So, Coleridge tells us that James Boyer of Christ's Hospital preferred Demosthenes to Cicero, Homer and Theocritus to Virgil, Virgil to Ovid, and Lucretius, Terence and Catullus to the Roman Augustan poets. The young Coleridge himself 'reverenced those who had reintroduced the manly simplicity of the Grecian and of our own elder poets' and, 'admitted the superiority of an austerer and more natural style.'<sup>6</sup> Coleridge's preferences in his youth are of a piece with a general European rediscovery of the noble simplicity of the ancients which accompanied growing impatience with the old despotisms and aristocratic decadence, and went hand-in-hand with the growth of liberal or radical political ideas. The progressives look back beyond their immediate artistic forbears for an art in harmony with their political views and find it in the 'supreme primitive', Homer; in the pre-Augustan Roman writers; and, in Britain,

5 Ibid., 2-3.

6 Ibid., 3.

in Milton and the English republicans, but also in our whole national literature reaching back to anonymous folk tales and legends. Political developments in the late eighteenth century and their effect on Charlotte Smith are dealt with in the discussion of her fiction below,<sup>7</sup> but here we may take a wider view of the way in which primitivism and sensibility in sentimental poetry were allied against the polished urbanity of Augustan verse.

The widespread Rousseauistic belief in moral and political regeneration through a shedding of artificiality, oversophistication, fashionable frivolity and complacent corruption led to an admiration for whatever was noble, austere and eloquently simple in classical art. Hugh Honour has indicated the evolution of a new attitude towards, and increased admiration for, Homer.<sup>8</sup> He progressed from being one of the great ancient poets compared favourably with Virgil, to a figure who towers above the ancient world. To Pope, 'the Homeric poems were a wilderness of savage beauties'<sup>9</sup> which could be turned into a formal garden if rendered in Augustan poetic idiom with, for instance, the insertion of elegant pastoral scenes unfortunately lacking in the original. Cowper on the other hand emphasized Homer's antiquity by translating him into Miltonic blank verse which attempted a strong simplicity. Homer was now honoured because taken to be representative of that 'golden moment when the Greeks had just emerged from barbarism but before their purity and spontaneity of feeling had been corrupted by civilization.'<sup>10</sup> Honour links this interest in Homer the primitive with the British rage for James Macpherson's Ossianic poems, which also portray a society on the point of emerging from barbarism, but which please middle-class tastes by their avoidance of Homer's sexual frankness and by their unHomeric heroic characters, totally

7 See below, Chapter 5, pp. 235a - 235f.

8 Hugh Honour, Neo-classicism (Harmondsworth 1977), 62-5.

9 Ibid., 64.

10 Ibid.

unflawed by deceitfulness, petulance and other ignobilities:

The poems of Ossian present primitive society - and, indeed, primitive life - as the later eighteenth century wished to see it: simple, rugged, unsophisticated and, at the same time, moral, rational and touched with sentiment.<sup>11</sup>

Also part of Charlotte Smith's poetic education were the genuine examples of poetry of a more primitive age reassembled in Bishop Percy's Reliques. And, indeed, almost all the poets of times past seemed to possess some virtue when measured against immediate predecessors. Milton spoke for a republican simplicity and sturdy libertarianism - the latter apparently guaranteed in 1688 but not subsequently fully realized. Similarly, there was a cult of seventeenth century republicans such as Algernon Sydney. The metaphysicals, despite their 'fantastic out-of-the-way thoughts', expressed themselves 'in the most pure and genuine mother English'.<sup>12</sup> The Elizabethans, with Spenser and Shakespeare at their head, expressed a various and colourful national life in close harmony with spontaneous and natural feelings, despite a regrettable tendency to glittering but artificial conceits. Chaucer and the medieval poets seemed to evoke a simplicity of character at odds with artificial refinement.

As regards eighteenth-century poets, the widespread admiration for Burns shows this interest in the primitive and natural. That Burns was not in fact the untutored peasant-poet is not to the point: he was taken to be so by many and his dialect poems surely were, it was felt, the looked-for antidote to the 'literary' and 'poetic'. Many of Burns's poems breathed the spirit of traditional song and ballad, and, in their treatment of rural and small-town Scottish life and timeless human impulses, emotions and predicaments, seemed far removed from artificial refinement. Seductive also for progressives was Burns's levelling concern for the essential man beneath the social distinctions and his libertarian,

11 Ibid., 66

12 Coleridge, op. cit., 10.

egalitarian implications. Simplicity and impatience of cant and hypocrisy in his poetry nevertheless did not preclude humanitarian moralizing and warm sentiment.

Thomas Warton's influential History of English Poetry, the last volume of which came out three years before Charlotte Smith's Elegiac Sonnets first appeared, shows that Coleridge's attitudes as recalled in the Biographia were typical of lesser but nevertheless innovative poets of Charlotte Smith's day.<sup>13</sup> There is the same reaching back to pre-Augustan poets for a 'true style' of simple, natural expression; for an avoidance of artificial complexities and the mere play of wit; for an accurate but lyrical portrayal of Nature in contradistinction to the artificiality of urban or courtly settings; for statements not just rhetorical or intellectual but authenticated by the infusion of feeling. In the Sonnets of Surrey, for example, there is 'nothing of the metaphysical cast' for his sentiments are 'for the most part natural and unaffected, arising from his own feelings and dictated by the present circumstances. His poetry is alike unembarrassed by learned allusions or elaborate conceits'. Surrey's sonnets are Petrarchan only in so far as their resembling the Italian poet when he 'descends from his Platonic abstractions, his refinements of passion, his exaggerated compliments, and his play upon opposite sentiments, into a track of tenderness, simplicity and nature'. Yet despite his 'affecting and pathetic sentiments', Surrey produces 'nervous and manly quatrains' and sonnets of 'dignity and propriety'. He was a poet who, besides 'sentiment and amorous lamentation', could produce 'descriptive poetry and the representations of rural imagery'.<sup>14</sup> When Warton comes to consider Wyatt, however, he is more critical - Sir Thomas is not equal to Surrey in 'elegance of sentiment, in nature and sensibility':

13 Thomas Warton, The History of English Poetry, From the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century. 3 vols (London 1774-81). I have quoted from Warton at some length because his book appeared immediately prior to Charlotte Smith's Elegiac Sonnets. Charlotte Smith had contacts with the Warton family (see below, p.287).

14 Ibid., III, 12-19.

His feelings are disguised by affectation, and obscured by conceit. His declarations of passion are embarrassed by wit and fancy.

It was 'from the capricious and over-strained invention of the Italian poets' that Wyatt learned 'to torture the passion of love by prolix and intricate comparisons, and unnatural allusions'. There are 'forced reflections, hyperbolic metaphors and complaints that move no compassion'. Such characteristics obstruct, we gather, the few instances of 'nature and sentiment', the rare apostrophes which are 'natural and simple' and the occasional 'touches of the pensive'. Wyatt is much more acceptable when he 'moralizes on the felicities of retirement, and attacks the vanities and vices of a court, with the honest indignation of a true philosopher': such passages comprise 'spirited and manly reflections'.<sup>15</sup>

The revival of the sonnet, in which Charlotte Smith shared, was in some measure part of the vogue for Elizabethan poetry in general, but Charlotte Smith and her contemporaries admired only those features of Elizabethan verse that seemed to sanction a movement away from 'the poetry of the head' and urban artificiality. But sentiment and 'natural' subjects were not to be taken to permit linguistic vagueness or effeminacy of style. If Charlotte Smith could not be expected to be 'manly', nevertheless one can see in Warton's remarks a rationale for her direct expression of thought and feeling uncomplicated by conceits or wit and her attempts at a fresh simplicity in her nature-descriptions. Further, the 'Miltonic' libertarian sonnets which occasionally interrupt the stream of her meditative, melancholy nature sonnets<sup>16</sup> will not seem utterly heterogeneous when the reader notes Warton's approval of 'dignity', 'nervous diction' and 'honest indignation' at 'the vanities and vices of a court'. Coleridge, too, recorded his approval of 'chaste and manly diction'<sup>17</sup> in admired sonneteers. By the 1780's, complex political and social

15 Ibid., 29-34.

16 For an example, see below p.204.

17 Coleridge, op. cit., 13.

factors had prompted the growth of liberal or radical views and poets such as Charlotte Smith harmonized their progressive politics with the simultaneous development of the primitivistic, the sentimental and the tendency to realistic but tender nature-description in the aesthetic field. This link between politics and aesthetics should not be oversimplified however: we shall see below, for instance, how the resolute adherents to reason amongst radical writers distrusted sentimentality.<sup>18</sup>

Though we know Coleridge admired Charlotte Smith's poetry and linked her with W.L. Bowles for praise, it is the latter who is mentioned favourably in Chapter One of the Biographia. However, I shall argue below that Bowles was himself influenced by Charlotte Smith's sonnets, so that when Coleridge praises Bowles's sonnets as constituting

a style of poetry so tender and yet so manly,  
so natural and real, and yet so dignified and  
harmonious ...,

then one may understand what he found stimulating in Charlotte Smith's poetry in his late 'teens:

my natural faculties were allowed to expand and  
my original tendencies to develop themselves;  
my fancy, and the love of nature, and the sense  
of beauty in forms and sounds.<sup>19</sup>

Charlotte Smith might also with justice have been mentioned when Coleridge wrote of Bowles and Cowper as 'the first who combined natural thoughts with natural diction; the first who reconciled the heart with the head.'<sup>20</sup>

The survey of Charlotte Smith's poetry below will, it is hoped, make clear her limited but not insignificant role in the poetic phase before the first Romantics and her interest for such figures as Coleridge and Wordsworth. Charlotte Smith's subject-matter and attitudes are often apparently Romantic, particularly her treatment of Nature, which at times passes

18 See below, pp. 235k - 235m.

19 Coleridge, op. cit., 8-9.

20 Ibid., 13.

beyond the merely descriptive and beyond a simple sentimental response to a deeper sense of man's relationship to the natural world: Nature sometimes becomes a metaphor for man's moods if not a kind of external expression of his complex inner nature and aspirations. Nature provides images and symbols for man's otherwise inexpressible nuances of thought and emotion. A steady belief in Nature's power to console and cleanse the man who retreats from the artificialities and corruptions of society is evident, allied to a respect for the common countryman, whose organic if taxing relationship with nature induces a benevolent fortitude and vision of human society as a community of mutual assistance - not a selfish business of 'getting and spending' and a striving for power, status and wealth.

Stylistically, though, Charlotte Smith belongs to the period of 'pre-Romantic' experimentation. She tries to adapt blank verse to the purposes of meditative nature poetry, manages some successful 'Wordsworthian' passages, but cannot always prevent her quietly conversational, personal tone from seeming flat and spiritless. Her attempts to develop an 'unpoetic' diction lead her sometimes into verse that reads like workaday prose; and she cannot always contrive a simplicity of diction, description and sentiment that will also achieve the strong dignity desiderated by Coleridge and Warton. Her experiments with the sonnet-form and refusal to be bound by severe classical and 'legitimate' precedent will be discussed below,<sup>21</sup> but it must be said that she undertakes with a host of contemporary sonneteers the fruitless labour of trying to adapt a short poetic form to a meditative, ruminating kind of nature poetry which is unsuited to concise, almost epigrammatic expression. Charlotte Smith's preference for the Shakespearean sonnet rather than the Petrarchan when she is not devising her own rhyme-schemes is not, in this period, a regressive tendency, since it represents the kind of poetic expansion inspired by pre-Augustan precedents indicated previously in this section.

21 See below, pp.171-8.



The weakness of Charlotte Smith's verse is a decadent, last-ditch Augustanism that she cannot consistently resist. Her passages of simple, closely-observed Nature-description give way to an occasional pastoralism adorned with Arcadian figures or classical deities with an escapist or decorative function. Most tedious stylistically are her personified abstractions, banal epithets and - particularly indulged in her later poems for young people - mechanical allegories. In its first phase, Augustanism had been still in touch with vigorous human speech in Dryden's works. In Pope we see a movement away from that speech for the sake of sustained elevation, polish and refinement maintained by 'poetic diction', frequent figurative language of the types personification, synecdoche and metonymy, and syntax dislocated for the sake of rhythmic éclat. After Pope, the devices which in his hands were supple and inventive tend to harden into cliché and mannerism, and the ultimate decadence of this style coincides with Charlotte Smith's poetic career. It is perhaps most clearly seen in the works of Erasmus Darwin, Samuel Rogers and the Della-Cruscans. Darwin's Botanic Garden did not appear early enough to influence Charlotte Smith's early poetry, but it may well have combined with the general inheritance of an ornate style to influence those of her later poems designed to teach Natural History rather than to communicate the relations between Nature and the poet's sensibility and circumstances. It is in her poems for young people that Charlotte Smith most commonly adopts couplets. Because of her stylistic experimentation in some areas, Charlotte Smith cannot be relegated to the ranks of the Della-Cruscans, who had something of the same manner as Darwin but with more 'sensibility'. In their case, feeling was unimpressively combined with what Wordsworth described as 'gaudy and inane phraseology'<sup>22</sup> with little sign of recognition of the need to evolve new forms and develop a

22 See: W.L. Renwick, English Literature 1789-1815 (Oxford 1963), 106. Renwick's chapter (pp.101-126) surveys Charlotte Smith's 'intermediate generation' of poets.

diction best calculated to convey feeling convincingly. Charlotte Smith's more gothically dark and midnight musings on death and the tomb, like her Natural history poems, also have a second-hand air; this time derivative of the work of the Graveyard Poets.

Such were Charlotte Smith's weaknesses and her minor talent is expressed by her relative failure to escape these traditions, though she avoided the poetic nullities of her one-time mentor, William Hayley. The element of familiarity in her poetry combined with some novelty and innovation in harmony with the changing temper of her times explains her huge initial success with the reading public, which now must be further examined in a survey of her individual poetic works.

## I

### The 'Elegiac Sonnets'

Though Charlotte Smith subsequently produced two further poetic works - The Emigrants (1793) and Beachy Head with other Poems (1807) - her Elegiac Sonnets (1784) was her greatest success. Indeed, the Sonnets launched her literary career on such a sea of popularity as made the remainder of it something of an anti-climax. Nine English editions appeared during their author's lifetime, and their popularity survived her death, with further editions published well into the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Dodsley's original 1784 collection of sixteen sonnets and three other short poems grew as further editions appeared and her success encouraged the author to add more poems. When Cadell succeeded Dodsley as publisher of the fifth edition in 1789, forty-eight sonnets were included, and a second volume was required by 1797. When the first volume reached its ninth edition in 1800, the two volumes comprised 92 sonnets and 25

<sup>1</sup> The British Library has copies of the 10th edition (London 1811), an edition of 1827 printed in Glasgow, and an edition forming Volume IV of the Cabinet Edition of the British Poets (1851). There were also Dublin and American editions (published in Charlotte Smith's lifetime).

other short poems. The Elegiac Sonnets therefore form a 'Collected Poems' of Charlotte Smith at each stage, apart from the long, blank-verse The Emigrants of 1793 and the poems appearing posthumously in Beachy Head in 1807.<sup>2</sup>

The Elegiac Sonnets were revised from edition to edition when Dodsley was the publisher, though the changes were fairly insignificant, consisting of alterations in punctuation and the occasional substitution of a new word or two. There seems no need in this chapter to give variant readings when the poems are discussed: the variations make no significant difference to the points to be made.<sup>3</sup>

Charlotte Smith was shrewdly professional in her ability to obtain maximum exposure of her poems to the public. Many sonnets and other poems included at suitable points in her novels and books for children would reappear in the next convenient edition of the Elegiac Sonnets (and later, in Beachy Head), though she did usually acknowledge them as second printings. In addition, some poems first appeared in periodicals before being collected in the Sonnets, but this fact was not acknowledged by the author.<sup>4</sup>

2 For more information on the pattern of publication of the Elegiac Sonnets, see Appendix II below, p.455. For an account of the genesis of the Elegiac Sonnets, see above pp. 17-18.

3 For quotation purposes in this chapter, copies of the Elegiac Sonnets most readily available to the writer for extensive study have been used: the 1797 eighth edition of Volume One, and the first edition of Volume Two of the same year. The latter was supplemented by a copy of Volume Two, second edition (1800) for sonnets LXXXV-XCII, not included in the first edition. There were no additional poems in subsequent editions. However, the sonnets are referred to by number and other poems by title in this chapter, and may be consulted in any appropriate edition of the Elegiac Sonnets.

4 For example, the poem 'Thirty-Eight' in the 1792 sixth edition had been published previously in the European Magazine (XX (Dec. 1791), 71).

Once she was an established literary figure, many of Charlotte Smith's poems appeared in periodicals without her permission, occasionally under a different name. Plagiarisms, and unauthorized publication of her poems circulating in manuscript<sup>5</sup> must have seemed ironical to the poet when she remembered that a common criticism of the early editions of the Sonnets had been of her unacknowledged borrowings from other poets: a criticism that faded or modulated into a general charge of lack of originality after she had acknowledged such borrowings in her first annotated edition - the 1786 third edition.

Charlotte Smith was meticulous in collecting her poems from novels and periodicals for re-publication in the Elegiac Sonnets. Despite a search of a number of contemporary Miscellanies and Reviews, I have found only one poem not included subsequently in her published works. There seems no reason for the exclusion of this one poem save an oversight, since it is no worse and no better than most of the Elegiac Sonnets.<sup>6</sup>

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Some poems enjoyed three appearances: first in a Smith novel, then in a periodical, and finally in Elegiac Sonnets: Sonnet XLIX appeared first in Celestina (1791), then in the European Magazine (XX (Dec. 1791), 71), and finally in Elegiac Sonnets (sixth edition, 1792). Similarly, Sonnet LXI appeared first in The Old Manor House (1793), then in the Gentleman's Magazine (ii 1793, 655) and finally in Elegiac Sonnets, Vol. II (first edition, 1797).

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5 For discussion of plagiarisms, imitations, and unauthorized reprints of Charlotte Smith's poems, see Turner, op.cit., 102, and Hilbish, op.cit., 265-269. Such plagiarisms are as eloquent of the resounding success and widespread influence of the Sonnets as are the numerous editions of the work.

6 The poem in question appeared in the Universal Magazine LXXXIV (June 1789), 331:-

The reviewers of the first edition of the Elegiac Sonnets showed little sign that they thought the work would prove to be a resounding success. The English was particularly dismissive of these effusions of an unknown poet:

Nothing will be added to the poetical stock by the publication of these poems. The same sentiments and imagery occur which have been already a thousand times repeated; they appear too without the least novelty of arrangement.<sup>7</sup>

However, the early reviews of the Elegiac Sonnets, written before the reviewers were affected or inhibited by the established reputation of the poet, do suggest the principal explanation of the subsequent popularity of the sonnets: their mellifluous melancholy chimed with the fashion of sensibility and allowed the reader to exercise his own in concern for the poet whose misfortunes were obscurely and rather romantically hinted at. The Critical

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Evening. A Sonnet

Evening, as slow thy placid shades descend,  
 Veiling with gentlest hush the landscape still,  
 The lowly battlement, and farthest hill,  
 And wood - I think of those who have no friend;  
 Who now, perhaps, by Melancholy led,  
 From the broad blaze of day, where Pleasure flaunts,  
 Retiring - wander 'mid the lonely haunts  
 Unseen; and mark the tints, that o'er thy bed  
 Hang lovely, oft to musing Fancy's eye  
 Presenting fairy vales, where the tir'd mind  
 Might rest beyond the murmers of mankind,  
 Nor hear the hourly moans of Misery.  
 Ah, beauteous views! that Hope's fair gleams the  
 Should smile like you, and perish as they smile.<sup>while</sup>

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7 English Review IV (Sept. 1784), 231.

reviewer, for instance, thought the sentiments of the sonnets were expressed with 'great delicacy and a pleasing simplicity' and those poems 'of the plaintive kind' were 'evidently the genuine effusions of the heart'. He expressed his hope that the 'amiable author' had in truth little reason to 'shed a tear'.<sup>8</sup> Edmund Cartwright in the Monthly also admired the 'plaintive tenderness and simplicity'.<sup>9</sup> Even the English reviewer moderated his severe tone to acknowledge the affecting nature of the sonnets:

A pleasing melancholy, however, runs through these little poems, which, in spite of the mediocrity that pervades them, will touch the heart of sensibility. We ourselves, though unaccustomed to the "melting mood", have felt the soft contagion; have wandered through the woods with the moaning Charlotte, have listened to her nightingale, moralised on the faded rose and closing year, have wept for Werter, have sighed with Petrarch.<sup>10</sup>

Once the Sonnets had proved popular, the Reviews tended to forget their early reservations in notices of later editions and claimed to have been rather more enthusiastic in their initial reviews than had been the case. The Monthly congratulated itself on the 'favourable opinion of this ingenious lady's poetical talents'<sup>11</sup> which it had previously expressed and the Critical stated that

We received the first edition . . . with cheering smiles of approbation . . . the public confirmed our award, by an extreme demand.<sup>12</sup>

8 Critical Review LVII (June 1784), 472.

9 Monthly Review LXXI (Nov. 1784), 368.

10 English Review IV (Sept. 1784), 231.

11 Monthly Review LXXIV (June 1786), 469.

12 Critical Review LXI (June 1786), 467.

The other reviews could only climb on the bandwagon of Charlotte Smith's popularity by reviewing later editions enthusiastically.<sup>13</sup>

R. D. Havens has studied the remarkable revival of the sonnet after about 1740 in his Influence of Milton on English Poetry.<sup>14</sup> Almost every poet and poetaster tried his hand at the form - Boswell, Charles Burney, Bishop Percy, William Cowper, Robert Burns, Charles Lamb, Hannah More, Robert Southey, Leigh Hunt, William Beckford, Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe amongst others - but Havens sees Charlotte Smith as one of a group that included Henry Cary, Anna Seward, William Hayley, Helen Maria Williams, Mary 'Perdita' Robinson and Richard Polwhele, who produced a particular kind of sonnet:

These later quatorzains are looser in structure, more careless in rime scheme (inclining to the complet ending), more sentimental, melancholy, fluent and trivial, hence less condensed and dignified; yet practically none of them dealt with love, or introduce conceits, or give any other evidence of Italian or Elizabethan influences. Indeed, their composers were often, like Miss Seward, enthusiastic admirers of Milton . . . Yet the work of these poetasters, though more like Milton than any one's else, is not Miltonic. It is, indeed, like nothing before and fortunately like very little since, but is distinctly of the second half of the eighteenth century . . .<sup>15</sup>

13 See for instance: European Magazine XVI (Oct. 1789), 264.

14 R. D. Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (London 1922), 489, 92. Havens traces a sonnet contributed to London Magazine as early as July 1738, but the real father of the revival was Thomas Edwards and his fourteen sonnets in Dodsley's Miscellany (2nd vol.) of 1748.

15 Ibid., 502-3.

Havens thinks that the tendency of these poems to deal with nature and to be pensive or even melancholy, reached its 'orbed fulfillment' in Charlotte Smith's Elegiac Sonnets,<sup>16</sup> and he attributes the irregularities of many of her sonnets to an unwillingness to work hard on her productions.<sup>17</sup>

It was perhaps inevitable that an age of tearful sensibility should seize on the sonnet form so that a concentrated charge of sentiment could be delivered in fourteen lines, avoiding lengthier forms that demanded a sustained display of intelligence and a little more by way of content than a globule of sentiment. On the other hand, the concentration on nature in the poems of Charlotte Smith and many of her contemporaries was not without its eighteenth-century precedents in the sonnet, for William Mason and Thomas Warton had effected a shift away from 'persons to nature and to places of legendary or historic interest.'<sup>18</sup>

Charlotte Smith was probably the most popular sonneteer of the 1780's and played no small part in assuring the triumph of the writers of the looser, innovative, 'illegitimate' sonnet over those who would confine it to approved models. Though most eighteenth-century writers knew rather little about Italian sonnets, and contemporary encyclopaedias show that notions of what a sonnet should

16 Ibid., 503.

17 Charlotte Smith's sonnets certainly were not great poems, and many were mediocre, but Havens is so severe upon them that it is hard to see how Wordsworth and Coleridge could have admired them if his strictures were wholly just:  
' . . . most of her elegies are quite impossible, - diffuse, self-conscious, sentimental, written in a conventional stilted diction, and, notwithstanding the genuineness of their author's sorrows, apt to leave an impression of rhetoric and declamation rather than of real feeling'  
(op.cit., 504).

18 Ibid., 496.



be were vague and limited,<sup>19</sup> the insistence on following classical models (at least as interpreted by Milton) seems to represent a lingering of Augustan attitudes. Charlotte Smith's refusal to be bound by the Petrarchan form is a contribution to the transition from neoclassicism to the impulse to modify old forms radically and evolve new ones characteristic of the Romantic poets.

The combatants in the 'Battle of the Sonnets' were indeed often confused about their subject, though this did not in the least prevent their pronouncing dogmatically on it. This study has already shown Anna Seward to have been an implacable literary foe of Charlotte Smith. The poetry of the latter pleased Anna Seward no more than did her prose and she lost no opportunity of characterizing the weaknesses, formal improprieties and plagiaristic iniquities of the Elegiac Sonnets. Yet she too, despite her admiration of Milton, ignored the Petrarchan form to the extent of using concluding couplets in nearly half of her one hundred and five sonnets. Nevertheless, she thought the 'brilliance, epigrammatic turn or point' of rhymed couplets did not properly belong to the conclusion of sonnets. Though she mocked Charlotte Smith's mournful productions, her own sonnets are often melancholy and have nature for their theme. She took particular exception to Charlotte Smith's untroubled apology for her indifference to classical models in the Preface to the first edition of the Elegiac Sonnets:

The little Poems which are here called Sonnets, have, I believe, no very just claim to that title: but they consist of fourteen lines, and appear to me no improper vehicle for a single Sentiment. I am told, and I read it as the opinion of very good judges, that the legitimate sonnet is ill calculated for our language.<sup>20</sup>

19 Ibid., 486-87.

20 'Preface' reproduced in the eighth edition, p. iii.

Anna Seward disputed this final sentence in a letter to Hayley in 1789,<sup>21</sup> when she quite reasonably pointed to the excellence of Milton's sonnets as a refutation. The legitimate sonnet could be 'exquisitely beautiful' in English. Earlier she had denied the right of Charlotte Smith's 'facile form of verse' - three elegiac stanzas closing with a couplet - to the appellation 'sonnet.'<sup>22</sup> A true sonnet must have the rhythm of blank verse, with internal rather than end-of-line pauses, and be divided into an octave and a sestet, the octave having two rhymes only. The tone should be grave and severe, with Miltonic elevated simplicity, strength and majesty.<sup>23</sup>

Havens remarks that Anna Seward's notions of what made for legitimacy in the sonnet were 'ideas of her own',<sup>24</sup> and indeed the arguments on the true nature of the sonnet do seem rather sterile at this distance. Yet the controversy was conducted with a peculiar intensity and heavy dogmatism.

Nathan Drake was representative of the supporters of the illegitimate sonnet. Despite tracing the form to Italy - he identified its early masters as Dante, Guitone d'Arezzo and Petrarch - he shared Charlotte Smith's view that the legitimate sonnet suited 'not well the genius of english poetry' owing to its 'singular arrangement, and frequent return of rhymes'. But Bowles and Charlotte Smith were to be commended for adapting the form to suit English verse, by 'assuming the elegiac measure':

21 Letter of January 29th, 1789 in the Letters (Edinburgh 1811) II, 222.

22 Ibid., 162. Letter to Rev. Berwick of October 6th, 1788.

23 See Havens, op.cit., 500.

24 Ibid.

They have . . . acquired for the sonnet greater sweetness and harmony of versification, and, as their subjects are usually of the plaintive kind, the tender tones of the elegy have happily been chosen. In unaffected elegance of style, and in that pleasing melancholy which irresistably steals upon and captivates the heart, they have excelled all other writers of the sonnet . . .<sup>25</sup>

It is characteristic of the enthusiasts of sensibility that no recognition is displayed that something may have been lost in the smoothing-out of Shakespearean conceits and Miltonic vigour for the sake of sweetness and elegance.

Anthologizers of Charlotte Smith's sonnets in her lifetime and well into the nineteenth century continued to argue about the true nature of the sonnet in their prefaces and notes. However, the continuing popularity of the Elegiac Sonnets is indicated by the fact that, whether supporters or detractors of the freer form, the anthologizers included examples of her work - and usually a fair number of them.<sup>26</sup>

- 25 Nathan Drake, Literary Hours, or Sketches Critical and Narrative. Second edition (London 1800) I, 208. The Critical Reviewer of the third edition of the Elegiac Sonnets did not object to Charlotte Smith's having ignored the 'rigid rules' of the Petrarchan Sonnet (Critical Review LXI (1786), 467). Edmund Cartwright in the Monthly also thought Charlotte Smith need not apologise for her sonnets not being 'of the legitimate kind', arguing that a strict adherence to Petrarchan rhyme-schemes was 'inconvenient' when it came to sonnets in English, and even an affectation: the genius of the language required more freedom. (Monthly Review LXXI (1784), 368-71.)
- 26 I have traced the following works containing selections from the Elegiac Sonnets or other Charlotte Smith poems, or editorial discussion of them:  
 Capel Lofft, Laura: or An Anthology of Sonnets (London, 1814).  
 Charles Lloyd, Nugae Canorae. Poems. Third Edition (London 1819).  
 Alexander Dyce, Specimens of British Poetesses; Selected and Chronologically Arranged (London 1825).  
 Robert F. Housman, A Collection of English Sonnets (London 1855).

The most formidable supporter of the illegitimate form favoured by Charlotte Smith was undoubtedly Samuel Taylor Coleridge.<sup>27</sup> Coleridge knew Charlotte Smith personally: in 1800 he either first met or renewed his acquaintance with her in London, for he wrote to Southey on 12th February, 'I pass this Evening with Charlotte Smith at her house.'<sup>28</sup> Later in the year he wished to write to her from Nether Stowey, enclosing a book, and wrote to Godwin requesting notification of her current whereabouts.<sup>29</sup> A lasting friendship apparently did not develop, but Coleridge considered her a poet of some significance. He included two of her sonnets in his Sonnets from Various Authors (1796) and in 1802 he was

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Frederic Rowton, The Female Poets of Great Britain (London 1848).

The Cabinet Edition of the British Poets (London 1851), IV.

Juvenile Poetry (Paris 1863).

Leigh Hunt and S. Adams Lee, The Book of the Sonnet (Boston, Mass. 1867).

Frederic Rowton, Cyclopaedia of Female Poets (Philadelphia 1874).

David Nichol Smith, The Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse (Oxford 1926).

John Hayward, The Penguin Book of English Verse (Harmondsworth, 1956).

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27 Though Wordsworth admired Charlotte Smith's work, he did not join in the public controversy on the sonnet in the direct way I show Coleridge to have done in this section.

28 Earl Leslie Griggs (ed.), Collected Letters of S. T. Coleridge (London 1956) I, 571.

29 Ibid., 589. Letter of 21st May, 1800.

projecting a book 'concerning Poetry, & the characteristic Merits of the Poets, our Contemporaries,' with essays on various poets, including Charlotte Smith. He wished to include selections from 'every one, who has written at all, any way above the rank of mere Scribblers.'<sup>30</sup> It is unfortunate that this project did not come to fruition, for it would be useful to have Coleridge's considered and detailed views of Charlotte Smith's works.

Coleridge stated and developed his views on the sonnet in the introductions to his various editions of poetry,<sup>31</sup> and was a vigorous upholder of the virtues of the illegitimate sonnet. He attacked Petrarch boldly:

I have never yet been able to discover sense, nature, or poetic fancy in Petrarch's poems: they appear to me all one cold glitter of heavy conceits and metaphysical abstractions.<sup>32</sup>

However, Petrarch must be acknowledged as the first popularizer of the sonnet, taken subsequently as a model by his countrymen.

Charlotte Smith and Bowles are they who first made the Sonnet popular among the present English: I am justified therefore by analogy in deducing its laws from their compositions.<sup>33</sup>

He duly deduced that the sonnet in England was 'a small poem, in which some lonely feeling is developed' and

those sonnets appear to me the most exquisite, in which moral Sentiments, Affections, or Feelings, are deduced from, and associated with, the Scenery of Nature.<sup>34</sup>

Coleridge acknowledges Bowles at this point in his introduction, but the influence of the Elegiac Sonnets is surely

30 Ibid., II 829. Letter of July 29th 1800 to Robert Southey.

31 Beginning with his anthology, Sonnets from Various Authors (London 1796). His introduction was revised and reprinted in the second edition of his Poems on Various Subjects (London 1797). Quotations in this section are taken from a later edition: S. T. Coleridge, Poems (London 1803).

32 Poems (1803), 81.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., 81-82.

apparent too. His liking for the new formal freedom in sonnet-writing established by Charlotte Smith's breakaway from Italian and Miltonic models is clear. Coleridge's cavalier attitude to 'rules' recalls Charlotte Smith's preface to the first edition of the Elegiac Sonnets:

Respecting the metre of a Sonnet, the writer should consult his own convenience. - Rhymes, many or few, or no rhymes at all - whatever the chastity of his ear may prefer, whatever the rapid expression of his feelings will permit; - all these things are left at his own disposal. A sameness in the final sound of its words is the great and grievous defect of the Italian language.<sup>35</sup>

Even the fourteen-line length of the sonnet is arbitrary, says Coleridge: only custom can be found as a reason for it, and perhaps the sonnet might, if shorter, become 'a serious Epigram' or, if longer, encroach upon the province of the Elegy', with no great harm done either way.<sup>36</sup>

Coleridge's formal tolerance is a relief after the hair-splitting solemnities of most of the sonneteers and critics. His advocacy of a freer attitude takes the form of exposing the weaknesses of those English poets who pride themselves on the legitimacy of their sonnets. Such sonnets on the Italian model are 'difficult and artificial', full of 'inverted sentences', 'quaint phrases', and an 'incongruous mixture of obsolete and Spenserian words',

and when, at last, the thing is toiled and hammered into fit shape, it is in general racked and tortured prose rather than anything resembling Poetry.<sup>37</sup>

Though Bowles is mentioned with approval, Charlotte Smith's influence on Coleridge's adopting these ideas should

35 Ibid., 83.

36 Ibid., 82.

37 Ibid., 83.

not be underestimated. In any case, Bowles himself was influenced by the Elegiac Sonnets.<sup>38</sup> His first fourteen sonnets did not appear until 1789<sup>39</sup> - five years after Charlotte Smith's first edition - and it is somewhat ironic that his work tends now to be remembered as the chief example of the kind of illegitimate sonnet that influenced greater poets. As for Coleridge's sonnets, it is true that one may search them in vain for direct and obvious echoes of Charlotte Smith, though it is not clear why Bowles's 'To the River Itchin'<sup>40</sup> should commonly be taken to have influenced Coleridge's fourth sonnet, 'To the River Otter',<sup>41</sup> while Charlotte Smith's sonnets 'To the River Arun' (XXVI and XXX) and perhaps even her other sonnets referring incidentally to the 'Aruna' (XXXII, XXXIII, XLV), are ignored in this respect.<sup>42</sup>

Coleridge's admiration for Charlotte Smith's sonnets was not unqualified, for he found their melancholy excessive. He wrote to Robert Lloyd in 1798 of

the race of sonnet writers & complainers, Bowles's and Charlotte Smiths, and all that tribe, who can see no joys but what are past.<sup>43</sup>

38 See Hilbish op.cit., 269-73, who makes detailed comparisons of Smith and Bowles sonnets. Few of Bowles's sonnets are so hopelessly melancholic as hers, but his sonnet 'Associations', to which Hilbish does not refer, might as easily have been written by Charlotte Smith. (Rev. George Gilfillan (ed.), Poetical Works of William Lisle Bowles (Edinburgh 1855) II, 21.)

39 Gilfillan, Works of Bowles II, xiii.

40 Ibid., I 10.

41 Coleridge, op.cit., 88. See Havens, op.cit., 513.

42 Charlotte Smith's sonnets on the Arun (and certain sections of The Emigrants, see below p.216), seem in turn, to owe something to Thomas Warton's ninth sonnet, 'To the River Loddon'. Like Charlotte Smith, Warton traces the first stirrings of poetic inspiration to childhood days by the river, and both poets, on revisiting its banks, contrast the cares of adulthood with idyllic, carefree days of youth spent at play by its waters. See: Eric Partridge (ed.), The Three Wartons. A Choice of their Verse (London 1927), 129.

Yet Coleridge's enthusiastic response to Charlotte Smith's formal freedom does indicate her contribution to an atmosphere in which innovation by major poets was possible. Havens has remarked that the illegitimate sonnet tended to be adopted by 'progressives' as giving a new freedom leading to Romanticism, and to be scorned by the 'conservatives' in a literary and even political sense:

. . . this groping for freedom, life, and colour which we now name romanticism was in large measure responsible for the sudden reappearance of the sonnet in English.<sup>44</sup>

Havens is severe on Charlotte Smith, but admits her significance:

In encouraging the use of these easier arrangements of rimes, in introducing quatorzains into her popular novels (a practice quickly adopted by Ann Radcliffe, Beckford, and others), and in fastening the elegiac mood upon the genre so firmly that it remained throughout the century and was regarded by many as indispensable, - in these things she is a force to be reckoned with.<sup>45</sup>

Hilbish described the Elegiac Sonnets as combining melancholy sentiment, plaintive tone, harmonious melody and easy, graceful flow,<sup>46</sup> and remarks that Charlotte Smith

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43 Carl Woodring described Coleridge's sonnets as 'woefully indebted to Charlotte Smith and William Lisle Bowles' (Politics in the Poetry of Coleridge (Madison, Wisc. 1961), 95). But Norman Fruman thinks the tracing of influences on his sonnets superfluous because they 'are not in themselves worth all this attention, since they are poetically of minimal value' (Coleridge: The Damaged Archangel (London 1972) 507).

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44 Havens, op.cit., 526.

45 Ibid., 504.

46 Hilbish, op.cit., 257.



had 'the happy faculty of combining in her sonnets introspection and outlook, description and sentiment.'<sup>47</sup> Few would quarrel with these generalized attributions. Bishop Hunt sees the central theme of the Sonnets as the gradual loss of the shaping spirit of the imagination in face of the hard realities of life,<sup>48</sup> but this is a little narrow, for the poet laments the loss of youth's bright fancies and optimistic hopes in general. Sadness and day-to-day troubles dissipate youth's happy vigour: creativity is only one element of what is lost. Typically, a Charlotte Smith sonnet begins with a description of a natural scene (though sometimes a man-made edifice or even a rural figure) and moves into the thoughts evoked in the poet by that scene. Almost invariably the scene is made to contrast or harmonize with the poet's sadness. Hunt argues that these poems follow 'the Wordsworthian pattern':

they proceed from visual observation to psychological commentary, from the description of an experience to the interpretation of it - with all the potential for irony inherent in the almost inevitable discrepancy between the external and internal world . . .<sup>49</sup>

The prevailing tone of the Sonnets is meditative, 'musing', and the language, at its best, simple and flowing in an uncluttered iambic pentameter, rarely checked by a mid-line pause.

As regards the structure and rhyme-patterns of her sonnets, it is indeed true that Charlotte Smith inclined to what her more conservative contemporaries termed the 'illegitimate' sonnet: only one is in the strictly Petrarchan

47 Ibid., 260.

48 Bishop C. Hunt, Jr., 'Wordsworth and Charlotte Smith', The Wordsworth Circle I, 85-103.  
Page 91.

49 Ibid., 92.

mode,<sup>50</sup> though she included free translations of four Petrarchan sonnets and a cantata by Metastasio.<sup>51</sup> She was most fond of the Shakespearean sonnet, almost half of hers being of this kind. The remainder were irregular: either innovatory or experimental variations on the Shakespearean and Petrarchan modes, or in the case of a handful, so radically irregular as to defy analysis in terms of variations on approved models.<sup>52</sup>

50 Defined by R. D. Havens as an octave of abbaabba and a sestet of cdcdcd, cdecde, cdedce, cddcdc, cdceed or cddcee, as used by Milton in his English sonnets. (The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (London, 1922), 483.) Charlotte Smith's sonnet XXXII is of the form abba abba cde cde.

51 Sonnets XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII.

52 Hilbish and Havens differ in their formal analyses of the Elegiac Sonnets (Havens op.cit., 483; Hilbish op.cit., 247). My analysis differs slightly from both theirs:-

Shakespearean: abab cdcd efef gg : 43  
(Hilbish: 44; Havens: 40).

Spenserian: abab bcbc dede ff : 2  
(Hilbish: 1; Havens: 1).

Petrarchan: abba abba cde cde : 1  
(Hilbish: 1; Havens: 2).

Irregular:-

quatrains + couplet:	26
quatrains + sestet:	15
others:	5

92 (including 5 translations)

These disagreements in analysis do not obscure the fact that Charlotte Smith refused to be bound by the strictly Petrarchan mode and was firmly on the side of the innovators. Hilbish analyzes the content of the Elegiac Sonnets thus: at least 34 sonnets and two short pieces dealing with nature, twelve sonnets to friends, ten to abstract qualities, eight to lowly and unfortunate life, five 'from Petrarch' (op.cit., 259).

Though Charlotte Smith knew her Milton (she adapted phrases of his or acknowledged him as an influence in Sonnets VII, VIII, LVII, LXXII, LXXX and LXXXIX), his 'republican austerity' and noble sonority is not evident in her poems, apart from a handful of sonnets of a libertarian cast in Volume Two, where she attempted a Miltonic tone.<sup>53</sup> Since she wrote over forty Shakespearean sonnets, one might imagine that Shakespeare was a major influence: it is true that she acknowledges his influence constantly in her annotations, but in fact all her references are to his plays and none to his sonnets.<sup>54</sup> There seems to be no particular moulding influence on the Elegiac Sonnets. There are some surface similarities: just as many of Shakespeare's sonnets are variations on a theme - the defiance of time by beauty through its recreation through marriage and offspring, or its transmutation into the printed word - so Charlotte Smith's sonnets are remarkably unified in theme and tone, though not the same theme and tone. They predominantly show nature either as a fresh, vital and colourful contrast to the melancholy circumstances and fading vigour of the poet, or in its sombre and bleak aspect as in harmony and sympathy with the poet's situation. Charlotte Smith's poems, which come to seem repetitive and tedious, have none of the linguistic strength and ingenuity of Shakespeare's sonnets; there is no complex imagery bodying forth subtle shades of thought on a continuing preoccupation. Despite the vogue for Elizabethan Poetry, the Age of Sensibility was inclined to disparage the elaborate conceits of the Elizabethans as quaint obscurity, not recognizing them as

53 See below, pp. 203-4.

54 See the notes to Sonnets VI, VII, XI, LVII, LXXIV, and to the 'Occasional Address'.

the evidence and embodiment of the poet's complex apprehension of his subject. In Charlotte Smith's sonnets there is a sameness because the 'sentiment' is straightforward and recurrent, and straightforwardly expressed, with little sense communicated of an ongoing exploration of her sensibility by the poet. The Elegiac Sonnets are meditative in tone, but seem to repeat the same train of thought time and again. Bishop C. Hunt has remarked that Charlotte Smith's poetry 'continually hovers on the edge of statement, on the verge of saying something that feels definitive, about the nature of the human condition,<sup>55</sup> and this is true. But, while this suggests to Hunt affinities with Wordsworth, it also indicates the disappointment one feels with Charlotte Smith's sonnets: the sentiment fails to meet the reader's expectation; no Wordsworthian revelation of a central truth is forthcoming; nothing is achieved but constant re-assertion of the poet's sadness. Her Shakespearean concluding couplets rarely seem to clinch and illuminate what has gone before, but merely terminate the poem rather lamely: she sometimes hovers on the edge of profundity, but she hovers interminably.

It seems extraordinary now that Shakespeare's sonnets should have been so consistently undervalued in the late eighteenth century, and have influenced the multitude of sonneteers so little. Yet the preference for facile sentiment and innocuous melodiousness to Shakespearean vigour and lyricism was widespread, and Nathan Drake was able to write that

The Sonnets of Shakespeare are buried beneath a load of obscurity and quaintness; nor does there issue a single ray of light to quicken, or to warm the heavy mass . . .<sup>56</sup>

55 Hunt, op.cit., 90.

56 Drake, op.cit. I, 208.

He preferred the modern sonneteers (amongst whom Charlotte Smith and W. L. Bowles shone with 'peculiar distinction'<sup>57</sup>) to 'the philosophical and metaphysical ones of the age of Elizabeth'.<sup>58</sup>

To find the sources of Charlotte Smith's poetic inspiration one needs to move into the eighteenth century. The annotations to the Elegiac Sonnets make her debt to her immediate predecessors clear. She refers five times to Gray<sup>59</sup> and twice to Collins.<sup>60</sup> References to Mason, Young and Thomson<sup>61</sup> also occur. Charlotte Smith remarks that it is 'impossible not to regret' that Gray wrote one sonnet only and describes that single example as 'exquisite',<sup>62</sup> but it is clear that Gray's Elegy was a major influence too, along with the works of other poets of the 'Graveyard School'. From them Charlotte Smith derived her tone of pensive melancholy, her gloomy musings and meditations on transient joys - indeed, the 'elegiac' strain in her sonnets. Gray's combination of scenery and sentiment also influenced her. All that was needed was to adapt this to the sonnet form, though it must be admitted that this was something of a challenge, since fourteen lines do not give much scope for leisurely meditation and detailed description of natural settings. Her debt to these poems can be seen most clearly in those poems which are 'set' in or near churchyards, or dwell upon death and the tomb.<sup>63</sup> The indebtedness may be demonstrated by brief quotation:

57 Ibid., 113.

58 Ibid., II, 195.

59 In the notes to Sonnets V, IX, LXXXIV, the 'occasional Address' and the 'Elegy'.

60 In the notes to Sonnets XXVIII and XLV.

61 In the notes to Sonnets XI, XII and XXVIII respectively.

62 Note to 'Elegy'.

63 See Sonnets XXIV, XXV, XXXV, XXXVI, XLI, XLIX, XLVIII, XLIX, LIV, LXVII, LXXII, LXXIV and 'Elegy', 'The Dead Beggar', 'Inscription', 'A Descriptive Ode', 'Verses', 'Ode to Death'.

Light lies the turf upon thy virgin breast.  
(Sonnet XLIX)<sup>64</sup>

The mournful path approaching to the tomb.  
(Sonnet XLVIII)

The ravenous Owl foregoes his evening flight,  
. . . in . . .  
That scene where Ruin saps the mouldering tomb  
(Sonnet LXVII)

Lo! rising there above each humbler heap,  
Yon cypher'd stones his name and wealth relate.  
(*'Elegy'*)

. . . the deserted being, poor and old  
Whom cold, reluctant, Parish Charity  
Consigns to mingle with his kindred mold.  
(*'The Dead Eggar'*)

. . . this drear sight of tempest-beaten graves  
. . . and . . .  
. . . thro' broken vaults beneath,  
The future storms low-muttering breathe  
(*'A Descriptive Ode'*)

. . . that tender heart,  
Now withering in a distant urn!  
(*'Verses'*)

Charlotte Smith's constant use of nature again was a development of trends in her predecessors. Her reference to Thomson recalls his The Seasons, but Havens has catalogued a series of mainly unrhymed 'topographical poems' popular before and during Charlotte Smith's literary career,<sup>65</sup> and it is a tradition she adopted and adapted to her own purposes, frequently including in her poems 'prospects' impressive in their picturesqueness or sublimity. 'Beachy Head' is the obvious example, but her poems generally (including many of the Sonnets) are full of impressive seascapes seen from high cliffs, desolate expanses of heath and 'views' over verdant valleys and

64 'Supposed to Have been Written in a Church Yard,  
over the Grave of a Young Woman of Nineteen.'

65 Havens cites Dyer's Grongar Hill (1726), Jago's Edge-Hill (1767), Cunningham's Leith Hill (1779), Crowe's Lewesdon Hill (1788), Cary's The Mountain Seat (1794), Wallace's Prospects from Hills of Fife (1796), Cottle's Malvern (1798) (op.cit., 247-55). Havens comments: '. . . in the forty years following 1767 the unrimed topographical poem enjoyed such a vogue that for a considerable period in the latter part of the century practically all the descriptive blank verse written was of this kind.' (p. 248.)

downland. However, she is not typical of the topographical school in that she omits, on the whole, leisurely accounts of country seats visible in her landscapes, and details of local historical events, which would be at odds with the lonely, rather wild atmosphere she is often attempting to evoke. Obviously, this is especially true of the Sonnets, which afford no space for leisurely digression. Charlotte Smith's employment of grand or idyllic prospects looks forwards to Wordsworth, and so too does her ability to combine her 'distant views' with a vivid particularity and close observation of detail as regards natural objects in the foreground: knowledgeable references to particular flowers and trees; the eddies in a river here, the plumage of a bird there.<sup>66</sup> There is much that would have interested Wordsworth, and Charlotte Smith's influence on him is explored below.

It may surprise those who see Charlotte Smith's poetry as heralding romanticism that she acknowledges the influence of Pope five times in her annotations to the Elegiac Sonnets.<sup>67</sup> Yet it is precisely a kind of enfeebled and decayed Augustanism in her poetry, as in the verse of most of her minor contemporaries, that constitutes a principal weakness and tends to obscure the elements of her verse that Coleridge and Wordsworth found admirable. The best example is her remorseless personification which is mostly employed quite automatically and unthinkingly, or, at best, with the conventional idea of its being intrinsically 'poetic'. Geoffrey Tillotson has argued that such personifications were no more 'unthinking' in the

66 Charlotte Smith possibly learned from Thomas Warton the Younger, whose poems at times come close to suggesting the countryman's close observation of the details of nature. See, for instance, Warton's 'The First of April' (Eric Partridge, The Three Wartons. A Choice of their Verse (London 1927), 144-7).

67 Notes to Sonnets I, VI, XXI, LIV, LXXXII.

great Augustan poets than were the original and individual images of the Romantics, but were a vital and inventive constituent of the neoclassical tradition.<sup>68</sup> However, by the time of Sensibility, the device had become conventional and stereotyped. So when Charlotte Smith writes:

. . . Memory draws from Pleasure's wither'd flower,  
Corrosives for the heart - of fatal power!  
(Sonnet XXVII)

one may allow the figure of Memory personified as a herbalist a certain limited power, but her personifications are usually more pedestrian:

. . . a world so full of pain,  
where prosperous folly treads on patient worth,  
And, to deaf pride, misfortune pleads in vain!  
(Sonnet XXVII)

There seems to be at work here the notion that a simple sentiment is elevated to poetry merely by the all-too-easy employment of personifications. Note too the conventionality of the epithets habitually applied to personified abstract qualities: 'mild patience' ('Ode to Despair'), 'comfortless Despair' (Ibid.), 'soft pity' (Sonnet I), 'pale sorrow' (Sonnet III), 'wild Frenzy' (Sonnet XLV), 'languid Despondency' ('Verses'), 'ruthless Avarice' ('Elegy'), 'weary hope' (Sonnet XXXVI). Occasionally the adjectives are a variation on the standard formula and show a modicum of vitality - 'pale Experience' (Sonnet XLVII) and 'sick Reason' ('Ode to Despair') are curiously Blakean, for instance - but mostly they seem hollowly rhetorical. Many of the Sonnets themselves address abstract qualities or personified seasons: 'To Spring' (Sonnet VIII), 'To Hope' (Sonnet VI), 'To Friendship' (Sonnet XXVIII), 'To Fortitude' (Sonnet XXXV), 'To Tranquility' (Sonnet XLI), 'To Fancy' (Sonnet XLVI), 'To Dependence' (Sonnet LVII),

68 Geoffrey Tillotson, 'Eighteenth Century Poetic Diction' Essays and Studies of the English Association XXV (1939), 59-80 and Augustan Poetic Diction (London, 1964).



'To Oblivion' (Sonnet XC) and 'Ode to Despair'. These tend to be the poems most marred by facile personification and it is instructive to compare their conventionality with the revivification of such forms by the great Romantics: Keats' Odes 'To Melancholy' and 'To Autumn' and Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' spring to mind as rich and inventive contrasts.

Nature too is sometimes presented in the Elegiac Sonnets in terms of an outworn and merely decorative neoclassical pastoralism:

Go rural Naiad! wind thy stream along  
 Thro' woods and wild: then seek the ocean caves  
 Where sea-nymphs meet their coral rocks among  
 To boast the various honours of their waves!  
 (Sonnet XXXIII)

Country folk are sometimes idealized in the pastoral tradition of an idyllic, untroubled and idle existence:

Blest is yon shepherd, on the turf reclined  
 Who on the varied clouds which float above  
 Lies idly gazing - while his vacant mind  
 Pours out some tale antique of rural love!  
 (Sonnet IX)

This is a considerable distance from Wordsworth's Michael with its vividly realized portrait of a rural working life, though perhaps the meditative inclinations of his lone countrymen might have grown from the 'vacancy' of such unpromising poetical ancestors.

It is odd that Charlotte Smith could combine such conventionalities with lines displaying a refreshing particularity and realism in their evocation of the English countryside, which must have delighted Wordsworth when he turned to his copy of the Elegiac Sonnets. The sonnet 'To Spring' (VIII) is a good example:

Again the wood, and long-withdrawing vale,  
 In many a tint of tender green are drest,  
 Where the young leaves unfolding, scarce conceal  
 Beneath their early shade, the half-form'd nest  
 Of finch or woodlark; and the primrose pale,  
 And lavish cowslip, wildly scatter'd round  
 Give their sweet spirits to the sighing gale.

One would make no great claims for this extract, but it is at least effectively and unpretentiously descriptive (apart possibly from the concluding line) and moves smoothly from the opening 'general view' to a loving detail of particulars: the poet knows something of nature at first hand.

A good example of vestigial neoclassicism mingled with a simply realistic evocation of nature is provided by the sonnet most likely to be encountered by the general reader because of its inclusion in a modern popular anthology<sup>69</sup> - 'Written at the Close of Spring' (Sonnet II):

The garlands fade that Spring so lately wove,  
 Each simple flower, which she had nursed in dew,  
 Anemones, that spangled every grove,  
 The primrose wan, and hare-bell, mildly blue.  
 No more shall violets linger in the dell,  
 Or purple orchis variegate the plain,  
 Till Spring again shall call forth every bell,  
 And dress with humid hands her wreaths again. -  
 Ah! poor humanity! so frail, so fair,  
 Are the fond visions of thy early day,  
 Till tyrant passion, and corrosive care,  
 Bid all thy fairy colours fade away!  
 Another May new buds and flowers shall bring;  
 Ah! why has happiness - no second Spring?

When Charlotte Smith employs personification she moves towards artificiality and precious pastoralism: Spring weaves garlands, dresses wreaths with humid hands and calls forth and nurses flowers. But such 'poeticisms' do not preponderate in this poem, for they are counterbalanced by fresher and more chastely plain nature-images: the flowers are 'simple' and the dew enforces their freshness. The attractive restraint of 'The primrose wan, and hare-bell, mildly blue', despite the poetic inversion, checks the tendency to garishness in the image of the anemones that 'spangled every grove'. Perhaps the best example of this

69 John Hayward (ed.), The Penguin Book of English Verse (Harmondsworth 1956), 252.

balancing effect is the ample Popean sweep of 'purple orchis variegate the plain' set against the hidden violets that simply 'linger in the dell'. The showy orchis, providing a fine prospect, merits the grandly latinate 'variegate' (and 'purple'); the retiring, paler violet has homely English 'linger'. The poem is attractive also in its alternations between 'close-ups' and more distant, comprehensive 'views'.

The sentiment of the last six lines is not too rudely forced from the descriptive portion - not always the case in the Elegiac Sonnets - since the identification of transient humanity and its 'fond visions' with the brief flowers of spring, bright amongst the common greenness, is effective if not wholly original. The poet indulges her bad habit of trying to intensify emotion by means of exclamation marks, interrogatives and dashes and a double use of 'Ah!', when she might better concentrate on making her language do such work rather than punctuation and ejaculations. The final couplet is given an artificial clinching effect by its being capped by an exclamation mark in so many of the Sonnets that the device becomes irritating. Curiously, though, the early editions of the Sonnets were much freer of such mannerisms, and it is unknown whether it was Charlotte Smith, her publisher, or the printers who added such embellishments subsequently. If the poet herself was responsible, it is difficult to discern her motive, bearing in mind the success of the early editions: she could hardly have thought that the more chastely punctuated earlier versions had failed to stir the emotions of their readers.

The above sonnet is dignified by the fact that the sentiment derived from the description is applied to humanity as a whole. Although this of course includes the

poet herself, she is expressing a generous general regret for her belief that the dreams and hopes of mankind are almost invariably denied or frustrated by life - rather in the manner of Hardy. However, this particular sonnet is exceptional in that it is usually the poet's personal sorrow and misfortune that are contrasted to the bright freshness of nature or compared to its barren gloom. This is acceptable in a single poem, but when the Sonnets are read in sequence, the constant return to the melancholy poet towards the end of so many of the pieces becomes intrusive and self-regarding. Many readers, thus irritated, have seen the melancholy as affected and the misfortunes as exaggerated. This is unfair, but the impression is strengthened by the arbitrariness of some of the sentiments derived from the descriptions, so they appear contrived in order that the poet might parade her troubles. An example is the sonnet 'written in the Church Yard at Middleton in Sussex' (XLIV) which, after an awkward second line, has some descriptive power, despite the conventionally gothic touches:

Press'd by the Moon, mute arbitress of tides,  
 While the loud equinox its power combines,  
 The sea no more its swelling surge confines,  
 But o'er the shrinking land sublimely rides.  
 The wild blast, rising from the Western cave,  
 Drives the huge billows from their heaving bed;  
 Tears from their grassy tombs the village dead,  
 And breaks the silent sabbath of the grave!  
 With shells and sea-weed mingled, on the shore.  
 Lo! their bones whiten in the frequent wave;  
 But vain to them the winds and waters rave;  
They hear the warring elements no more:  
 While I am doom'd - by life's long storm oppress,  
 To gaze with envy on their gloomy rest.

After the energetic and vividly-conveyed descriptive portion, the concluding couplet seems heterogeneous, unprepared-for, and tacked onto the main body of the poem. Despite the parallel drawn between the tempest and 'life's long storm', the poet seems to force herself into the poem.

Some of the weaknesses of the Elegiac Sonnets have been indicated above: I turn now to a fuller discussion of what redeems them from total unremarkableness, by way of an examination of certain aspects of the poems that Wordsworth may have found admirable.

There is no doubt that Wordsworth did admire Charlotte Smith's poetry. He owned a copy of the 1789 fifth edition of the Elegiac Sonnets<sup>70</sup> as early as his undergraduate days at Cambridge and he continued to read them after their early popularity had passed; for, on Christmas Eve 1802, Dorothy Wordsworth recorded that her brother was 'turning over the leaves of Charlotte Smiths sonnets.'<sup>71</sup> Wordsworth's continuing interest in Charlotte Smith's poetry is attested by his writing two of her later sonnets on the rear fly-leaf of his copy of the fifth edition.<sup>72</sup>

Wordsworth was also personally acquainted with Charlotte Smith, having met her sometime between the sixth and tenth of December, 1791 when he was 'detained at Brighthelmstone' awaiting a passage to France. Charlotte Smith received him 'in the politest manner' and showed him 'every possible civility'. She also furnished him with a letter of introduction to Helen Maria Williams in France.<sup>73</sup> Wordsworth no doubt wished to meet Charlotte Smith as an admired poet: the fact that two of his relations had connexions with the Smith family may have provided a sufficient excuse.<sup>74</sup>

70 Now in the Dove Cottage Library at Grasmere.

71 Helen Darbishire (ed.), The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth (Oxford 1958), 211.

72 The fifth edition was still on Wordsworth's bookshelves in 1833: when Alexander Dyce was compiling his Specimens of British Poetesses, Wordsworth wrote on 4th December that he had 'scanty materials' wherewith to help Dyce, but did possess 'Mrs. Smith's Sonnets' in addition to works by other female poets (E. de Selincourt (ed.), The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth. The Later Years (Oxford 1939), II, 677).

Interestingly, though not indisputably, Bishop Hunt<sup>75</sup> has suggested that Charlotte Smith may have shown Wordsworth some of her revised poetry on this occasion, two sonnets of which he may then have written in the back of his fifth edition - possibly from memory, since these versions differ slightly from the sonnets published previously in Celestina and subsequently in the sixth (1792) edition of the Elegiac Sonnets. Perhaps, then, Wordsworth discussed the poems with Charlotte Smith when she was preparing them for re-publication in the sixth edition.

Wordsworth's favourable opinion of Charlotte Smith's poetry is further indicated by his suggestion to Dyce in 1830 that, should a second edition of his Specimens be called for, he should include two more sonnets by Helen Williams and 'a few more from Charlotte Smith.'<sup>76</sup> He particularly recommended Sonnet XXXIX 'To Night'. In a note to his 'Poems composed in a Tour of 1833,' Wordsworth acknowledged an indebtedness in his poem 'St. Bees'<sup>77</sup> to Charlotte Smith, and was anxious that her merits should not be underestimated:

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73 E. de Selincourt (ed.), The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth 1787-1805 (Oxford 1935), 66.

74 Wordsworth's cousin, John Robinson, became a trustee of Benjamin Smith's involved affairs in 1784. A co-trustee was Anthony Parkin, a cousin of Wordsworth's father and employer of Wordsworth's older brother, Richard in London. See: Bishop C. Hunt, Junior, 'Wordsworth and Charlotte Smith', The Wordsworth Circle I (1970), 85-103. p. 85.

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75 Hunt, op.cit., 86.

76 de Selincourt, Letters - The Later Years I, 478-79. Letter of 10th May. Dyce subsequently dedicated his second edition to Wordsworth.

77 'Stanzas suggested in a Steamboat off St. Bees' Heads, on the Coast of Cumberland' in: Ernest de Selincourt (ed.) The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth (Oxford 1940-49) IV (1947), 25.

The form of stanza in this Poem, and something in the style of the versification, are adopted from the 'St. Monica', a poem of much beauty upon a monastic subject, by Charlotte Smith: a lady to whom English verse is under greater obligations than are likely to be either acknowledged or remembered. She wrote little, and that little unambitiously, but with true feeling for rural Nature, at a time when Nature was not much regarded by English Poets.<sup>78</sup>

Until very recently Wordsworth scholars made little attempt to assess Charlotte Smith's influence on his poetry. But in 1970, the neglect was remedied by Bishop Hunt's article on 'Wordsworth and Charlotte Smith' in The Wordsworth Circle. Hunt discerns many verbal resemblances between poems of the two poets which he attributes not to any conscious plagiarism on Wordsworth's part, but to his 'eclectic and retentive verbal memory'<sup>79</sup> and his highly developed 'auditory imagination', which was of such power that

words, phrases, and patterns of phrase, from even the most unlikely writers, turn up time and time again in his own poetry.<sup>80</sup>

Hunt's verbal resemblances involve many Smith and Wordsworth poems<sup>81</sup> and it would be superfluous to repeat details here: the reader is referred to Hunt's article as a whole. It is sufficient to say that though one may quarrel with some of the alleged similarities, Hunt's argument that overall a distinct indebtedness emerges is persuasive. The comparison of The Emigrants and 'Tintern Abbey' is

78 de Selincourt (ed.) Poetical Works of Wordsworth IV, 403. Hilbish is mistaken when she says Wordsworth adds 'in a note', 'It seems a pity this genuine Singer should have gone out of sight.' (p. 253). She takes this quotation from the Rev. Alexander B. Grosart's The Prose Works of William Wordsworth (London 1876), III 151 and 507. The note on p. 507 was in fact provided by Grosart.

79 Hunt, op.cit., 96.

80 Ibid., 88.

81 E.g. Sonnet XXXIX - The Prelude and 'Elegiac Stanzas'; Sonnets LVIII and LIX - The Prelude; Sonnet XLVII - The Immortality Ode and The Prelude; Sonnet XL - Wordsworth's sonnet, 'It is a beauteous evening'; The Emigrants - 'Tintern Abbey'.

particularly illuminating.<sup>82</sup>

The 'Wordsworthian' images and cadences occur throughout Charlotte Smith's poetry and may be demonstrated by reference to poems other than those on which Hunt concentrates. The effect is curious: as though Charlotte Smith were imitating Wordsworth sporadically, or the reader perusing hitherto unknown Wordsworth juvenilia in which he was searching for his mature style. Sometimes Charlotte Smith is meditating in solitary communion with nature:

On some rude fragment of the rocky shore  
Where on the fractured cliff the billows break,  
Musing, my solitary seat I take,  
And listen to the deep and solemn roar.  
(Sonnet XII)

And while I gaze, thy mild and placid light  
Sheds a soft calm upon my troubled breast.  
(Sonnet IV - 'To the Moon.')

Such lines are palely reminiscent of the quiet exaltation often evoked in Wordsworth by 'natural objects'. Sometimes nature is hushed in harmony with the poet's mood or calms and impresses its sublimity on her. On other occasions there is a contrast of calmness and agitation in nature reflecting conflicts within the poet:

. . . the faint moon, yet lingering on the wane,  
And veil'd in clouds, with pale uncertain light  
Hangs o'er the waters of the restless main  
(Sonnet XXXIX)

This is the sonnet Wordsworth thought Dyce should include in his anthology. Wordsworth himself is a master of such

82 Hunt op.cit., 93-99. Hunt is not alone in claiming Smith influences on Wordsworth: in recent years Paul Sheats has suggested a resemblance between Charlotte Smith's storm imagery and Wordsworth's 'Vale of Esthwaite', and S. M. Parrish sees her 'Apostrophe to an Old Tree' as a possible source for 'The Thorn'. (Paul D. Sheats, The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, 1785-98 (Cambridge, Mass. 1973), 27; Stephen Maxfield Parrish, The Art of the Lyrical Ballads (Cambridge, Mass. 1973), 106-107.)



juxtapositions of fragile calm and threatening restlessness.<sup>83</sup>

Favourite images of Wordsworth for a profound and majestic tranquility in nature, inducing an awed calm in the beholder, are the sunrise and sunset. Charlotte Smith goes some way towards securing a similar effect in Sonnet LXXXIII, though the third party in her poem and the suggestion of vestigial neoclassical pastoralism he brings with him is unWordsworthian in these circumstances:

The upland Shepherd, as reclined he lies  
 On the soft turf that clothes the mountain brow,  
 Marks the bright sea-line mingling with the skies;  
 Or from his course celestial, sinking slow,  
 The Summer-Sun in purple radiance low,  
 Blaze on the western waters: the wide scene  
 Magnificent, and tranquil, seems to spread  
 Even o'er the Rustic's breast a joy serene.

The sudden flaming of 'Blaze' at the beginning of a line, after the dying falls of 'sinking slow' and 'radiance low' ending the immediately preceding lines, secures a vivid effect that would not be totally despised by the poet who could introduce the brilliance of 'the orange sky of evening' as a sudden contrast to a frost-gripped, bare, darkening scene in the skating episode of The Prelude.<sup>84</sup>

Charlotte Smith shares many of Wordsworth's attitudes: the necessity of exposure to natural beauty to develop sensibility, and the particular importance of this in childhood is almost as central a tenet to her as to Wordsworth in The Prelude:

83 See for example 'Upon Westminster Bridge', where the awesome stillness of a great city at dawn is what is overtly conveyed, but where the reader's recognition of the temporariness of this state and of incipient human bustle to break the calm is important to its effect. (Thomas Hutchinson (ed.), Wordsworth: Poetical Works (London 1936), 214.)

84 Book I, line 473. See: Ernest de Selincourt (ed.), Wordsworth: The Prelude 'Oxford Standard Authors' (London 1933), 13-14.

Ah! hills beloved! - where once, a happy child  
 Your beechen shades, 'your turf, your flowers among,'  
 I wove your blue-bells into garlands wild,  
 And woke your echoes with my artless song,

and she is aware of a loss of the fresh vision and uncomplicated joy of childhood in the wearying and worrying sadnesses of adulthood, and of the impossibility of their recapture:

. . . your turf, your flowers remain;  
 But can they peace to this sad breast restore,  
 For one poor moment sooth the sense of pain  
 And teach a breaking heart to throb no more?  
 (Sonnet V)

Alas! can tranquil nature give me rest,  
 Or scenes of beauty sooth me to repose?  
 Can the soft lustre of the sleeping main,  
 You radiant heaven, or all creation's charms,  
 "Erase the written troubles of the brain,"  
 Which memory tortures, and which guilt alarms?<sup>85</sup>  
 (Sonnet XL)

A difference is that there is no Wordsworthian struggle, as in 'Tintern Abbey' to find alternative joys more enduringly grounded; merely despairing gestures and a self-pitying melancholy. There are, too, images in these extracts one would not expect to find in Wordsworth. The hackneyed 'artless song' is part of the rather idealised pastoral vision of self: Wordsworth was sufficiently original to hoot in mimicry of the owls.<sup>86</sup>

Charlotte Smith, like Wordsworth, does not observe Nature merely, but meditates upon it, and shares with him a need to be solitary, to withdraw to unpeopled natural scenes to gather strength and a detached perspective on the 'fever and the fret' of life in society. Sometimes she displays even a kind of pride in her alienation from others:

85 See Hunt's remarks on Charlotte Smith and Wordsworth's sharing of a sense of 'the lost glory of the flower', op.cit., 91-2.

86 The Prelude, Book V, lines 395-404. See de Selincourt, op.cit., 78.

But I prefer from some steep rock to look  
 On the obscure and fluctuating main.  
 (Sonnet LXXX)

Charlotte Smith deserves more recognition as a poet of the sea, for she refers to it remarkably often. Wordsworth must have derived hints for his own seascapes from such poems, for she paints the sea in all its moods, sometimes with considerable feeling and descriptive facility. The 'fluctuating main' is a useful metaphor for human moods and she employs it for this purpose as frequently as seasonal changes in vegetation and weather. At her best, Charlotte Smith quickly establishes the prospect of a broad expanse of sea, indicating not merely a visual impression, but simultaneously evoking a mood in harmony or contrast with her own:

Far on the sands, the low, retiring tide  
 In distant murmers hardly seems to flow;  
 And o'er the world of waters, blue and wide,  
 The sighing summer wind forgets to blow.  
 (Sonnet XL)

The calm but 'sighing' poet, murmuring against her harsh life, is prepared for, yet appears as a contrast to the peacefulness of nature. The seascape here is painted effectively enough: the lines flow smoothly, with the tiniest ripples, as befits the sense; and the sibilants smooth the way.

Different sea-moods are evoked competently. At dusk the sea is still calm, but faintly threatening:

Huge vapours brook above the clifted shore,  
 Night on the Ocean settles, dark and mute,  
 Save where is heard the repercussive roar  
 Of drowsy billows, on the rugged foot  
 Of rocks remote . . .  
 (Sonnet LXXXVI)

Inevitably there are storms when 'The screaming sea-bird quits the troubled sea' (Sonnet XII), and Charlotte Smith's language is more vigorous and loses some of its customary smoothness:

The night-flood rakes upon the stony shore;  
 Along the rugged cliffs and chalky caves  
 Mourns the hoarse Ocean, seeming to deplore  
 All that are buried in his restless waves -  
 Mined by corrosive tides, the hollow rock  
 Falls prone, and rushing from its turfy height,  
 Shakes the broad beach with long-resounding shock,  
 Loud thundering on the ear of sullen Night . . .  
 (Sonnet LXVI)

The accumulation of harsh, hard and abrasive words - 'rakes', 'stony', 'rugged', 'hoarse', 'corrosive', 'shakes', 'shock' - shows Charlotte Smith could vary the elegance of diction and the soft and passively melancholic tone thought by her contemporaries to characterize her poems. Her sea and sea-side portraits cover a still wider range, however: sailors and ships appear and one sonnet even evokes the out-of-season loneliness and bleakness of a resort full of human activity and gaiety in the summer months (Sonnet LXXI). Admittedly many of the seascapes and coastal scenes are fancifully ornate, artificially heightened and 'literary' -

. . . the martial star with lurid glare,  
 Portentous, gleams above the troubled deep;  
 Or the red comet shakes his blazing hair;  
 Or on the fire-ting'd waves the lightnings leap  
 (Sonnet LXXX)

- but Charlotte Smith's ability at times to achieve some lyrical beauty in her sea descriptions and to relate them to human moods anticipates finer things in Wordsworth. His sonnet, 'The World is too much with us', with its beautiful evocation of the calm sea of evening for which we are 'out of tune'<sup>87</sup> is a kind of apotheosis of the poems Charlotte Smith produced when she contrasted her own restless sorrow with expanses of calm ocean.

It is not surprising that the poet who wrote the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads should find things to admire in Charlotte Smith's poetry. She was profoundly

87 Sonnet XXXIII. See Hutchinson, op.cit., 206.

indifferent to the complaints of those who considered the common people unworthy of inclusion and sympathetic treatment in poetry. Her sonnets constantly refer to 'low' characters, and while it is true that her shepherds still have about them a suspicion of pastoral idealisation, yet she also describes the peasant 'on his hard bed', 'the poor sea-boy', the village girl (Sonnet LXII), the homeless lunatic (Sonnet LXX) and the dead beggar buried unlamented ('The Dead Beggar'). Often, these, while looking forward to Wordsworth's countrymen, are descended from the obscure country-folk of Gray's Elegy. They must compete for attention with the poet herself and are often subsidiary to her. As in Charlotte Smith's novels, the lower classes sometimes fill the role of close-to-home noble savages whose plain virtue may be contrasted with the vices of members of higher social strata, but there is, especially in the Elegiac Sonnets, some patronization implicit in the poet's point of view. The poor may endure the common-or-garden deprivations and pains to which they are fairly accustomed, but their stolidly uneducated condition ensures they are not racked by the exquisite mental sufferings of the poet of refined sensibility and heightened consciousness. The woodman, wearied by his labour,

His careless head on bark and moss reclined,  
Lull'd by the song of birds, the murmuring wind,  
Has sunk to calm tho' momentary rest.  
Ah! would 'twere mine in Spring's green lap to find  
Such transient respite from the ills I bear!  
(Sonnet LIV)

Similarly, the 'hind' is 'blest'

. . . whom no sad thought bereaves  
Of the gay season's pleasures! - All his hours  
To wholesome labours given, or thoughtless mirth;  
No pangs of sorrow past, or coming dread,  
Bend his unconscious spirit down to earth,  
Or chase calm slumbers from his careless head!  
(Sonnet XXXI)

But in some poems Charlotte Smith takes a further step towards those poems of Wordsworth in which the simple countryman is depicted, with full respect, in his own right. Sonnet LXIX for instance is devoted to a seaman returning from imprisonment abroad:

Lo! on the deck a pallid form appears,  
 Half wondering to behold himself once more  
 Approach his home - And now he can discern  
 His cottage thatch amid surrounding trees;  
 Yet, trembling, dreads least sorrow or disease  
 Await him there, embittering his return:  
 But all he loves are safe; with heart elate,  
 Tho' poor and plunder'd, he absolves his fate!

Charlotte Smith's determination to portray the life of ordinary country people in a realistic manner, including the harshnesses and deprivations involved, reminds the reader of Crabbe, though only the later sonnets and other poems could have been influenced by the sober rural realism of Crabbe's The Village, published in 1783. The mixture of rural realism and sentimental elements in Charlotte Smith's work - especially her nostalgia for an idyllic country childhood - is reminiscent of the earlier Deserted Village of Goldsmith (1769).

Charlotte Smith does not achieve the language commonly used by men in everyday life desiderated by Wordsworth in his Preface, but she takes a modest step in that direction when writing spontaneously, and not remembering she is being a poet. Her contemporaries often remarked her eloquent simplicity and indeed, compared to the spent neoclassicism and ornate, declamatory emptiness of such contemporaries as William Hayley, her diction seems often plainly fresh and almost colloquial. This occurs usually when Charlotte Smith's imagination is aroused by her describing her favourite subjects, nature and the sea:

Low murmers creep along the woody vale  
 The tremulous Aspens shudder in the breeze,  
 Slow o'er the downs the leaden vapours sail,  
 While I, beneath these old paternal trees  
 Mark the dark shadows of the threaten'd storm.  
 (Sonnet XCII)

He may be envied, who with tranquil breast  
 Can wander in the wild and woodland scene,  
 When Summer's glowing hands have newly drest  
 The shadowy forests, and the copses green.  
 (Sonnet LXXXI)

The chill waves whiten in the sharp North-east;  
 Cold, cold the night-blast comes, with sullen sound,  
 And black and gloomy, like my cheerless breast;  
 Frowns the dark pier and lonely sea-view round.  
 (Sonnet LXVI)

One poem even displays traces of the Shelleyan vigour of 'Ode to the West Wind', though enervated by a characteristic Smith surrender to melancholy:

The blasts of Autumn as they scatter round  
 The faded foliage of another year,  
 And muttering many a sad and solemn sound,  
 Drive the pale fragments o'er the stubble sere,  
 Are well attuned to my dejected mood.  
 (Sonnet LXXXVII)

Bishop Hunt has noticed that Charlotte Smith has the habit of setting her poems specifically at a definite time and place, as a kind of guarantee of authenticity and sincerity.<sup>88</sup> Sometimes the titles are less specific - 'The Sea View' (Sonnet LXXXIII), 'The Winter Night' (Sonnet LXXIV) - but often they read, as Hunt puts it, like entries in a diary. Charlotte Smith is not content with Gray's generic country churchyard, but tells us her sonnet was 'Written in the church-yard at Middleton in Sussex' (Sonnet XLIV) and where possible a date is provided: 'Written in Farm Wood, on the South Downs, May 1784' (Sonnet XXXI). Often the occasion prompting the poem is recorded: 'Written on passing by Moonlight through a village, while the ground was covered with Snow' (Sonnet LXII) and

<sup>88</sup> Hunt op.cit., 88.

'written Sept. 1791, during a remarkable thunder storm, in which the moon was perfectly clear, while the tempest gathered in various directions near the earth.' (Sonnet LIX). This tying of the poem to a specific occasion and date not of public or national significance was not, of course, introduced by Charlotte Smith, but it is habitual with her in the way it became so with Wordsworth. The intention is indeed partly to authenticate the poem as a genuine experience of the poet, but it is related to the so-called sublime egotism of Wordsworth, which is in reality no egotism at all: a particular, definite and private experience is taken by the poet to be interesting and important not because it happened to her, but because it gives rise to some insight into the human condition; some 'moral' applicable to all is inherent in the private situation. This habitual specificity and drawing attention to the poet as a protagonist in her own verses is another indication of Charlotte Smith's position between neoclassicism and her romantic successors: the poet no longer instinctively keeps behind the scenes.

Misrepresentation of their subjects through selective quotation is an occupational hazard for critics and literary historians: even a judicious juxtaposing of the best and the worst of a poet's work may convey a false impression by ignoring the remaining mass of unremarkableness. This is a real danger in the case of the Elegiac Sonnets, where the mass is competent verse but not worth detailed comment. If any confirmation of the gulf separating Charlotte Smith's and Wordsworth's poetry - despite the similarities - is required, quotation of one of her attempts at a Miltonic tone and manner may provide it. Hunt has remarked Wordsworth's facility in combining 'the short meditative lyric about lonely feelings and scenery of nature



with the public voice of Milton's political and patriotic sonnets' in his sonnets 'dedicated to national independence and liberty.' Such fusions are beyond Charlotte Smith: her sonnets remain curiously heterogeneous rag-bags of conventional poeticisms and fresh observation and diction. The better lines seem accidental, as though the poet could not distinguish her strengths from her uninspired use of hackneyed subjects and language. Artificiality, mannerisms and hollow rhetoric mar many sonnets:

To a young man entering the world

Go now, ingenious Youth! - The trying hour  
 Is come: The World demands that thou should's't go  
 To active life: These titles, wealth and power  
 May all be purchas'd - Yet I joy to know  
 Thou wilt not pay their price. The base controul  
 Of petty despots in their pedant reign  
 Already hast thou felt; - and high disdain  
 Of Tyrants is imprinted on thy soul -  
 Not, where mistaken Glory, in the field  
 Rears her red banner, be thou ever found;  
 But, against proud Oppression raise the shield  
 Of Patriot daring - So shalt thou renown'd  
 For the best virtues live; or that denied  
 May'st die, as Hampden or as Sydney died!  
(Sonnet LXXVI)

Keats and the Elegiac Sonnets: a Note

It seems probable that Charlotte Smith's poetic influence extended beyond the first generation of Romantic poets, and scholars have argued that John Keats in particular learned from the Elegiac Sonnets. Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale' displays certain verbal similarities to Charlotte Smith's 'On the Departure of the Nightingale' (Sonnet VII) and, remarkably, two scholars have discerned

and recorded these resemblances, apparently independently, in rather similar articles.<sup>89</sup> The articles may be consulted for the alleged parallels, but it may be useful to reproduce Charlotte Smith's sonnet here. Whiting thinks it particularly suggestive of the final stanza of Keats' poem, while Pollin finds near-echoes throughout the 'Ode':

Sweet poet of the woods - a long adieu!  
 Farewel, soft minstrel of the early year!  
 Ah! 'twill be long ere thou shalt sing anew,  
 And pour thy music on 'the night's dull ear.'  
 Whether on Spring thy wandering flights await,  
 Or whether silent in our groves you dwell,  
 The pensive muse shall own thee for her mate,  
 And still protect the song she loves so well.  
 With cautious step, the love-lorn youth shall glide  
 Thro' the lone brake that shades thy mossy nest;  
 And shepherd girls, from eyes profane shall hide  
 The gentle bird, who sings of pity blest:  
 For still thy voice shall soft affections move,  
 And still be dear to sorrow, and to love!

Keats is known to have browsed widely in books of minor poetry,<sup>90</sup> and Pollin remarks that Keats' reading of Charlotte Smith 'had been most intensive before 1815'.<sup>91</sup> It is perhaps significant that Charlotte Smith's sonnets were well known to Leigh Hunt, who of course had close connexions with Keats, and also to Coleridge who, less than a month before the composition of the 'Ode', conversed with Keats on 'nightingales, poetry . . . poetical sensation.'<sup>92</sup> Pollin admits that nightingales are a standard romantic poetic property,<sup>93</sup> but Whiting suggests that poems bidding adieu to the bird are a rarer phenomenon.<sup>94</sup>

89 George W. Whiting, 'Charlotte Smith, Keats, and the Nightingale', Keats-Shelley Journal XII (1963), 4-8; and: Burton R. Pollin, 'Keats, Charlotte Smith, and the Nightingale', Notes and Queries XIII (May 1966), 180-81.

90 Whiting, op.cit., 4-5.

91 Pollin, op.cit., 181.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 Whiting, op.cit., 5.

Pollin's remark that Charlotte Smith's final couplet is basically similar in idea to the fundamental premise of the poem by Keats' rather underrates the subtle complexities of the 'Ode',<sup>95</sup> but certainly it seems likely that her poem was a factor in the composition of Keats' poem.

## II

### The Emigrants

In the early months of 1793 a group of French emigrés probably lodged at Charlotte Smith's house in Brighton. At any rate, they were to be found each evening in the 'small back room' of her dwelling.<sup>96</sup> Charlotte Smith was active on behalf of these refugees, and tried to engage William Hayley's active sympathy for them when she visited Earham in late February.<sup>97</sup> In September of that year, a notice appeared<sup>98</sup> of the marriage of her daughter, Anna Augusta, to an emigré, Alexander Mark Constant de Faville, Chevalier de St. Lazare, whose name and title were infinitely more impressive than his current impecunious situation. The obvious deduction is that he was one of the group of emigrés, or at least had connections with its members. Charlotte Smith was thoroughly pleased by the marriage, though prejudice against France was so intense at this time that she found but one among her and her husband's relations who approved the match,<sup>99</sup> despite de Faville's being a victim rather than a perpetrator of revolutionary activity in France. Given Charlotte Smith's abiding concern to dissipate the mutual dislike and distrust of the English and French, there is a pleasant

95 Pollin, op.cit., 181.

96 See Turner, op.cit., 122.

97 Ibid., 121.

appropriateness in the marriage of Anna Augusta and de Faville, though also some irony when one remembers Charlotte Smith's previous revolutionism and strictures on the French ruling classes in Desmond (1792). When The Emigrants appeared by the summer of 1793<sup>100</sup> - probably in May<sup>101</sup> - Charlotte Smith's conservative critics were quick to notice her sympathy for the emigrés and deduced a turn-about in her politics. Discussion of the poem below will show this deduction to have been ill-founded.

Charlotte Smith had almost completed a first draft of the poem as early as February 1793, which she said Cowper was to correct, though there is no definite evidence that he did so.<sup>102</sup> Hayley much approved of the work, which Charlotte Smith intended to have been of 'about a thousand or twelve hundred lines'. In fact it is only 823 lines.<sup>103</sup>

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98 European Magazine XXIV (1793), 237. The marriage took place on August 12th, 1793 in the parish church of Storrington, near Petworth, Sussex. (See Joyce Hemlow (ed.), The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay), III (Oxford, 1973), 7 n.).

99 Turner, op.cit., 37-8.

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100 Published by Cadell.

101 Turner, op.cit., 121.

102 See discussion above, pp. 23-4.

103 Book I is of 382 lines, Book II of 441. There is no numbering of the lines in the published version of the text. Charlotte Smith did well to manage even 823 lines in addition to her best novel, The Old Manor House, in 1793, for despite the pleasant interlude of her visit to Eartham in 1792, when she started the novel, Turner points out that this was followed by a dark year 'in which she was quite destitute, she was crippled most of the time, in which her son Charles lost his leg in battle, and her vexations regarding the Smith estate redoubled' (op.cit., 120).

The Reviews were disappointed with The Emigrants, though the 'beauties of the descriptive kind'<sup>104</sup> were widely appreciated: there was 'good scenery'<sup>105</sup> to be found and the poem was 'exceedingly picturesque'<sup>106</sup> in parts. However, the Elegiac Sonnets had enjoyed such a resounding success that Charlotte Smith's subsequent poetic works, unenhanced by the novelty of the advent of a new poet, were to seem less entrancing. The European reviewer was typical of the general tendency to compare new Smith poems unfavourably with the Sonnets when he wrote of The Emigrants that 'whatever be their merits, which we acknowledge to be very great', they were 'not entitled to that peculiar and exclusive admiration which the Sonnets have so justly acquired'.<sup>107</sup>

Most of the elements that had made the Elegiac Sonnets popular were present in The Emigrants, but the length of the new poem and the pedestrian blank-verse employed made them seem tedious as compared with their necessarily succinct treatment in the Sonnets. The Critical complained that there was 'too much of mere reflection, verging towards humble prose'<sup>108</sup> and William Enfield in the Monthly wrote that 'the style of the poem is seldom highly poetical, and sometimes is nearly prosaic', despite the 'general effect' being 'truly pleasing'.<sup>109</sup> The Emigrants revealed Charlotte Smith's technical limitations

104 British Critic I (Aug. 1793), 403.

105 Critical Review IX Second Series (Nov. 1793), 299.

106 European Magazine XXIV (July 1793), 42-3.

107 Ibid.

108 Critical Review IX Second Series (Nov. 1793), 299.

109 Monthly Review XII Second Series (Dec. 1793), 375.

in the use of blank-verse not apparent in the short, highly concentrated Sonnets. The Critical found the versification 'tame' - 'Blank verse requires a fuller cadence and a larger sweep of harmony, than the confined and elegant sonnet'<sup>110</sup> - and the British Critic complained that Charlotte Smith's latest poem contained 'neither the harmony of Milton's pauses, nor the energy of her justly admired COWPER'S diction'.<sup>111</sup> The European Magazine considered that the blank verse was inappropriately chosen, not merely badly managed:

. . . whether it be that blank verse fatigues by its monotony unless relieved by the variety and dignity of the Epic Muse, or offends by the length of the periods, when there is too much attention employed to interrupt the monotony; we do not think it is the proper measure in which to complain - at least to do nothing else but complain.<sup>112</sup>

There were allegations that Charlotte Smith had stooped to 'expressions which degrade the dignity of style required in such a composition' when she included the words 'parish' and 'farmer'. Cowper's poetry had a 'general strength' which counterbalanced his use of 'familiar and trite' words, but Charlotte Smith had no such defence against phrases 'not conducive to elegance.'<sup>113</sup> It seems that the Reviews were not yet prepared to accept a Wordsworthian movement towards plainer diction.

Another complaint was that The Emigrants was not true to its title in that, as John Aikin put it in the Analytical, Charlotte Smith passed from the troubles of the emigrants 'by natural transition, to her own misfortunes'.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Critical Review IX Second Series (Nov. 1793), 302.

<sup>111</sup> British Critic I (Aug. 1793), 405.

<sup>112</sup> European Magazine XXIV (July 1793), 42.

<sup>113</sup> British Critic I (Aug. 1793), 405.

<sup>114</sup> Analytical Review XVII (Sept. 1793), 91.

The author was 'the subject of part of her poem' wrote the European reviewer, but was omnipresent in the work as a whole: we may 'discover' her 'almost at the bottom of every page, as we may the portrait of some of the most renowned painters in the corner of their most favourite pictures'.<sup>115</sup> The Critical made the complaint more effectively:

The pathos is weakened by the author's adverting too often to perplexities in her own situation, . . . and the plaintive strain, though interesting when lightly touched, is too monotonous to be long dwelt upon, though by the most skilful finger. Herself, and not the French emigrant, fills the foreground; begins and ends the piece; and the pity we should naturally feel for those overwhelming and uncommon distresses she describes, is lessened by their being brought into parallel with the inconveniencies of a narrow income or a protracted law-suit.<sup>116</sup>

Finally, the Reviews questioned Charlotte Smith's religious orthodoxy: she was thought to have implied in The Emigrants that communion with Nature was a sufficient substitute for worship in Church.<sup>117</sup> The reviews must have been discouraging for no other work by Charlotte Smith was received so coldly, save The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer, and possibly Desmond.

115 European Magazine XXIV (July 1793), 42.

116 Critical Review IX Second Series (Nov. 1793), 299-300.

117 Ibid., 302 and British Critic I (Aug. 1793), 405.

The Brighton emigrés and Anna Augusta's marriage obviously suggested The Emigrants, but Charlotte Smith acknowledged Cowper's The Task as an inspiration, though she modestly stated that her 'performance' was 'far from aspiring to be considered as an imitation of Cowper's inimitable poem.' However, it was dedicated to Cowper, the versification was based on that of The Task and, as Bishop Hunt has said, it 'offers much the same combination of quasi-Miltonic formality interspersed with the "divine chit-chat" which Lamb admired so much in Cowper'.<sup>118</sup> In so far as the chit-chat is a conveyance of the poet's meditations and concerned with her relationship with the natural world and the trials of life, the poem again looks forward to Wordsworth. It is, like 'Beachy Head' later, a development of the eighteenth-century topographical poem, for it is set where downs meet sea, near Brighton, and is full of marine and rural prospects. In her dedication to Cowper, Charlotte Smith specified her poem as an attempt at

a delineation of those interesting objects which happened to excite my attention, and which even pressed upon an heart, that has learned, perhaps from its own sufferings, to feel with acute, though unavailing compassion, the calamity of others.

Thus the emigrés are felt to have a bond with the poet in their sufferings; but the readiness with which she moves in the dedication from her ostensible subjects to her own troubles indicates the tenor of the whole poem, for the emigrés seem often merely a device to introduce and heighten the sufferings of the poet. The poem is cast in the form of what Bishop Hunt terms

a quasi-dramatic monologue with almost no prior restrictions on the range of subjects covered or the scope of the poet's meditation,<sup>119</sup>

118 Hunt, op.cit., 96. The phrase is Coleridge's: see Griggs op.cit., I, 164.

119 Ibid., 93.



and Charlotte Smith moves readily from the history and plight of the Emigrants to contemporary politics, political philosophy and social comment; continuing from the Elegiac Sonnets, descriptions of and musings on nature and lamentations of the poet's unhappy situation are interlarded unstintingly. The first book has as its 'scene' the cliffs east of Brighton, the second an eminence of the Sussex downs, with a distant view of the sea. The emigrants themselves appear on the cliffs in Book I, gazing ruefully towards France, as they may well have done in reality. Yet realism is minimal: here a prelate, an abbé and a poor parish priest are arranged in a group on the cliffs for their symbolic value as representatives of the many vices and few virtues of the French church; there an aristocratic lady is seated, her children grouped round her and playing with simple stones and shells in marked contrast to the artificial splendours of Versailles. Soon a proud, lone aristocratic soldier is introduced, indifferent to the natural beauty around him because he still dwells on the pomp of Courts and the pleasures of Paris life. It is all very like a ritual procession or series of dismal tableaux, with Charlotte Smith as commentator and interpreter - for the emigrants do not speak for themselves. Charlotte Smith is present on the cliffs too; is herself the dominant 'character'.

Although Book I ends with a plea for help for the emigrés, the emigrants on the cliffs are soon displaced by discussion of Anglo-French relations and other matters, with poet communicating directly with reader. The title therefore is misleading: the emigrants are an introductory device and serve as occasional points of reference throughout, but a rather uneasy alliance of politics and social comment on the one hand and melancholy personal meditation in natural settings on the other dominate the poem.

The Emigrants never enjoyed the extraordinary success of the early editions of the Elegiac Sonnets. Hilbish did not disagree with the comparative indifference of Charlotte Smith's contemporaries to the work: it was, she thought, Charlotte Smith's most inferior poem. Yet The Emigrants really does not seem enormously different in quality from the Sonnets and contains many of the ingredients of the earlier work - nature, melancholy, complainings, simple and smooth lyricism. Perhaps the 'progressive' commentary on social and political issues alienated some readers who had found the Sonnets agreeably apolitical, just as Desmond had repelled many a reader who had responded enthusiastically to the earlier novels. Yet there is also the occasional sonnet which is libertarian in the Miltonic manner, though these came in the later editions. The nearest the early sonnets get to politics is their implied sympathy for the rural poor, though this is fairly unobtrusive.

Reviews of The Emigrants complained of the lameness of its blank verse. This was less evident in the Elegiac Sonnets, for their leisurely iambic pentameters are disciplined and tightened by the rhymes the form requires, so that even the most prose-like meditative passages are given at least the form of verse. There are no rhymes in The Emigrants to counteract a tendency to an impression of meandering flow and there is much uninspired flatness hardly distinguishable from plain prose: the Creator

. . . surely means  
To us, his reasoning Creatures, whom he bids  
Acknowledge and revere his awful hand,  
Nothing but good . . .

(I, 3)

and Charlotte Smith tells us her

. . . weary soul recoils  
From proud oppression, and from legal crimes  
(For such are in this Land, where the vain boast  
Of equal law is mockery, while the cost  
Of seeking for redress is sure to plunge  
Th' already injured to more certain ruin  
And the wretch starves before his Counsel pleads).

(I, 3)

The verse is often at its most turgid when the poet is at pains to convey moral indignation. She writes of

. . . Men, whose ill acquir'd wealth  
 Was wrung from plundered myriads, by the means  
 Too often legaliz'd by power abus'd  
 Feel all the horrors of the fatal change,  
 When their ephemeral greatness, marr'd at once  
 (As a vain toy that Fortune's childish hand  
 Equally joy'd to fashion or to crush),  
 Leaves them expos'd to universal scorn.  
 For having nothing else; not even the claim  
 To honour, which respect for Heroes past  
 Allots to ancient titles; Men like these,  
 Sink even beneath the level, whence base arts  
 Alone had rais'd them . . .

(I, 26-7)

This curious mixture of rhetorically poetic ('Fortune's childish hand') and prosaically utilitarian phrases ('For having nothing else; not even the claim' and 'Men like these / Sink even beneath the level') is all too common in The Emigrants and it is noticeable that the quality of the verse deteriorates whenever Charlotte Smith leaves nature and meditation and moves to her ostensible theme, the emigrés; or to overt political argument; or to an obtrusive cataloguing of the details of her own vexations, as opposed to a more generalized musing on human suffering.

Whenever Charlotte Smith attempts a libertarian rhetoric abounding in heavy-handed personifications and deriving ultimately from Milton, the strain shows and versified prose results. Nor does the poet's anxiety to convey her disapproval of the turn the French Revolution had taken, yet to make clear her continuing adherence to Liberty itself, do anything to unclog her verse:

A group approach me, whose dejected looks  
 Sad heralds of distress! proclaim them Men  
 Banish'd for ever and for conscience sake  
 From their distracted Country, whence the name  
 Of Freedom misapplied, and much abus'd  
 By lawless Anarchy, has driven them far  
 To wander; with the prejudice they learn'd  
 From Bigotry (the Tut'ress of the blind),  
 Thro' the wide World unshelter'd; their sole hope,

That German spoilers, thro' that pleasant land  
 May carry wide the desolating scourge  
 Of War and Vengeance; yet unhappy Men,  
 Whate'er your errors, I lament your fate . . .  
 (I, 7-8)

Occasionally the libertarian rhetoric does intensify rather than stiffen and obstruct the poet's emotion. This happens usually when Charlotte Smith turns to English wrongs, referring to

Ye venal, worthless hirelings of a Court!  
 Ye pamper'd Parasites! whom Britons pay  
 For forging fetters for them . . .  
 (I, 29)

and may rise to millennial prophecy mingled with a fear of total revolution:

. . . trembling, learn, that if oppress'd too long  
 The raging multitude, to madness stung,  
 Will turn on their oppressors; and, no more  
 By sounding titles and parading forms  
 Bound like tame victims, will redress themselves!  
 Then swept away by the resistless torrent,  
 Not only all your pomp may disappear,  
 But in the tempest lost, fair Order sink  
 Her decent head, and lawless Anarchy  
 O'erturn celestial Freedom's radiant throne; -  
 As now in Gallia; where confusion born  
 Of party rage and selfish love of rule,  
 Sully the noblest cause that ever warm'd  
 The heart of Patriot Virtue - There arise  
 The infernal passions; Vengeance, seeking blood,  
 And Avarice; and Envy's harpy fangs  
 Pollute the immortal shrine of Liberty,  
 Dismay her votaries, and disgrace her name.  
 (I, 30-31)

It is true that a post-Terror English middle- and upper-class fear of Revolutionary violence in tense juxtaposition with libertarian fervour gives this passage what power it has; nevertheless, it is difficult to see how those who had disapproved of Charlotte Smith's radicalism in Desmond could discern a convert from libertarianism in The Emigrants.

Another subject that elicits genuine feeling from Charlotte Smith in The Emigrants is war: an activity which

she denounces with a fierce consistency throughout her works, whatever its cause or alleged justifications. It is no surprise that The Emigrants precedes by a year only the desolate tableaux of war in the first book of The Banished Man (1794). War's principal result is

The Widow's anguish and the Orphan's tears! -  
 Woes such as these does Man inflict on Man;  
 And by the closest murderers, whom we style  
 Wise Politicians, are the schemes prepar'd,  
 Which, to keep Europe's wavering balance even,  
 Depopulate her kingdoms and consign  
 To tears and anguish half a bleeding world!  
 (II, 59)

Thus Charlotte Smith herself keeps a 'wavering balance even' in The Emigrants between horror of the violence unleashed on the class from which her emigrés are drawn, and sympathy for the mass of people still labouring under corrupt government in England; between loyalty to libertarian principles and distaste for the violence arising from attempts at their implementation.

The most effective parts of The Emigrants, however, are those which adopt a personal tone and a musing lyricism reminiscent of the Elegiac Sonnets, when nature and landscape are introduced and a 'vocabulary of meditation'<sup>120</sup> at times reminiscent of Wordsworth is employed. Bishop Hunt has stressed the 'Wordsworthian' aspects of The Emigrants, including Charlotte Smith's ability to pass easily and smoothly from such 'public' pronouncements as the lines last quoted to personal history and the inner life of the poet in a contrasting setting of rural tranquility:

Oh! could the time return, when thoughts like these  
 Spoil'd not that gay delight, which vernal suns,  
 Illuminating hills, and woods, and fields,  
 Gave to my infant spirits - Memory come!  
 And from distracting cares, that now deprive  
 Such scenes of all their beauty, kindly bear  
 My fancy to those hours of simple joy,

120 Bishop Hunt's phrase, op.cit., 93.

When, on the banks of Arun, which I see  
 Make its irriguous course through yonder meads,  
 I play'd; unconscious then of future ill!  
 There (where, from hollows, fring'd with yellow broom,  
 The birch with silver rind, and fairy leaf,  
 Aslant the low stream trembles) I have stood,  
 And meditated how to venture best  
 Into the shallow current, to procure  
 The willow herb of glowing purple spikes,  
 Or flags, whose sword-like leaves conceal'd the tide,  
 Startling the timid reed-bird from her nest . . .  
 (II, 60-61)

Coming as it does immediately after the complications of politics and horrors of war, the untroubled 'hills, and woods and fields' has something of the strong, moving simplicity of Wordsworth's 'rocks and stones and trees'<sup>121</sup> and, as with the greater poet, there is no question of the poet's childhood and the rural beauties forming a bathetic contrast to matters of national and international concern treated of elsewhere: rather they are intimately related to implied enduring human values transcending a particular political and social situation.

Nature in The Emigrants is a means of access to such values and an indispensable humanizing and purifying agency. The proud aristocratic emigré is cut off from this vital influence:

. . . one, who long  
 Has dwelt amid the artificial scenes  
 Of populous City, dreams that splendid shows,  
 The Theatre, and pageant pomp of Courts,  
 Are only worth regard; forgets all taste  
 For Nature's genuine beauty; in the lapse  
 Of gushing waters hears no soothing sound  
 Nor listens with delight to sighing winds,  
 That, on their fragrant pinions, waft the notes  
 Of birds rejoicing in the tangled copse;  
 Nor gazes pleas'd on Ocean's silver breast,  
 While lightly o'er it sails the summer clouds  
 Reflected on the wave, that, hardly heard,  
 Flows on the yellow sands . . .  
 (I, 25-26)

121 See Hutchinson, op.cit., 149.

However the poet does keep her Rousseauistic idyllicism in check: Nature should not be sought merely as an escape from life's complications into unthinking tranquility. Even in the countryside one is face to face with human suffering and social iniquities:

We ask anew, where happiness is found? -  
 Alas in rural life, where youthful dreams  
 See the Arcadia that Romance describes,  
 Not even Content resides! - In yon low hut  
 Of clay and thatch, where rises the grey smoke  
 Of smold'ring turf, cut from the adjoining moor,  
 The labourer, its inhabitant, who toils  
 From the first dawn of twilight, till the Sun  
 Sinks in the rosy waters of the West  
 Finds that with poverty it cannot dwell;  
 For bread, and scanty bread, is all he earns  
 For him and for his household - Should Disease,  
 Born of chill wintry rains, arrest his arm,  
 Then, thro' his patch'd and straw-stuff'd casement,  
peeps  
 The squalid figure of extremest want;  
 And from the Parish the reluctant dole,  
 Dealt by th' unfeeling farmer, hardly saves  
 The ling'ring spark of life from cold extinction.  
(II, 50-51)

As in the Mlegiac Sonnets, a knowledge of rural reality restrains any tendency to merely decorative neoclassical pastoralism: Charlotte Smith describes

those bleak russet downs; where, dimly seen,  
 The solitary Shepherd shriv'ring tends  
 His dun discoloured flock (Shepherd, unlike  
 Him, whom in song the Poet's fancy crowns  
 with garlands, and his crook with vi'lets binds.)  
(I, 27-28)

Critics complained that Charlotte Smith herself begins and ends The Emigrants, but it would be more accurate to say that Nature and its significance to the poet fills this role. Nature in its harmonious and tranquil aspects is contrasted throughout the poem to political and social evils and the troubles of the poet herself. Such evils are thus exhibited as enormities, 'unnatural' occurrences, offences against the spirit of Nature. So the poor labourer's plight is highlighted, not obscured, by his

sylvan surroundings and large-scale horrors, such as the Revolutionary war, pollute natural order and beauty: the English spring is so different from the continental, where

. . . violets, lurking in their turfy beds  
Beneath the flow'ring thorn, are stained with blood.  
(II, 43)

A benevolent deity is discerned working through natural objects and sometimes located in them and those who had lamented the lack of piety in former Smith works had less cause for complaint in the case of The Emigrants, for religious references also help open and close the poem. However, such references are not impeccably orthodox and Charlotte Smith's God is related to Wordsworth's Spirit of the Universe: in the fourth and fifth lines below He comes close to being immanent in that nature she contrasts with the evil works of man:

. . . He, whose Spirit into being call'd  
This wondrous World of Waters; He who bids  
The wild wind lift them till they dash the clouds,  
And speaks to them in thunder; or whose breath  
Low murmuring o'er the gently heaving tides,  
When the fair Moon, in summer night serene,  
Irradiates with long trembling lines of light  
Their undulating surface; that great Power,  
Who, governing the Planets, also knows  
If but a Sea-kew falls . . .  
(I, 2-3)

It is Charlotte Smith's habitual contrasting of nature to the evil of man and his institutions that leads her some way towards a pantheistic conception of God. However, her deity remains sufficiently personal and selective to avoid permeating those institutions:

my prayer was made  
To him who hears even silence; not in domes  
Of human architecture, fill'd with crowds,  
But on these hills, where boundless, yet distinct,  
Even as a map, beneath are spread the fields  
His bounty cloathes; divided here by woods,  
And there by commons rude, or winding brooks,  
While I might breathe the air perfum'd with flowers,  
Or the fresh odours of the mountain turf;  
And gaze on clouds above me, as they sail'd



Majestic: or remark the reddening north,  
 When bickering arrows of electric fire  
 Flash on the evening sky - I made my prayer  
 In unison with murmuring waves that now  
 Swell with dark tempests, now are mild and blue,  
 As the bright arch; for all to me  
 Declare omniscient goodness; nor need I  
 Declamatory essays to incite  
 My wonder or my praise, when every leaf  
 That Spring unfolds, and every simple bud,  
 More forcibly impresses on my heart  
 His power and wisdom . . .

(II, 63-65)

As with Wordsworth, the meanest flower can induce the deepest thoughts.

The seascapes of the Elegiac Sonnets recur in The Emigrants, but with the additional significance that the sea separates England from France and

. . . by the rude sea guarded we are safe  
 (I, 52)

The Emigrants, despite Charlotte Smith's dissatisfaction with English politics and society, reflects her basic constitutionalism and at times becomes a hymn of thanksgiving for the fundamental harmony of England reflected in her tranquil natural beauty. The poet's celebration of the vivid particulars of nature is what remains in the reader's mind:

. . . on shelter'd banks, the timid flowers  
 Give, half reluctantly, their warmer hues  
 To mingle with the primroses' pale stars.  
 No shade the leafless copses yet afford  
 Nor hide the mossy labours of the Thrush  
 That, startled, darts across the narrow path;  
 But quickly re-assured, resumes his task.  
 (II, 40-41)

The overt religious references in The Emigrants are not obtrusive, for they seem of a piece with all the passages of rapt observation of nature and elevated meditation with their religious or philosophical intensity. Such passages, with their Wordsworthian rhythms, cadences and meditative vocabulary, form the modest successes of the poem:

How often do I half abjure Society,  
 And sigh for some lone Cottage, deep embower'd  
 In the green woods, that these steep chalky hills  
 Guard from the strong South West; where round their base  
 The Beach [sic] wide flourishes, and the light Ash  
 With slender leaf half hides the thymy turf! -  
 There do I wish to hide me; well content  
 If on the short grass, strewn with fairy flowers,  
 I might repose thus shelter'd . . .

For I have thought, that I should then behold  
 The beauteous works of God, unspoil'd by Man.  
 (I, 3-4)

Pensive I took my solitary way,  
 Lost in despondence, while contemplating  
 Not my own wayward destiny alone . . .  
 (II, 39)

Ah! 'twill not be: - So many years have pass'd,  
 Since on my native hills, I learn'd to gaze  
 On these delightful landscapes; and those years  
 Have taught me so much sorrow, that my soul  
 Feels not the joy reviving Nature brings;  
 But, in dark retrospect, dejected dwells  
 On human follies and on human woes.  
 (II, 41-2)

Such passages make it clear, I think, that Wordsworth was conscious of a personal debt when he wrote that English verse was under greater obligations to Charlotte Smith than 'was likely to be either acknowledged or remembered.'<sup>122</sup>

### III

#### Beachy Head, with Other Poems

Charlotte Smith's literary career ended, as it had begun, with a volume of poetry. Beachy Head, with Other Poems was published posthumously in 1807, though she began work on it at least as early as the Spring of 1804. Despite interruptions due to illness in her latter years,

122 de Selincourt (ed.) Poetical Works of Wordsworth IV, 403.

she was badgering Johnson to publish the book in the summer of 1806, so that the profits might, as ever, be employed in alleviating pressing family financial problems.<sup>123</sup>

In fact 'Beachy Head', the title poem, was unfinished at the time of Charlotte Smith's death, but was nevertheless published incomplete. Also included were three versified fables from Pilpay, Aesop and La Fontaine and nine other lyrics. Charlotte Smith displayed her usual acumen in getting the most from her works in her inclusion of 'Flora' and 'Studies by the Sea' which had first appeared in Conversations including Poetry (1804). She considered, apparently, that these two poems would hold some interest for adults and not only for the children at whom Conversations had been directed, but perhaps this reprinting of not wholly suitable material indicates difficulties in producing a full volume of new poems as her health deteriorated.

Reviews of Beachy Head were few and far between. The British Critic produced a generous summary of Charlotte Smith's talents by way of an obituary, acknowledging in this 'genuine child of genius' a 'most vivid fancy, refined taste and extraordinary sensibility'.<sup>124</sup> Thomas Denman in the Monthly discerned in the poems, 'all the characteristic peculiarities, and much of the excellence, which distinguish . . . their admired author'.<sup>125</sup>

The title poem represented Charlotte Smith's second foray into blank verse and she apparently had not been totally discouraged by the plenitude of adverse comment on

123 See Turner, op.cit., 159. On this occasion Charlotte Smith wished to help the young man engaged to her daughter Harriet.

124 British Critic LXX (Aug. 1807), 170.

125 Monthly Review LVI Second Series (May 1808),

the versification of The Emigrants. Further criticism was forthcoming from the British Critic on this subject:

Blank verse is of late becoming a favourite style of composition. We are inclined to suspect that this proceeds either from idleness, or from a conscious want of powers.

This somewhat ungracious comment, and a reference to Charlotte Smith's 'wayward and preposterous' ventures into 'subjects beyond her line of experience' - mainly in the political field, one suspects - were balanced by the assertion that 'her poetic feeling and ability have rarely been surpassed by any individual of her sex.'

The Monthly had a criticism to make of Charlotte Smith's treatment of Nature later in her career. This was of a habit that had developed in her books for children, but which seemed out of place in poems for adults which were not overtly 'educational'. Charlotte Smith's facility in

accurate observations not only of the beautiful effect produced by the endless diversity of natural objects that daily solicit our regard, but also in a careful study of their scientific arrangements, and their more minute variations . . . led to an inclusion of 'dry details of natural history' unworthy of the attention of a poet and not calculated to excite the 'strong emotions in the reader which poetry should endeavour to awaken.'

The volume is disappointing, though, paradoxically, many of the elements that made Charlotte Smith's earlier poetry interesting achieved their fullest expression in Beachy Head. In particular, close and loving observation of nature is everywhere present and her characteristic sympathetic interest in the rural poor occurs constantly in the title poem. However, since The Emigrants, Charlotte Smith had produced a number of books for children and,

partly to provide material for these instructive volumes, had developed her knowledge of botany and natural history considerably. The didactic tone she had employed in the children's books tends to colour Beachy Head too, and there is a distinction between a nature-poet writing for adults and a versifier making botany palatable to children which Charlotte Smith does not always make in Beachy Head. In the Elegiac Sonnets and The Emigrants, nature-descriptions are not usually merely gratuitous, but are linked with the poet's meditations and concern with human problems and values, and even with particular social and political matters. Close observation and a fresh realism are often balanced there by more abstract, or general speculations in, as I have suggested, a manner somewhat reminiscent of Wordsworth's poetry. Some of the poems in Beachy Head, however, are almost unrelievedly descriptive and take the shape of a versified catalogue of British flora and fauna. In 'Flora' for example, though the poem has a 'poetical' neoclassical framework as a description of the 'goddess of the flowery tribe', some seventy species of flora are referred to or described in its two hundred and twenty-eight lines, and this remorseless cataloguing is exhausting as well as exhaustive. There is a 'moral' at the end - such proliferating natural beauties console the sorrowful - but Charlotte Smith would have done well to let the poem lie in Conversations. Similar cataloguing mars 'The Horlogue of the Fields', 'A walk in the Shrubbery', and, to a limited extent, 'Beachy Head' itself.

Where the poet turns from her botanizing, one finds the meditations on and explorations of human woes of earlier poems replaced often by the brisk and categorical moral aphorisms of the schoolteacher: again a legacy from

the children's books. In this regard, it is significant that Charlotte Smith chose to versify three fables in this collection, and also included a poem on the aphorism 'L'Amitie est l'Amour sans qiles'. Such poems involve a less subtle and even less adult approach to moral complexities than the earlier poems and other titles indicate the confidently schoolmasterish approach: 'Studies by the Sea', 'A walk in the Shrubbery', 'The Horlogue of the Fields'. So often Charlotte Smith adopts the cut-and-dried moral certainty considered appropriate to the education of children and all sense of the adult trying to account for the living complexities of experience is lost. A final indication of Charlotte Smith's didactic approach is provided by the formidable apparatus of notes accompanying the poems, forming over one-third of the total length of the volume, and scrupulously awarding the British flora and fauna their Latin nomenclature. The poet has become, in her own words, a 'moralizing botanist'<sup>126</sup> and the work now holds as much interest as a record of scientific speculations of the time as a collection of poetry.<sup>127</sup>

Perhaps 'Beachy Head' itself is the best poem of the collection, though it is less satisfying than The Emigrants, despite all that poem's imperfections. Hilbish is correct in saying that in 'Beachy Head' 'is found Mrs.

126 Beachy Head, with other Poems (London 1807), 126. Page references in parentheses in the text are to this edition.

127 In 'Beachy Head' Charlotte Smith refers, often sceptically, to scientific theories now almost universally accepted: that England was joined once to Europe (p. 1 and pp. 143-44); that chalk consists of fossilized crustaceans (p. 26 and pp. 158-9). She also refers to speculations on why remains of 'elephants' have been found in England: apparently mammoths had not been distinguished from the modern elephant (p. 28 and pp. 160-63). Charlotte Smith considered herself a very competent botanist, and severely dissociated herself from what

Smith's love of nature most beautifully and realistically expressed', but the praise also indicates the limitations of the poem. It is in one sense the poet's most traditional and least original effort, since 'Beachy Head' is in the direct line of the eighteenth-century topographical poem referred to in connection with The Emigrants, but with few of the innovatory features of the earlier poem. 'Beachy Head', like The Emigrants, is in blank verse, though it includes inset lyrics in rhymed quintets and sextets, supposedly written by a shepherd portrayed in the main body of the poem.<sup>128</sup> 'Beachy Head' comprises 'prospects' seen by one stationed at the summit of the headland, combined with sketches of inhabitants of the locality, references to the history of the region and memories of the poet's childhood there. Sometimes nature provokes meditation in the poet as in the Elegiac Sonnets and The Emigrants, but such passages are rare, and the poem is predominantly of the 'loco-descriptive' kind. It is thus less varied in tone and interest than The Emigrants, though detailed enough in its scene-painting and natural and local history. Charlotte Smith's claim to be considered a poet of the sea is strengthened by the 'sea views' of this poem,<sup>129</sup> though they seem rather repetitious to the reader familiar with the earlier poems.

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she termed mere 'florists', who improved varieties of flora (p. 216). The history (and some archeology) she had studied for the sake of her books for children is also evident in the copious footnotes, as is her geographical and meteorological information. When her wide range of literary quotation is borne in mind too, it becomes clear that Charlotte Smith was a widely-read woman towards the end of her life.

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128 36-38 and 40-46.

129 And by 'Studies by the Sea', 100-109.

The method employed in the topographical portions of 'Beachy Head' is to portray the various prospects at different seasons and times of day, and in varying weathers. This is integrated quite successfully with portraits of the country folk following their seasonal occupations, but there remains a marked effect of digression and random progression. The poet tends to follow the thread of the moment: thus, a view of a merchant ship off Beachy Head soon leads to references to India and its exotic products (p. 4). Charlotte Smith also includes much in the way of history, local history and local legend, which often seems more detailed than its place in any overall design would warrant. The historical associations of Beachy Head are selectively referred to throughout the poem: we read of the Roman legions (p. 28), eighth-century viking raiders (p. 9), the invading Normans (p. 10) and a naval victory of the French under Tourville in 1690 (p. 11). / The appreciation of Britain's insulation from revolutionary France in The Emigrants has developed into a defiant patriotism in 'Beachy Head', in the age of Napoleon. / Britain will know no other conqueror though she must 'undaunted meet a world in arms' (p. 11). The history is overdone, though the many references seem designed to demonstrate the vanity of ambition and aggression in the face of the eternal peaceful arts of those who work the land in harmony with nature (pp. 29-30). The poem is in fact notable for its sympathetic attention to the rural labourer and the rural poor in general, which saves much of it from being merely a literary evocation of picturesque scenery: there are references to the farmer (p. 34), shepherds (pp. 13, 31), foresters (p. 39), the peasant's daily tasks (p. 27), the unloading of a vessel on the beach (p. 8), the trapping



of food (p. 31) and even to smuggling (p. 13) and truffle-hunting (p. 39). The dwellings of the rich, traditionally a part of topographical poetry, are ignored for peaceful small farms (p. 12), the shepherd's lowly dwelling (p. 13) and cottages idyllically situated amongst orchards (p. 22). The poet describes such people, occupations and dwellings in the detail afforded by a close acquaintance, but she refrains largely from idealization: her sense of the worth of these 'uncorrupted primitives' does not blind her to their suffering, nor to the gap between literary pastoral convention and rural reality she constantly notes in her poetry:

Rude, and but just remov'd from savage life  
Is the rough dweller among scenes like these,  
(Scenes all unlike the poet's fabling dreams  
Describing Arcady) - But he is free;  
The dread that follows on illegal acts  
He never feels; and his industrious mate  
Shares his labour . . .

(p. 15)

Despite the poverty and unceasing labour of such lives, Charlotte Smith's belief in the superiority of a primitivistic morality prevails and her distrust of artificiality is undiminished: the sound of the wind and birdsong are sweeter than those of musical instruments and the human singing voice (p. 5).

An assumption runs through 'Beachy Head' that virtue and inner contentment are compatible only with a simple, isolated rural existence (at the cost of physical pain and unremitting labour), or with childhood before exposure to the corrupting commerce of the world. Even the simple village lad beating his toy drum may become a soldier in earnest and become the miserable tool of the ambitiously great, and the village girl who is happy when she

. . . sets forth  
To distant fair, gay in her Sunday's suit,  
With cherry-coloured knots, and flourish'd shawl,  
And bonnet newly purchas'd

(p. 19)

is probably making the journey to Vanity Fair, where she will hear

. . . her rural lovers' oaths  
Of constant faith, and still increasing love;  
Ah! yet a while, and half those oaths believ'd,  
Her happiness is vanish'd.

(p. 19)

'Beachy Head', at least in its unfinished state, is the most pessimistic of Charlotte Smith's poems when it comes to the possibility of human contentment. The poet herself asserts that such happiness as she has known was limited to her rural childhood before she was removed to a 'polluted smoky atmosphere' and 'dark and stifling streets' and it seems that she has concluded that all human social intercourse corrupts and distresses. The poem ends with the verses of a shepherd who has become a solitary dweller in the woods, and with the hermit of a sea-cave whose only human contact is with sailors he assists after shipwreck.

Yet it would be wrong to see 'Beachy Head' as the gloomy farewell of a world-forsaker near to an embittered death, for there is freshness and vigour in the poem to defy its pessimism. The pictures of the poet wandering through the delights of nature are as freshly drawn as anything in the Elegiac Sonnets and The Emigrants, though rather overdone in scenic and botanical detail. Charlotte Smith seems to have been encouraged by her early successes in nature description to attempt scenic set-pieces at every opportunity, and the result is a piling-up of detail that undoes beauty through excess: no less than twenty-five lines are devoted to sunset and moonrise at one point (pp. 6-7). But within such sections lines of freshness and fertility stand out to counteract the bleak view of human intercourse. There are hill cottages whose

. . . lowly roofs of thatch are half conceal'd  
 By the rude arms of trees, lovely in spring,  
 When on each bough, the rosy-tinctur'd bloom  
 Sits thick, and promises autumnal plenty.  
 For even those orchards round the Norman farms,  
 Which, as their owners mark the promis'd fruit,  
 Console them for the vineyards of the south,  
 Surpass not these.

(p. 22)

These are not quite Keats' 'moss'd cottage trees', but there is a similar, if not so well expressed delight in richness here - as in these subsequent lines:

There wanders by, a little nameless stream  
 That from the hill wells forth, bright now and clear,  
 Or after rain with chalky mixture gray,  
 But still refreshing in its shallow course,  
 The cottage garden; most for use design'd,  
 Yet not of beauty destitute. The vine  
 Mantles the little casement; yet the briar  
 Drops fragrant dew among the July flowers;  
 And pansies rayed, and freak'd and mottled pinks  
 Grow among balm, and rosemary and rue:  
 There honeysuckles flaunt, and blow  
 Almost uncultured: Some with dark green leaves  
 Contrast their flowers of pure unsullied white;  
 Others like velvet robes of regal state  
 Of richest crimson, while in thorny moss  
 Enshrined and cradled, the most lovely, wear  
 The hues of youthful beauty's glowing cheek. -  
 With fond regret I recollect e'en now  
 In Spring and Summer, what delight I felt  
 Among these cottage gardens, and how much  
 Such artless nosegays, knotted with a rush  
 By village housewife or her ruddy maid  
 Were welcome to me; soon and simply pleas'd.

(pp. 23-24)

This is not great poetry, but it does manage to convey the poet's joy in freshness and fertility through a series of explicitly and implicitly linked images: the clear or rain-swollen stream freshens the garden and the water-image continues in the 'fragrant dew' from the briar, in turn leading to the aromatic herbs. The brightness of the flowers thus watered includes the warmth of 'richest crimson' and the comparison of pink roses with the complexion of handsome youth seems to follow naturally, the

human and the floral being again united in the nosegays presented by the 'ruddy maid'. These images of fresh beauty and glowing health both attach to the reader's picture of the poet as girl, receiving the flowers with genuine pleasure. Such passages recur in 'Beachy Head' and Charlotte Smith's pessimistic views on the possibility of adult human happiness are relieved by her capacity for delight, albeit with the poignancy of remembered happiness after many anxious years.

The remaining poems in the Beachy Head collection are perhaps a little more varied in tone than was customary with Charlotte Smith. Possibly she took to heart admonitions of her prevailing melancholic cast and attempted a little more sprightliness in one or two of the poems. There is humour inherent in the fable-form, as also in all animal stories for children, because of the attribution of human motives and activities to beasts, but Charlotte Smith enhances the humour by bringing her fables up to date: her truant dove yearns for a more glittering life than the father's role at the nest affords, but, fashionably, he wishes to undertake an eighteenth-century grand tour - 'quite the rage' - and tells his mate

'. . . at my return  
 I shall have much to tell, and you to learn;  
 Of fashions - some becoming, some grotesque  
 Of change of empires, and ideas novel;  
 Of buildings, Grecian, Gothic, Arabesque,  
 And scenery sublime and picturesque;  
 And all these things with pleasure we'll discuss -'  
 'Ah me! and what are all these things to us?'

(p. 58)

The dove is equated with a human being who becomes caught up in the bar-room philosophizing of his day and is thereby convinced of his intellectual mission in life:

And when (like other husbands from a tavern)  
 Of his new notions full, he sought his cavern  
 She with dissembled cheerfulness, 'beguiled  
 The thing she was,' and gaily coo-ed and smiled.  
 'Tis not in this most motley sphere uncommon,  
 For man, (and so of course more feeble woman)  
 Most strangely to suspect, what they're pursuing  
 Will lead them to inevitable ruin,  
 Yet rush with open eyes to their undoing;  
 Thus felt the dove; but in the cant of fashion  
 He talk'd of fate, and of predestination,  
 And in a grave oration,  
 He to his much affrighted mate related,  
 How he, yet slumbering in the egg, was fated,  
 To gather knowledge, to instruct his kind,  
 By observation elevate his mind,  
 And give new impulse to Columbian life . . . .  
 (pp. 56-57)

The typically Smithian moral of the fable is that one should rest content with domestic bliss if one is lucky enough to possess it. An additional piquancy is imparted to 'The Truant Dove' by the reader's speculations on how far the straying Benjamin Smith's propensities are indicated therein. The other fables are similarly modestly amusing, though essentially lightweight verse.

Humour occurs elsewhere in the collection, though often with a bitter tinge. In 'On the Aphorism, L'Amitie est l'Amour sans ailes', the impossibility of guaranteeing love's continuance is portrayed:

And she, who years beyond fifteen,  
 Has counted twenty, may have seen  
 How rarely unplum'd Love will stay;  
 He flies not - but he coolly walks away.  
 (p. 140)

Characteristically, the best poems are the simple lyrics with vignettes of nature - 'The Swallow', 'Studies by the Sea' and 'Evening', but 'Saint Monica' is of particular interest because of Wordsworth's approval of it, and his use of its versification in 'St. Bees'.<sup>130</sup> The poem is in fact of eleven iambic nine-line stanzas, each in effect consisting of four rhymed couplets and a

130 See above, p.194.

concluding unrhymed line ending invariably in 'Monica'. The poet made the measure more taxing however by giving the fourth couplet the same rhyming sounds throughout the poem.

Wordsworth's poem is of nineteen iambic nine-line stanzas, also comprising rhymed couplets, but with the additional complication of a triple-rhyme at the end of each stanza, the last word of the stanza being invariably 'Ees'. As in Charlotte Smith's poem, an abbey is described, which was destroyed in the Reformation. The peaceful agricultural arts of the monks and the former life of the abbey - enlivened by visiting pilgrims and strolling minstrels - are described, and contrasted with the previous barrenness of the site and its subsequent emptiness.<sup>131</sup>

Charlotte Smith's ruined abbey is sacred to St. Monica, and the poem dwells on its decay. It has a pronounced Gothic flavour (though this would not perhaps be the characteristic interesting to Wordsworth), with references to a storm accelerating the ruin of the abbey, gravestones, the 'owl obscene', a 'wan and restless sprite' reputed to 'Gibber and shriek', and an allegedly supernatural light. There are, however, some Wordsworthian touches: the ancient, long-gone life of the abbey, when it was visited by wandering pilgrims with 'staff and humble weed', is contrasted with its present ruin. Nature gradually conceals the labours and evidence of humble devotions of man, rather as the sheepfold and cottage of Wordsworth's Michael disappear, leaving only the clipping-tree.<sup>132</sup> We are told that

. . . half the falling cloisters are conceal'd  
By ash and elder

(p. 119)

and of

131 See Hutchinson, op.cit., 365-67.

132 Ibid., 110 (lines 471-82).

The chapel pavement, where the name and date  
 Or monkish rhyme, had mark'd the graven plate,  
 With docks and nettles now is overgrown;  
 (p. 120)

But a 'pensive stranger' is often to be seen 'Among these  
 ruins shagg'd with fern and thorn', watching the birds  
 and beasts repossess the place (pp. 122-23):

He comes not here, from the supulchral stone  
 To tear the oblivious pall that Time has thrown,  
 But meditating, marks the power proceed  
 From the mapped lichen, to the plumed weed,  
 From thready mosses to the veined flower,  
 The silent, slow, but ever active power  
 Of Vegetative Life, that o'er Decay  
 Weaves her green mantle, when returning May  
 Dresses the ruins of Saint Monica.  
 (p. 123)

Nature is a refuge for the world-weary throughout Charlotte Smith's poetry, its beauty and harmonising power refreshing those oppressed by the ugliness disfiguring human nature, and its principle of renewal and healing counterbalancing corrupt or deteriorating human relationships and institutions. In 'Saint Monica', nature (its cruelties ignored) is no longer a metaphor for perfection, but the medium through which an ultimately prevailing creative power is expressed. Yet there is a melancholy aspect even to the comfort Charlotte Smith derives from the transitoriness of the particular evils of man and society she had suffered during a vexatious life: 'Saint Monica' shows man's nobler institutions and modes of life to be equally subject to the principle of decay and replacement.

Charlotte Smith's career as a poet rather parallels her career as a novelist: in both cases her work at the end fails to add anything substantially new to her earlier efforts or even to refine them. In the case of the prose, she switched to the writing of less demanding books for

young people, but her poetry perhaps satisfies even less at the end because of her incorporation in adult verse of material and a tone more appropriate to works for young people. Her sonnets - despite their sameness - are her most creditable achievement, partly owing to their influence on greater poets, and because her talent was stretched too thinly when she attempted longer and more demanding forms. The Emigrants was her most ambitious effort and a noteworthy attempt to combine the topographical poem with political and social observation and to find a fresh vocabulary of natural description, but it remains hopelessly uneven and heterogeneous in effect and its blank verse too often flatly prosaic.



## CHAPTER FIVE

## THE PROSE WORKS

Introduction

When one comes to consider Charlotte Smith's place in the development of fiction in the 1780's and 90's, one moves rapidly into the sphere of politics and ideology, for, in addition to overt authorial political discussion, the form, structure and characterization of late-eighteenth century novels tend to reflect the novelist's stance in these areas. Something has been said already of Charlotte Smith's affinities with the Didactic Novelists,<sup>1</sup> her favourite liberal causes,<sup>2</sup> and Hilbish's detection of echoes of the work of such radicals as Bage, Godwin and Holcroft in her writings.<sup>3</sup> Before moving to a chronological survey of her fiction in this chapter - showing, amongst other things, her response to the changing political climate - more needs to be said to link Charlotte Smith with the politics of her time and define her political position vis-a-vis the radical novelists. It will also be useful to show how the structure of her novels and her particular developments of the novel of sensibility of the 1760's and 70's are in part directed by her position in the eternal debate between conservatives and progressives.

That Charlotte Smith took a liberal and, for a time, a near-radical position is clear: it is less clear how far these can be explained by her 'formative years'. She was born into a family which might have represented the country gentry in a Jane Austen novel. We have a record of her sister's distress when in 1791 Charlotte Smith adopted opinions 'in direct opposition to those principles she had formerly professed, and to those of her family',<sup>4</sup> as she worked on her novel Desmond

1 See above pp.42-5.

2 See above pp.45-6.

3 See above pp.46-8.

4 Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 38.

and enthusiastically adopted revolutionist ideas. Nor can we trace a dissenting background to afford clues to the origins of her liberalism: the Anglican Church at Stoke, where Charlotte Smith is buried, was on the family estate, and her brother Nicholas became a minister of the Church of England. Her childhood was leisured, if not pampered, and her father was in almost indecent haste to introduce her conventionally into society and to marry her well financially.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that Charlotte Smith's late-teenage years and early adulthood coincided with mounting pressure for economic and parliamentary reform, occasionally erupting into such stirring events as the 'Wilkes and Liberty' affair, which continued until she was twenty. Her marriage to Benjamin Smith some six years previously had taken her into Cheapside, right in the middle of City radicalism, and her new family of merchants would be more inclined to take a Whiggish if not a radical political viewpoint. It may be that Richard Smith, the father-in-law she liked and respected, had a more profound influence on her political development than has been realized. Such influence would certainly help account for Charlotte Smith's attitude to slavery in The Wanderings of Warwick (1794), where she condemns the institution but argues that many slaveowners are more benevolent than some reformers suggested.<sup>5</sup> The Smiths owned estates in the Caribbean and Richard Smith doubtless would have countered the propaganda of the abolitionists whilst perhaps in other respects championing liberal causes in discussions with his daughter-in-law.

The disappointments of Charlotte Smith's marriage must have strengthened her liberal tendencies, for she was reduced gradually to a mode of life much less affluent than that into which she was born. She eventually had little reason to feel much 'class solidarity' as she descended, lamented but nevertheless not rescued by her peers, to anxiety and near-want. Institutions commonly considered the support of her class, such as the Law and its practitioners, seemed actively to accelerate her downfall when they were not indifferent.

5 See below, pp.353-56.

In the assessment of Charlotte Smith's relation to the 'Jacobin' novelists below, it will become apparent that she is less radical, or less consistently radical, than most; but it would be inaccurate and unfair to dismiss her as indulging a fashionable, conscience-soothing, mild liberalism. If we bear in mind Charlotte Smith's comfortable origins, early experience and education, and the difficulties in the way of women joining in political controversy (Mary Wollstonecraft's background makes her an exceptional case), then it is remarkable that this respectable English lady of the middle class should in 1792 have supported the French Revolution and vigorously attacked the constitution of her own country in her writings: a phenomenon that could not have happened before the 1790's and would not really recur for another century afterwards. The extraordinariness of Charlotte Smith's producing political and satirical works at all should be borne in mind when one is tempted to see her contribution to didactic fiction as limited.

Charlotte Smith has much in common with those overlapping groups which shared a mistrust of the court and governing class and a desire to reform the constitution, either to restore it to what it was assumed had been intended in 1688 or to change it more radically. This movement may be seen developing before Charlotte Smith began to publish, but gathering momentum at the same time as her personal affairs were growing more troubled after her marriage. John Brewer, writing of politics and ideology at the accession of George III,<sup>6</sup> has suggested the growth of an 'alternative political nation' centred on the City, but spreading in influence through the rapidly increasing reading public, and bourgeois and commercial in character rather than working-class. Each political crisis strengthened this 'nation' - I have indicated above how the Wilkes affair coincided with Charlotte Smith's later teenage years in the City - and the American War, not too unpopular

6 See: John Brewer, Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III (Cambridge 1976).

at the beginning, ended by greatly damaging the credit of King, Ministry and the governing system.<sup>7</sup> Idealisation of this 'war of democracy' is apparent in Charlotte Smith's writings, as is a tendency to attribute all wars to the malevolence of kingly tyrants - an attitude she shares with Blake and the young Wordsworth.

By the end of the 1770's, movements for electoral reform under Wyvill and Fox were making great headway, though the Gordon Riots of 1780 checked the enthusiasm of reformers, particularly those who saw them at first hand. By this time, however, Charlotte Smith had left the City, was living in Hampshire, and was somewhat insulated from such rude shocks. Fox was subsequently discredited by his coalition with North, and the forces of reform never managed to translate their aspirations into legislation before the Terror in France in the 1790's dashed hopes of immediate reform in England.<sup>8</sup>

One of the largest and most influential reforming groups was the Dissenters.<sup>9</sup> Charlotte Smith was not of this stock as regards religious denomination, but many of her literary acquaintances were reforming Dissenters, and they had their influence on her politics. Any writer tending to liberal opinions would almost inevitably acquire links with this group, for they were articulate, and prominent in book - and periodical publishing; in 1792, for instance, they controlled four major Reviews, with Joseph Johnson, who published some of Charlotte Smith's works, at the helm of the Analytical. The Aikin Family's approval for Charlotte Smith has been indicated previously,<sup>10</sup> as has her friendship with William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft.<sup>11</sup> Godwin had moved from being a

7 See: Dora Mae Clark, British Opinion and the American Revolution (New York 1966). David V. Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire (Princeton N.J. 1954) is also helpful.

8 See: George Stead Veitch, The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform (London 1913; repr. 1965). As a general history, I consulted: Dorothy Marshall, Eighteenth Century England (London 1962).

9 See: Anthony Lincoln, Some Political and Social Ideas of English Dissent 1763-1800 (Cambridge 1938).

10 See above, pp.78, 86.

11 See above, pp.49-50.

dissenting minister to a secular, radical philosophy; Mary Wollstonecraft had been a member of the congregation of Dr. Richard Price, who began the 'debate on the French Revolution'. Such influence on Charlotte Smith counterbalanced her conservative family background and the milder Whiggism of William Hayley.

Another group that won Charlotte Smith's support was the anti-slavery movement, which drew on a wider range of adherents. It focussed some of the same political idealism as the reform and revolutionist movements; though it bears out Brewer's notion of the alternative political nation as a number of overlapping, shifting, not obviously homogeneous groups, as it included as a leading force the ministerialist William Wilberforce and mainly excluded those of the commercial classes who had business interests in the countries where slavery was established.

The crucial series of events that distinguished the 'hard' radicals from the reformist liberals in their differing reactions, were those of the French Revolution and its aftermath, and much will be said of France in my discussions of individual Smith novels below. In 1789, the 'alternative nation' supported the Revolution. Such overlapping groups as Dissenters avid for full civil rights, parliamentary reformers wishing to make electoral practice reflect population changes, theorists in favour of a constitution based on reason and natural rights, and Whigs impatient with royal power and exclusion from office, all supported the French. Even many conservatives approved, for the Revolution seemed aimed at establishing the constitutional blessings already enjoyed by English gentlemen; it also seemed likely to disable France as England's 'natural enemy' and rival. As the Revolution continued and the Terror developed, many of its English supporters dropped off until, by the time of the French War and the Treason Trials in England, it was a hardy and isolated radical who would publicly promulgate his creed and invite imprisonment.

Unlike the conservatives, Charlotte Smith was undismayed by sweeping measures against the French Church and aristocracy

in 1790, and she was one of those who joined the revolutionist cause in the literary debate<sup>12</sup> that followed the publication of Burke's Reflections in November, 1790. She attacked Burke in Desmond (1792), her most radical novel. Charlotte Smith was no friend to the crown, but she supported the idea of a constitutional monarchy in France, Mirabeau being the French leader she most admired. She was apparently insufficiently alarmed by the implications of the royal flight to Varennes in the summer of 1791 to reconsider her position as she wrote Desmond. The publication of the novel was unfortunately timed: it appeared just before the attack on the Tuileries and the September prison massacres. Charlotte Smith's retreat from this fairly radical position came later in the 1790's in The Banished Man (1794), Marchmont (1796) and The Young Philosopher (1798), but she claimed, with some justice as I shall show in my discussion of these novels, that she adhered still to her libertarian sympathies, although she had abandoned hope of their implementation on a large scale. Her liberal ideals are still intermittently apparent in her later books after her last novel in 1798, though by then she had switched her didacticism from overtly political subjects to the education of young people.

We must move now into more purely literary and philosophical spheres and show more precisely Charlotte Smith's place in the development of didactic fiction. Charlotte Smith was heir to the sentimental tradition of the 1760's and 70's, a movement best exemplified by the works of Mackenzie and Brooke, themselves heirs to Richardsonian and French sensibility. More will be said of the influence of French novelists below, but as regards the British sentimentalists, one may note that though their works were not explicitly politically didactic in the manner of such later 'Jacobin' novelists as Holcroft, Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, there were certain ideological assumptions

12 See: Alfred Cobban (ed.), The Debate on the French Revolution 1789-1800 (London 1960), and Philip A. Brown, The French Revolution in English History (London 1918).

implicit in their work which were adopted by Charlotte Smith. Perhaps the most fundamental was a confidence in the innate virtue of the natural man and a conviction that vice stemmed from the corruption of fair instincts by foul environment - the individual originally virtuous and benevolent, is marred by a vicious society. The origins of this belief may be variously located and are contentious.<sup>13</sup> Whatever the principal cause, one may discern in the sentimentalists an absorption and trust in the individual rather than the group and a tendency to set the hero in virtuous contrast with society. Constantly, from Richardsonian beginnings, the sentimental novelist traces in minute detail the thought-processes and fluctuating emotions of his hero, and his social milieu is seen through his own eyes - as restrictive and corrupt when it hems in or subverts his benevolent good nature, and as equally corrupt when it allows selfish, unreflecting villains to prosper. Explicitly or implicitly such novels value individual intuitive goodness and benevolent fellow-feeling, self-assessed and subjectively verified by means of the hero's profound emotions, as against a conception of virtue as consisting in submission to the social code. Allowing an individual ample scope for free development and action is viewed as more likely to issue in true virtue than conduct ordered according to the dictates of society's mores. So Augustan notions of manners and behaviour as assessable by reference to timeless, rational, 'objective' standards derived from religious doctrine, classical example, traditional morality, and sanctioned by wide social agreement, give way to a more individualistic, emotional conception of virtue, albeit based on a more generalized theory of the natural man.

13 It has been traced to the philosophies of Locke, Shaftesbury, Hartley and Hutcheson; to a Restoration latitudinarian tradition opposed to Puritan notions of innate depravity; to Rousseau; and, subsuming these, to the gradual rise of bourgeois economic individualism which fretted under established social restraints of individual initiative. All have some validity on their own level.

Such assumptions are largely adopted by Charlotte Smith in her writings and many of her specific liberal causes flow naturally from them - for she belongs not to the first generation of sentimentalists (who were not directly concerned with explicitly political issues), but to the novelists of the 80's and 90's, who more and more responded to actual events and conditions. If we merely marshal a list of her causes, it is puzzling that she is commonly excluded from the ranks of the radical didactic novelists. One certainly finds in her works much to illustrate Gary Kelly's definition of English Jacobinism as 'a state of mind, a cluster of indignant sensibilities, a faith in reason, a vision of the future.'<sup>14</sup> Kelly sees that the English Jacobins viewed the French Revolution as a stimulus to extend the battle for liberties which had begun in the seventeenth century, though they eschewed violence. They were, in truth, Girondins in their principles and beliefs, and their heritage was

the empirical psychology of Locke and Hartley, the republican politics of the seventeenth century 'Commonwealthmen', the rational religion of the Scottish philosophers, and the historical optimism of the French Enlightenment. They ... often ... had direct personal experience of social, moral, or legal oppression. They opposed tyranny and oppression, be it domestic, national or international, spiritual or temporal; they were against all distinctions between men which were not based on moral qualities, or virtue; and they were utterly opposed to persecution of individuals, communities and nations for their beliefs on any subject. Most important of all they saw history, both past and present, as an account of some men to establish the rule of reason against its enemies, which were not imagination and feeling, but error and prejudice.<sup>15</sup>

If these are the criteria for Jacobinism, then Charlotte Smith's credentials seem almost impeccable. In the survey of individual Smith novels that follows, we shall see her attack placemen, timeservers, pensioners and unprincipled politicians in general; write history demonstrating the unremitting tyranny of kings;

14 Gary Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805 (Oxford 1976), 2.

15 Ibid., 7.



refer approvingly to Hampden, Sydney and other saints of English republicanism; venerate Rousseau and Voltaire; praise the French graspings at Liberty in 1789 and the measures against church and aristocracy in 1790; complain of her mistreatment by the English legal establishment; plead for extension of women's rights; lament prison conditions and the severity of sentences; campaign for the abolition of slavery; and ridicule English prejudice against Foreigners - all this and more as part of a constant concern for national and individual regeneration. I would contend that Charlotte Smith's place in the history of the early didactic novel has indeed been undervalued, and that if such writers as Elizabeth Inchbald are included in the pantheon of didactic novelists, then Charlotte Smith may be allowed her modest pedestal.

Yet, when all is said, it remains true that the student of Charlotte Smith's writings is reluctant to attach the Jacobin or radical label to them as a whole as he compares her work with that of Holcroft, the early Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. First, we may remark Charlotte Smith's vacillating enthusiasm for her causes, if not for her almost constant conviction of their rightness. Her early Burneyesque novels are largely unpolitical and her later ones show a retreat from the immediate political battleground and from hopes of widespread practical reform to a position of philosophical idealism and extreme political gradualism. Only Desmond stands as a radical work, with minor qualifications. She stubbornly retained her libertarian ideals after Desmond, but joined the horrified condemnation of the French revolutionists and suggested that there was no easy and immediate route to the promised land. Second, the variety of purposes evident in Charlotte Smith's novels distinguish them from purely didactic, polemic, or propogandist works: they have not the purity of intention or the struggle to evolve a distinctively didactic form that one would look for in a radical writer. Charlotte Smith was concerned to entertain and to develop other strands than the purely didactic, as we shall see when we survey the adventure, gothicism, landscape and other elements of romance in her novels.

There is something else preventing one's categorizing Charlotte Smith as "Jacobinical", and the clue is to be found in Kelly's remarks on the importance of reason to the Jacobin novelists. They insisted, he says, that 'reason should decide the issue in human affairs and human government.'<sup>16</sup> This insistence that rational assessment rather than precedent, dogma or emotion should be the test of institutions and affairs shows the kinship of the radicals to the wider European neo-classical movement, itself 'of the culminating phase of that great outburst of human inquiry known as the Enlightenment', as Hugh Honour has put it.<sup>17</sup> France was the leading country in this movement which, with the publication of Diderot and D'Alembert's Encyclopedie, took on an earnest, moralizing tone and evinced always an urge to reform - to achieve '... a new and better world governed by the immutable law of reason and equity'.<sup>18</sup> Honour has shown how, in the Arts, this urge produced the paradox of a resurgence of the classical style, which was in truth no mere chilly and stilted 'antique revival', but rather an approximation in artistic terms of 'the creation or restoration of a static and harmonious society founded on unaltering principles, a dream of classic perfection ... It preached a peaceful universalism and a rational humanitarianism.'<sup>19</sup> England had its resurgence of classicism in its arts, but as regards that unprecedented literary form, the novel, the spirit of rational enlightenment and the urge to create a reasonable society are most evident in the Jacobin novelists, with their determination to make fiction subserve political and moral ends and their attempts to evolve an appropriate form.

Impatience with the 'unreasonableness' of some previous novels is apparent in Charlotte Smith's tendency to parody extreme sentimental conventions and we shall see later in this chapter more to demonstrate how she constantly satirizes time-

16 Ibid., 8.

17 Hugh Honour, Neoclassicism (Harmondsworth 1968), 13.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

honoured irrationalities and illogicalities of British social and political life. But it will also be apparent that her novelistic practice does not always accord with her preaching - that she retains some of the assumptions of her sentimental predecessors rejected by her more sternly rationalistic and radical contemporaries. One may also discern in her works an unwillingness to allow reasonableness invariably to be the measure of rightness - a tendency to place the 'good heart' somewhat higher than the rational mind in her hierarchy of values and to allow depth of emotion to function as an indicator of moral value, thus linking her more closely with both her sentimental predecessors and her romantic successors than is the case with the Jacobin novelists. Marilyn Butler has examined the radicals' misgivings about the sentimentalists, their relative lack of that attention to psychological processes that characterizes sentimental liberals, and their rejection of the philosophical and psychological assumptions behind sensibility. If the intuitional psychology of Hartley and Hume and the notion that man is the creature of his sensations and involuntary powers of association are true, then 'he cannot at the same time be the dignified and rational captain of his own mental universe.'<sup>20</sup> If a man is merely the product of his instincts, sensations and associations, then there tends to be no room for those willed choices based on rational analyses which the radicals see as essential to changing things for the better. So the radicals, believing a better-organized society would produce better individuals, had to accept the premise that man is to a large extent moulded by social forces, but that it is possible to change and direct social forces rather than be merely their creature. It is a form of the age-old conflict between concepts of determinism and free-will which Godwin strives to resolve in Political Justice by stressing the need for the individual to analyze the forces acting on him, to observe his involuntary actions, and gradually to approach nearer to making his actions voluntary and rationally directed.

20 Marilyn S. Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas (Oxford 1975), 32-4.

So,

Instead of the sentimentalists' benevolent intuition or fellow-feeling, he [Godwin] believes in the conscious, willed understanding as the essentially human thing, the guarantee of man's dignity and his sole hope for improvement.<sup>21</sup>

Charlotte Smith does not adopt this rigorous rationalism: she is much more inclined to produce heroes and heroines valued for spontaneous benevolence and instinctive emotional responses, but who are also given to clear-sighted analyses of the evils of society and are liable to demand that society should give a rational account of itself if it is to be acceptable. Her characters often seem normally 'sensible' rather than, say, reminiscent of Bage's Hermsprong, whose breezy unremitting application of reason to every situation would be eccentric if he were judged naturalistically.

Mary Wollstonecraft's review of Charlotte Smith's Emmeline (1788) highlights the distrust of sentimentalism by the rigorous radical. In her reviews of Ethelinde (1789) and Celestina (1791) she criticizes Charlotte Smith for including 'distressing encounters' and 'ludicrous embarrassments' which she 'copies' from 'some popular modern novels'.<sup>22</sup> Such 'stage tricks' are frivolous, and, in reviewing Emmeline, Mary Wollstonecraft was particularly severe on the emotional frenzies of Delamere: 'such an exhibition of violent emotions and attitudes follows as we cannot describe or analyse'.<sup>23</sup> Delamere behaves unreasonably in his pursuit of Emmeline in that his passion leads him into a series of impulsive acts culminating in his abduction of the heroine, though it is obvious that his actions are eroding Emmeline's goodwill and the likelihood of her becoming his wife. Yet Charlotte Smith generates considerable sympathy for the man who loves but loses and she juxtaposes the 'true' passion of Delamere with the calculating approach of

21 Ibid., 41.

22 Analytical Review V (Dec. 1789), 485; and XI (Aug 1791), 409.

23 Ibid., I (July 1788), 328-9. For further discussion of these reviews, see above pp. 79-83.

worldly suitors favoured by the heroine's guardian, much to Delamere's advantage. Delamere is close to being admirable because his emotions get the better of his reason, a position Mary Wollstonecraft cannot accept. She must, however, have approved the introduction of Willoughby as the man who combines sound feelings with rational conduct and thus ultimately proves to be the character worthy of Emmeline's hand. Dr. Butler has pointed to the reluctance of the revolutionary novelists to allow passion to carry the day (Holcroft in Anna St. Ives, Mary Wollstonecraft in The Wrongs of Women) and to the curious fact that their distrust of the irrational and emotional abandonment, and their advocacy of reason and restraint 'often makes them read like their opponents, the conservative moralists'.<sup>24</sup> Charlotte Smith's introduction of Willoughby in Emmeline shows she has some kinship with the radicals, but her sympathetic contrasting of Delamere with more prudent characters shows her debt to the sentimental tradition. Indeed, it is doubtful that Charlotte Smith ever rationalized or articulated the discrepancies between sentimental and radical premises, and such lack of a thoroughgoing rational analysis of her own position allows her curious juxtaposing of sentimental and rationalistic values in her fiction.

Perhaps one can come at the point I have been trying to make by another route, which is a consideration of Charlotte Smith's debt to Rousseau. He is a potent and recurring influence in her works, from the hints and first stirrings of liberalism in her early novels to her philosophical idealism in the last.

Hugh Honour has indicated the neoclassical urge to reform, whether 'by patient scientific advance or by a purgative return a la Rousseau to primitive simplicity and purity'.<sup>25</sup> The radical novelists favour the first method, for their programme for a better world stresses such things as the encouragement of

24 Butler, op. cit., 45-6.

25 Honour, op. cit., 13. Charlotte Smith was indebted to other French writers. See below, p.238 for the influence of Prévost. Voltaire's L'Ingenu may have influenced the creation of George Delmont in The Young Philosopher (1798) and others of her unworlily, uncorrupted characters.

the application of reason to human affairs, the more rational organization of society, and a new kind of education to counteract engrained corruptions. Their emphasis is on the future and a new order of things without real precedent in history. There were moments of hope in the past when the Roman republic encouraged stoical, social, selfless virtues, or the English republicans attempted to throw off Stuart oppression, or art attained a classical, rational harmony and proportion which should be a kind of objective correlative of a reasonable society. However, history was mainly a sorry tale of ignorance, superstition and tyranny. Give reason its sway, though, and there was nothing in the nature of man and society to preclude the possibility of the just state. The Jacobin novelists thus tended to a distrust of regressive tendencies in Rousseau and his followers, in their primitivistic inclination to view all forms of social organization as corrupting. Again, Mary Wollstonecraft may be the radical spokesman in her Vindication of the Rights of Women. In her first chapter, she writes that Rousseau, because of the 'misery and disorder' of society and his contact with 'artificial fools', became 'enamoured of solitude' and tried to prove that man was a 'solitary animal'. His arguments that man was originally virtuous in the State of Nature are 'plausible but unsound', for the state of nature was in fact 'brutal'. To claim that a state of nature is preferable to civilization 'in all its possible perfection' is to arraign supreme wisdom - to accuse God of creating a being bound to err in all circumstances other than his pristine condition, whereas Mary Wollstonecraft is confident that men are rational creatures who will ultimately shed their errors. The evils observed by Rousseau are vestiges of barbarism, not the consequence of civilization - a result of the age-old 'arbitrary power' and 'hereditary distinctions' as opposed to the 'mental superiority that naturally raises a man above his fellows'. Mary Wollstonecraft is distressed to find that maxims 'deduced from simple reason' seem unacceptable if they do not implicitly acknowledge 'faith in the wisdom of antiquity', and she sees

Rousseau's primitivism as uncomfortably akin to the conservative habit of appealing to tradition to justify current conditions.

Rousseau should not have despaired of society, but should have pushed his speculations a stage further and realized that man's destiny was the establishment of true civilization through the expansion of intellect, instead of 'taking his ferocious flight back to the night of sensual ignorance'.<sup>26</sup>

Mary Wollstonecraft would perhaps have disapproved of Charlotte Smith's 'flight' from rational optimism in The Young Philosopher. Throughout Charlotte Smith's fiction and poetry we discern a constant tendency to equate virtuous, benevolent life with rural simplicity and a small, organic community. Vice and corruption are characteristic of urban 'artificial' life and the more elaborate man's institutions become, the more corrupt and oppressive they tend to be. During her radical phase with Desmond and her high hopes of the Revolution, Charlotte Smith's primitivism was temporarily ousted by a belief that a society complex and civilized, but just and rational, could be achieved. The Terror and its aftermath caused her to revert to the Rousseauistic conception of the isolated virtuous individual. The French had betrayed their liberal principles and proved, it seemed, that all social organization degenerated to corruption. So, in her later poetry and, especially, in The Young Philosopher, Charlotte Smith abandons hope of the practical possibility of a just and virtuous society in the immediate future, and shows us isolated virtuous lovers in arcadian enclaves and a handful of worthy, benevolent men doing good in their own parishes, but surrounded by the selfish desert of the greater society in which they live. What virtue there is derives from our retreat into rural simplicity, not from the combined power of reason and benevolence to transform society.

Charlotte Smith was thus returning to her Rousseauistic position at a time in the 1790's when, after his cult had reached its peak in the early years of the Revolution, the English

26 Mary Wollstonecraft, Vindication of the Rights of Women (London and New York 1929), 17-22.

Jacobins had come to mistrust him. If sensibility as a movement is absorbed in the individual consciousness, then Rousseau himself, particularly in the Confessions, had lived the role of a character so absorbed - and the less attractive aspects of the man and his writings had suggested that unbridled, self-absorbed individualism had its own corruptions.

Kelly sees the principal Jacobin novelists as Robert Bage, Elizabeth Inchbald, Thomas Holcroft and William Godwin, with such figures as Mary Wollstonecraft, Emma Hays and Helen Maria Williams in the same camp but as lesser novelists not so concerned, or so successfully concerned, to evolve new structures to best embody their political doctrines. I have indicated already my opinion that Charlotte Smith can claim to be of this group if one judges by her liberal opinions and causes, though perhaps less so if one takes commitment to reason and the struggle to evolve a fictional form best fitted to convey doctrine. Kelly argues that the Jacobin novelists

tried to show how their characters had been formed by circumstances, and how character and incident were linked together like the parts of a syllogism. The conclusion to be drawn from their novels therefore would have a logical truth and necessity which would make them simply the imaginative enactments of a philosophical argument.<sup>27</sup>

There is some difficulty in fitting Bage into this scheme, as there is with Charlotte Smith, and I have indicated already some of the features of their writing that makes one link Charlotte Smith with Bage more readily than with the other radicals.<sup>28</sup> Bage seems to meet Kelly's criteria for a Jacobin novelist in his demonstrations of characters moulded by their environment and experience and in his testing of social institutions and practises by the rules of reason, but one is less confident that his humour, picaresque narrative and Theophrastian characters are minor modifications of the basically realistic novel of cause and effect, which, as a radical

27 Kelly, op. cit., p.16.

28 See above, p.47.



believing in determinism, it is assumed he must have wanted to write. Perhaps it would be truer to say that, like Charlotte Smith, he evolves fictional forms different from the syllogistic realism attempted by the other Jacobins, but expressing similar radical views. Both Bage and Charlotte Smith often aim at advancing their progressive views by such techniques as the creation of minor characters who are largely mouthpieces for approved or - especially - disapproved views, rather than plausible, rounded human beings. The instinct of these two writers is not invariably to a sober naturalism but often to the discrediting of disapproved views by means of humour, parody and burlesque. The illogicalities and errors of disapproved views are demonstrated partly by the satirist's traditional expedient of creating characters close to 'humours', who embody noxious opinions and positions in exaggerated and even grotesque forms. The picaresque feeling of many of Bage's and Charlotte Smith's novels confirms their tendency to dispense with a tightly-knit deterministic plot to demonstrate the truth of their liberal principles, but instead they tend to cast about freely for situations and character-confrontations with comic and satirical potential.

Structure in Charlotte Smith's novels needs further introductory discussion if we are to see its relation to her political and social views. She incorporates popular ingredients both to ensure, as a novelist writing for her living, her appeal to a wide readership (the picaresque structure allows variety, landscape appeals as a novel ingredient) and also to embody and convey her liberal views. We shall see in discussion of the individual novels below, especially of Desmond, how response to landscape is made to reflect the political stance of the observer. But an aspect of Charlotte Smith's fiction that is of particular interest in the light of the conflict between progressives and conservatives, and of her feminist views, is her handling of the figure of the heroine.

Charlotte Smith deserves a more prominent place in the history of the struggle for women's rights than has so far been

her lot. She was a part of the first concerted effort to improve the position of women that our literature has known and, not surprisingly, it is her sister-writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Inchbald, Helen Maria Williams and Mary Hays who, with Charlotte Smith, form a sub-group within the progressives particularly concerned with the position of women. These women writers tended to combine direct discussion of women's rights (in Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication and Charlotte Smith's prefaces to and authorial intrusions in her fiction) with novels structured so as to highlight female perplexities and problems.

Charlotte Smith had a unique authority when she spoke about women's rights because of her personal experience. Her position as misused but faithful and long-suffering wife, and as devoted mother writing to support her children and fighting legal battles to secure their economic well-being, made her invulnerable to charges of immorality and indifference to domestic virtues. She had also experienced pressure to make a loveless marriage for financial security. She was much less easily attacked than, say, Mary Wollstonecraft, and induced in opponents, if not always respect, at least a sullen restraint. Her feminist causes were those shared by her fellow female writers: abhorrence of parental pressure to make loveless marriages; dissatisfaction with female education as narrowly conceived to produce competent housekeepers and instil trivial accomplishments; resentment of double standards of morality as between men and women; chafing at the circumscribed role allowed a woman - especially at the convention that any intelligent interest in political and public affairs was unfeminine. There had, of course, always been exceptional women capable of avoiding such restraints, stepping out of a solely domestic role and making their intellectual and even political mark in a man's world. With the breakdown of the feudal economy and the growth of the middle classes within a capitalist economic framework however, more and more women were removed from a direct participation in affairs. They

found themselves with leisure and servants, and were expected to occupy themselves in genteel domesticity, social gatherings and visiting, maternal duties and charitable excursions. The larger world of public and political affairs and serious intellectual pursuits was considered out of bounds and unsuitable to their natures. Middle-class morality was much less tolerant of those who kicked against the pricks than was the aristocratic code of its eccentric females. But it was precisely that earnest bourgeois moralism that encouraged such middle-class ladies as rebelled in their determination to enter the debate on what made for a fuller individual life and a better social one.

Paradoxically, the same situation also produced middle-class women who made it their business to defend the status quo, or who directed the bulk of their energies into religious proselytizing. There were intelligent women whose conservative instincts made them deeply distrustful of the cult of subjective individualism and its literary equivalent, the novel of sensibility. Unlike the radicals, however, such women also distrusted the exhortation to remake society in the light of reason, sweeping away traditional forms and procedures that seemed to have no rational basis. The most eloquent defender of established forms was Edmund Burke, but there were many literary ladies - Hannah More and Anna Seward have already appeared in this study - who shared his conservative instincts. Undoubtedly the most effective voice amongst the conservative moralists, when it came to the advocacy of traditional wisdom in fiction, was Jane Austen.

In comparisons of Charlotte Smith and Jane Austen above,<sup>29</sup> some similarities have been stressed in an effort to counteract the impression sometimes conveyed that Jane Austen saw Charlotte Smith as nothing more than a hack writer of sentimental romances who might amuse and entertain one in adolescence, but who was to be put aside for more serious things when one grew up and began to develop a kind of fiction intended to say something

29 See above, pp.128-52.

important about life. Jane Austen derived positive advantages from her reading of Charlotte Smith's fiction. However, it is useful to draw some distinctions between the two novelists as a way of indicating Charlotte Smith's contribution to the development of the novel - especially in her handling of the figure of the heroine.

Both Jane Austen and Charlotte Smith were seen as heirs to Fanny Burney and one can see why: there is the same eye for social comedy and the same close observation of contemporary manners. Both Charlotte Smith and Jane Austen, however, also tended to adopt and develop the basic Burney structure: the action revolves round the young heroine, who is the central consciousness of the novel, and follows her perplexities as she feels her way into the adult world, and either discovers or strives to establish her place in society. In this respect, Charlotte Smith is perhaps closer to her mentor, since her heroines must encounter a bewildering, often vicious and immoral world, relying on their own moral notions to test the various aspects of society affecting them. A lover or a trusted confidant may offer some guidance and encouragement, like the distant correspondents of Fanny Burney's epistolary fiction, but contrivances are employed to isolate the heroine so that she must perforce trust largely to her own instinctive responses. The heroine must rely on her own resources and those of a friend or two because Charlotte Smith sees society as misorganized on vicious principles: there is no coherent, established, system of social norms fit for an intelligent, sensitive being to discover and adapt to. Or, at least, we may say simply that the corrupt vastly outnumber the virtuous and it is therefore unwise for the latter to adopt fashionable mores.

With Jane Austen it is different, for in her case there is a body of social assumptions and a code of conduct for her young heroines to discover and adhere to willingly. Her conservatism does not blind her to some imperfections in the social fabric, and certainly not to the existence of vicious individuals;

but if she satirizes the vicious as firmly as Charlotte Smith and perhaps more deftly, then this is precisely because they are deviating from the norm; failing to fill their places respectably in the moral structure of society. It has been said of Jane Austen that she

... finds her ideal in a world she deliberately makes resemble the actual ... for at least four of her heroines, moral progress consists in discerning, and submitting to, the claims of society around them ...<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, 'the reforms she perceives to be necessary are within the attitudes of individuals; she calls for no general changes in the world of the established lesser landed gentry.'<sup>31</sup> A gentleman in her novels derives his dignity and value not from self-assertion but 'from the contribution he makes at the head of an organic, hierarchical, small community.'<sup>32</sup>

Charlotte Smith does consider 'general changes' necessary in society, though she also has the liberal's conviction of the importance of individual example and reformation. Like Jane Austen, she often places her heroines at the centre of her novels, but they always represent a virtuous contrast to surrounding society, and their developing virtue is a reproach to the society that tries to choke it. In those Smith novels in which the role of the heroine is subservient to that of the hero - in The Old Manor House and The Young Philosopher, for example - she is shielded somewhat from direct confrontation with vicious society by the hero and tends to the kind of passive, vulnerable, sentimental goodness that the radicals distrusted in sentimental fiction because it seemed to imply submission to social, political and parental tyrannies. But where the heroine is to the fore, Charlotte Smith develops - as we shall see in Emmeline, Ethelinde, Celestina and Montalbert - a more spirited, intelligent figure who resolutely resists and combats environing evils, asserts her own value and values,

30 Butler, op.cit., 1.

31 Ibid., 2

32 Ibid., 3.

and can bring a cool head and a witty tongue to bear on the mediocrities she encounters. If this reminds the reader of Jane Austen's Elizabeth and Emma, then it must be stressed that these novelists use a similar structure to different ends. Jane Austen's heroines are 'right' to despise moral mediocrity, but their reliance on their personal system of values - their 'pride' and 'prejudice' - leads them to erroneous initial assessments of the men they eventually marry, and their realization of the worth of these men coincides with an acknowledgement of society's claims on them and its basic rightness. Charlotte Smith's heroines, on the contrary, persist in their resistance to much of what society represents, have their analyses confirmed by the love and approval of the few virtuous characters and the discomfiture of the rest, and build with those few sympathetic characters a virtuous enclave within a vicious world, pending a more general reformation.

In Jane Austen's case, the subjectivity of the heroine as central consciousness (albeit qualified by authorial comment), allows for a dramatic eclaircissement, a sudden irruption of objectivity as humbling to the reader who has viewed the action largely through the heroine's eyes as to the heroine herself. With Charlotte Smith, the heroine's personal view is the objective view also; she is an isolated figure who refuses to adopt the role demanded of her and who, therefore, from the outside surveys society's flaws, her perception sharpened by its shabby treatment of her.

Jane Austen is of course the better novelist, but if we are to judge by subsequent literary history, it was Charlotte Smith who was in the main current of development in her handling of the heroine. Her development of the isolated Burney heroine, perplexed by the uncertainties of her 'entry into the world', into a young woman assessing that world and refusing to take its accepted wisdom on trust, and to accept its manipulations of her, had some illustrious successors. Mrs. Leavis has drawn attention to the initially-isolated Jane Eyre's adherence to her personally-determined notions of moral rightness in Charlotte

Brontë's novel.<sup>33</sup> Society, especially through its religious and educational institutions, constantly offers Jane a restricted role which her own instinctive divination that finer things are possible prevents her accepting, except temporarily. The novel shows a quest for self-fulfilment and self-realization in a world seemingly organized to make such things impossible and hope for them selfish and impious. In Wuthering Heights, there are fine moral and psychological insights as the elder Catherine follows her own impulses: an example of indifference to society's expectations of her, but also illustrative of how easily the pursuit of self-fulfilment passes into self-indulgence; how the scorners of society may rely on others recognizing and adhering to social bonds in their attentions to her despite her waywardness. It is the younger Catherine who survives Heathcliff's parody of society's forcing women into suitable matches, but whose impulsive vitality is tempered by an ability to learn to care for others and recognize their needs.<sup>34</sup> Charlotte Smith never achieves such complexity of vision, but the Brontës' explorations of what the individual - especially a woman - ought to be able to expect and what society expect of her, have their uncertain precedents in Charlotte Smith's novels.

33 Q.D. Leavis, Introduction to the Penguin edition of Jane Eyre (Harmondsworth 1966), 7-29.

34 See Q.D. Leavis, 'A Fresh Approach to Wuthering Heights' in: F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, Lectures in America (London 1969), 85-138.

## I

The Translations and the Early Novels

<u>Manon Lescaut</u>	1785
<u>The Romance of Real Life</u>	1786
<u>Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle</u>	1788
<u>Ethelinde; or, the Recluse of the Lake</u>	1790
<u>Celestina</u>	1791

In his Men, Women and Books Leigh Hunt imagines a 'Novel Party' attended by a number of fictional heroes and heroines, in order to categorise eighteenth-century fiction. Each guest soon finds congenial companions:

We observed that the Company might be divided into four different sorts. One was Sir Charles Grandison's party; another the Pickles and Joneses; a third, the Lord Orvilles, and Cecilians, with the young lady from the Old Manor House; and a fourth, the Hermsprongs, Desmonds, and others, including ... Mr Hugh Trevor.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the guest list could be even more cosmopolitan - where are the residents of Otranto or the heroine of The Mysteries of Udolpho? - but significantly two of Charlotte Smith's characters are in attendance<sup>2</sup> and gravitate to different groups. Indeed, Hunt easily might have found more characters from Smith novels related to those in each of his groups, and to any others that he cared to include, for in those novels one finds exemplified most of the principal forms and trends of late-eighteenth century

- 1 Leigh Hunt, Men, Women and Books: a Selection of Sketches, Essays, and Critical Memoirs, from his Uncollected Prose Writings (London 1847), 106.
- 2 Monimia from The Old Manor House and Desmond from Desmond.



fiction. Charlotte Smith is, in varying degrees of success, a sentimental novelist, a gothicist, a novelist of doctrine and social comment, an exponent of the comedy of manners and a satirist, a verbal painter of landscape, and a retailer of yarns of adventure and suspense. She is perhaps the novelist the most representative of her age, though she was equalled or excelled by others of her time in each category. Because of this representativeness, literary historians have postulated a varied array of 'influences' upon her work and indeed Charlotte Smith's reading - much wider than she is given credit for generally<sup>3</sup> - shows her open to a battery of influences. Yet the variety and unspecialised nature of her fiction is primarily due to her need to write for her living rather than to admiration for illustrious predecessors and contemporaries. The mixture of ingredients in her work testifies to the need to stimulate and satisfy the fickle appetites of her readers.

Charlotte Smith's novels are basically tales of domestic sensibility, especially the early ones, but are enlivened increasingly by adventurous travels, scenic splendours, and gothic diversions. The history of the sentimental novel is too complex a subject to dwell on here, but Charlotte Smith follows such sentimentalists as Frances Brooke and Frances Sheridan (whose gloomily tearful Sydney Biddulph (1761) she particularly admired). The works of Richardson and, to a lesser degree, Sterne had played their part in the rise of the French novel of sensibility and Charlotte Smith was heir to a combined tradition of her English predecessors and a series of French novels popular in translation in England.<sup>4</sup> She rarely reaches the extremes of sentimentality of such writers as Mackenzie and Brooke, though tears and fine feelings are much in evidence at times. More will be said of Charlotte Smith's brand of

3 See Charlotte Smith's notes to the various editions of her poems, and Mrs Ehrenpreis's notes on the 'Oxford English Novels' editions of The Old Manor House (1969) and Emmeline (1971).

4 Those who loom largest in accounts of French influence are Marivaux, Prévost, Riccoboni, de Genlis, Crébillon fils and D'Arnaud.

sensibility in discussion of her heroes and heroines below, but it is appropriate at this point to say something of the immediate foreign influences on her fiction.

Certain seminal works by European writers had of course almost universal effect, and Charlotte Smith was not exempt: Rousseau's New Eloise and Goethe's Werther are often quoted by her with approval. But a particularly potent influence in her case was the Abbé Prévost. When Benjamin Smith fled from his creditors to a gloomy chateau near Dieppe in the winter of 1784-85, taking his wife with him, Charlotte Smith occupied dreary days in reading Prévost's Manon Lescaut. Catherine Dorset implies that this was the only French work her sister had at her command during her exile<sup>5</sup>: at any rate, it was the one that interested her sufficiently for her to begin translating it.<sup>6</sup> Cadell published the completed work in 1785, but immediately it provoked criticism on the grounds of immorality and plagiarism. Charlotte Smith presented a copy to George Steevens, the critic, who disapproved severely: 'I am beyond measure provoked at books, which philtre the passions of young people til they admit the weakest apologies for licentiousness', he wrote,<sup>7</sup> and implied that Prévost had seemed to imagine that 'exalted sentiments will atone for profligate actions'.<sup>8</sup> The Monthly Review, too, thought the work likely to 'interest the passions, to warm the imagination'.<sup>9</sup> Charlotte Smith was surprised and indignant: it was true, she admitted, that vice was not painted blackly enough

5 Catherine Dorset's memoir in Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works (1827) IV, 27.

6 Apparently, Charlotte Smith first translated portions of Manon as she read from it to 'some English friends' who could not read French. They found some of the most striking passages 'so very interesting' that she determined to translate the whole. (Hilbish op. cit., 113-14; Scott, op. cit., 27.)

7 Scott, op. cit., 29.

8 Hilbish, op. cit., 119.

9 Monthly Review LXXV (Oct 1786), 316.

by Prévost, but all lapses from virtue were punished severely in Manon and the catastrophe was sufficiently comprehensive to counteract any impression of a casual attitude to vice.<sup>10</sup>

What most severely damaged the prospects of the work, however, were the charges of plagiarism levelled at it. Charlotte Smith's free translation was published anonymously and certain readers thought it was masquerading as an original work. One 'Scourge' notified the Public Advertiser that such 'Literary frauds' should be exposed 'as soon as discovered' and listed former English editions of Manon.<sup>11</sup> The reviewer in the Gentleman's Magazine thought the work

a scandalous imposition on the Circulating Libraries, or rather on the too numerous Novel readers; as this Manon is, word for word, the same story as appeared 19 years ago intituled, Le Chevalier de Grioux.<sup>12</sup>

These attacks made Cadell fearful for his reputation and the prospects of the work.<sup>13</sup> Charlotte Smith therefore withdrew it, but without admitting any guilt in the matter: she had never pretended that Manon was anything but a translation, had not seen any previous translations, but in any case saw nothing fraudulent in endeavouring to make a better translation than previous attempts.<sup>14</sup> It would appear that few copies of Manon were distributed before the edition was withdrawn, for there seem to be no surviving copies in England, and Turner's extensive inquiries failed to reveal any in the United States.

Her work on the stillborn Manon and on her free translation of parts of de Pitival's Causes Célèbres (1786), formed a

10 Hilbish, op. cit., 119. As late as 1810 Anna Barbauld wrote disapprovingly of the work as 'exceptionable' as regards its 'moral tendency'. However, she thought it a work of 'affecting pathos'. (Introduction to the 'British Novelists' edition of The Old Manor House (London 1810), iv.)

11 Catherine Dorset implies that Steevens was behind this letter, an instance of 'wanton malignity' (Scott, op. cit., 35).

12 Gentleman's Magazine 1787 (i), 167.

13 Scott, op. cit., 32.

14 Ibid., 33-4.

valuable apprenticeship to prose fiction for Charlotte Smith. The Gentleman's assertion that Manon was 'word for word' the same as a previous translation was an exaggeration, made apparently to heighten its triumph in detecting a supposed fraud, for the Critical stated that

the principal incidents are preserved in language sometimes very different from that of the original author,<sup>15</sup>

and Charlotte Smith herself stated her intention to have been 'to write it anew in English'. We cannot know how radically she reworked Manon, but certainly the work would make her ponder Prévost's style, methods and intentions and perhaps encouraged her to attempt fiction of her own later. That Charlotte Smith was given to careful consideration of the novel as a genre we know from her frequent scathing references to inferior examples of the form in her later works.

It is clear from the many English translations of Prévost's works during the second half of the eighteenth century that he was influential on English fiction in general, as well as upon Charlotte Smith in particular. James Foster saw Prévost's 'romanesque and sentimental novel' as offering 'just the material desired' when 'the pendulum swung away from realism and toward adventure' in England;<sup>16</sup> and

Because of Mrs Smith's great popularity she must be counted as one of the chief disseminators of Prévost and French Sensibility.<sup>17</sup>

She firmly belongs, he thinks, to

... the line of sentimental fiction that began with Richardson and then became more romanesque and adventure-like because of the influence of Prévost.<sup>18</sup>

If a shift from purely domestic sensibility may be discerned in English fiction as the Romantic period approaches, then that same movement is visible, microcosmically as it were,

15 Critical Review LXII (Aug 1786), 149.

16 James R Foster, 'The Abbé Prévost and the English Novel', PMLA XLII (1927), 443-64. P. 444.

17 Ibid., 460.

18 James R Foster, 'Charlotte Smith, Pre-Romantic Novelist', PMLA XLIII(1928), 463-75.

in Charlotte Smith's fiction. Emmeline and Ethelinde concentrate largely on the heroine in her English domestic setting (though there is some movement about England and brief visits to the Continent); with Celestina the author begins to dwell more on foreign parts and exotic adventures. In the later novels she combs Europe, America and the East for varied adventures: Marchmont and Desmond become involved in the French Revolution and its aftermath; Orlando of The Old Manor House fights in the American War; Rosalie of Montalbert is involved in an earthquake at Messina. One reads of Barbary Corsairs and is allowed exotic glimpses of Caribbean scenery. West Indian slaves and primitive American Indians appear.

Foster has described characteristics of Prévost's work which one recognises, often rather less sensationally presented, in Charlotte Smith. His theme of passionate love in conflict with the hero or heroine's destiny is often employed by Charlotte Smith:<sup>19</sup> her lovers, it seems, are doomed to frustration as circumstances conspire to separate them, though she bows to the popular preference for happy endings and avoids final catastrophe. Heartbreaking trials and restless wandering beset both writers' separated lovers.<sup>20</sup> There is a drawing closer to romanticism with an interest in strange sensation and 'unnatural' passion: the Prévostian theme of incest finds its way into Celestina and Montalbert (though incest is never actually committed).<sup>21</sup> Charlotte Smith's tales are sometimes spiced by abductions, assaults, duels, frenzied outbursts and corroding jealousies,<sup>22</sup> and her melancholy temperament and private troubles gave her an interest in suicide which distressed some reviewers. It is true that there were abductions and rapes in Pamela and Clarissa too, but their leisurely, detailed, controlled treatment there contrasts with their brief but

19 See James R Foster, History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England (London 1949), 46, 49.

20 See Foster, History of Pre-Romantic Novel, 52, and Benjamin M. Woodbridge, 'Romantic Tendencies in the Novels of the Abbe Prévost', PMLA XXVI (1911) 324-32. P. 328.

21 See Woodbridge, op. cit., 330.

22 See Hilbish, op. cit., 500.

sensational inclusion in tales of headlong journeys through lurid adventures and disastrous episodes in Prévost. Delamere's impetuous abduction of the heroine in Emmeline is indebted to Prévost's example at least as much as to English models.

There is in Prévost and his English followers a stressing of certain emotional states and a searching for novelty of incident which is often taken to demonstrate how the novel of sensibility held the seeds of its own decay. There is the constant insistence on the hero or heroine's exquisitely highly-strung sensibility; there is the constant suffering he or she undergoes, leading to a luxurious pleasure in its melancholy confession; there is the resort to ever more sensational, melodramatic, horrifying, or exotic incidents to stir the vitiated sensibility of the reader himself. Such was the logical end to the presentation in fiction of a notion of sensibility as an index of moral worth. The virtuous were those who felt most intensely and as sensibility became everyman's affectation, heroes and heroines must perforce distinguish themselves by a pursuit of feeling, passion, emotion through incidents and situations inaccessible to the generality.<sup>23</sup>

Scholars have noted specific Prévostian influences on Charlotte Smith's works. Foster detects the influence of The Dean of Killerine in Emmeline, Ethelinde and Montalbert,<sup>24</sup> and W F Wright sees Manon and Cleveland, as well as The Dean of Killerine, as containing characters in some ways prototypes of those in Emmeline, Celestina and Desmond.<sup>25</sup> It is possible that the name 'Monimia' in The Old Manor House was suggested by Prévost's imitation of Thomas Otway's The Orphan: or, The Unhappy-Marriage<sup>26</sup> as much as by Otway directly, or by other

23 See Martin Turnell, 'The Novels of the Abbe Prévost', Sewanee Review LXI (Autumn 1953), 4.

24 Foster, 'Prévost and the English Novel', PMLA, 460.

25 Walter F Wright, 'Sensibility in English Prose Fiction, 1760-1814', Illinois Studies in Language and Literature XX (Urbana 1937), 74.

26 In Ouevres Choiesies de Prévost (Paris 1810) 111, 58-77. See: Paul Bunyan Anderson, 'English Drama Transferred to Prévost's Fiction', English Language Notes XLIX (Mar 1934), 178-80. P. 178.

English sources. It is interesting too that the hero of Prévost's *Cleveland* lives among savages in America and 'finds much to admire in these children of nature,'<sup>27</sup> for Charlotte Smith includes American Indians and primitivistic morality in her works.<sup>28</sup>

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary historians sometimes observed that the women writers of the late eighteenth century refined the novel, eliminating certain coarsenesses and vulgarities of the early masters.<sup>29</sup> Certainly this critical attitude involved an appreciation of more sympathetic, finely-drawn female characters, and a distaste for the more rumbustious, farcical elements in Fielding and Smollett, but such critics were usually thinking primarily of sexual matters. In this area, the gain when the women novelists avoided licentiousness or even plain matter-of-factness in their fiction seems dubious now, for conventional restraints on sexual plain speaking led to much tedious circumlocution and even obscurity, and encouraged prudery. In many such novels the reader must deduce constantly instances of extra-marital sexual intercourse, rapes and even approved, legitimate married love-making from a series of vague hints and euphemistic phrases. A modern reader, not finely attuned to this extreme indirectness in referring to sexual matters, may find himself surprised by pregnancies of which he has missed the inception.<sup>30</sup> Love and desire are commonly spiritualised and physical aspects ignored apart from occasional embraces and hand-kissings. Charlotte Smith allows her lovers to throw themselves

27 Woodbridge op. cit., 324. Prévost was only one influence among others here: Rousseau would, of course, be important in this respect.

28 See, for example, Orlando's experiences in the American War in The Old Manor House.

29 A good example is Julia Kavanagh, who discusses the contribution of women to fiction in a chapter on Charlotte Smith (English Women of Letters (London 1863) 196-204.). But cf. J.M.S. Tompkins's comments in The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 (London 1932), 143.

30 Though even pregnancies are sometimes, euphemistically,

to the ground and embrace the knees of her heroines in extremes of passion: put thus it is comical, but it is curious how intense a sexual charge this carries, even to the modern reader, in the general atmosphere of inhibition.

In fact, Charlotte Smith was less inhibited than most of her sister-novelists and avoids excessive prudery. Possibly her particular interest in French literature had an effect here. One need not subscribe fully to cherished English convictions of French sexual avidity to see that French fiction was indeed rather more frankly explicit in its treatment of sex and rather less intensely preoccupied with its moral aspects and considerations of respectability.<sup>31</sup> On the whole, Charlotte Smith remembers to observe the restraints expected in English lady novelists, but occasionally she incurred charges of immorality which her next preface or letter reveals has taken her by surprise. Manon Lescaut is a good example: Charlotte Smith, clearly, was surprised that some critics thought it was morally unpardonable to make the sexually promiscuous, rather feckless heroine an appealing character in other respects. Because she was sexually vicious, Manon should have been vicious generally, but Charlotte Smith had thought her sufferings and catastrophe quite sufficient to point the compulsory moral that vice is not to be recommended and to deter readers from similar paths. Morally stern critics objected to other laxities in Charlotte Smith's novels: Adeline in Emmeline shows 'unfeeling indelicacy' in telling the 'humiliating story'<sup>32</sup> of her seduction by a married man and the birth of her illegitimate child; Rosalie, in Montalbert offends the proprieties by accepting the assistance and protection of a man other than her husband, despite there

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'fruits of passion'. This metaphorical language of sex often uses legal or moral terms: one succumbs to illicit passions or indulges guilty connections.

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31 Charlotte Smith laboured to remove English misconceptions of the French, but even she, in Emmeline, has a Frenchman express his feelings for the heroine in a direct way she acknowledges impossible to imagine in an Englishman.

32 Anna Seward's words: Letters of Anna Seward II, 214.



having occurred an earthquake and its being probable her husband is dead; Desmond has a passion for a married woman, though he does nothing to express, indulge or advance it. It seems extraordinary that critics should object so strongly to these matters being portrayed in a novel, but perhaps the remarkable thing is that it invariably surprised Charlotte Smith too.

The incident in Charlotte Smith's fiction most reminiscent of French sexual matter-of-factness also occurs in Desmond. The hero, after prolonged self-denial and repression vis-a-vis Mrs Verney, relieves his sexual frustrations in a brief affair with a French girl for whom, however, he has no particularly strong feelings. The inclusion of this casual liaison is remarkable, for it is superfluous to plot requirements, however psychologically appropriate it may be. If Charlotte Smith had paused to consider, she must have realised its inclusion would provide ammunition for the righteous, but she seems to have included the incident unconcernedly, with a Prévostian lack of inhibition.

Charlotte Smith's second prose work, The Romance of Real Life (1787) contained even more sensational elements than the 'lust, violence and despair' of Manon, and again must have provided ideas for exotic adventures, strange passions and gothic extravagance in her later novels, when her stock of situations of domestic sensibility was running down.

The work was a free translation of parts of Gayot<sup>33</sup> de Pitival's Causes Célèbres, involving some re-writing and re-arrangement

33 Both Hilbish (op. cit., 121) and Turner (op. cit., 104) follow Charlotte Smith in writing 'Guyot' and not 'Gayot'. Clara McIntyre noticed that Ann Radcliffe too had used the form 'Guyot' and, since The Romance of the Forest (1791) draws on the Causes Célèbres, particularly the story of Mlle de Choiseul, she deduced that Ann Radcliffe had in fact used Charlotte Smith's version rather than the original. See: Clara F McIntyre, Ann Radcliffe in Relation to Her Time (New Haven and London 1920), 57-8. See also Foster, History of the Pre-Romantic Novel, 267.

of the original, with the help of Richer's amended edition of the Causes.<sup>34</sup> Charlotte Smith was wary of attempting another translation after her embarrassments over Manon and so she carefully recorded her reasons for undertaking the task. She made it clear in her Preface that her intention was improvement rather than plagiarism: a literary friend had recommended the reports of French law cases in the Causes Célèbres as being 'as attractive as the most romantic fiction', yet as conveying 'all the solid instruction of genuine history'. Charlotte Smith was advised, on account of the 'affectation and bad taste' evident in de Pitival's 'voluminous and ill-written' work to consider herself

as under no restriction, but that of adhering to authenticated facts; and by telling each story in ... /her/ ... own way, to render it as much as possible an interesting lesson of morality.<sup>35</sup>

Charlotte Smith had compared Richer's version of the Causes Célèbres, which claimed to elucidate the difficulties and obscurities of his predecessor, but she observed tartly that Richer had succeeded only in imparting a flatness to the work and had presumed to change the original and introduce fictitious elements when it suited him. Charlotte Smith thought of herself as improving the 'frequently obscure' style of de Pitival, though she kept sufficiently close to it for readers of her Romance to acquire 'some idea of it.'<sup>36</sup> However,

34 Hilbish mentions a 1775-87 Paris edition of Les Causes Célèbres de tous les Cours Souveraines du Royaume (op. cit., 121), which I have not seen. However, the British Library has editions under de Pitival's name which Charlotte Smith equally well might have used. I consulted: François Gayot de Pitival, Causes célèbres et intéressantes avec les jugements qui les ont décidées, 13 vols., (La Haye 1735-39). Richer used this title for his version: François Richer, Causes célèbres et intéressantes ... décidées, 10 vols. (Amsterdam 1772-75).

35 Charlotte Smith, The Romance of Real Life (London 1787) 3 vols. Preface.

36 Ibid.

there was no question of her changing the facts. She selected fifteen cases only and thus her three-volume work was considerably slimmer than the original.<sup>37</sup>

Translating, editing and exercising her improving literary taste proved a burdensome task: Charlotte Smith almost gave up the project on finding

so many minute and unnecessary details, and so much improper and ridiculous description, intermixed with the most pathetic events.<sup>38</sup>

The old French and foreign legal terminology were difficult to penetrate,<sup>39</sup> and when The Romance of Real Life went on sale 'for a very small sum' and 'inconsiderable compensation was obtained',<sup>40</sup> Charlotte Smith's disgust was complete and she was determined 'to rely in future on her own resources, and to employ herself in original composition.'<sup>41</sup>

Charlotte Smith was anxious to avoid the allegations of immorality that had been levelled at Manon. She stressed that she had selected such cases 'as might lead us to form awful ideas of the force and danger of the human passions.' Yet, in all conscience, the Romance was sensational enough. By their very nature many law cases involve extremes and aberrations of human passion and activity, but Charlotte Smith's tales could serve as a source-book for every lurid Romance or melodrama since written: we encounter lustful clerics, married nuns, unfaithful spouses, bigamy, seduction, desertion, marriage of minors, illegitimate offspring, runaway children, attempted infanticide, kidnapping, poisoning, beheadings,

37 Charlotte Smith did not attempt to reconcile the versions of de Pitival and Richer where they disagreed, but gave the one she preferred, naming its source at the end of the story.

38 Charlotte Smith, Romance, Preface.

39 Phillips, Public Characters, 61 and Hilbish op. cit., 122.

40 Phillips, op. cit., 61.

41 Catherine Dorset in Scott, op. cit., 35.

common-or-garden murder and violence of various kinds, forgery, impersonation (in one story a woman passes successfully as a chevalier), false accusations, corrupt magistrates and police, deprivation of financial rights, banishment, torture, imprisonment in convents, dank dungeons, and duelling. Charlotte Smith reproaches the guilty and, on the whole, selects cases in which justice and virtue triumph ultimately, but one might imagine that such a catalogue of crime and vice might have proved too strong for most critical palates. Yet in fact the reviewers adopted the view that historical facts, however lamentable, are still facts, and that while one is morally culpable for actually inventing stories of human iniquity - especially sexual aberrations - the elegant retailing of actual crime is permissible given ultimate detection and punishment, and a severely disapproving attitude on the part of the historian.<sup>42</sup>

Andrew Becket of the Monthly certainly took this view: Charlotte Smith's narratives were originally 'Trials and Cases in Law' and consequently 'not the objects of criticism.' He could hope only that, since the circumstances recorded in the book were 'really shocking and disgraceful to our nature,' Charlotte Smith's volumes might

serve as beacons to warn the reader of his danger; and and hinder him from striking on the rocks which others have been unable to shun.<sup>43</sup>

The Critical reviewer found it hard to credit such a catalogue of iniquity as historical fact, but comforted himself with the patriotic thought that these appalling French cases might

contribute to reconcile us to our own judicial proceedings, however attended with delay or expence.<sup>44</sup>

42 In fact as gothic fiction developed fictional incidents became no less lurid than Charlotte Smith's cases and it became less easy and effectual to maintain the critical position that such material should not appear in novels.

43 Monthly Review LXXVII (Oct 1787), 328.

44 Critical Review LXIV (Oct 1787), 310.

The unintended irony generated by the drawing of this moral from a work of Charlotte Smith is obvious to any reader familiar with her subsequent sufferings from the 'delay or expence' of the English Law and her criticisms of its shortcomings.

Though there is evidence that the Romance enjoyed a modest success<sup>45</sup> despite Phillips's remark that its publication was not very remunerative, the Reviews did not receive it with any great enthusiasm, but tended to praise faintly and patronize. The European and English reviewers joined the Critical in giving thanks for the superiority of English justice and in indulging in a little Francophobia.<sup>46</sup> To the European Magazine the Romance was 'an amusing little work' with the stories told 'in a plain, but pleasing style.'<sup>47</sup> The English reviewer thought the work would not add to the reputation the Elegiac Sonnets had given Charlotte Smith.<sup>48</sup> Had the author not produced Emmeline shortly afterwards, it seems fair to assume her fame would have dwindled after the translations.

Before moving to Emmeline, it is as well to re-emphasise a further element in Charlotte Smith's fiction. This chapter has characterised her novels as basically works of domestic sensibility, but with a growing tendency to romantic ingredients. But I have, in discussing her relationship to Jane Austen, previously drawn attention to a countervailing impulse towards social realism in Charlotte Smith's work, often uneasily juxtaposed with more sensational elements. If she is heir to Richardsonian and French sensibility, equally she is secure of a modest place in a realist tradition that begins with Fielding

45 Charlotte Smith often told her publishers in later years of enquiries she had received about the book and where it might be obtained, and she wondered why they would not reprint it (Turner, op. cit., 105). Leigh Hunt remarked on its being in demand at circulating libraries and admitted that the work was the source of several of his One Hundred Romances of Real Life (Hilbish, op. cit., 122).

46 See: European Magazine XXII (Oct 1787), 291, and English Review X (Nov 1787), 388.

47 European Magazine XXII (Oct 1787), 292.

48 English Review X (Nov 1787), 387.

and finds its ablest early followers in Fanny Burney and Jane Austen.

There is no doubt that Charlotte Smith's contemporaries were aware of a certain struggle between realism and romance for dominance in fiction. Charlotte Smith herself was anxious that fiction should have rather more than an escapist function, and was acutely aware of that identification of fiction with triviality, fantasy and indeed falsehood that the mass of ephemeral works encouraged in many a critic and reviewer. Two dictionary definitions of 'Romance' show how closely the word is associated with falsehood:

- 1 A fictitious narrative in prose of which the scene and incidents are very remote from those of ordinary life.
- 2 An extravagant fiction, invention, or story; a wild or wanton exaggeration; a picturesque falsehood.<sup>49</sup>

It is said that 'Romance' and 'Novel' were often interchangeable terms in the late eighteenth century, but in fact attempts were made to define what it was in the new kind of fiction indicated by 'novel' that distinguished it from the old Romance. Clara Reeve was typical of such thinking in The Progress of Romance (1785), when she had her character Euphrasia say:

The word Novel in all languages signifies something new. It was first used to distinguish these works from Romance, though they have lately been confounded together and are frequently mistaken for each other ...

The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things. - The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written. The Romance in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen. - The Novel gives a familiar relation of such things, as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves; and the perfection of it is to represent every scene, in so easy and natural a manner and to make them appear so probable, as to deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real, until we are affected by the joys or distress, of the persons in the story, as if they were our own.<sup>50</sup>

49 Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

50 Clara Reeve, The Progress of Romance (London, 1785) I, 110-111.

Charlotte Smith agreed. In her Rambles Further (1796) she was to define Romances as 'stories ... in which the imagination of the author overleaps the bounds of nature and common sense,' whereas novels are 'meant to represent beings like ourselves, and the probable incidents of human life.'<sup>51</sup> She lamented the tendency of girls to limit their reading to the 'trash' of the circulating libraries: 'greasy-looking books' which inculcate false views of life and give consequence to trifles.<sup>52</sup> Clara Reeve seems to admire novels for their superior power of inducing the reader to accept a falsehood, but there is some indication that, like Charlotte Smith, she distinguished between the escapist fantasies of Romance and the use of 'fictions' in the novel to offer both entertainment and some kind of 'criticism of life.' Charlotte Smith's concern that her fiction should perform the latter function prevented her ever progressing to the full-blown 'new' Romance of Ann Radcliffe.

Charlotte Smith's inclination was thus towards realism, but this proved too plain a diet for most readers in the late eighteenth century. If she was to live off the proceeds of her writing, she had to find ways of combining realistic elements with more palatable ingredients. Her immediate model was Fanny Burney, who, to the extent that her novels are comedies of manners and social satires, descends from Fielding and Smollett and anticipates Jane Austen. But Fanny Burney kept close to the popular taste by placing at the centre of her novels heroines of a sensibility and intelligence which raises them above the vulgar and inferior beings that surround and beset them. She also ensured her novels turned on a love-story plot.<sup>53</sup> Charlotte Smith utilized this basic situation and structure again and again, though with her it is not so much

51 Charlotte Smith, Rambles Farther: A continuation of Rural Walks, in Dialogues. (London 1796) I, 63.

52 Rural Walks: in Dialogues. Intended for the Use of Young Persons (London 1795) II, 2-7.

53 For a fuller analysis, see Baker, History of English Novel V, 154-73.

a matter of an inexperienced young woman's 'entry into the world' as that of a heroine sufficiently mature from the start to discern and resist the malevolence and vulgarity that threatens her, and possessing moral discrimination enough to see her through situations of intolerable pressure arising from her contact with high, but vicious society.<sup>54</sup>

Like Fanny Burney, Charlotte Smith satirizes those enriched by trade, but she does not on the whole inherit a certain snobbishness in the elder novelist. Charlotte Smith's mockery of tradesmen and businessmen is confined to those who assume a consequence and condescension to others which she sees as morally and sociably undesirable, and is not exerted merely because such characters are of a lower social class or follow an occupation not highly regarded.<sup>55</sup>

From Fanny Burney Charlotte Smith learned the economical deployment of a gallery of minor characters representative of the fashionable foibles and moral and social corruptions of

54 Hilbish calls Fanny Burney's work 'a new type of novel of manners, portraying realistically London society life.' (op. cit., 504). Charlotte Smith also portrays 'society life', but tours fashionable resorts and great houses in addition to metropolitan society.

55 Though Julia Kavanagh remarks that 'too much bitterness tinges /Charlotte Smith's/ account of a society which Miss Burney represented with such comfortable powers of sarcasm.' (English Women of Letters, 204), and Lionel Stevenson thinks Charlotte Smith's 'incidental social satire' differs from Fanny Burney's 'in being obviously the outcome of personal bitterness ... her ne'er-do-well spouse and his vulgar commercial family are portrayed with asperity again and again.' (The English Novel: A Panorama (London 1960), 161-62.) It is true that such personally-motivated social satire exists in Charlotte Smith's fiction. Nevertheless she is careful usually to give moral and social reasons for our despising her objects of satire. It should be said on Charlotte Smith's behalf that her satire is not invariably provoked by personal sufferings, but also stems from a more disinterested concern, and from her generally liberal outlook.



the Age of Sensibility. She learned how to allow such figures to reveal themselves in a sentence or two and a typical action, with the help of tart authorial comment. Such characters in both novelists tend towards types or humours, but Charlotte Smith is less liable to caricature than Fanny Burney, and varies her types slightly from novel to novel to give them a modicum of individuality.<sup>56</sup> On the whole, Charlotte Smith was uneasy with what Miss Tompkins calls the 'farical breadth' and boisterous caricature of Fielding and Smollet, inherited in diluted form by Fanny Burney: 'guffaws, the overturning of coaches, with the accompanying indelicacies of wigless pates and miry ditches.'<sup>57</sup> Charlotte Smith is usually more 'refined and moderate,' one of the women novelists of sensibility to whom

vulgarity is shocking enough without heightening by means of rough-and-tumble and grotesque action and appearance.<sup>58</sup>

The early Smith novels are her most Burneyesque, and the echoes of certain themes and characters of Cecilia in Emmeline were immediately apparent to contemporary readers. Mary Wollstonecraft thought Charlotte Smith 'certainly took Cecilia for her model,'<sup>59</sup> and Anna Seward said Emmeline was a 'weak and servile imitation'<sup>60</sup> of the Burney novel.<sup>61</sup> There

56 Hilbish claims that Charlotte Smith does heighten type-characters to caricatures occasionally, especially in Emmeline (op. cit., 420). But this is a tendency that is less evident in later novels when Cecilia was less freshly in mind.

57 J.M.S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 (London 1932), 134.

58 Ibid. Though there are exceptions to this rule as regards 'grotesque appearance', some examples of which I refer to below. Hilbish largely agrees with Miss Tompkins: 'Coarseness of speech and situation are present even in Fanny Burney's novels, but not in Charlotte Smith's.' (op. cit., 544.)

59 Analytical Review I (July 1788), 333.

60 Letters II, 213.

61 For discussion of the indebtedness of Emmeline to Cecilia, see A.H. Ehrenpreis's introduction to the 'Oxford English Novels' edition of Emmeline (London

are reminiscences of Evelina (1778) and Cecilia (1782) in Ethelinde and Celestina too.<sup>62</sup> The influence is much less direct in the later novels, though Hilbish finds faint similarities in Desmond and thinks even that the late and less captivating Camilla (1796) may have influenced The Young Philosopher (1798).<sup>63</sup>

Though it was a common practice to use what were considered attractive and romantic names for young ladies as the titles of novels, it is perhaps not too fanciful to suggest that even the titles of Charlotte Smith's early novels show them to be modelled on Fanny Burney's Evelina and Cecilia: Charlotte Smith's heroine's names begin with E's and C's and are phonetically close to the Burney titles.

With the success of Charlotte Smith's early novels, and before the advent of Ann Radcliffe, she came to be seen as Fanny Burney's rival and their works were sufficiently similar to make comparisons of the authors seem appropriate:

In the modern school of novel-writers, Mrs Smith holds a very distinguished rank; and, if not the first, she is so near as scarcely to be styled an inferior. Perhaps, with Miss Burney she may be allowed to hold 'a divided sway': and, though on some occasions below her sister

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1971), xii-xv. Mrs Ehrenpreis compares Charlotte Smith's Delamere to Delville, and the friendship of Mrs Stafford and Emmeline to that of Cecilia and Mrs Delville. Hilbish emphasises similarities between the heroines of the two works (op. cit., 504-505). Mrs Ehrenpreis considers that Fanny Burney provided Charlotte Smith 'the most respectable precedent for her use of coincidence and her trick of suspending the ultimately happy conclusion.' (op. cit., xx.)

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62 See Hilbish's comparisons and discussion of the characteristics of the two novelists, op. cit., 506-510, and also Foster, 'Charlotte Smith, Pre-Romantic Novelist,' 468.

63 Hilbish, op. cit., 506-507.

queen, yet, from the greater number of her works, she seems to possess a more luxuriant imagination, and a more fertile invention.<sup>64</sup>

The English Review also ranked Charlotte Smith with Fanny Burney: they must 'share the bays' with Miss Lee. It was their realism that distinguished them from other writers of fiction, and they followed Fielding and Smollett in advancing a tradition of fiction opposed to that of the generality of novels, whose 'delusive prospects of pleasure' induce in young minds 'a false estimate of human life' leading to 'consequences alike destructive of individual comfort and of general good.'<sup>65</sup>

Charlotte Smith does not seem to have left any comment on her indebtedness to Fanny Burney, unless one cites her frequently expressed indignation at general accusations of plagiarism. She certainly admired the Burney novels and claimed in Rural Walks that 'the admirable novels of Evelina and Cecilia, but particularly the latter' afford

at once entertainment and instruction, without giving ... those false views of life, which is one of the most serious objections against this species of writing.<sup>66</sup>

Fanny Burney's recipe was one Charlotte Smith strove to follow.

Fanny Burney returned Charlotte Smith's admiration initially. Whilst Second Mistress of the Robes, she borrowed Queen Charlotte's copy of Emmeline,<sup>67</sup> and she read also Ethelinde,<sup>68</sup> which she enjoyed. However, Celestina disappointed her, and perhaps it is significant that it was in this work that Charlotte Smith began to interrupt her basically realistic tightly-knit domestic plot with extended evocation of landscape and foreign travels and adventure:

64 Review of Celestina in Critical Review III (Nov 1791), 318. (Second Series.)

65 English Review XVIII (Oct 1791), 259.

66 Rural Walks II, 141. In Emmeline, Fitz-Edward reads Cecilia to the heroine and Mrs Stafford (A.H. Ehrenpreis ed., Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle (London 1971) II, 190.)

67 Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay (London, 1842-6) IV, 390.

68 A.R. Ellis (ed.), Early Diary of Frances Burney (London 1889) I, 4.

We also read *Celestine* /sic/, by Mrs Charlotte Smith: I think it very inferior to the *Emmeline* or *Ethelinde*. There is so little story, that the spinning out is wearisome, & that little is so trite and hackneyed, that not one circumstance precedes its expectation.<sup>69</sup>

There were contacts between Charlotte Smith and the Burney family, though I have not been able to establish that Charlotte Smith actually met any of the Burneys. However, when her daughter Anna Augusta married the Chevalier de Faville in the summer of 1793,<sup>70</sup> Charlotte Smith ventured to communicate with Fanny's father, Charles Burney, about difficulties she was having in finding a Catholic priest willing to perform a second ceremony to make the marriage 'binding according to the Laws of France.'<sup>71</sup> Joyce Hemlow summarises the matter thus:

Charlotte Smith addressed Charles Burney as the parent of a daughter who had been married in the Chapel of the Sardinian Ambassador 'to beg ... directions' how the marriage of her daughter might likewise be 'a second time performed by a Catholic Minister.'<sup>72</sup>

Charles Burney referred to the matter in a letter to Fanny of 12th September, which shows that he was sympathetic towards Charlotte Smith's family problems, though helping her in the marriage matter had proved troublesome:

I have had a negotiation and correspondence to carry on for and with Charlotte Smith, of which I believe I told you the beginning, and I do not see the end myself. Her second son had his foot shot off before Dunkirk, and has undergone a very dangerous amputation which, it is much feared, will be fatal.<sup>73</sup>

Fanny was 'sorry' for the difficulties of 'poor Mrs Charlotte Smith's Daughter',<sup>74</sup> but does not appear to have intervened in the matter.

69 Hemlow, op. cit., I (1972), 26.

70 See above, pp. 206-7.

71 Hemlow, op. cit., III (1973), 7 n.

72 Ibid. Indication of Hemlow's sources is appended to this note.

73 Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, VI, 3-4.

74 Hemlow, op. cit., III, 7. Letter of 16th September 1793 to Dr Burney.

Miss Hemlow writes that Charlotte Smith 'addressed' Charles Burney, and it is possible that this was her first contact with the family. However, she knew several people acquainted with the Burneys and possibly did not write as a stranger. One route of access to the Burneys was, inevitably, via her old mentor William Hayley, through whom she met Cowper. Cowper was an intimate friend of Samuel Rose<sup>75</sup> and Samuel's sister, Sarah, married Charles Burney the son.<sup>76</sup> The connection is tenuous and tortuous indeed, but it should be noted that the Smith connection with the Roses became close, though this later than the Anna Augusta - de Faville marriage. Samuel Rose was involved in the thankless task of trying to administer Charlotte Smith's financial affairs arising from her father-in-law's preposterous will, and his wife Sarah (née Farr) was a regular correspondent of Charlotte Smith between 1800 - 1806.<sup>77</sup> The connected Rose and Burney families were thus both concerned in Charlotte Smith's troubled private life at one time or another.

By the early summer of 1787 Charlotte Smith was able to inform Cadell that she had the first volume of a novel almost ready for his perusal. Her publisher evidently liked what he saw and Emmeline, or The Orphan of the Castle appeared in the spring of 1788.<sup>78</sup> It proved to be Charlotte Smith's second great success, but its impact was more immediate than that caused by the Elegiac Sonnets, published when Charlotte Smith was unknown to the general public. Sir Walter Scott later reminisced:

75 See Dictionary of National Biography XLIX (1897), 243-44 and Nangle, The Monthly Review - Indexes of Contributors etc. II, 58.

76 D.N.B. XLIX (1897), 243.

77 See above, pp. 86-8.

78 In April according to Mrs Ehrenpreis: Emmeline (London 1971), XIX.

We remember well the impression made on the public by the appearance of Emmeline, or The Orphan of the Castle, a tale of love and passion, happily conceived, and told in a most interesting manner. It contained a happy mixture of humour, and of bitter satire mingled with pathos, while the characters, both of sentiment and of manners, were sketched with a firmness of pencil, and liveliness of colouring, which belong to the highest branch of fictitious narrative.<sup>79</sup>

Sir Egerton Brydges writes that the public 'received this enchanting fiction with a new kind of delight' because

It displayed such a simple energy of language, such an accurate and lively delineation of character, such a purity of sentiment, and such exquisite scenery of a picturesque and rich, yet most unaffected imagination, as gave it a hold upon all readers of true taste, of a new and most captivating kind.<sup>80</sup>

Of the reviews of Emmeline which I have seen, only Mary Wollstonecraft's in the Analytical is less than enthusiastic: she objected to some scenes of exaggerated passion and to the hope of one female character for marriage with her seducer.<sup>81</sup> The leading Reviews gave ample space to Emmeline: to Andrew Becket in the Monthly, Charlotte Smith's 'drawing' was

... elegant and correct. All is graceful and pleasing to the sight: all, in short, is simple, femininely beautiful and chaste.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore,

... the whole is conducted with a considerable degree of art; ... The characters are natural, and well discriminated; ... The fable is uncommonly interesting; and ... The moral is forcible and just.<sup>83</sup>

Whatever elements of novelty may have struck its first readers, Emmeline was sufficiently akin to Cecilia to possess the comforting virtue of familiarity too in many of its aspects, and comparisons with Fanny Burney were immediately forthcoming:

79 Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 50-51.

80 Brydges, Censura Literaria IV, 77.

81 Analytical Review I (July 1788), 328-31.

82 Monthly Review LXXIX (Sept 1788), 242.

83 Ibid.

We might, perhaps, be censured as too easy flatterers, if we said, that this novel equals Cecilia; yet we think it may stand next to Miss Burney's works, with so little inferiority, that to mistake the palm of excellence, would neither show a considerable want to taste or of skill. Mrs Smith is not equal to Miss Burney in elegance of language: she is not, perhaps, entirely equal to her in the mellowness of description, or in the highly worked pathos of distress.<sup>84</sup>

The doubts as to Charlotte Smith's equalling Fanny Burney's Johnsonian 'elegance of language' were not usually referable to her style as a whole, but rather to occasional grammatical lapses and curious choices of vocabulary. More than one critic noted

the little errors in point of language, which have struck us in the perusal of this performance. They are but as freckles on a beautiful face; - freckles, however, which we cannot but wish away.<sup>85</sup>

This was to be a continuing criticism of Charlotte Smith's prose, as hurried writing in her later fiction engendered more such errors and imperfections.

Emmeline was generally so pleasing that another reviewer contrasted it to the mass of ephemeral fiction - 'dull and dangerous productions' - that he was obliged to read, and yet another emphasised the high degree of talent that the writing of a good novel requires.<sup>86</sup>

As regards the novelty of Emmeline, it is clear that Charlotte Smith's happy idea of inserting the occasional original sonnet into the narrative, supposedly penned by her characters in moments of emotion, was appreciated and certain reviewers reproduced examples.<sup>87</sup> Another novelty was her

84 Critical Review LXXVII (Appendix to Jan-June, 1788), 530.

85 Monthly Review LXXIX (Sept 1788), 244. The European made much the same point (XIV (Nov 1788), 348.). See Anna Seward's examples of such errors, above p. 35.

86 European Magazine XIV (Nov 1788), 348; and English Review XII (July 1788), 26-27.

87 See the Monthly, Critical, English and European reviews, as cited above.

inclusion of descriptions of 'scenery', which also drew critical applause.<sup>88</sup> Yet one should not over-emphasise the scenic description in Emmeline for the sake of underlining Charlotte Smith's anticipation of Ann Radcliffe in this respect. Though Turner speaks of 'delicately painted sentimental landscape,'<sup>89</sup> and Hilbish of 'romantic description,'<sup>90</sup> the treatment of nature and landscape in Emmeline is tentative and undeveloped, and it is more accurate to talk of a romantic treatment, with all the 'atmosphere' that the phrase implies, in relation to Ethelinde and (more so) Celestina, a little later. There are indeed brief descriptions of the Welsh landscape around Mowbray Castle, setting off its 'gothic magnificence' (I, 37)<sup>91</sup> and of the grandeur of the stormy sea off the Isle of Wight (III, 305, 313), but these are very much 'settings', briefly done and under-exploited as indicators of a character's mood or the 'tone' of the story at that point. Such 'symphonic' orchestrations of landscape, architecture, mood and incident come later.

Scott calls Emmeline 'a tale of love and passion': the love subsists between the heroine and William Godolphin; most of the passion is provided by Frederic Delamere. Throughout Charlotte Smith's novels (and indeed in conventional love-stories in general), the relationship between hero and heroine is of a superior nature to the flawed and imperfect marriages and liaisons which surround it. The lovers are mutually attracted physically, emotionally and intellectually, and both are well endowed with sensibility. Each is worthy of the other: the heroine sensitive, intelligent, accomplished, but modest; the hero courteous and considerate, protective,

88 See the Critical review cited above.

89 Turner, op. cit., 106.

90 Hilbish, op. cit., 130.

91 References in parenthesis in this section are to A H Ehrenpreis, Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle (London 1971), and give the volume and page numbers.



good-hearted and combining sensibility with courage. Both prefer domestic pleasures and intellectual pursuits to fashionable and sporting life or an existence devoted to self-aggrandizement and self-enrichment. The lovers are perfectly harmonized and utterly devoted: mutual faith and trust are invariably vindicated after many a trial and challenge. Yet the love-story in Emmeline is the least characteristic of Charlotte Smith, and its novelty helps explain the success of the book. Godolphin does not appear until the third of the four volumes, whilst in all her other novels the man one recognises to be destined ultimately for marriage with the heroine is introduced very early. Charlotte Smith's typical procedure is to establish the love of hero and heroine at the outset, then separate them, usually by removing the hero from the scene to foreign parts, and concentrate on the heroine's trials while he is away. There is always some apparently insurmountable obstacle to the marriage of hero and heroine which must await removal until the final volume. The delectable heroine, usually orphaned, of obscure origins and deprived of loving protection, is then importuned by libertines on the lookout for a mistress and by one or more genuine suitors of an obviously inferior and objectionable nature. She is pressured to accept a financially expedient marriage by unfeeling, unscrupulous and narrowly ambitious uncles, aunts or other guardians. However, the heroine survives all threats and assaults, retains her dignity and integrity against all the odds, and is rewarded by marriage with the returned hero, but also with the advent of a competence from an unexpected source or with proof of a birth nobler than she knew (preferably with both). Usually the unsuccessful suitors are obviously vicious from the start and win none of the reader's sympathy; but Charlotte Smith also has a more intriguing line of lovers who have much to recommend them but are doomed to lose the heroine. Delamere is the first and most powerfully drawn of these. Whereas the reader knows that Sir Edward Newenden in Ethelinde cannot replace the absent Montgomery in

the heroine's affections because he is married and Montague Thorold in Celestina has rather silly romantic excesses that make him inferior to Willoughby, the fiery Delamere is Emmeline's suitor for the first two volumes of the novel and the reader cannot predict with confidence either ultimate success or failure for him. There is no Godolphin on the scene and when the near-irresistible passionate ardour of Delamere sweeps Emmeline into agreement to an engagement, many a reader must conclude that Charlotte Smith intends true love on his part to run rather unsmoothly into marriage. It does not, and there is no doubt that the broken engagement and Delamere's impetuous abduction of the doubting heroine contributed substantially to the fascination of the work for Charlotte Smith's contemporaries. Delamere's passion and lack of restraint is made much of in the novel and undoubtedly made him another of the successes of the book with romantically-minded readers. From the time he first sets admiring eyes on Emmeline at Mowbray Castle and declares his love with indecent haste, he batters at her resisting propriety with tenacious fervour. The outbursts of passion are in truth terribly melodramatic and strained: there are scenes with Delamere in anguish on his knees, 'dashing his head' against unyielding fixtures and fittings, suddenly and unreasonably abusing servants, rushing ominously towards his loaded pistols and emitting such imprecations as 'Death and madness!'<sup>92</sup> Throughout, Emmeline valiantly holds to propriety, taking care to inform Lord Montreville, Delamere's father, that she is not encouraging his son's attentions. When she is abducted, the breach of

92 Mary Wollstonecraft was one reviewer who resisted Delamere's appeal. She characterised one scene in which Delamere is on his knees before Emmeline yielding to a 'paroxysm' of passion (II, 165-66) thus: 'Such an exhibition of violent emotions and attitudes follows as we cannot describe or analyse; yet, we fear, the description will catch the attention of many romantic girls, and carry their imaginations still further from nature and reason.' (Analytical Review I (July 1788), 331.)

morality is so horrifying to her that she develops a fever. Mrs Ehrenpreis is no doubt correct when, comparing the phrenetic Delamere to Delville in Cecilia, she remarks that it is

as if Mrs Smith exaggerated Delville's defects in Delamere so as to render him unfit to be the hero;<sup>93</sup>

but many a reader was disappointed that the dashing Delamere was displaced by the more staidly appealing Godolphin. Such readers were inclined to agree with Delamere's reiterated reproach to Emmeline that she was hard-hearted; even the young Jane Austen amusedly compared Emmeline's treatment of Delamere to Elizabeth I's 'torment' of the Earl of Essex and called Delamere one of her 'first of men'.<sup>94</sup> Scott thought that although we are told much of Godolphin's merits, we do not feel half as much interested in him as in 'poor Delamere', 'fiery, high-spirited, but noble and generous.'<sup>95</sup>

The opening chapters of Emmeline in which the heroine is introduced are well known for their probable influence on Northanger Abbey. Emmeline, 'believed to be' the natural daughter of the late, well-born Mr Mowbray, is brought up, shielded from the world, in far-off Pembrokeshire by a simple but decent pair of servants. In these unpromising circumstances she displays a remarkable facility for self-education and even contrives to acquire a good working knowledge of the etiquette required for social intercourse at the highest levels: possibly her ample stock of sensibility makes this instinctive in her. A situation soon develops with which readers of Charlotte Smith became very familiar. The old servants die, and loving foster-parents are replaced by a coarse housekeeper and amorous steward. The heroine is soon under siege: Delamere visits the castle and declares his

93 Introduction to Emmeline, XIV.

94 See above, pp. 128-9.

95 Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 51-2. Delamere's vices are counter-balanced by his vivacity: vigour and athleticism appropriate to a romantic hero are revealed when he casually leaps a hedge! (I, 24.)

passion with unnerving fervour. Lord Montreville, indifferent to Emmeline's natural excellence, will not hear of his son's marrying an illegitimate child, and encourages the steward Maloney's 'presumptuous' predilections for Emmeline. This situation of sensibility under attack is basic to Charlotte Smith's novels, with the isolated heroine forced to rely on her own untried resources.

One also finds in Emmeline a number of minor characters who appear, slightly amended, throughout Charlotte Smith's novels. The housekeeper sent by Lord Montreville to look after Mowbray Castle, and his Lordship's French valet, Millefleur, are the first of a long line of vulgar, would-be fashionable servants whose conversation is racy, but coarse and offensive to sensibility. The description of the arrival of the housekeeper, Mrs Grant, might be by Fanny Burney verging on caricature:

She wore a travelling dress of tawdry-coloured silk, trimmed with bright green ribbands; and her head was covered with an immense black silk hat, from which depended many yellow streamers; while the plumage, with which it was plentifully adorned, hung dripping over her face, from the effects of a thunder shower thro' which she had passed. Her hair, tho' carefully curled and powdered on her leaving London, had been also greatly deranged in her journey, and descended, in knotty tufts of a dirty yellow, over her cheeks and forehead; adding to the vulgar ferocity of a harsh countenance and a coarse complexion. Her figure was uncommonly tall and boney; and her voice so discordant and shrill as to pierce the ear with the most unpleasant sensation, and compleat the disagreeable idea her person impressed.

(I, 9-10)

The sheltered Emmeline is shocked into tears by the combined effect of Mrs Grant's appearance and opening words:

'Oh! Lord a marcy on me! - to be shore I be got here at last! But indeed if I had known whereabout I was a coming to, 'tis not a double the wagers as should a hired me. Lord! why what a ramshakel ould place it is! - and then such a monstrous long way from London! ... Why to be sure I didn't much expect to see a christian face in such an out of the way place. I don't b'leve I shall stay; howsomdever do let me have some tea ...

(I, 10)

Lord Montreville is another stock Smith character: the powerful nobleman who follows a fashionable social life and pursues political advancement and wealth despite being in possession of a handsome fortune in the first place. Such characters, variously absorbed in assemblies, gambling, field-sports, political manoeuvring and the making of advantageous marriage alliances are inimical to sensibility, yet often have it in their power to make life difficult for the hero and heroine. Lord Montreville is Emmeline's guardian, but has no interest in the young woman apart from disposing of her by marrying her off and removing her from the grasp of his son. Emmeline depends initially on Lord Montreville's financial support, which he gives grudgingly and which gives him considerable power over her. It is wholly in the tradition of Charlotte Smith's fiction when it is revealed eventually that Emmeline is legitimate after all and the financial tables are turned when it becomes clear that she is entitled to inherit a substantial estate, the income of which Lord Montreville has been depriving her of for many years. Often Charlotte Smith makes a woman the power behind the throne: Lady Montreville is a malignant force, encouraging her husband to ignore his better feelings towards Emmeline. Her family pride is intense and the thought of her son Frederick marrying Emmeline is painful to her in a way which makes her husband's feelings seem palely moderate in comparison. It is often a female character in Charlotte Smith's work who makes the heroine feel most keenly her dependant position and who takes the most malicious satisfaction in reminding her of her burdensomeness.

It is often remarked that Charlotte Smith's novels have a pronounced autobiographical content, and often regretted that the author loses no opportunity to air her grievances and pillory those who have annoyed her. Emmeline is strongly autobiographical: Adelina's account of her courtship by Mr Trelawny when she was 'but just turned fifteen' and 'full of gaiety and vivacity' and her account of her immature reasons

for acceptance of his proposal of marriage (II, 210-12), are obviously closely related to Charlotte Smith's own experiences. There is also Mrs Stafford, the first of a series of idealized self-portraits of Charlotte Smith after a number of years of married life, surrounded by children and burdened by a feckless, hare-brained husband. Mrs Stafford is Emmeline's confidant, to whom she instinctively turns for protection and advice when most severely assailed and perplexed. Mrs Stafford's capacity to help is limited by the financial difficulties her husband strays into and her consequent efforts to extricate him and preserve her large family, but she is a rock of wisdom, experience and sound advice for the heroine. When Charlotte Smith's tendency to autobiography later became apparent to reviewers, her uncomplimentary portraits of Benjamin Smith drew their disapproval. In Emmeline Mr Stafford is castigated, but Charlotte Smith can still find Benjamin's penchant for disastrous business ventures amusing: Mr Stafford enthusiastically pursues a scheme to manure farmland with old wigs (II, 190).

From Fanny Burney come merchants and financiers who expect their wealth to admit them to the highest social levels and nonentities who affect fashionable foibles in the hope of acceptance in such circles. The rich banker Rochely and the tedious 'old cit.' Rugby are examples of the former; the preposterous fop Elkerton of the latter. As in the case of the portrait of her husband, Charlotte Smith can rise to high-spirited satire at this stage of her career; her tolerant amusement has not yet been eroded by prolonged vexations to be replaced by bitterness and impatience. Elkerton is an extravagant creature verging on caricature:

... a tall, thin, but extremely awkward figure, which in a most fashionable undress, and with a glass held to his eye, strided into the box, and bowing with a strange gesture to Mrs Ashwood; exclaimed - 'Oh! my dear Mrs A! - here I am! - returned from Spa only last night; and already at your feet.'

(I, 81-2.)

Charlotte Smith takes an obvious delight in Elkerton's absurdities. There is a scene in which he is the Osric to Delamere's Hamlet:

Delamere, on seeing the very odd figure and baboonish face of Elkerton, ... stopped short and made a grave bow.

Elkerton advancing towards him, bowed also profoundly, and said, 'I am charmed, Sir, with being permitted the honour of paying you my devoirs.'

Delamere concluded from his look and bow, as well as from a foreign accent, (which Elkerton had affected 'till it was become habitual) that the man was either a dancing master or a quack doctor, sent to him by some of his companions, who frequently exercised on each other such efforts of practical wit. He therefore being not without humour, bowed again, more profoundly than before, and answered, 'that the honour was entirely his, tho' he did not know how he had deserved it.'

'I was so fortunate, Sir,' resumed Elkerton, 'so fortunate as to - have the honour - the happiness - of knowing Lord Montreville and Lady Montreville a few years ago at Naples.'

Delamere, still confirmed in his first idea, answered, 'very probably, Sir.'

'And, Sir,' continued Elkerton, 'I now waited upon you, as his Lordship is not in town.'

'Indeed, Sir, you are too obliging.'

'To ask, Sir a question, which I hope will not be deemed - be deemed - ' (a word did not immediately occur) 'be deemed - improper - intrusive - impertinent - inquisitive - presuming -'

'I dare say, Sir, nothing improper, intrusive, impertinent, inquisitive, or presuming, is to be apprehended from a gentleman of your appearance.'

Delamere expected something very ridiculous to follow this ridiculous introduction, and with some difficulty forbore laughing.

(I, 90-91)<sup>96</sup>

Such absurdities are no real threat to the aristocrats of sensibility. Much more dangerous is Charlotte Smith's first crooked and malevolent lawyer, Sir Richard Crofts. His vices are immediately apparent to Emmeline - sensibility, it

96 See also Charlotte Smith's lighthearted portrait of Mrs Ashwood's rambling account of her visit to Lady Montreville, interspersed with her instructions to her maid regarding her elaborate toilette. (II, 140-41.)

seems, can unerringly discern vulgarity, inferiority and vice at first sight, prior to revelatory action - but he has ingratiated himself with Lord Montreville. Sir Richard is of humble birth, with 'less understanding than cunning; less honesty than industry':

He had that sort of sagacity which enabled him to enter into the characters of those with whom he conversed: he knew how to humour their prejudices, and lay in wait for their foibles to turn them to his own advantage.

To his superiors, the cringing parasite; to those he thought his inferiors, proud, supercilious, and insulting ...

(I, 87.)

Crofts is the most evil character in Emmeline and the first of Charlotte Smith's many lawyers portrayed with an unrelieved blackness that makes them more the villains of melodrama than plausibly flawed realities.

Love-stories traditionally lead to the marriage of hero and heroine with implied perpetual bliss succeeding. The mass of novels in the late eighteenth century follow this pattern, but behind the conventional story there often lies a more serious concern with marriage as highlighting the plight of woman. The women novelists - and Charlotte Smith is a prime example - are drawn again and again to situations which emphasise the dependent situation of young women; their near-helplessness before the power and authority of parents or guardians, or of husbands chosen for them. It may be true that no woman could be forced legally into marriage, but many of the women novelists show how empty this right could be in practice. A young woman of the middle or upper class was, after all, educated to leisure and given a severely limited set of 'accomplishments' suited to few practical or remunerative uses, even had there been employment open to such women. Financial support and a roof over one's head derived from the parents and opposition to parental wishes could result in threats to withdraw both. Charlotte Smith's heroines, like many another, find themselves pressured to



accept husbands they find intellectually, morally and physically uncongenial and it is an arranged marriage that most starkly brings home to them their dependance and lack of control over their own destiny. Charlotte Smith's heroines are intelligent, sensitive and discriminating and invariably resist assaults on their integrity and right of free choice, taking temporary refuge with sympathetic friends, such as Emmeline's Mrs Stafford, or with indifferent relations. Young men are in a slightly less unenviable situation, often being heirs to estates entailed on them or able to make money if they will stoop to business or employment. Nevertheless, society's expectations of respect for and obedience to parents bear strangely upon them too. One of the fascinations of Emmeline was Delamere's determination to pursue his passion in the face of severe parental disapproval, and his attacks on the sacred tenet of the right of parents to filial obedience and deference must have been scandalous stuff. Delamere tells Emmeline that not only does her guardian Lord Montreville have no right to extort a promise from her that she will not marry or even see him, but also that she has no right thus to bind herself. Such views were no doubt meant to be provocatively extravagant and of a piece with Delamere's other impetuosities and lapses from propriety and Charlotte Smith adheres in her specific utterances on the matter of the principle of obedience to parents. Yet the logic of the narrative often points in the opposite direction. When the parents or guardians are so often obviously acting selfishly, cruelly and from the basest motives and the offspring, virtuous and sensible, strive heroically to avoid open defiance in resisting loveless marriages, then the tale irresistably enforces the moral that adherence to the every wish of parents as a universal and unvarying rule on the part of young adults is not automatically appropriate.

Emmeline is a heroine and therefore the exceptional young woman who, despite all the pressures, will not be forced to

take the ultimate step that would destroy her integrity, self-respect and deny the deepest of her heart's convictions and affections. It is at such moments of ultimate challenge that the steel beneath the soft layers of sensibility is seen and she will even remind her guardian what humanity and his position of responsibility demands of him, when he attempts to browbeat her into marriage with his steward:

'To become the wife of Maloney! - to accept of the establishment he offers me! I am humbled, I am lost indeed! No, my Lord! unhappy as I am, I can claim nothing, it is true; but if the support of an unfortunate orphan, thrown by Providence into your care, is too troublesome, suffer me to be myself a servant; and believe I have a mind, which tho' it will not recoil from any situation where I can earn my bread by honest labour, is infinitely superior to any advantages such a man as Maloney can offer me!'

(I, 25.)

The passage seems over-written, declamatory, rhetorical and stylised, with little in itself to distinguish it from the instances of mutual declaration of passion and the harrowing death-bed scenes which appear from time to time in the novel. However, Emmeline's back-to-the-wall speeches are germane to the central concerns of the novel in a way the other conventionally affecting passages are not. From the opening pages the reader has been encouraged to feel for Emmeline as the young woman under siege and to appreciate through her fictional experiences the frustrations and resentments arising from the controls and limitations that were part of a woman's rôle in Charlotte Smith's day. When Emmeline finally makes her stand, realism in the writing gives way not so much to automatic sentimental rhetoric as to the author's intervention to assert female dignity and express her sense of the misuse of woman. When Emmeline refuses to capitulate she is an idealised everywoman: in one instance she even speaks of herself in the third person, which both gives her speech a formalised dignity and makes her seem the spokeswoman for oppressed womanhood. Crofts, on behalf of Lord

Montreville, tries to force her to marry the banker Rochely, threatening her with ostracism from the Mowbray family, its indifference to her fate and total withdrawal of financial support should she refuse:

'My Lord Montreville, Sir, would have been kinder, had he delivered himself of his wishes and commands. Such, however, as I now receive them, they require no deliberation. I will not marry Mr Rochely, tho' instead of the fortune you describe he could offer me the world. - Lord Montreville may abandon me, but he shall not make me wretched. Tell him, therefore, Sir,' (her spirit rose as she spoke) 'that the daughter of his brother, unhappy as she is, yet boasts that nobleness of mind which her father possessed, and disclaims the mercenary views of becoming, from pecuniary motives, the wife of a man whom she cannot either love or esteem. Tell him too, that if she had not inherited a strong sense of honour, of which at least her birth does not deprive her, she might now have been the wife of Mr Delamere, and independent of his Lordship's authority; and it is improbable, that one who has sacrificed so much to integrity, should now be compelled by threats of indigence to the basest of all actions, that of selling her person and her happiness for a subsistence. I beg that you, Sir, who seem to have delivered Lord Montreville's message, with such scrupulous exactness, will take the trouble to be as precise in my answer; and that his Lordship will consider it as final.'

(I, 109.)

One would imagine that many a reader could scarce forbear to cheer, though it is doubtful that any young woman ever spoke with such imperious exactness, proud control and convoluted sentence-structure in such circumstances. But perhaps such a formal speech is the only possible response of Emmeline and her creator to the accumulated slights and indignities she has borne throughout this volume. Her speech has little to do with verisimilitude, but expresses the reality of her outraged sense of personal worth. It is significant that in this moment of heightened emotion when Emmeline finds the courage to repel her tormentors, she speaks of 'selling her person'. Rochely is physically unattractive to her and, to her young eyes, old; and a sexual antipathy is obviously a strong element in her distaste

for the proposed marriage. It is rarely that Charlotte Smith is even this explicit: the reader is told frequently that the suitors being forced upon the heroines are physically unattractive or advanced in years, but the objections expressed by the heroines are normally to the manners, ways of life, immorality, or intellectual shallowness of such suitors. The horror of a forced sexual union with a person to whom one is indifferent or worse is normally unstated, but powerfully suggested to the reader by the heroine's extreme and decided reactions to the slightest approach by such suitors or their advocates. Such determined resistance by Emmeline shows, though, the inadequacy of an analysis of Charlotte Smith's young women as merely typical softly sentimental and lachrymose heroines of sensibility. The early ones at least have spirit and a degree of resourcefulness, which tend to increase to meet growing troubles.

Emmeline established Charlotte Smith's reputation as a novelist and Ethelinde; or, The Recluse of the Lake consolidated it. By February, 1789 the first volume was 'transcribed for the press', in June three volumes were with the printer and the author was working on the final volume,<sup>97</sup> and the novel was published in five volumes before the end of the year. According to Charlotte Smith, two thousand copies of Emmeline had been sold in its first year of publication and by June 1789 Cadell had a third edition ready to accompany the publication of Ethelinde.<sup>98</sup> The four volumes of Emmeline had sold for three shillings each, and although Cadell voluntarily augmented the sum he had agreed to give for it in the light of its unanticipated popularity,<sup>99</sup>

97 Turner op. cit., 111.

98 Turner op. cit., 107. Catherine Dorset says that the first edition of Emmeline comprised 1500 copies (Scott op. cit., 38); presumably therefore the second edition was of 500 copies.

99 Catherine Dorset in Scott, op. cit., 38.

Charlotte Smith still referred, one feels rather enviously, to the 'very considerable profit'<sup>100</sup> he had made and soon felt the financial need to capitalize on her earlier success. Ethelinde is her only five-volume novel and sold for fifteen shillings. It is clear that the proceeds from Emmeline were soon exhausted, for Charlotte Smith tried to extract advances from Cadell prior to the publication of Ethelinde and on one occasion Cadell refused to oblige. Turner has written of this quarrel in some detail and of Charlotte Smith's attempts to induce Johnson to buy Ethelinde from Cadell and publish it himself.<sup>101</sup> Nothing came of this however and Cadell remained her publisher for the time being.

Ethelinde may not have created the stir of Emmeline - Scott says the 'love tale' is 'less interesting'<sup>102</sup> but its popularity was such that a second edition was soon called for.<sup>103</sup> No doubt the success of Emmeline ensured good sales for its successor, for Charlotte Smith was established as a leading novelist on the strength of her one essay in the form to date:

The character of Mrs Smith, both as poet and novelist, is so firmly established, that our commendation, at the present time, may be thought unnecessary . . . ,  
wrote Andrew Becket in the Monthly.<sup>104</sup>

100 Turner op. cit., 107.

101 Ibid., 110-12. Some idea of the remuneration Charlotte Smith may have received for Ethelinde is provided by Turner's report of her asking Johnson to pay Cadell fifty pounds per volume and to refund with interest the advances she had received. Charlotte Smith's displeasure with Cadell was profound, for she also tried to sell her next work, in advance, to another publisher - this time Robinson.

102 Scott op. cit., 53.

103 The British Library copy of the second edition of Ethelinde is dated 1790, though Hibbish's bibliography refers to a 1789 second edition (op. cit., 582.)

104 Monthly Review II (June 1790), 161 (Second Series).

Emmeline is referred to often by literary historians in relation to Northanger Abbey; in the case of Ethelinde, the romantic landscape tempts them to link the novel with Ann Radcliffe's work. Certainly there is rather more in the way of scenic description than in Emmeline and every evidence that readers appreciated the fuller treatment of nature. Kitty, in Jane Austen's Catharine, or The Bower (1792?) thought the descriptions of Grasmere beautiful<sup>105</sup> and Mary Wollstonecraft agreed.<sup>106</sup> Appreciation of fine landscape is always a crucial indication of sensibility in Charlotte Smith's characters, and in Ethelinde the point has been reached where sublime mountain scenery is sought by such sensitive characters as stirring their most profound responses. Sir Edward Newenden, later Ethelinde's guardian, looks forward to his visit to Grasmere Abbey, 'the abode of his ancestors', (I, 2)<sup>107</sup> but to the fashionable, socializing Lady Newenden, the trip involves her being 'condemned for two months to a desert'. (I, 3) Ethelinde's appreciation of natural beauty endears her to Sir Edward whilst his wife's indifference renders husband and wife emotional strangers to each other. When Sir Edward patiently tries to educate Lady Newenden's taste, he provokes only an expression of her jealousy of Ethelinde:

"Look, my love," continued he, "at the wild grandeur of that varied and bold outline; observe the effect of the sun's rays on the summits of the craggs, while the large and swelling clouds that pass over them seem almost to touch them and give them numberless shades in their progress."

"I see but little beauty in those dreary looking mountains," answered Lady Newenden, with a cold and disdainful smile.

105 See above, p. 129.

106 Analytical Review V (Dec 1789), 484. It is odd that although Charlotte Smith seems to respond to the praise of landscape in Emmeline by expanding its use in Ethelinde, she did not include any of her equally appreciated sonnets in her second novel.

107 All references to Ethelinde in parentheses in the text are to the first edition: Ethelinde, or The Recluse of the Lake (London 1789).

"Perhaps you had better apply to Ethelinde. You may teach her as she is a young lady of sublime taste you know, to admire what I, who am a creature without any, really want faculties to enjoy."

(I, 31)

Sir Edward elicits no better response from his hard-riding sister, Ellen, who much prefers regions 'where one may gallop on turf for ten or twelve miles on end without check or leap.' (I, 32)

Sir Edward's appreciation of landscape, framed by his carriage window, is reminiscent of that of an artist weighing such matters as proportion and light and shade: he is, one feels, a travelling connoisseur who could have read Gilpin's various Observations. However, there are more clearly romantic descriptions of scenery in Ethelinde, where the observer is less detached and coolly appraising, but more vitally involved in surrounding nature. A Radcliffean harmonizing of mood with landscape, a more markedly romantic empathy, occurs when the heroine takes one of her frequent walks. Ethelinde

gave way to the solemn but melancholy species of pleasure inspired by the scene around her. It was now evening; the last rays of the sun gave a dull purple hue to the points of the fells which rose above the water and the park; while the rest, all in deep shadow, looked gloomily sublime. Just above the tallest, which was rendered yet more dark by the wood that covered its side, the evening star arose, and was reflected on the bosom of the lake, now perfectly still and unruffled. Not a breeze sighed among the hills, and nothing was heard but the low murmur of two or three distant waterfalls, and at intervals the short soft notes of the woodlark ...

(I, 46-7)

The passage demonstrates Charlotte Smith's ability to present plausibly scenery she had not seen, for I have found no evidence that she ever visited the Lake District, but every indication that she drew on a favourite work of Ethelinde's, (I, 58) Gray's Journal in the Lakes (1769), and

possibly on other 'guides'.<sup>108</sup> As in the case of Emmeline, the romantic landscape-painting should not be overstressed. One can see that Ethelinde would influence Ann Radcliffe, but Charlotte Smith is still a good way from a 'symphonic' integration of nature, character and action, with landscape a continuous thread in the fabric of the novel contributing constantly to its 'tone'. The Lake District descriptions come at the beginning of the first and towards the end of the final volume, but there are huge stretches between of domestic and satirical material in which Charlotte Smith ignores the 'setting'.

Charlotte Smith did not delay the entrance of the hero in Ethelinde: Charles Montgomery, well-born of a Scottish family fallen on hard times, lives with his mother in a Grasmere cottage and appears romantically on Ethelinde's horizon during her rural rambles. He is suitably heroic, early saving Ethelinde from drowning, and obviously is destined for her hand, but he remains conventional and wooden. Only occasional jealousy mars his perfection. Mrs Montgomery, content to live in relative seclusion and simple domesticity and stoically enduring financial insecurity, is only a little less autobiographical than Mrs Stafford in Emmeline. Sir Edward Newenden is a much more interesting character. Though older and infinitely more controlled than Delamere, he plays the same part of the admirer destined to disappointment. Sir Edward is caught in an intolerable situation of desire conflicting with duty and conscience. His marriage with the shallow, insensitive Lady Maria, neglectful of her children in pursuit of social pleasures and flirtations, is unsatisfying and disillusioning. Sir Edward cannot help but compare his wife unfavourably with Ethelinde, who combines sensibility, intelligence and inevitable physical attractiveness with a contentment with intellectual and domestic pursuits.

108 See above, pp. II9-20.



She proves her strong maternal instincts too (always a cardinal virtue with Charlotte Smith), when she becomes for a time mother-substitute to Sir Edward's children and nurses them through severe illness at the cost, temporarily, of her own good health. Sir Edward remains faithful to his wife despite their hollow relationship, but it is clear that he loves Ethelinde. When Colonel Chesterville, the heroine's father, dies, the agonized Sir Edward finds himself Ethelinde's guardian and responsible for the moral supervision and protection of the young woman he loves. Charlotte Smith traces his inner struggle to fulfil his role honourably and keep his feelings from Ethelinde, though many are the times he trembles on the brink of disclosing them. Sir Edward's torment is refined by his duty to give Ethelinde disinterested advice on her relationship with Montgomery. He cannot but recognize Montgomery's sterling qualities, but does his advice that Ethelinde nevertheless should not marry a poor man stem from genuine concern for her welfare, or from his inability to contemplate surrendering her to another man? - It is a question to which Sir Edward himself cannot decide the answer and his inner conflict engages the reader's sympathy and ensures his involvement in a credibly human dilemma. In comparison, the novel's 'set pieces' - the prolonged pathos of Colonel Chesterville's death, the Ethelinde-Montgomery love-scenes, and Montgomery's anguished departure to seek his fortune in India - seem strained and unconvincing. Unfortunately, Charlotte Smith involves Sir Edward himself in one such set piece. With Lady Newenden dead and Montgomery thought to be drowned in a shipwreck, Sir Edward feels able to propose to Ethelinde in a gothic setting at Grasmere. Ethelinde, despite her respect and indeed liking for Sir Edward declines, preferring to remain faithful to Montgomery's memory.<sup>109</sup>

109 Once Ethelinde is aware of Sir Edward's love, Foster sees her as facing a problem Charlotte Smith probably derived from Prevost's Dean of Killerine: 'what response should be made to the love of a virtuous and sensible man who has married the wrong woman?'

Montgomery, very much alive and hiding nearby, overhears this protestation of eternal fidelity and a tearful but ecstatic reunion follows. Sir Edward nobly surrenders all his fondest hopes and learns to live in tolerable contentment as a friend of the happy couple. Despite his involvement in this contrived scene, Sir Edward remains a character of some human complexity and reality. It is true he weeps too readily and too often, but Ethelinde as a whole is the most lachrymose of Charlotte Smith's novels.

Benjamin Smith is discernible behind many an unreliable male character, of unsteady principle, created by his wife. In Ethelinde the heroine's brother, Harry Chesterville, is not unmitigatedly vicious by nature, but rather the vacillating slave of circumstances. His basic 'good heart' has not been schooled by firm parental control and example and he has acquired no tendency to 'reflection', no propensity to moral self-scrutiny and no steadiness of character to arm him against life's vicissitudes. Miss Tompkins remarks that the female novelists of Charlotte Smith's day agreed that a mere good disposition is a necessary but insufficient attribute: 'principling' is essential in young women.<sup>110</sup> In Charlotte Smith's view it is no less needful in young men. One gathers

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('Charlotte Smith, Pre-Romantic Novelist', PMLA, 470.) Turner points out that the 'hazard of immorality - - which seems more than anything else a refusal of the author to turn her back on the realities of life ... comes up again in Ethelinde' with regard to this relationship. He compares Charlotte Smith's daring to treat of the love of a married man for another woman with the abduction of the heroine in Emmeline (op. cit., 109.). Certainly the moral perplexities in both cases help account for the popularity of Emmeline and Ethelinde.

110 Tompkins, op. cit., 149. The untutored Emmeline may seem to challenge this analysis, but Miss Tompkins qualifies her remark: 'Even the liberal spirit of Mrs Charlotte Smith will be found faithful in the main to this allegiance, for her liberality expresses itself not in tampering with standards, but in a greater tenderness to frailty, a less rigid distribution of justice.'

that there are very few natural aristocrats of sensibility - such as Emmeline - whose good natures and innate moral sense lead them untutored to probity and rectitude. Harry Chesterville pursues a free-spending, dissolute youth which leads him to a debtor's prison. His father, no less inclined towards gambling, dies in reaction to shame and financial ruin and Harry is suicidally remorseful. When new wealth comes his way however he reverts to proud insensitivity. Finally, he recognises his errors, but Charlotte Smith resists the improbability of a perfect and unshakeable reformation. Charlotte Smith, it would seem, thinks Shaftesbury's innate moral sense may be overwhelmed or smothered by unguided exposure to a vicious world: it must be nurtured and developed in childhood by benevolent mentors.

Davenant, Ethelinde's despised suitor, has little sense moral or otherwise and even Sir Edward Newenden's guardianship cannot redeem a character with so little originally to recommend it. Davenant, at first a prototype of the vacillating Waverly of Desmond, is 'deficient in that strength of intellect which gives determinate character' and has a 'vapid and vacant mind ... ever open to momentary impressions.' He falls into bad company and adopts the vicious attitudes he encounters as his own. I have remarked previously Charlotte Smith's ability to persuade even the modern reader that a seemingly trifling incident may represent or symbolize a radical assault on the integrity of her heroines: the drunken Davenant's attempt to kiss Ethelinde is such an incident. Ethelinde's outraged and lasting reaction seems no more exaggerated in context than Clarissa's slow decline after her rape by Lovelace. Davenant calls Ethelinde a prude; but in the world of the eighteenth-century women's novel, where a humiliated sense of woman as man's possession and desirable object runs strongly if often unarticulated, she is no such thing. In such a context, insisting on one's right to choice and discrimination even in trifling sexual

matters is part of a wider programme of the assertion of one's worth and consequence as a human being.

Turner thinks Ethelinde contains less incident than Emmeline, but 'the characters seem more painstakingly drawn.'<sup>111</sup> Certainly there are attempts at a greater and more complex realism in Sir Edward and perhaps Ethelinde herself. The minor characters too are delineated in rather more detail. Impecunious virtue in the shape of the heroine is assailed by a variety of undesirables as Ethelinde's sources of help and protection are stripped away: at one point her brother is in the West Indies, Montgomery in India and Sir Edward across the Channel. Ethelinde is left in the ineffectual care of Sir Edward's unsympathetic sister, Ellen, a notable addition to Charlotte Smith's gallery of recurrent minor characters. Like Harry Chesterville she is not bad-hearted, but she has few of the feminine virtues appreciated by sensibility. Davenant's friend Woolaston - later to be her husband - describes her initially as a 'hard-favoured, masculine, disagreeable thing.' (IV, 159) Certainly she is brusque, matter-of-fact and rather unfeeling, and thinks of little but riding and hunting. Lacking all social graces ('Nobody ever stands upon ceremony, you know, in the field'. (IV, 158)), she speaks with a breezy directness Charlotte Smith finds unbecoming in a young woman. Ellen comments thus on Sir Edward's at last taking a firm stand against his wife's infidelities:

'I dare say that all his rearing and kicking will end in his being quiet again, and submitting to the curb as gently as ever. Ned was always as soft hearted as a girl; and has no notion of taking the bit between his teeth and setting off, as I should have done long ago, if I had been jaded by such a vain, ill-tempered, proud doll.'

(IV, 121)

It is wholly characteristic of Ellen that she should see human relationships in terms of horse-management and that she speaks like a man. She attains through her very indifference

111 Turner, op. cit., 109.

to conventional expectations of female conduct a kind of equality with the men, but we are left in no doubt that the author disapproves: woman is not to achieve recognition of an equal dignity by adopting man's characteristics - especially not the coarser ones - but by developing and asserting the worth of those peculiarly her own. When Ellen says scornfully

'I know nothing of love, nor of the fine sentimental stuff that sets half the people in the world to make fools of themselves, so I don't pretend to be very quick sighted in such matters ...,'

(IV, 4)

Charlotte Smith is not using her to attack sentimental excesses, for Ellen is speaking of Ethelinde and her relationships. Ellen's insensitive and unsympathetic response to Ethelinde's perturbation consequent to Davenant's attempted kiss and his tearing up her letter from Montgomery, ranges her with the enemies of sensibility:

'Really, Miss Chesterville, these conceited airs, this affectation of excessive delicacy is mighty tiresome. I thought as you saw more of the world you would get rid of such squeamish folly - and a mighty matter indeed!, what, Davenant asked for a kiss?'

'Mr Davenant, Madam, was extremely rude; and so little master of the little reason he usually has, that he appeared capable of any insults. Surely I have reason to complain, when he has taken from me a letter of consequence, and torn it to pieces.'

'Poor Ethy,' exclaimed Mrs Woolaston, loudly laughing. 'So he tore your love letter ... Well that was really a sad thing; but I'll devise a punishment for him which will give you ample revenge: make him write you another.'

'He write another?' said Ethelinde.

'Aye why not? Why one love letter you know is nearly as good as another; and I dare say with taking scraps out of novels, and a little of Woolaston's help, who is quite a dab at it, he'd produce you now in a day or two, his dictionary being well consulted, as pretty a love letter as a sentimental Miss need desire to read in an arbour.'

(V, 53-4)<sup>112</sup>

112 Charlotte Smith shows, in relation to this incident, that she does not consider sensibility or decency to be the prerogative of any one class. Davenant's grooms, James and Peter, protect Ethelinde from his advances at the cost of their positions and earn warm commendation

The reader is meant to disapprove of Eleanor Newenden, yet undeniably the presence of such characters in Charlotte Smith's novels, like the author's satire, has a welcome balancing effect: it provides a modicum of spice to offset the sugar of sentiment and sensibility. Similar characters appear in later Smith novels, but on at least one occasion the author evolves a more sympathetic version, where openness and vitality are not opposed to sensibility, but engagingly combined with it.<sup>113</sup>

In Ethelinde Charlotte Smith shows her concern with the novel as a serious form. Through her satirizing of Clarinthia and Robert Ludford she attacks trashy novels, humdrum verse and dilettante writers with all the scorn of the professional. The Ludfords, enriched by trade, are anxious to establish their cultural and social credentials.<sup>114</sup> Clarinthia affects enthusiasm for the arts - 'Oh.' do you know that music is the passion of my soul, and that I perfectly doat on poetry.' (II, 164) - but is shallow and indiscriminating. Much to the embarrassment of Ethelinde, Clarinthia is determined to make a confidant of her, which post requires a passive receptivity to gushing accounts of Clarinthia's largely imaginary passions for young men, and to her effusions on literature.<sup>115</sup> It is not difficult to discern a model for Jane Austen's Camilla Stanley when Ethelinde reluctantly questions Clarinthia on the subject of her literary tastes and pursuits:

113 Fanny Waverley of Desmond is the character that springs to mind.

114 Turner's comment that Ethelinde 'smiles upon the trade class' (op. cit., 109) needs some qualification. In so far as the Ludfords and the Maltravers display pretentiousness and vulgarity, they are severely mocked.

115 Strictly, Charlotte Smith's first shallowly literary young lady is Miss Ashwood in Emmeline, who, unlike Clarinthia Ludford, does not herself write, but models herself on fictional heroines. She learned 'all the cant of sentiment from novels' and talked 'perpetually of delicate embarrassments and exquisite sensibilities, and had probably a lover, as she extremely wanted a confidant; a post which Emmeline with some difficulty declined.' Of the 'sweet novels' she has read, she

Ethelinde ... repeated the question - 'You read history, perhaps?'

'Oh yes, a great deal of history. One must, you know, be acquainted with those things, or else one appears ignorant. But after all 'tis. fatiguing enough. To tell you the truth, my great delight is in novels.'

'Novels,' said Ethelinde, 'are certainly very entertaining.'

'Oh yes, delightful! and the only fault I find with some of the latest is that they are too probable, and I fancy myself reading what is true. Now the thing I like is to be carried out of myself by a fiction quite out of common life, and to get among scenes and people of another world.'

'In that I should think you might easily be gratified.'

'Whenever I am so happy, as to see you at Ludford House,' continued Clarinthia, elated at the attention Ethelinde lent her, 'I will show you a little sketch I have drawn up myself. My heroine falls in love with a young man; quite a divine creature of course, who is obliged to go Ambassador, to Tripoli. She knows not what to do; but at length determines to hire herself into the family of the Tripoline Ambassador here, to learn the language, and accompany her lover as his valet de chambre. This plan, by help of walnuts to change her complexion, and a pair of black mustacios, she accomplishes; then she meets with an amazing number of adventures in France; where she kills two or three men in defence of her lover; and her sex being discovered, a French nobleman becomes enamoured with her, and carries her away by force into a chateau in a wood. But I will not tell you a word more, because I will surprise you with the catastrophe, which is quite original; only one event is borrowed from the Arabian Nights, and one description from Sir Charles Grandison. Rupert indeed says, that with a little application my pen will become truly Richardsonian.'

She now stopped, rather for want of breath than of subject; and Ethelinde enquired of how many volumes the novel was to be.

'Only two volumes,' replied the fair authoress; 'and I believe I have got writing enough to make them. But you know 'tis the fashion to have little books with a wide margin, and a vast deal of white paper; then people read them so easily while their hair is dressing, that is quite comfortable.'

(II, 166-8.)

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understands just as much as makes her 'long to become the heroine of such a history herself ...'  
(Emmeline III, 229-30.)

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Robert Ludford (who prefers 'Rupert' as more literary and romantic) is even more absurd. He bombards Ethelinde with his verses and perfectly insubstantial professions of devotion.

On one occasion he

... thus addressed her, leaning over the back of her chair:

'Well might, alas! the threaten'd vessel sail,  
'When winds and lightnings both at once prevail!'.  
She turned suddenly towards him, with a look expressive of some surprise.

'Exactly in that situation,' said Mr Rupert, 'I find myself. The wind, is my natural affection for you; a sort of sense which stifles every other idea; the lightning, those brilliant eyes, which give me the exact sensation of being electrified.'

(II, 199)

A little later he asks Ethelinde

'... Did you ever see the verses that I wrote on a lady; a very fine girl, upon my honour, who was much celebrated here last year?'

'Never that I recollect.'

'I wonder at that; for they were in all the newspapers and magazines. A friend of mine - friends, you know, will be indiscreet - stole a copy; and sent them to all the prints, under the name of 'the modern Petrarch.' I am almost tempted to repeat to you one stanza.'

'You will oblige me.'

'Lo! Sensibility with iron fang,  
Doth on my palpitating heart-strings hang,  
As more and more they dulcet charms appear,  
And tiptoe Admiration's ardent gaze  
Counts all thy beauties o'er in much amaze,  
And strikes my heart, and rouses to a tear.'

'Are they not exquisite?' said Miss Ludford. 'You cannot imagine what applause Rupert got for them; till it was known who did them, the most celebrated names had the credit of them, and the papers were full of conjectures.'

'Oh a trifle,' interrupted Mr Rupert...

(II, 201-202)

The overt treatment of politics is still sparse and peripheral in Ethelinde. Where it does appear, the treatment is largely confined to criticism of corrupt politicians. There is Royston, the M.P. who readily transfers his support from Ministry to Opposition in the light of no guiding principle but his own advancement; and there is Lord Hawkhurst who has no time for matters - particularly charitable matters - other than

'Political negotiations' and the attending Minister's 'levees'.



Charlotte Smith keeps clear of open discussion of particular political problems at this point of her career.

There is usually a dissolute nobleman in a Charlotte Smith novel, bracketed with her vulgar businessmen for her middle-class disapproval. In Ethelinde, the cynical, libertine Lord Danesforte, who seduces Lady Newenden and sets rapacious eyes on the heroine, joins Lord Hawkhurst as representatives of a loose-principled, selfish aristocracy. Such characters usually contrive to drink, gamble and womanize themselves to death before the end of the tale.

It has been indicated that Charlotte Smith's inferior characters are invariably obsessed by worldly pursuits in contrast to the lofty disdain of hero and heroine for 'the world'. Sexual pleasures, social elevation and political power are common goals, but money is the prime object of pursuit as well as the root of all evil: rich businessmen want more of that commodity, impecunious noblemen strive to recover it, crooked lawyers cheat others out of it, selfish guardians determine to dispense none of it charitably. The noble characters do good by visiting the local poor and relieving them from their scanty resources, but disdain to see the acquisition of wealth as a worthy objective. Yet paradoxically the plot almost invariably turns on money: hero and heroine would commonly be married in the first volume but for lack of funds. To resolve the problem, the author usually has resource to some variation of the traditional but improbable expedient of the accession of a modest fortune from a deceased and previously unknown distant relation. The problem of the inconveniences necessarily implied by a refusal to pursue acquisitive objectives and adopt money values is never really tackled. In Ethelinde the heroine refuses to marry Montgomery until a suitable private income materializes, despite the availability of the Grasmere cottage and the very limited Montgomery family funds. She reasons that Montgomery will suffer constant anguish to see her labouring - presumably she has in mind domestic duties and perhaps

commissioned needlework - and living in a style beneath that to which she is accustomed. Charlotte Smith strives to prevent Ethelinde appearing selfish and overly concerned with financial security, but the excuses seem somewhat feeble. It is arguable that Ethelinde shows level-headedness in insisting on a stable financial basis to her marriage, but her realism on this score has the effect on calling in question her otherworldliness in other areas. Charlotte Smith's irritation and bitterness at her own financial difficulties is always apparent in her novels: she knew one cannot raise children on love and refined sentiment alone and it seemed to her that wealth too often accrued to those conspicuously lacking such feelings.

Celestina appeared nearly two years after Ethelinde. Charlotte Smith worked hard during 1791 preparing Celestina, starting work on Desmond, her next novel, and even 'collecting material' for The Old Manor House.<sup>116</sup> Celestina appeared in four volumes at a cost of twelve shillings and was published by Cadell in the summer of 1791. Again a Smith novel was successful: a second edition appeared the same year, as did an Irish edition, and apparently there were further editions in 1792 and 1794.<sup>117</sup>

Celestina prompted comparisons of Charlotte Smith and Fanny Burney in the Reviews<sup>118</sup> though, as previously indicated, Fanny

116 Phillips op. cit., 63; Catherine Dorset in Scott, op. cit., 38-9.

117 The British Library has the first edition and a French translation of 1795, 'Traduit de l'anglais sur la seconde édition.' In this section I have used the 1791 second edition for reference purposes. Hilbish lists the Irish edition and those of 1792 and 1794 in her bibliography (op. cit., 582), but attributed that of 1792 to the British Museum. This edition does not in fact appear in the British Library Catalogue. In her text Hilbish states Celestina to be of three volumes (op. cit., 138), though she records it correctly as of four volumes in her bibliography. Possibly she was thinking of the Dublin edition; the only one of three volumes I have seen recorded.

118 Critical Review III (Nov 1791), 318; English Review XVIII (Oct 1791), 259.

Burney was disappointed with the work.<sup>119</sup> William Enfield, writing in the Monthly, thought Celestina deserved to be brought forward 'out of the promiscuous crowd' of novels and to be given 'that distinction, to which in every walk of literature, genius is entitled.'<sup>120</sup> The Critical thought Charlotte Smith excelled in the delicacy and verisimilitude of her characterisation.<sup>121</sup> The scenery again was much appreciated, the European Magazine reviewer remarking that

The faculty, indeed, of exhibiting the charms of rural nature in all their beautiful and sublime varieties, seem peculiar to the pen, or rather the pencil of Mrs Smith, for her descriptions frequently present to the mind more perfect pictures than ever painting could express.<sup>122</sup>

Celestina was Charlotte Smith's most romantic effort to date and its exotic and adventurous portions struck Mary Wollstonecraft as having been derived from books rather than from life. She was disappointed with this 'very defective and unnatural' work, though she acknowledged 'many lucid parts scattered with negligent grace' and admired the minor characters and the many 'delicate tints' that made her 'feel the exquisite taste of the mind that guided the pencil.'<sup>123</sup>

A letter to Joseph Warton not previously referred to by Smith scholars reveals that the author herself shared the dissatisfaction of Fanny Burney and Mary Wollstonecraft with Celestina:

I am afraid your partial opinion in regard to the powers I possess, has received no additional strength from the entire perusal of Celestina - for many parts of it are weak; and none except perhaps the close, of equal strength to the former Novels. I wrote it indeed under ... oppression of Spirit from the long and frequently hopeless difficulties in which my children's affairs continue to be involved.<sup>124</sup>

119 See above, pp. 255-6.

120 Monthly Review VI (Nov 1791), 287. Second Series.

121 Critical Review III (Nov 1791), 318. Second Series.

122 European Magazine XX (Oct 1791), 278. See also English Review XVIII (Oct 1791), 260.

123 Analytical Review X (Aug 1791), 409.

124 Letter of August 31st /1791?, British Library Ms Division Add. 42561, fo. 230.

Although Celestina is basically another novel of domestic sensibility, containing the usual sensitive and beleaguered heroine in an English setting, it also transports the reader to more exotic regions than the previous novels, and characterization, situation and incident are romantically heightened. Emmeline, apparently illegitimate, spent her childhood isolated in a Welsh castle; Celestina de Mornay's origins are even more intriguing and mysterious. She is brought up in a convent in Provence, treated 'sometimes with harshness, and always with indifference' (I, 2) <sup>125</sup> by the nuns, though she is a beautiful and charming child. Celestina becomes the playmate of Matilda Willoughby, whose mother is travelling on the Continent. Mrs Willoughby adopts Celestina and takes her to England. Celestina's parentage is a complete mystery which Mrs Willoughby cannot penetrate: a former Superior of the Convent, now deceased, received Celestina 'as a child whose birth it was of the utmost consequence to conceal.' (I, 3). Charlotte Smith has entered the area of Protestant fascination with Catholic holy orders and their allegedly dubious transactions so much a characteristic of English Gothicism and so often to be exploited by Ann Radcliffe.

As the years pass, Celestina and Mrs Willoughby's son, George, grow to love each other. The novel turns on the obstacles to their union. Mrs Willoughby nurses the ambition that George should marry the daughter of wealthy Lord Castlenorth, her dead husband's brother, thus paying off mortgages encumbering estates and restoring the much depleted family fortunes. Mrs Willoughby is distressed when she is acquainted with George's feelings for Celestina and her treatment of the heroine markedly declines in warmth. Her insistence that George should not marry Celestina is urgently intense and on her death bed she extorts a promise from him to this effect.

125 All references in parentheses in this section are to: Celestina. A Novel (London 1791) (Second Edition).

After Mrs Willoughby's death, a suspicion arises, actively encouraged by the malevolent Lady Castlenorth, that Celestina is George's half-sister. In most Smith novels some threat to social convention or moral order hovers fascinatingly: in Ethelinde there is the married Sir Edward's passion for the heroine; in Celestina the lovers are horrified to find they are contemplating what may be an incestuous union.

Even before the introduction of the incest-theme though, Celestina proves Ethelinde's sister in her refusal to marry a poor man for all kinds of selfless reasons: and, as with Ethelinde, the suspicion of a respect for wealth undermines her frequent protestations to the contrary:

Celestina represented to him [George Willoughby] the situation of his fortune; the absolute necessity there was for marrying one who could repair its deficiency and restore him to the splendid affluence of his ancestors.

(I, 108)

They should not marry, she argues, for George would grow to resent her if he was forced to sell his estates and would feel guilty always for breaking his promise to his dying mother.

The possibility that Celestina and Willoughby are closely related separates them as lovers and allows Charlotte Smith to introduce exotic adventures and landscape. Willoughby tours Europe trying to fathom Celestina's parentage in his optimistic moments, and to escape his misery in the more frequent pessimistic periods. George's adventures abroad are retailed in detail. Mutual and heart-breaking misunderstandings arise between the lovers: at one point Celestina assumes George to be married to Lord Castlenorth's daughter and broods darkly on the Isle of Skye; later George is consumed with jealousy when he infers that Celestina, separated from him by their consanguinity, is to marry a rival, Montague Thorold. Ultimately Willoughby discovers Celestina's aristocratic ancestry and her relations in the South of France, and the accession of wealth consequent on this smooths the way to marriage and a happy ending.

Charlotte Smith comes near to attributing to *Celestina* an innate knowledge of her noble birth; she feels not merely that she is an aristocrat of sensibility but also a member of a social class superior to that of many who despise her. She feels

a consciousness of hereditary worth, an innate pride, which would never suffer her to believe herself descended from mean or unworthy persons.

(I, 126)

It is a 'consciousness' that sorts ill with Charlotte Smith's opinion promulgated frequently elsewhere in her works that virtue and worth are little dependent on social class and birth, but are to be found in all persons in harmony with the simplicities of nature and resistant to artificiality and worldliness.

The nature-description in *Celestina* has a romantic intensity that makes similar description in the earlier novels seem chaste and muted. This cannot credibly be attributed to the influence of Ann Radcliffe; on the contrary, the influence at this stage would appear to be all the other way. Ann Radcliffe's first great success, *The Romance of the Forest*, appeared the same year as *Celestina* and there is nothing in Charlotte Smith's early works to indicate she was influenced by Ann Radcliffe's earlier efforts, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789) and *A Sicilian Romance* (1790)<sup>126</sup>.

In Charlotte Smith's descriptions of the Isle of Skye one may see her first full-blooded use in fiction of a combination of landscape, weather and architecture in a way previously exploited by the 'Graveyard' poets and Ossian to produce effects generally characterized as 'gothic'. *Celestina* travels

126 Foster thinks that '*The Romance of the Forest* would never have taken the form it did had not *Celestina* been written' ('Charlotte Smith, pre-Romantic Novelist', *PMLA*, 473). This seems very doubtful since both appeared in the same year. *Celestina* was published in the summer, so Ann Radcliffe would hardly have had time to write and publish her novel before the end of the year.

to Skye to stay with Mr and Mrs Elphinstone. Elphinstone, another Benjamin Smith-like projector of dubious business ventures, is drowned whilst in the throes of his efforts to develop the Hebridean fisheries. Vivid descriptions of storm and shipwreck give way to the recounting of a melancholy visit to Elphinstone's tomb:

A calm but sullen day, with an overclouded sky, threatening snow, was succeeded by a dark but mild evening. The distant sun had left a few lines of red light in the western horizon; and the moon, within a day or two of being at the full, edged with fainter rays the opposite clouds, through which it appeared but at intervals ... Not a breath of air wandered among the channels of the hills, and the water-falls murmured low and hollow at a distance; the sea was calm, and being low on the sands, was hardly heard; while the birds, and few animals who inhabited the land, were returned to their repose.

Around this little chapel, now more than half in ruins, a few rude stones were raised to the memory of the dead of former times. The grass and weeds concealed many, and on the rest no figures but those of crosses rudely cut were now visible ...

As they approached the spot, the ground sounded hollow beneath their feet, and a mournful echo ran round the damp walls. The moon, darting for a moment through the ruined stone-work of the dismantled window, shewed them a broken table that had once been the altar; on which some pieces of the Gothic ornaments of the chapel, and several human bones, were scattered ...

(III, 75-6)

The intensified romanticism of Celestina is apparent not only in this creation of gothic atmosphere, but also in a much fuller employment of nature to reflect and condition human moods. When Celestina first arrives on Skye she contrasts its bleak beauty with the softer 'green delights' she is used to in Southern England; nevertheless, were Willoughby to come the place would be a paradise. Later, when she imagines Willoughby is married to another, the landscape takes on a gloomier aspect in harmony with her despondent mood. Celestina, indeed, wishes to see only those aspects of the scenery which chime with her misery:

A little time before, she had been imagining how pleasant the most desolate of these barren islands might be rendered by the presence of her beloved Willoughby. She now rather sought images of horror. The sun, far distant from this northern region was as faint and languid as the sick thoughts of Celestina: his feeble rays no longer gave any warm colouring to the rugged cliffs that rose above her head, or lent the undulating sea that sparkling brilliance which a few weeks before had given gaiety and cheerfulness even to these scattered masses of almost naked stone, against which the water incessantly broke. Grey, sullen and cold, the waves now rolled towards the shore, where Celestina frequently sat whole hours, as if to count them, when she had in reality no idea present to her but Willoughby lost to her forever - Willoughby forgetting her, and married to Miss Fitz-Hayman!

(III, 39-40)

The landscape here is orchestrated to reflect and reinforce the mood and situation of the heroine, and Celestina marks a step forward in fiction from the use of landscape merely as stage and setting - a picturesque backcloth - towards its more vital incorporation with character and action in an organic whole. Movement in this direction was no doubt inevitable in the Sentimental Novel. As the old methods of conveying excesses of sensibility - tears, swooning, passionate outbursts, the striking of the head and clutching at the heart - became stereotyped, conventional and etiolated, the better novelists resorted to Nature, not only as a stimulant to sensibility in its grander and wilder aspects, but also as a metaphor for the varied and extreme moods and reactions of sentimental heroes and heroines.

Romantic scenery, gothic effects and the impressionable imaginations of sensitive heroines in harrowing adventures come to be combined in such novels as The Mysteries of Udolpho to provide their characteristic Radcliffean atmosphere. The reader still unconvinced of Charlotte Smith's truly anticipating such effects could do no better than turn to those pages of Celestina which describe the heroine's seaside walk on Skye, on a stormy night. The passage begins with a celestial firework display to rival the colour, and perhaps the gaudiness, of any of Ann Radcliffe's scenic set-pieces. The moon is of 'singular appearance':



It was large, and of a dull red, surrounded by clouds of a deep purple, whose skirts seemed touched with flame. Large volumes of heavy vapour were gathering in the sky, and the heaving surges swelled towards the shore, and broke upon it with that sullen regularity that foretells a storm. From the North; arose distinctly the pointed rays of the Aurora Borealis: fiery and portentous, they seemed to flash like faint lightning ...

(III, 49)

This ominous scene and the gathering storm work on the feelings of the heroine:

Celestina, who was in that disposition of mind to which horrors are congenial, walked slowly on notwithstanding; but quitting the cliffs, on account of the gales of wind which now blew from the sea, she went along a narrow path, where there was a cairn, or heap of stones piled loosely together, the work of the first wild natives of the country: and ... she leaned pensively against it, and watched with some surprise the fluctuations of the clouds that were wildly driven by the wind across the disk of the moon, and listened with a kind of chill awe, to the loud yet hollow echo of the wind among the hills; which sometimes sobbed with stormy violence for a moment, and then suddenly sinking was succeeded by a pause more terrible.

(III, 50)

The novelist has by now rendered both heroine and reader susceptible to superstitious imaginings and it comes as no surprise when the 'loneliness of the place' and Celestina's 'desponding spirits' make her 'start with terror' when she thinks she sees 'the shadow of a human form for a moment on the ground'. (III, 51) Meteorologically, calm gives way to storm; in the heroine the progression is to panic: she hurries away but, looking back, fancies she sees a figures motionless on the spot she has just quitted,

... and the strange superstitions of the islands, of which she had heard much since her residing on them, crowding at that moment on her mind, she became extremely terrified, and hurried on with such unguarded speed, that ... she trod on a loose stone ... and she fell with some violence and with considerable pain which, together with the fear she had before felt, produced a momentary stupor ...

(III, 51-2)

In the Radcliffean manner again, this turns out to be an example of the supernatural expliqué: the 'figure' is Montague Thorold, Celestina's unwelcome suitor who has tracked her down in this isolated region.

The writer has a certain advantage over the painter in the creation of landscape, for the novelist can incorporate the changeableness of weather and scenery in his developing 'picture'. Both Charlotte Smith and Ann Radcliffe take full advantage of this resource, though both will sometimes use landscape merely as a passive, fixed and picturesque backcloth. Even in the Skye scenes Charlotte Smith presents the occasional 'Highland View': at one point there is even a figure present, in complete Highland dress, to provide local colour:

... exactly the figure a painter would have chosen to have placed in a landscape, representing the heathy summits and romantic rocks of the Hebrides.

(III, 30-31)

The later Pyrenean scenes of Celestina are more usually emphasised by literary historians as displaying a Radcliffean treatment of nature. This is hardly surprising since such scenes obviously invite comparison with the landscapes of the same region in The Mysteries of Udolpho. There are indeed many Radcliffean phrases in Charlotte Smith's descriptions. Willoughby surveys with 'awe and admiration' the 'stupendous works of the Divine Architect'. (IV, 191) He feels the 'simple and sublime delight' of the 'rude mountains', (IV, 194) their 'stupendous points' (IV, 195) 'covered, by eternal snow' and their 'sharp and barren rocks' and 'savage spots' relieved only by 'a dark and apparently inaccessible wood of firs'. (IV, 196) Occasionally, a 'broad and thundering torrent threw itself; falling with deafening noise, into a rocky cauldron, so far below that the eye could not fathom it.' (IV, 196) As in the Skye scenes, there is a storm giving scope for Radcliffean contrasts of light and shade and a series of meteorological effects compressed into a few lines for additional power. After

the 'tremendous bursts' of the storm, a serene scene ensues and Willoughby's response is reminiscent of Emily's awed first view of Udolpho in the evening light:

The last rays of the departed sun were now reflected from the summits of snow, the air became perfectly serene, and Willoughby saw distinctly every object around him,

(IV, 199)

and 'the moon was rising in majestic beauty behind him.' (IV, 200) The orchestration of light and shade to produce a sublime effect is not the only Radcliffean touch: Willoughby hears music drifting hauntingly up to him:

... the sound of a human voice, in slow cadence, accompanied by some musical instrument, was borne on the faint breeze that arose from the lowlands.

(IV, 200)

The Castle of Rochemorte nearby completes the romantic scene. This building - ancient, rugged, with ruined and overgrown outer fortifications but of basic 'ponderous strength' - is Charlotte Smith's first fully-realised forbidding Gothic pile:

The whole was composed of grey stone; the towers, at each end, rose in frowning grandeur, above the rest of the building; and having only loops, and no windows, impressed ideas of darkness and imprisonment, while the moss and wall-flowers filled the interstices of the broken stones; and an infinite number of birds made their nests among the shattered cornices and half-fallen battlements, filling the air with their shrill cries.

Such is the effect of this scene and the 'gloomily magnificent' interior of Rochemorte, that Willoughby responds with all the romanticism that the writer must have hoped for in her readers:

Willoughby, as he marched gravely along, through the long gallery, and across the gloomy hall, fancied himself a knight of romance; and that some of the stories of enchanted castles, and wandering adventures, of which he had been so fond in his early youth, were here realized.

(IV, 231)

It is not surprising that the Pyrenean scenes of Charlotte Smith and Ann Radcliffe are similar: they did, after all, both rely on Ramond de Carbonnière's Observations faites dans les

Pyrenees, (1789).<sup>127</sup> The region makes Willoughby think of Rousseau's New Eloise (IV 193), since the rural isolation and natural beauty has produced a simple, but courteous and hospitable peasantry, much given to singing plaintive pastoral songs. (IV 209) A similar idealization of the peasantry, permeated by virtue from surrounding natural beauties, is to be found in the work of Ann Radcliffe.<sup>128</sup>

Thus far, similarities between Charlotte Smith and Ann Radcliffe in their treatment of nature have been indicated. Yet literary historians are commonly anxious to distinguish the two writers. The Radcliffeans write of their author's unrivalled powers of lyrical description and creation of atmosphere. Yet it is difficult to discern any striking qualitative difference between Charlotte Smith's romantic descriptions and those of Ann Radcliffe: the same picturesque natural objects, play of light and weather, and sonorously adjectival descriptions; the same harmonizing of mood with nature; the same tendency to pass from natural sublimities to specifically gothic properties and quasi-supernatural experiences, occur in both. This could well be a scene confronting Willoughby in the Pyrenees:

It was when the heat and light were declining that the carriage entered a rocky defile, which shewed, as through a telescope reversed, distant plains, and mountains opening beyond, lighted up with all the purple splendour of the setting sun. Along this deep and shadowy perspective a river, which was seen descending among the cliffs of a mountain, rolled with impetuous force, fretting and foaming amidst the dark rocks in its descent, and then flowing in a limpid lapse to the brink of other precipices, whence again it fell with thundering strength to the abyss, throwing its misty clouds of spray, high in the air, and seeming to claim the sole empire of this solitary world.

In fact, it is a scene viewed by Ellena in The Italian (1797).<sup>129</sup>

127 See Baker, History of the English Novel V, 197-8; Hilbish, op. cit., 472 n., Tompkins, op. cit., 262.

128 See for example Chapter xviii of The Romance of the Forest.

129 Ann Radcliffe, The Italian; or, The Confessional of the Black Penitents, A Romance (London 1827), 29.

Certainly, Charlotte Smith increasingly takes a coolly botanical interest in nature, in chaste contrast to her romantic passages, with a tendency to footnotes attributing the latin nomenclature to her flora and fauna:

The short turf beneath ... [the trees] ... appeared spangled with the soldinella and fringed\* pink, or blushing with the scented wreaths of the Daphne Cneorum - while through the cracks and hollows of the surrounding wall of rock, were filtered small and clear streams, that crept away among the tufts of juniper, rosemary, and the Rhododendron of the Alps<sup>7</sup>, that clothed the less abrupt declivity.

\* Dianthus superbus

7 Rhododendron Alpina; dwarf rosebay. This plant supplies firing to the shepherds of the Pyrenees.

(III, 192)

However, Ann Radcliffe likes sometimes to temper her romanticism with the realism of botanical particularity too:

... Ellena Followed ... up a path that wound among the rocks, and was coolly overshadowed by thickets of almond-trees, figs, broad-leaved myrtle, and evergreen rose-bushes, intermingled with the strawberry-tree, beautiful in fruit and blossoms, the yellow jasmine, the delightful acacia mimosa, and a variety of other fragrant plants.<sup>130</sup>

It is misleading to attribute a superior and unique facility in romantic scene-painting, passage for passage, to Ann Radcliffe. What is true is that Ann Radcliffe's romantic landscapes and landscapes-cum-gothicism permeate and condition her novels in their entirety; and landscape, characters and plot are interrelated from start to finish to give them their characteristic romantic homogeneity. Indeed, character is drawn and plot organized to introduce and support 'description' and romantic or gothic atmosphere whenever possible. One has no hesitation in calling these exotic, orchestrated works 'Romances', whereas the term does not satisfy if applied to Charlotte Smith's works. The scenery and gothicism in even the most romantic Smith works is quantitatively much less and always intermittent: the romantic elements are suspended during long passages of domestic sensibility, social comedy and political and social didacticism.

The weakness of such a structure is its risk of heterogeneity - changes of tone consequent on the juxtapositioning of realistic and romantic elements - but it does avoid the satiation arising from unremitting lyricism and perpetual strong sensation. Miss Tompkins, too, finds an excess of 'glories' in Ann Radcliffe:

... the reader turns with approval to the sobriety of Mrs Charlotte Smith's English scenes and the structural rightness of their introduction.<sup>131</sup>

It is not invariably that the scenery enters unobtrusively and inevitably - sometimes it seems that Charlotte Smith has decided arbitrarily to give her readers a lyrical treat - but she manages it sufficiently well sufficiently often for her admirers to regret the attention commonly paid to Ann Radcliffe's handling of landscape at Charlotte Smith's expense.

Celestina has its share of minor characters rather successfully drawn. Female antagonists to the heroine are invariably more deadly than the male in Charlotte Smith's novels and it is Lady Castlenorth, ambitious that her unprepossessing daughter should marry George Willoughby, who works assiduously to separate him from Celestina. Lady Castlenorth thus plays a similar role to Lady Montreville of Emmeline, but she has a character all her own. The daughter of a doctor, her social elevation resulting from her marriage has given her notions of consequence loftier even than those Lady Montreville derives from pride of birth. Lady Castlenorth has been 'advancing in arrogance and ostentation' since her marriage, and considers, herself 'born for the government and amendment of the world'. Her steamrollering determination to dominate relates her to Jane Austen's Lady Catherine de Bourgh:

131 Tompkins, op. cit., 263. Sir Egerton Brydges made much the same point: 'In Mrs Radcliffe's works ... the narrative is often of little use but to introduce the description to which it is subservient; in Mrs Smith's the description is only used to illustrate the story, and never forced into the service: it is always natural, and such as every reader of taste thinks he should feel himself in similar situations.' Brydges mentions the 'rich though sometimes gaudy colouring' of Ann Radcliffe's

... Lady Castlenorth was as well as by her rank as her talents and her travels, qualified in her own mind for universal dominion. Not content therefore with governing her Lord with despotic sway ... she assumed towards the rest of the world a style equally dictatorial. Her opinion was strongly enforced on every topic that came before her; in private anecdote, in public debates, in literature, in politics, in fashions, she was equally omniscient; and whether the conversation ran on taxes or taste, in laying out grounds or in setting out a dinner, in making a peace or a poem, she understood all, descanted on all, and could decide on all, in a way from which few of her auditors had at the moment courage to appeal.

(I, 81)

Charlotte Smith's early heroines are always troubled by undesirable suitors and in Celestina they beset her on all sides. At one point in the second volume Celestina is admired not only by the absent Willoughby, but also by his friend Vavasour, by Montague Thorold and by his libertine brother Captain Edmund. The plot is thus complicated by rivalries between the suitors and Celestina is to be romantically distressed by a duel fought between Vavasour and Montague. Vavasour is a less prominent but more unprincipled Delamere, but the reader is never tempted to think he might succeed with the heroine, as is the case with regard to Emmeline's fiery suitor. Like Delamere, Vavasour is not malignantly vicious, but a life of affluent indulgence has led him to expect to satisfy his appetites at will, and any obstacles put in their way provoke passionate outbursts and excessive drinking. Montague Thorold is a different case: it is true that he has his sillinesses - he has a propensity for quoting romantic verse and playing a romantic part derived from his reading - yet he is a 'scholar', is not bent simply on sexual gratification, and has none of the coarseness of the other unsuccessful suitors. His love for Celestina is genuine and he presents her with considerable problems in how best to cope with

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nature descriptions, but prefers Charlotte Smith's novels to her sister-novelist's Romances, since they offer 'views of life and manners' and realistic delineation of character, in addition to pleasant description. (Censura Literaria VIII, 104.)

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him. The usual contemptuous hauteur is not in order here: Celestina cannot 'prevail upon herself to be rude'. (II, 156) Nor can she for long 'pretend ignorance of his meaning', (II, 176), another standard resource of heroines in such situations. Ultimately, she must take Thorold's attentions seriously, tell him she is too fondly attached to Willoughby to return Thorold's love as he deserves, and offer him 'friendship and esteem' (II, 179) instead. As in Ethelinde's relationship with Sir Edward Newenden, the reader here is interested by a credibly human problem and develops considerable sympathy for Thorold: the convenient distinction between virtuous and vicious suitors cannot be made this time. The reader may feel some disappointment when Thorold is paired off subsequently with Anzoletta, Celestina's newly-discovered relation, for the sake of a tidily happy ending.

There is some scorn of presumptuous vulgarity in Celestina: the heroine is disgusted by the 'purse-proud pertness' of a grocer and a chandler in a public coach. (I, 128-36) On the other hand, Mrs Elphinstone, the daughter of a merchant is portrayed with considerable sympathy. There is also some notable sympathy for the lot of servants, perhaps based on Charlotte's experiences in Richard Smith's London house after her marriage. Jessy Woodburn, a servant in a City house, is allowed to tell her story to the heroine, and to complain of the 'dark, damp places' (I, 150) in basements of buildings in 'close and narrow streets' where she and her fellows were condemned to work, and where they 'hardly saw daylight from one end of the year to the other'. (I, 153) However, Jessy relates her narrative impeccably in language indistinguishable from that of a gentlewoman and is thus firmly distinguished from Charlotte Smith's usual servants, colloquial and tending to comicality. Charlotte Smith also shows some impatience with expected attitudes of automatic moral outrage in her treatment of the 'kept woman', Emily Cathcart. The other members of the Cathcart family are viewed with an approval unalloyed by Emily's straying beyond the pale and she herself is allowed virtues to redeem her from total shame. Mixed with conventional condemnation of extra-marital sexual relations, and



seeming acceptance of the view that such conduct can be atoned for only by an irreversible decline, is the presentation of Emily's loving and selfless deathbed concern for the welfare and happiness of Vavasour.

The politics in Celestina is again peripheral and incidental but there are signs of that enthusiasm for liberty which was to permeate Desmond. At this stage, Charlotte Smith resists the temptation to treat of the French Revolution at length, despite Willoughby's travels in France in the summer of 1789. He hears only from afar 'a noble struggle for freedom' in Paris, (IV, 189) and Charlotte Smith limits the expression of her opinions on the Revolution to the Count de Bellegarde's assertion that he wishes to

... assist in the glorious business of securing the liberty of France - yes! - the immortal work of defending myriads yet unborn from ever suffering the oppressions, under which I have groaned.

(IV, 293)

In Charlotte Smith's three first novels, the heroine is the central consciousness of the tale. It is principally with the heroine's thoughts, feelings and reactions that author and reader are concerned, and with the other characters only in so far as they impinge on her. The reader sees the action mainly through the eyes of the heroine and learns of events in which she is not physically involved, and the doings of characters separated from her, chiefly by means of reports and letters delivered to her: she is rarely 'off stage'. Of course, the narrator guides the reader's responses and there are many authorial intrusions and analyses, but these are generally to be taken as being identical with the heroine's views. The tracing of the inner life of the heroine forms a considerable part of the novel, since the heroine of sensibility is so often isolated and forced to rely on her own resources. At such times the reader is presented with the heroine's psychological and emotional life: her inward debates, agonizings and reflections on experience, are described in considerable detail. This is not accomplished by any attempt at a direct representation of the thinking mind in a 'stream of consciousness' manner, but by the traditional technique of an omniscient, third-person narrator

privy to every movement of the heroine's mind and every fluctuating and transient emotion. This is Celestina's response to her belief that Willoughby is to marry, or is actually married to, another:

... to Willoughby she determined not to write. That trembling solicitude with which she had been accustomed to expect letters from him, it was now, she thought, time to subdue, for she persuaded herself that never again they would bring to her anything but anguish and regret: and yet by those contradicting sensations to which violent attachments subject the human heart she incessantly indulged herself in thinking of all those happy hours which she had passed with him, whom she fancied deserved little or no regret, of whom she ought not to think at all, and yet was so fond of recollecting, that every conversation was irksome to her, and every employment a task, which took off her attention a moment from him.

"Ti perdo! ti lascio, non ti vedro piu -" she repeated incessantly to herself, some times with tears of tenderness, and some times with those painful emotions of mingled anger and regret which press on the heart when pride and resentment are struggling with affection. In other moods she reproached herself for thus cherishing this unhappy passion, tried to recal those days of resignation when, without hope of ever being his, she yet preferred Willoughby to all mankind; and to dismiss from her mind for ever the recollection of the few weeks when he had awakened that hope, and called forth all her sensibility only as it should seem to render her wretched ...

(III, 43-5)

Though this is cast in reported speech and gathers thoughts and emotions distinct in time, and not originally integrated in one 'session' of reflection, the heroine is rather less distant from the reader than such an analysis would seem to suggest. The leisurely sentences, much qualified and containing conflicting emotions and ideas, do suggest the movement of Celestina's mind. So close, too, is the identification of the narrator with Celestina that, when Charlotte Smith uses the expression 'she incessantly indulged herself', there is conveyed not merely an authorial assessment, a mild moral censure from 'outside', but also Celestina's own awareness that she perhaps should think of other things, but cannot.

Charlotte Smith's sentimental heroines, like most others of the breed, do rather savour their distress, and when such inner dramas as that of Celestina above are raging, withdraw whenever possible from company to their rooms so that their sorrows may be

indulged to the full. Though her heroines are aware of a duty to present a cheerful face to the world and conscientiously to undertake their social responsibilities, they find the day-to-day business of living and intercourse with worldly beings hardly to be borne; a cruel exacerbation of their agony. Celestina herself,

... In these gloomy moods ... was quite unable to remain a moment in company, especially in the company of Elphinstone, who, with the true projector's infatuation, fancied every body else as much interested about the fishery as he was; and persecuted her with details ...

(III, 45)

A Charlotte Smith heroine is introduced usually with the author's commendation of her beauty, intelligence, moral worth and exquisite sensibility. However, in Celestina there are signs that Charlotte Smith - always ready to provide strictures on the incredible perfections of the usual fictional heroine - was uneasy with her own creation in this respect. She unexpectedly provides a detailed analysis of Celestina's character in the latter half of the third volume, long after it has been minutely revealed in speech and action, in which she labours to give her heroine a couple of minor blemishes. Celestina has heard of Montague Thorold's many past infatuations, and

... her self-love, though no being ever appeared to have less, was gratified by having thus fixed a man so volatile and unsteady, though she never could, nor ever had given him reason to suppose she could, return the passion she had thus inspired.

(III, 184)

Then the reader is told:

... if Celestina had any fault, it was a sort of latent pride, the child of conscious worth and elevated understanding; which, though she was certainly obscurely and possibly dishonourably born, she never could subdue, and, perhaps, never seriously tried to subdue it. She felt, that in point of intellect she was superior to almost everybody she conversed with ...

(III, 185-86)

Charlotte Smith's concessions here to realism were limited but admirable, but were immediately nullified, so compelling and insidious was the convention of the heroine's perfection and, perhaps, the author's habit of self-identification. She provided one-and-a-half pages of mitigation and justification of these feelings

in Celestina, concluding with a statement totally erasing the fault:

Her pride, therefore ... was rather a virtue than a blemish, and taught her to value herself, but never to despise the rest of the world.

(III, 138)

In Celestina, Charlotte Smith began to experiment with the removal of the heroine from the centre of the stage for substantial periods. Then, the reader sees through Willoughby's eyes and shares his agony when, after hearing tales of Celestina's alleged loss of affection for him, he misinterprets her subsequent conduct as indicating she is to marry Montague Thorold. Willoughby's pride then prevents his speaking to Celestina and eliciting an explanation. Such a shift of viewpoint in the novel is essential to this particular instance of the propensity of love to run unsmoothly, and for the generation of suspense as the reader holds his breath lest Willoughby should conclude his position is hopeless and, in despair, marry another. The novel also follows Willoughby to France and the Pyrenees, leaving Celestina in England and uninvolved in the action for a considerable time. In her later novels, Charlotte Smith was to repeat this formula often and, indeed, to make her hero the central consciousness: her next novel, Desmond, is perhaps the best example. The titles of her later novels - so often identical with the hero's name - reinforce the point. No doubt Charlotte Smith felt some desire to portray more fully the sensibility of men for its own sake, but I suspect that her need to provide the novelty of adventure and travel, find new and unusual situations, and expand the interest from purely domestic situations, was the principal motive. A greater variety of experience was open to men and men could move easily into and through exotic situations and settings, making varied social contacts, without burdening the author with many of the considerations of reticence and propriety which made it difficult to portray an adventurous heroine. Simply, women had too little acknowledged right to independent action and were under too strict a social imperative to avoid situations that threatened

their reputations to be easily shuttled through hair-raising escapades in foreign parts (though Rosalie in Montalbert is an exception). It was left to Ann Radcliffe to convert a liability to an asset by making luridly unconventional and exotic situations which threatened her heroine's respectability and integrity the very basis of the fascination of her novels.

## II

The Later Fiction

<u>Desmond</u>	1792
<u>The Old Manor House</u>	1793
<u>The Wanderings of Warwick</u>	1794
<u>The Banished Man</u>	1794
<u>Montalbert</u>	1795
<u>Marchmont</u>	1796
<u>The Young Philosopher</u>	1798
<u>The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer</u>	1800?-1802

In 1793 Charlotte Smith published what is generally agreed to be her best novel, The Old Manor House; the previous year had seen the appearance of her worst, Desmond. Yet Desmond is of considerable interest as a contemporary political document and as marking a turning-point in Charlotte Smith's literary career. This novel was the author's most controversial work, owing both to its alleged immoralities and its extensive, sympathetic treatment of the French Revolution. Charlotte Smith's revolutionary ardour, only faintly foreshadowed in the largely English and domestic settings of her earlier works, caught the reviewers by surprise and such unequivocal revelation of her political views displeased conservative readers. No doubt the slight waning of her popularity that can be discerned after Desmond was due in part to fading novelty and the ascendancy of such rivals as Ann Radcliffe, but a proportion of Charlotte Smith's readers defected for reasons of political antipathy, or simply because they preferred the escapism of romance to earnest instruction in their political and social responsibilities.

Desmond is at times more a political tract than a novel, containing revolutionist philosophy, anti-royalist historical surveys, discussions of contemporary political literature and

political analyses of English and French society. In addition to such undigested discursive passages, the narrative itself is highly politicized: the hero is an ardent revolutionist who observes events in France (and English reactions), while a succession of satirically-portrayed anti-revolutionists pass across the stage.

Whatever its faults as to organic homogeneity, the fascination of Desmond as a contemporary political document is enhanced by the fact that the author was responding to recent events in France and England as she wrote: the action of the novel covers the period from June 1790 to the autumn of 1791, and though Charlotte Smith was collecting material for Desmond while writing Celestina before 1791, she was incorporating very recent events in her writing through the year 1791.<sup>132</sup> For instance, she introduced what amounted to a hostile review of Burke's Reflections in Desmond, in letters supposedly written by the hero in December, 1790 and January, 1791. Events in France during the period covered by the action of the novel can clearly be seen to have influenced it. 1790 saw a series of religious measures in France: nationalization and sales of Church lands, higher salaries for poor clergy, the appointment of bishops by secular committees and the dissolution of religious orders. Charlotte Smith refers frequently to disputes over the Revolution's treatment of religion, sometimes dramatizing the arguments through the creation of English and French clerics. In addition, the flight of Louis XVI to Varennes in June 1791 and the consequent events leading to his acquiescence in the new Constitution in September 1791 are commented on from time to time in Desmond. Like many a bourgeois revolutionist in England, Charlotte Smith

132 The Preface is dated June 20th 1792, though of course this could well have been written some months after the novel itself was roughly complete. At the most, Charlotte Smith could not have been writing more than six to nine months after the occurrence of some of the historical events to which the novel refers.

saw Mirabeau as the most admirable of the French leaders and a passage in Desmond laments his untimely death.

Catherine Dorset remarks that Charlotte Smith met 'violent advocates of the French Revolution' in Brighton and caught the 'contagion' of radical opinions from them.<sup>133</sup> Certainly, her radicalism is less qualified in Desmond than in any previous work (and more outspoken than in subsequent post-Terror works, when she was on the defensive). However, the implication that Desmond was an aberration will not do. Charlotte Smith's radicalism was implicit in her demonstrations of the unreasonableness of various social conventions, inequalities and corruptions in earlier works. No doubt conversation with her radical acquaintances made her systematize her views, in so far as she ever did so, and the heady optimism of the early days of the Revolution gave her confidence to express them less guardedly, but her radicalism was created more by her own unfortunate experiences and difficulties and by a natural generous sympathy, than by eloquently persuasive friends. Disappointment with events in France, and a relationship with a French emigré created by her daughter's marriage, was to modify her liberatarianism, but not destroy it; exposure to radical views confirmed and encouraged her reformism, but did not create it.

Charlotte Smith had approached Robinson earlier with a view to his publishing Ethelinde, but at the end of the day sold it to Cadell. Perhaps in 1792 she still considered she could earn a more handsome return with another publishing house or possibly she needed to find a publisher who would have no qualms in publishing a radical work: at any rate, it was Robinson, the publisher of many radical writers of the Foxite connexion, who published Desmond, a Novel in three volumes at three shillings

133 Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 38.



each in the early summer. Despite the controversy it provoked, or perhaps because of it, a second edition and a Dublin edition appeared the same year, followed by a four-volume French edition in Paris in 1793. However, the apparent lack of further editions suggests that after the initial excitement the publisher and reading public agreed with Sir Walter Scott's assessment of Charlotte Smith's fourth novel as 'decidedly the worst of her compositions.'<sup>134</sup>

Hilbish remarks that Desmond 'left extant more critical comments than any other novel by Mrs Smith.'<sup>135</sup> The huge boulders of doctrine, impeding and diverting the stream of narrative, with the action often clumsily manipulated to enable the politics to be introduced, created a formal weakness that provided grounds for criticism even by reviewers not hostile to the politics. Reviewers found cause for complaint also on grounds of sexual immorality. Lionel Desmond makes love to a Frenchwoman, Josephine de Boisbelle, and an illegitimate child results. This episode is not indispensable to the plot, though it does provide an unconvincing explanation of Desmond's residing close to the adored but married Geraldine Verney in isolated rural Herefordshire: Josephine and the child have been secreted nearby to avoid shame and scandal. Several reviewers of stern rectitude, unappeased by Charlotte Smith's striving to make Desmond's attachment to a married woman platonic, found the de Boisbelle episode too much to countenance, and were unimpressed by his staunch sexual self-denial throughout the rest of the novel. The Critical reviewer criticised the episode on both literary and moral grounds:

The connection with madame Boisbelle is unnecessarily introduced; for the only purpose it answers, viz. to increase the perplexity previous to the catastrophe, is

134 Scott, Journal, 1825-32 (Edinburgh 1891), 156.

135 Hilbish, op. cit., 146.

scarcely perceived among the more affecting circumstances of the other events. Besides: we may be romantic, but we felt our esteem for Desmond in some degree lessened by it.<sup>136</sup>

William Enfield's objections in the Monthly were frankly moral:

... the virtuous Desmond should not ... have been suffered so far to forget himself and his Geraldine, as to have fallen into a criminal amour with a married woman.<sup>137</sup>

Despite the growth of strong feelings in England in 1791-92 against the Revolution, the Reviews did not censure Desmond heavily on political grounds. Yet this is not surprising: the Monthly, with its Dissenting tradition, could be expected to support Charlotte Smith's libertarianism, and the Critical was in the process of changing from Tory to Foxite Whig. The virulent Anti-Jacobin Review was not to appear until 1798, nor the less strident British Critic until 1793. The Analytical's approval of Charlotte Smith's warm defence of 'the cause of freedom' and 'shrewd satire' directed against its opponents could be taken for granted, and Mary Wollstonecraft duly obliged.<sup>138</sup> With the Reviews in Foxite hands, conservative outrage was not recorded in those journals.

The Critical reviewer strove to praise a novel of Foxite sentiment without alienating any remaining Tory readers and, in a piece of rather tame fence-sitting, stated that Charlotte Smith's views on French politics would

be differently judged of according to the taste, more properly, according to the political opinions, of the readers.<sup>139</sup>

The reviewer appreciated that Charlotte Smith had 'spoken as she thought' and did not object in principle to a woman's concerning herself with political matters. Yet he doubted the legitimacy

136 Critical Review (Second Series) VI (Sept 1792), 100.

137 Monthly Review (Second Series) IX (Dec 1792), 412.  
The European Magazine also objected to the episode (XXII (July 1792), 22.).

138 Analytical Review XIII (Aug 1792), 428.

139 Critical Review (Second Series) VI (Sept 1792). 100.

of contemporary politics in a novel and stressed the need to state fairly the arguments on both sides, if such matters were brought in. Charlotte Smith, having 'exhausted various plans in the department of novel writing', had attempted a new one. Surprisingly, the reviewer thought Desmond a success apart from the politics: the numerous episodes kept the mind in 'pleasing agitation' and the characters were 'well developed, or artfully contrasted.' He also appreciated the Gothic touches in Desmond - another literary fashion adopted more and more by Charlotte Smith in the middle and later years of her career. Geraldine's bandit-plagued search for her husband in France was conducted with so much skill, and worked up with so much terror and pathos, as to fix the rank of this last work of Mrs Smith in the very first class.<sup>140</sup>

The Monthly was all enthusiasm for Desmond apart from its momentary disapproval of the de Boisbelle episode. Enfield reproduced three passages from the novel strong in the revolutionary cause and critical of 'the present defects of the British Government', and agreed wholeheartedly with Charlotte Smith's opinion that women had a right to political interests and views, and to express them. He saw Desmond as an exemplary instance of a new kind of novel:

Among the various proofs which the present age affords, that the female character is advancing in cultivation, and rising in dignity, may be justly reckoned the improvements that are making in the kind of writing which is more immediately adapted to the amusement of female readers. Novels, which were formerly little more than simple tales of love, are gradually taking a higher and more masculine tone, and are becoming the vehicles of useful instruction.<sup>141</sup>

The English was non-committal towards the politics in Desmond, contenting itself with the wish that Charlotte Smith would, in the light of her satirical facility, turn her talents to the writing of a comedy.<sup>142</sup> The European Magazine merely

140 Ibid.

141 Monthly Review (Second Series) IX (Dec 1792), 406.

142 English Review XX (Sept 1792), 176.

stated that the novel was

agreeably enlivened by discussions on the new face of affairs in France ... our Authoress has certainly vindicated the cause of French liberty with much acuteness.

It objected to the 'crowd of improbabilities huddled together' but concluded on a paean of praise:

Desmond, as a novel, towers far above the common productions of the day; and for its morality, blended so easily and delicately with the sentiments of liberty, it will we doubt not, be recognized as a work not less useful than entertaining. It is not inferior to any of Mrs Smith's former productions and a more close adherence to nature has removed what we formerly thought defective in taste. The style is more pure and simple, and consequently produces more effect upon the heart.<sup>143</sup>

This review is rather blithely unaware of the doubts in more conservative quarters as to the compatibility of 'morality' with Charlotte Smith's kind of 'sentiments of liberty'.

Certainly, it overrates the artistic merits of Desmond. Even this review, however, contains an ominous phrase which was to recur in reviews of later Smith works: Desmond was 'not inferior to any of Mrs Smith's former productions ...'. Such a sentiment, initially approving, was to seem more an expression of disappointment than praise for consistency as Charlotte Smith's popularity failed to maintain its highest level.

The Reviews, then, were not unkind to Desmond, though there were rather more criticisms than Charlotte Smith was used to. Her later novels were to bear the brunt of critical hostility when the Foxite Reviews no longer monopolized the field, when the Reign of Terror had shocked even liberals, and when anti-radical feeling in Britain had intensified further. Desmond appeared a heinous work to some more in retrospect than at the time of its publication.

As regards its alleged sexual immorality, Hilbish remarks that some readers interpreted Desmond as encouraging wives to desert their husbands and, identifying Geraldine with the author, recalled Charlotte's own separation from Benjamin Smith.<sup>144</sup>

143 European Magazine XXII (July 1792), 22-3.

144 Hilbish op. cit., 151.

Catherine Dorset implies that there were sceptical comparisons of Geraldine's 'innocent' love for Desmond with Charlotte Smith's friendship with Hayley: Desmond 'brought a host of literary ladies in array against her, armed with all the malignity which envy could inspire!'<sup>145</sup>

Charlotte Smith was in some measure prepared for criticism of Desmond and attempted to forestall it in her preface to the novel. She anticipated both the moral criticisms and the political disagreements. As regards Desmond's 'ardent but concealed passion for a married woman', she certainly did not mean to 'encourage or justify' such attachments, but no delineation of character was more interesting

than that of a man capable of such a passion so generous and disinterested as to seek the good of its object; nor any story more moral, than one that represents the existence of an affection so regulated.<sup>146</sup>

She justified the dramatised political passages (conveniently ignoring the discursive ones) by claiming them as typical of actual conversations she had heard during the previous year in England and France and therefore permissible in a novel purporting to give a realistic contemporary picture:

In carrying on my story in those countries, and at a period when their political situation (but particularly that of the latter) is the general topic of discourse in both; I have given to my imaginary characters the arguments I have heard on both sides; and if those in favour of one party have evidently the advantage, it is not owing to my partial representation, but to the predominant power of truth and reason, which can neither be altered nor concealed.<sup>147</sup>

After thus nailing her colours to the mast, Charlotte Smith went on to re-emphasise her role as a friend to France and an opponent of the national prejudice that saw France as England's natural enemy.

The Preface to Desmond also reveals Charlotte Smith at her most militantly feminist:

145 Catherine Dorset in Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 39.

146 Charlotte Smith Desmond, a Novel (Dublin 1792), ii.

147 Ibid, ii-iii.

But woman is said to have no business with politics - Why not? - Have they no interest in the scenes that are acting around them, in which they have fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, or friends engaged? - Even in the commonest course of female education, they are expected to acquire some knowledge of history; and yet, if they are to have no opinion of what is passing, it avails little that they should be informed of what has passed, in a world where they are subject to such mental degradation; where they are censured as affecting masculine knowledge if they happen to have any understanding; or despised as insignificant triflers if they have none.<sup>148</sup>

Charlotte Smith was always sensitive to charges that such 'knowledge' could be acquired by women only by sacrificing 'domestic virtues' or neglecting 'domestic duties': in Desmond she tartly claims that she became an author 'in the observance not in the breach of duty'.<sup>149</sup>

The plot of Desmond (to ignore the political elements for the moment) is a variation on Charlotte Smith's usual romantic recipe. Poverty of the leading characters as an obstacle to their union is here replaced by the prior marriage of the heroine, Geraldine, to the dissolute, ne'er-do-well, cruelly indifferent and unfaithful Verney. Geraldine had been forced into marriage by her family, like Josephine de Boisbelle later in the novel and not unlike Charlotte Smith herself: indeed, Geraldine is another reflection of her creator, though this time a nostalgic younger version. Lionel Desmond, the hero, is determined to cease the 'dangerous indulgence' of thinking of Geraldine's attractions<sup>150</sup> (a resolution he makes and breaks continually throughout the novel), and to this end, and also to keep an eye on Geraldine's unsteady younger brother, Waverly, he crosses the Channel to France. Desmond keeps up a regular correspondence with the more mature Bethel, fourteen years his senior, who regards himself as the hero's guardian, since he holds money in trust for

148 Ibid., iii.

149 Ibid.

150 Desmond never expresses his feelings for Geraldine to her except in a most circumspect and platonic manner. Turner says 'Desmond's is a kind of courtly love minus the adultery'. (op. cit., 115.)

Desmond until the young man reaches the age of twenty-five. In addition to political events and philosophies, Desmond and Bethel discuss the hero's feelings for Geraldine and the doings of a number of minor characters. In France Desmond befriends the admirable revolutionist aristocrat, Montfleuri, but despises his reactionary uncle, the Count d'Hauteville. The hero is seriously wounded in a duel as a result of his extricating Waverly from marriage-snares set by a designing family, but recovers. Meanwhile, Verney has gone from bad to worse, has wasted his wife's fortune, and is in desperate financial straits. Desmond discreetly pays Geraldine's debts through Bethel, rescuing her and her children from absolute want. She lives in the country, separated from her husband, who keeps a 'courtezan' in a Yorkshire house. Verney eventually becomes bankrupt and flees to the Continent, where he soon finds himself with gambling debts to the 'veteran debauché', the Duc de Romagnecourt. He intends to force Geraldine to become the Duke's mistress, but she resists de Romagnecourt's advances when the latter visits England. In due course Verney instructs her to go to France with her children. Geraldine obeys and travels to Paris, but withdraws to the Gothic atmosphere of Meadon to avoid an outbreak of small-pox and await Verney. Verney, meanwhile, is wounded near Avignon in a revolutionary skirmish, fighting on the aristocratic side. Geraldine rushes to be near him but is harassed by banditti in the Auvergne. Desmond, with three servants, appears on the scene in the nick of time to drive off her persecutors and he continues with Geraldine to Verney's bedside. The dying husband, stricken with remorse, commends Geraldine to Desmond's care and expires, stirring 'paroxysms of grief' in his long-suffering wife. The novel ends with Desmond hinting that only a decent interval of mourning now stands in the way of marriage to Geraldine, despite the aberration of his brief affair with Josephine de Boisbelle and the birth of their illegitimate child.

Despite Charlotte Smith's move towards the Novel of Doctrine and Political Purpose in Desmond, the above summary shows the work to be based on her usual basic sentimental plot of distressed and complicated love, spiced with Gothic thrills and elements of suspense and adventure. It is odd how little use the novelists of this period made of the opportunities for adventure provided by the upheavals in France. Charlotte Smith was one of the few to seize upon the ready-made situations of high drama thus provided, as a change from the usual run of highly-contrived fictional situations. In this respect she prepared the way for Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities and the works of Baroness D'Orzcy, who was not to be born until 1865.

Desmond was Charlotte Smith's only fully epistolary novel and she handles the difficulties of the convention with some resourcefulness. Most of the letters pass between Desmond and Bethel (with Bethel rather inactive and passive), thus placing the hero for the first time in a Smith novel firmly at the centre of interest. Occasionally letters from Geraldine to her sister Fanny Waverly appear.

A difficulty of the epistolary method encountered when the young hero or heroine writes to a guardian of the troubles he suffers, is that the recipient of the letters tends to seem unnaturally passive or even callously unconcerned. The author must have the hero report his troubles and the often urgent dangers that confront him, yet he cannot have his correspondent extricate him from them too readily and rapidly, or there is no tale. It is a problem at least as old as Pamela in English epistolary fiction and it obtrudes on the reader's notice in Fanny Burney's works and those of other of her contemporaries: in Holcroft's Anna St Ives, for example, the hero's correspondent does not react to reports of criminal conduct. At one point in Desmond, Charlotte Smith seems to aim a shrewd blow at such stretching of probability: when Desmond is injured in a duel, Bethel writes offering to come to him in France immediately, since he is 'not



one of those who can, with great composure, talk over and lament their friend's misfortunes, without stirring a finger to help them.<sup>151</sup>

Charlotte Smith avoids many of the difficulties of the 'passive recipient' by making her hero essentially his own master, entitled and obliged to rely on his own resources. Bethel is an honorary rather than an actual guardian, and a friend and adviser rather than someone with a legal right and duty to intervene. He is, however, also much more of a character in his own right with concerns of his own additional to the receipt of Desmond's letters: he is involved in the action in England in a minor way. His rôle as correspondent is keeper of Desmond's moral conscience in relation to Geraldine and, though sympathetic to liberty, his political instincts are more cautious and conservative than those of Desmond. His judicious caution therefore balances the ardent revolutionist enthusiasm of the hero in their political discussions and exchanges of news. Although by no means advanced in years himself, Bethel can always be relied upon to provide mature and chastening advice when required and at times appears Desmond's alter ego - the restraining, common-sensical, conventional-moral aspect of his nature: in moments of passionate feeling for Geraldine, Desmond resents Bethel's 'grave cold lectures'.<sup>152</sup> Bethel is not simply a disembodied voice without a history, though. The reader finds he has reached the Palace of Wisdom by travelling the Road of Excess: like Fielding's Man on the Hill, Bethel retails the story of his past life as a sorry rake's progress of dissipation, duelling, infidelity, prodigality and all manner of worldliness. Yet he has reformed and retired to a quiet domesticity, armed with the wisdom that such experience invariably brings, we gather, to a mind and heart fundamentally sound.

151 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 180.

152 Ibid, 96.

Charlotte Smith obviously was afraid that Bethel would seem humourlessly prudish. In addition to describing his colourful past, she endeavours to enliven his judicious letters and relieve his moralizing by heavy jocularities: 'my lecture must terminate with my paper', he writes on one occasion.<sup>153</sup> The reader does not find his advice invariably wise. It is difficult to agree with his contention that Desmond should marry one of his 'fair cousins', the Fairfaxes of Margate, who are remarkably unappealing, however much one appreciates Bethel's concern that Desmond should turn his attentions from the married Geraldine.

Another difficulty of the epistolary form arises when the hero is reporting the action constantly to a largely passive correspondent. The hero is, in effect, narrator of the tale and needs to write a great deal without much interruption if he is to advance the plot and capture the reader's interest. In such circumstances, 'replies' invariably alternating with the hero's letters become distracting and superfluous to artistic economy. Charlotte Smith's solution to the problem is to pose as an 'editor' and not to 'print' such replies, or make the passive recipient dilatory in his replies. Desmond expresses anxiety that he has not heard from Bethel of late,<sup>154</sup> or Charlotte Smith refers in footnotes to letters 'which do not appear',<sup>155</sup> allowing her to summarize information succinctly without interrupting the hero's narration.

A novelist relying on elements of adventure and suspense for at least some of the appeal of his fiction may encounter difficulties with the epistolary method, for the very fact that the hero has recorded his troubles and dangers shows he has for the moment survived them. Charlotte Smith resorted to breaks in her letters at climactic moments to generate suspense and ensured they were written almost contemporaneously with the

153 Ibid, 9.

154 See for example I, 82, 97.

155 See for example Desmond (2nd London edition, 1792) III, 18.

events they describe. The hero then returns to continue his letter when the danger is past. If the writer was incapacitated by his experience, she brought in additional correspondents to prevent an interruption to the narrative: when Desmond is seriously injured in a duel, a surgeon writes to Bethel who, like the reader, trembles that Desmond may be mortally hurt.<sup>156</sup> As the novel nears its end, the correspondents acquire some literary skill in arousing anticipation and generating suspense in the opening paragraphs of their letters:

Never, my dear Bethel, did the most feverish dreams of fiction produce scenes more painful, or more terrific, than the real events to which I have been a witness, and in which I have been an actor, since the date of my last letter ... I await the catastrophe!<sup>157</sup>

Thus writes Desmond, and Geraldine is equally breathless:

What scenes, my dear sister, have passed since I wrote to you last! - In what a scene do I now write! - When I look back on the past, or consider the present, I sometimes wonder to find myself living, oftener doubt my existence! - and ask, whether the sufferings I have lately experienced, are not the hideous paintings of disease on the disordered brain of a wretch in a fever?<sup>158</sup>

Desmond has its quota of knavish lawyers, bitterly and roundly condemned by the author. It is instructive to contrast Charlotte Smith's invective against one of the tribe, Cranbourne - unconvincing in its animus and personal asperity<sup>159</sup> - with the more indirect demolition of Robert Stamford. Stamford, low-born, benefits before the action of the novel from Bethel's youthful extravagances, and references to him from time to time throughout the novel record his steady rise to affluent respectability and influence, aided by his unsavoury transactions

156 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 175.

157 Desmond (2nd London edition 1792) III, 243.

158 Ibid., 170.

159 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 242-43.

and selfish cunning. Stamford, now Sir Robert, spins a web of patronage and indebtedness which colours the views that local tradesmen and professional men take of him. An attorney speaks cuttingly of Stamford's humble origins, though he does not wish to disparage the legal profession,

'... for an honest attorney is a very honourable thing.'

'And, I am sure, it is a very rare one,' interrupted a blunt tradesman, in a smooth black wig, and leather breeches - 'a very rare one - and, for aught I ever saw or heard to the contrary, you may put all the honest lawyers that ever was in your eye, and never see the worse.'

'That's not so civil a speech, Sir,' said Mr Grimbold, the Exciseman. 'Sir Robert Stamford, Sir, my worthy Patron, is a man of honour, Sir, and a gentleman, Sir: and as for his having practis'd the law, Sir, and thereby raised himself to his present rank, it does him credit, Sir, and shews that this government and administration fairly and justly rewards merit, Sir.'

'Come, come, Mr Grimbold,' cried the Attorney, 'we know very well that the greatest merit Sir Robert has in your eyes, is his having rewarded your merit, and made you a riding-officer; because of the votes for this here borough of ours, that are in your family, Mr Grimbold.'<sup>160</sup>

The satire here is not first-rate, but Charlotte Smith would have done well to have substituted more of such dialogue for her authorial invective against lawyers.

Discussion of the characters in Desmond inevitably leads back to the politics, for many are introduced largely to embody noxious or approved doctrines.

Lord Newminster is a forerunner of John Thorpe of Northanger Abbey, but is more objectionably coarse. In previous novels Charlotte Smith had pilloried habits and attitudes she found distasteful, but in Desmond she linked them with anti-libertarian and anti-revolutionist political views much more decidedly and explicitly. Lord Newminster, visiting Desmond's relations at Margate, enters drunk and dirty:

160 Desmond (2nd London edition 1792) III, 170-71.

'Rat me, if I know why the plague we came through this darned place, twenty miles at least out of our way. - How in the devil's name do ye contrive to live here, why here is not a soul to be seen?'<sup>161</sup>

Yet he is treated with respect - indeed fawningly - because of his rank and wealth. Later he gives one of his dogs a cup of chocolate, remarking that he would rather all the old women in the county should fast for a month than his dog want for anything.<sup>162</sup>

Having established Newminster as a selfish, insensitive boor, Charlotte Smith is ready to use him as a representative of anti-revolutionist sentiment in a conversation with the reactionary General Wallingford, who has a figure reminiscent of 'a garden roller set on its end and supported by two legs.'<sup>163</sup> The General is outraged by the French National Assembly's passing a decree abolishing all titles and Newminster's reaction is predictably violent: 'I wish the King and the lords may smash them all ...'<sup>164</sup> Wallingford thinks French gentlemen should know better than to 'encourage the brutes' by 'affecting a ridiculous patriotism, and calling themselves the friends of the people.'<sup>165</sup> Newminster is enraged:

161 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 17.

162 Ibid, 34.

163 Ibid, 35.

164 Ibid, 36.

165 Ibid.

'Rot the people,' - cried the noble Peer: I wish they were all hanged out of the way, both in France and here too. - What business have a set of blackguards to have an opinion about liberty and be cursed to them?<sup>166</sup>

It is little wonder that some readers were not convinced that Charlotte Smith had expressed fairly both sides of the revolutionary question and thought she had not allowed the most intellectually respectable anti-revolutionary arguments to appear. The author could claim to have aired views opposed to the Revolution in her discursive passages, but all the dramatised debates and arguments portray the opponents of the Revolution as malicious, hysterical and fatuous - and there are a number of such scenes set both in England and France.<sup>167</sup> The opponents of the Revolution are given trivial, absurd arguments and emphasize their fear of losing privileges: Paris will be ruined for the fashionable,<sup>168</sup> French food will be forced on reluctant Englishmen.<sup>169</sup> Charlotte Smith also alleges that some Englishmen have been paid to misrepresent what has happened in France.<sup>170</sup> Many of Charlotte Smith's minor political characters in Desmond are thus the merest types - mouthpieces for a series of anti-Gallic prejudices.

Throughout Desmond, Charlotte Smith staunchly defends the Revolution in the observations and arguments of Desmond in his letters to Bethel. The novel reveals the author's enthusiasm for French liberty, but also the limits of her revolutionism.

The alarm felt in England even as early as 1790 may be gauged from Desmond's early news from France, where the author labours to allay lurid English fears of chaos across the Channel. The Revolution, writes Desmond reassuringly in July 1790,

166 Ibid., 37.

167 See for example Ibid. I, 46-53 and 71-79.

168 Ibid., 36.

169 Ibid., 46-9, 77.

170 Ibid., 62.

has not led to 'sanguinary and ferocious democracy' and 'scenes of anarchy and confusion.'<sup>171</sup> On the contrary, Paris has an 'excellent police' and the people display 'natural gaiety ... without any restraint, and yet, certainly without any disorder.'<sup>172</sup> Later, in the summer of 1791, Geraldine travels to France and the author again claims there is no revolutionary chaos (this time it is the Dieppe district that is mainly peaceful), though the failure of life to return completely to normal in France is reasonably accounted for: when a great change occurs in a country one cannot expect things to subside immediately into perfect order. Geraldine reassuringly compares the Nation to a family, and the most closely-knit and harmonious family will be disturbed for some time by 'a change in its oeconomy or its domestics'. What little inconveniences there are in France are 'a remnant of its former despotism rather than a deficiency of the new regime'.<sup>173</sup>

Reforms that aroused Tory wrath in England are claimed to be sweetly reasonable and beneficial. The changes in the Church, for example, had relieved poor, conscientious clergy at the expense of luxurious bishops and an idle hierarchy in general.<sup>174</sup> Geraldine later records a pious scene to show religion has not been swept away.<sup>175</sup>

Charlotte Smith was reproachful of those Britons who condemned the French for struggling for the freedom they themselves enjoyed and prized, but she suspected such opponents were afraid that the French reforms would highlight faults in the British system of government.<sup>176</sup> Nor was she tolerant of Britons who execrated French support of the Americans. The British soldiers had been mere 'disciplined mercenaries of despotism in the War of Independence'. Those who now prophesied

171 Ibid

172 Ibid., 63.

173 Desmond (2nd London edn. 1792) III, 124-5.

174 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 63.

175 Desmond (2nd London edn. 1792) III, 128.

176 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 84.

doom for the Revolution were precisely those who previously had done the same vis-a-vis American independence, she noted with satisfaction.<sup>177</sup>

The abolition of titles was another reform welcomed by Charlotte Smith in Desmond. The true aristocrat is he notable for the 'virtues of his heart ... dignity of mind ... and ... sensibility', not an 'illustrious name and ... noble fortune'.<sup>178</sup> Feudal social structures and values were outmoded; can one

... really think, that a dealer in wine, or in wood, in sugar, or cloth, is not endowed with the same faculties and feelings as the descendant of Charlemagne?<sup>179</sup>

This was indeed to conceive of the Revolution as a bourgeois triumph and Charlotte Smith's avoidance of extreme radicalism is clearly revealed when the reactionary Count d' Hauteville tells Desmond that, according to his lights, he is bound to consider his footman an equal; why then is he his footman? Desmond extricates himself by arguing that equality in the sense of one man's having no power or right to compel another does not imply economic and social equality. The relationship is of the nature of a business agreement, not a master-slave situation:

I have occasion for his services, he has occasion for the money by which I purchase them: in this compact we are equal so far as we are free. - I with my property, which is money, buy his property, which is time, so long as he is willing to sell it.<sup>180</sup>

It is an attractive argument for those whose property is money, but it would be instructive to have the views of the footman.

As the novel progresses, there are traces of perturbation because France was not establishing Charlotte Smith's notion of ideal liberty with sufficient rapidity and smoothness. The author will have no truck with gloomy prognostications as to the outcome of the great experiment, but she does allow Bethel

177 Ibid., 92-3.

178 Ibid., 139.

179 Ibid., 140.

180 Ibid., 142-43.



to express a certain impatience with the factitious French National Assembly after the death of Mirabeau which shows how welcome the advent of Napoleon was to seem to many former revolutionists later. Writing in the summer of 1791, he dreads

That want of some great leading mind, to collect and condense the patriotic intentions and views of those who really wish only the salvation of their country. - The despotism of superior ability is, after all, necessary; and it is the only despotism to which reasonable beings ought to submit.<sup>181</sup>

Towards the end of Desmond, Charlotte Smith still found herself an apologist for continuing unrest in France. Earlier she had been content to dismiss such English claims as exaggerated, now she found explanations. Geraldine, travelling near Dieppe, notices 'rich harvests' in 1791 and remarks that the bread shortages of 1789 and 1790 must have been 'artificially created' for the profit of the few and to cow the people. It was not surprising, therefore, that 'popular tumult' was 'so naturally excited', and while one pitied the victims, it had to be recognized as 'the tremendous decree of justice', though 'seen in colours of blood'.<sup>182</sup>

As Charlotte Smith completed Desmond, outside forces in Europe were threatening to combine against France, and the hero, hearing talk of a 'confederacy of the Northern powers', deploras such 'an union of tyrants' and, even more, those Englishmen ready to crusade against 'the holy standard freedom'. However, Desmond's ardour and confidence is undimmed: these 'tyr anous breathings'

... will not destroy the lovely tree that has now taken vigorous root in the finest country of the world, though it may awhile check its growth, and blight its produce; but I lament, that in despite of the pacific intentions of the French towards their neighbours, its root must be manured with blood.<sup>183</sup>

181 Desmond (2nd London edn. 1792) III, 103.

182 Ibid., 128-30.

183 Ibid., 207-8.

Libertarian rhetoric, deriving ultimately from Milton (whom Charlotte Smith quotes),<sup>184</sup>, rings through Desmond, and the leading literary apostles of liberty are celebrated. There is praise for the 'resistless wit' of Voltaire and the 'matchless eloquence' of Rousseau.<sup>185</sup> Paine's Rights of Man is defended<sup>186</sup> and Locke's Of Civil Government quoted in refutation of Burke's alleged view that Englishmen are not at Liberty to choose their form of government since giving up this right in 1688.<sup>187</sup> Charlotte Smith, avid for news of the Revolution, seems to have laid hands on any French accounts she could: she acknowledges the help of a 'little French pamphlet' at one point.<sup>188</sup>

The impact of Burke's Reflections and the rage the work provoked in revolutionists is graphically illustrated by Desmond. The hero has just read the work in January 1791 and is deeply shocked: he had 'never expected to have seen an elaborate treatise in favour of despotism written by an Englishman'. It is full of 'virulence as well as misrepresentation', thus laying it open to 'ridicule and contradiction'. Yet such contradiction is not forthcoming; Desmond will not discuss the work, since

abusive declamation can influence only superficial or prepossessed understanding. - Those who cannot, or who will not see, that fine sounding periods are not arguments - that poetical imagery is not matter of fact.<sup>189</sup>

Desmond returns to Burke later, and to the end of the novel is characterizing him as an apostate. Burke

advances opinions, and maintains principles absolutely opposite to all the professions of his political life.

He has become '... the champion of the placeman - and the apologist of the pensioner.'<sup>190</sup>

184 See above, p. 158.

185 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 90.

186 Ibid., 243.

187 Ibid., 210-13.

188 Ibid., 73.

189 Ibid., 210.

190 Desmond (2nd London edn. 1792) III, 209.

Charlotte Smith's wholehearted support of the early Revolution was reprehensible enough to conservatives, but what really rankled was her insistence on demonstrating the inadequacies of the British Constitution in the light of French innovation. Charlotte Smith's more general remarks on the British government and legal system are disarmingly enthusiastic: the Constitution was 'the best in the world' because it assured both 'the dignity of the state and the privileges of the people'.<sup>191</sup> Even in such days of 'luxury and corruption' the Constitution was such as to ensure that 'in no other age or country, has there existed a people to whom general happiness has been more fairly distributed, than it is among the English of the present day.'<sup>192</sup> Yet these accolades seem curiously hollow when Charlotte Smith lists her specific grievances: the Constitution is threatened by undue adherence to party interest;<sup>193</sup> it enshrines inequality of representation<sup>194</sup> and the Law confirms and upholds inequalities;<sup>195</sup> the penal system distributes absurdly harsh penalties in atrocious prisons<sup>196</sup> for petty offences;<sup>197</sup> debtors are imprisoned, so they cannot free themselves from debt;<sup>198</sup> civil lawsuits are ruinously expensive and intolerably protracted.<sup>199</sup> (Charlotte Smith anticipates Dickens in her demonstrations of Chancery suits giving empty victories, with the monies in dispute being wholly expended in resolving that dispute.) At another point, as in her Preface, Charlotte Smith attacks the inadequacies of female education, the severely circumscribed expectations of women's social and political roles, and the pressures exerted on them to accept loveless marriages for financial security.<sup>200</sup> There is even an excursion into discussion of

191 Ibid., 101.

192 Ibid., 101-102.

193 Ibid., 165-66.

194 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 249.

195 Ibid., 246.

196 Ibid., 153-4.

197 Ibid., 249.

198 Ibid., 246.

199 Ibid., 249.

200 Desmond (2nd London edn. 1792) III, 132-6.

slavery, with the author resisting the argument that poor conditions and cruel punishments are justified by the 'inferiority' of races other than the caucasian.<sup>201</sup> Slavery and primitivistic notions were to reappear for fuller discussion in The Old Manor House, The Wanderings of Warwick and The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer.

The Terror and Charlotte Smith's connections with a French emigré were subsequently to moderate though not destroy her libertarianism. Desmond, therefore, remained her most explicit and enthusiastic statement of her reformist hopes. It is always reform she at bottom approves rather than a basic social and economic transformation, and even in Desmond one is conscious of her speaking to her own class urging an essentially prudential approach: surrender obnoxious privileges or risk losing everything in revolutionary chaos.

Before moving on from Desmond, a further development of Charlotte Smith's use of landscape should be noted; namely her relating it to political philosophy. When Desmond visits Montfleuri's estate in 'the Lyonois', he discovers that his host has 'a great taste for rural beauty',<sup>202</sup> as a Rousseauesque concomitant to his revolutionist sentiments. The countryside is voluptuously beautiful, but Montfleuri's land is also efficiently cultivated. The peasants 'on the domain of M. Montfleuri are happy and prosperous'.<sup>203</sup> The estates of a neighbouring monastery which is obviously unenlightened by revolutionary sentiment are a sorry contrast: the vineyards have 'everywhere the appearance of being under a languid and reluctant cultivation'.<sup>204</sup> The monks, it seems, keep their peasants in ignorance, and the poverty consequent on outdated farming methods keeps them subdued. Montfleuri's estate is of

201 Ibid., 163.

202 Desmond (Dublin 1792) I, 98.

203 Ibid., 108. Desmond has democratic conversations with a Breton peasant (I, 151-54.)

204 Ibid., 102.

the nature of a model farm and the villagers display 'exultation and content on their animated faces' as they prepare for the vintage. They have a prosperous appearance and 'comfortable habitations', contrasting with the mud-cabins of surrounding estates.<sup>205</sup> Charlotte Smith shows the extent - and the limits - of her radicalism in her remarks that Montfleuri has 'made it the business of his life to make his vassals and dependents content, by giving them all the advantages their condition will allow.'<sup>206</sup>

The estate of the reactionary Count d'Hauteville, like the monastery, forms a stark contrast. Even the surrounding Auvergne countryside is uninteresting: Montfleuri's romantic surroundings give way to 'dead flats' with 'dull uniformity of prospect'.<sup>207</sup> D'Hauteville's confidential servant, Le Maure, displays the futility and spitefulness of aristocratic resistance to social change when he shoots as many partridges as possible in order that the local people may not exercise their newly-acquired right of taking game on the estate.<sup>208</sup>

There is in Desmond an interesting conflict between the sentimentalist's liking for gothic architecture and ancient picturesqueness and the brave, forward-looking attitude required of revolutionists. Montfleuri is impatient of gothic nostalgia and magnificence:

The chateau of Montfleuri is an old building, but it is neither large nor magnificent - for having no predilection for the gothic gloom in which his ancestors concealed their greatness, he has pulled down every part of the original structure, but what was actually useful to himself ...<sup>209</sup>

Desmond, in contrast, cannot resist the gothic and picturesque, though he is guiltily apologetic for his regret that Montfleuri's agricultural improvements has not left 'one vista

205 Ibid., 106.

206 Ibid.

207 Ibid., 122.

208 Ibid., 125-26.

209 Ibid., 102.

of the beautiful and graceful Spanish chestnut remaining.' He knows this 'belongs to a very gothic and exploded taste', but he has 'still an affection for the bowed roof - the cathedral-like solemnity of long lines of tall trees, whose topmost boughs are interlaced ...'. Desmond would not attempt to 'defend the purity' of his taste in this matter, 'for nature certainly never planted trees in direct lines.'<sup>210</sup> Desmond is attracted by an ancient ruin atop a hill on Montfleuri's estate, of which the country people 'tell wonderful legends', and rejoices that his friend will be able to preserve it 'in its present romantic form':

I, who love, you know, everything ancient, unless it be ancient prejudices, have entreated my friend to preserve this structure in its present state - than which nothing can be more picturesque: when of a fine glowing evening, the almost perpendicular hill on which it stands is reflected in the unruffled bosom of the broad river, crowned with these venerable remains half mantled in ivy ...<sup>211</sup>

Desmond also trusts that Montfleuri will allow a hermit - a refugee from the recent dissolution of a local monastery - to remain picturesquely in his cell on the estate. Montfleuri treats the hermit with 'attentive liberality', though we are not actually told this is because he raises the romantic tone of the place.<sup>212</sup>

Desmond's love of ranks of trees originates in his childhood and he is soon entranced by memories of solitary walks along similar arboreal avenues 'in a very wild and woody part of Kent', with supplementary gothic effects provided by woodpeckers and owls. The passage deserves quotation as representative of a gothic effect Charlotte Smith rather specialized in and made her own in the 1790's: the eeriness of woodland as darkness approaches:

210 Ibid., 104.

211 Ibid., 102-103.

212 Ibid., 109-110.

- I see the moon rising slowly over the dark mass of wood, and the opposite hills, tinged with purple from the last reflection of the sun, which was sunk behind them.  
 - I recall the sensations I felt, when, as the silver leaves of the aspens trembled in the lowest breeze, or slowly fell to the ground before me, I became half frightened at the increasing obscurity of the objects around me, and have almost persuaded myself that the grey trunks of these old trees, and the low murmur of the wind among their branches, were the dim forms, and hollow sighs of some supernatural beings; and at length, afraid of looking behind me, I have hurried breathless into the house.<sup>213</sup>

This is a very tolerable creation of gothic atmosphere, neither going too close to the lurid and the actual supernatural, nor too far from the Wordsworthian experience of boyish awe and fear before nature's effects. The gothic possibilities of woodland were perhaps first exploited in the English novel in Smollet's Ferdinand Count Fathom (1753),<sup>214</sup> but Charlotte Smith added her own intensifying touches. The silver leaves which 'slowly fell to the ground' give just the requisite ghastly tinge of unreality, with everything arrested in movement and muted, or at least intolerably decelerated and muffled. Slowly-falling leaves became a favourite Smith effect.<sup>215</sup>

213 Ibid., 104-105

214 See Chapter XX of the 'Oxford English Novels' edition (ed. Damian Grant) of Smollet, The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom (London 1971). Charlotte Smith refers to Smollet's novels in Montalbert. A Novel (London 1795) II, 229, and she is probably indebted to Fathom when she describes Rosalie, the heroine, and her kidnappers sheltering from a storm in 'a dirty unshuttered inn.' The ferocious countenances of the abductors and the occupants of the inn 'seemed to be such as I remember in a description in one of Smollet's novels.' (Montalbert II, 229 - cf. Fathom Chapter XXI.). The episode of Gerald threatened by banditti in the Auvergne seems in part inspired by these Smollet chapters (Desmond III, 274-289.). Hilbish refers to other evidences of Charlotte Smith's indebtedness to Smollet (op. cit., 521.).

215 See: Charlotte Smith, Montalbert. A Novel (London 1795) I, 106 and II, 63; The Banished Man: a Novel (London 1794) IV, 85-86.

Sir Walter Scott considered The Old Manor House (1793) Charlotte Smith's chef d'oeuvre<sup>216</sup> and almost all later critics have agreed. James R. Foster notes the book's 'English flavour and realistic atmosphere', making it 'doubtless her best' work;<sup>217</sup> B. G. MacCarthy admires the fusion of elements characteristic of Charlotte Smith into an artistic whole and the skilful characterization, again making the work 'the best of all' her novels;<sup>218</sup> Sir E. A. Baker recommends the book 'as the type novel of Charlotte Smith'.<sup>219</sup> More recently, Walter Allen finds it 'odd that so good a novel should not have been reprinted since 1820', and thinks Charlotte Smith has been 'persistently underrated'.<sup>220</sup>

The first volume of The Old Manor House, written in Hayley's house at Eartham, was finished by early September 1792<sup>221</sup> In December, Charlotte Smith was working on the final volume which was complete by February 1793, and the novel appeared some time before May.<sup>222</sup> It was published by Joseph Bell in four volumes at a cost of fourteen shillings, and John Rice brought out an authorized Dublin edition of three volumes very soon after the publication of the first edition, in order to forestall piracies.<sup>223</sup> Bell published a second English edition at the end of 1793. It was nothing new for a Charlotte Smith novel to require an immediate second edition, and it was really only after the author's death that this novel emerged as her best claim to some enduring literary fame. In addition to Anna Barbauld's 'British Novelists' version,<sup>224</sup> there were at

216 Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 54.

217 Foster, History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England, 246.

218 B. G. MacCarthy, The Later Women Novelists, 157.

219 Sir E. A. Baker, The History of the English Novel V, 189.

220 Walter Allen, The English Novel (Harmondsworth 1958), 96-7.

221 For an account of the writing of the novel at Eartham, see above pp. 20-3.

222 See A. H. Ehrenpreis (ed.), The Old Manor House (London 1969), xiii.

223 See Turner, op. cit., 123-4.

224 Anna L. Barbauld (ed.), The Old Manor House (London 1810-20). Volumes XXXVI-XXXVII of 'The British Novelists'.



least six nineteenth-century English editions,<sup>225</sup> as well as a redaction in chapbook form.<sup>226</sup> Two French editions also appeared.<sup>227</sup> The latest and best edition is Mrs Ehrenpreis's in the 'Oxford English Novels' series.

The Reviews showed few signs of awareness that The Old Manor House was to prove Charlotte Smith's most enduring work. Most in harmony with later critical opinion was William Enfield in the Monthly Review, who remarked that the characters were drawn 'with strength and discrimination' and spoke 'their own appropriate language.' As for other aspects:

The main plot is diversified with many collateral occurrences, which all contribute to give unity to the whole. The narrative, if not in every particular guided by probability, is however too well filled up with incident to suffer the reader's attention to flag.<sup>228</sup>

But although the work displayed 'facility of invention, knowledge of life, and command of language',<sup>229</sup> Enfield did not think it superior to Charlotte Smith's previous novels.

- 225 To date the following editions have been traced:  
 B. Crosby and Co. (London 1810), 2 vols.  
 A. K. Newman (London? 1822), 4 vols.  
 C. Whittingham (London 1820, 22), 2 vols.  
 ('Whittingham's Pocket Novelists' series.)  
 J. McGowan (London 1837), 1 vol.  
 Thomas Richardson and Son (Derby 1847), 1 vol.  
 Milner and Co. (London and Halifax 1878), 1 vol.
- 226 Rayland Hall; or the remarkable adventures of Orlando Somerville (? 1810): John Arliss. See Ehrenpreis, Old Manor House, xxiii.
- 227 In 1799 and 1816. See Ehrenpreis, op. cit., xxiii.
- 228 Monthly Review (Second Series) xi (June 1793), 150.
- 229 Ibid., 153.

The Critical reviewer was more hostile:

After a perusal of these four volumes we are forced to confess ... we have ... found much to disapprove. From the name of Mrs Charlotte Smith we certainly were led to expect something above the common love cant of novels.<sup>230</sup>

What the reviewer really objected to was the morality: scenes are 'repugnant to decorum and virtue'<sup>231</sup> (presumably the hero's nighttime visits to the heroine's bedroom), and:

While youthful thoughtlessness and intemperance are crowned with success, ingratitude and the most complicated villany remain unpunished.<sup>232</sup>

Remarkably, the reviewer was totally unimpressed by Mrs Rayland, probably Charlotte Smith's most successful character, but remarked that 'with regard to character in this novel, we can find little that can be said to leave a clear and distinct image on the mind'.<sup>233</sup> He was unsoftened by Charlotte Smith's 'prettinesses' of expression and her attempts at the pathetic and the tender, which he did not think to be her forte: a rather curious judgement on the author of the Elegiac Sonnets. Finally, his patience was tried by the undue length of the novel:

... when we find the most ordinary and trivial occurrences in life drawn out to whole chapters, and the eternal theme of love and sentiment spun out to thirteen hundred pages, can it be wondered at if we sometimes yawn, and exclaim in the words of Hotspur, 'Oh! it is as tedious as a tired horse or a scolding wife?'<sup>234</sup>

In the Analytical John Aikin gave Charlotte Smith, in a general way, 'great credit for her talents as a novelist' and appreciated her powers of characterization, but had his reservations:

Some leading circumstances are scarcely reconcileable with probability ... Sometimes the narrative is clogged by collateral incidents, which produce little effect... With regard to sentiment and passion, the reader's mind is throughout agreeably interested rather than powerfully agitated.<sup>235</sup>

230 Critical Review (Second Series) VIII (May 1793), 45-6.

231 Ibid., 51.

232 Ibid., 52.

233 Ibid.

234 Ibid., 54.

235 Analytical Review XVI (May 1793), 149.

By now The British Critic had appeared to swell the ranks of the Reviews and it noticed The Old Manor House in an early issue. It displayed tory vigilance in scouring the novel for repetitions of the revolutionist heresies so glaringly apparent in Desmond:

The introduction of Political Reflections may be judged censurable, where they favour in the slightest degree of those erroneous /sic/ and pernicious principles which have been recently promulgated with such fatal effect.<sup>236</sup>

However, in the event only a few sentiments 'of rather ambiguous tendency' were detectable - probably mainly in Charlotte Smith's implied support of the colonists in the American war. Like the Monthly reviewer, the writer in The British Critic thought that 'propriety of conduct' was not invariably displayed by the approved characters of The Old Manor House.<sup>237</sup> Another objection was to Orlando's superstitious premonitions of future events, presented as if they had some foundation.<sup>238</sup> The British Critic praised the characters 'drawn with much originality from life' and

well illustrated by the display of those minute shades which the accuracy of female observation is accustomed to note and to describe with fidelity. The incidents are well varied and lively ...<sup>239</sup>

The English Review, largely written by Dr William Thomson, who supported Paine and the radicals at this time, also had political reservations, but for different reasons from the ideologically-opposed British Critic. The reviewer regretted that Charlotte Smith had

... not availed herself as much as she might have done of an opportunity of reprobating that greatest of all national evils, the American war.<sup>240</sup>

The English gave The Old Manor House six largely sympathetic pages, praised Charlotte Smith's 'excellence in the descriptive and pathetic' and pronounced the work 'equal to any of the former

236 British Critic I (June 1793), 149.

237 Ibid., 148.

238 Ibid., 149.

239 Ibid., 148.

240 English Review XXI (Apr. 1793), 270.

novels ... except Desmond,<sup>241</sup> a judgement possibly more political than literary.

The hero and heroine of The Old Manor House are Orlando Somerive and Monimia Lennard. Charlotte Smith continued the precedent established in Desmond of placing the hero rather than the heroine at the centre of the action. Monimia, an orphan who is brought up by her heartless aunt, Mrs Lennard, to be little more than a servant, is a sweet, timorous creature who is called upon only rarely to display the determined resistance of Charlotte Smith's earlier heroines - principally when threatened by the lecherous advances of Sir John Belgrave. Rather notably in a novel of this period, the author resisted the temptation of a final-volume revelation of the heroine's long-concealed noble birth and the acquisition of a fortune: Monimia remains of middling social background and portionless to the end. Orlando, in his pasteboard perfection, has little to distinguish him from the standard hero of sensibility, though the reviewers were made uneasy by his nocturnal visits to Monimia and his failure to take measures to forestall his sister's elopement. He also displays some suspicious jealousy when he hears that Monimia has been assisted by a young sailor in his absence, but this seems meant as an indication of the depth and intensity of his passion rather than a serious moral criticism.

The character who dominates the tale, both in life and death, is Mrs Grace Rayland, the unmarried sole survivor of the principal line of an ancient family. Autocratic, filled with fierce family pride and feudal notions of deference and duty, she maintains rigidly the customs and attitudes of her ancestors in gothically-rambling Rayland Hall. Her contempt for vulgar parvenus and families elevated by wealth recently acquired in trade is absolute - as indeed it is in general for the business-minded age into which she has anachronistically survived. Her only relatives, the financially-straitened Somerives, live nearby, but she considers them degenerate, and their Rayland blood diluted

241 Ibid., 226.

by inferior marriages. Philip, the eldest Somevive son - a gambling, hard-drinking, mistress-keeping, boisterous fellow - confirms her worst fears, but the virtuous younger brother, Orlando, is her brightest hope and possible heir. Mrs Rayland has complete power of disposal of Rayland Hall and the family fortune, and the novel's main element of suspense is whether the old lady's liking for Orlando will overcome her distaste for his debased family. Though she demands frequent visits and punctiliously deferential behaviour from Orlando, she will neither confirm him as her successor nor, alternatively, disabuse him of false hope. It must be said that Orlando cultivates Mrs Rayland's regard more assiduously than is congenial to the modern reader. Despite Mrs Rayland's pride, her servant-companion Mrs Lennard and, to a lesser degree, the butler Pattenson have a strong influence upon her and have expectations of benefitting financially when their mistress dies.

Orlando duly falls in love with Monimia, who lives with her aunt at the Hall, but must keep the relationship secret, since a proposed match with a girl of undistinguished birth would offend Mrs Rayland. The liaison must be kept also from Mrs Lennard and Pattenson, since they expect reduced legacies, if Mrs Rayland disinherits Orlando and breaks up the estate. Mrs Lennard comes to suspect that there is something between the two young people; and Pattenson is watchful of Orlando, as he thinks the young man admires Betty Richards, the maid he hopes to seduce. Spotlessly innocent though nerve-racking brief meetings are arranged by Orlando and Monimia in a Gothic Chapel and, by way of a secret passage, in Monimia's bedroom in a turret. Strange nocturnal noises which tempt Monimia to think the Hall haunted prove to be caused by smugglers in league with Pattenson and using parts of the Hall as their base of operations.

Orlando has three sisters, Isabella, Selina and Emma. The mild, virtuous Selina becomes the friend and confidante of Monimia, but the eldest sister, opinionated and rather brashly vivacious, draws the attentions of General Tracy, an old roué.

He wishes to remove Orlando as an obstacle to the seduction of his sister. To this end, he offers Orlando an army commission and Mrs Rayland, mindful of the military prowess of her ancestors, considers his acceptance essential if he is to prove worthy to succeed her; so he perforce agrees. The General does not succeed in his designs on Isabella, however, for she elopes with his nephew, Captain Warwick.

Orlando is posted to North America and fights the colonists with reluctance. He is captured by Indians, spared by one Wolf-hunter, sees the slaughter of women and children by his captors and unwillingly lives in harsh conditions for some time as a member of the band. Eventually he falls into the hands of the French, is taken to France and makes his way to England, arriving on the South coast ragged and almost penniless. He finds the Somerive home in the hands of strangers, and Rayland Hall shuttered and in the first stages of decay. He learns that his father and Mrs Rayland are dead. Mrs Lennard is married to a young knave, Roker, and departed, and Monimia has disappeared. Because of an early will of Mrs Rayland, the Hall is in ecclesiastical hands - in particular those of Dr Hollybourne, one of Charlotte Smith's purse-proud, haughty clergymen, whose daughter Orlando earlier refused to marry.

In London Orlando finds his mother with Selina and Emma (who all imagined he had died in North America) and begins his search for Monimia. He combines the search with efforts to prove himself Mrs Rayland's rightful heir. Eventually he finds Monimia who, consigned by her aunt as a milliner's assistant, was in danger of being forced into being Sir John Belgrave's mistress or into general prostitution.

Mrs Lennard, thoroughly disillusioned by her new husband, is kept a prisoner by him on the pretext that she is mad, lest she compromise those who have benefitted from the Rayland estate. Orlando makes little progress at first owing to the infamy of lawyers, but ultimately obtains a letter from Mrs Lennard intimating the existence of a later will by Mrs Rayland in which Orlando is named as the main beneficiary. Orlando marries Monimia, who helps the Somerives nurse Philip as he dies, penitent, as a

result of his debauched life. But the dark clouds are dispersed as the later will is discovered at Rayland Hall. Warwick and Isabella return from abroad and are forgiven by General Tracy, Orlando purchases a baronetcy and takes up residence at Rayland Hall, and the novel closes with Somerives reinstated in the old family home and the joy of hero and heroine crowned with the birth of a son.

Baker's remark that The Old Manor House is the type novel of Charlotte Smith perhaps gives a clue as to why this novel should have seemed fairly unremarkable on its appearance, but to later critics Charlotte Smith's most accomplished work. Before its publication, Charlotte Smith's novels had provided novelty that nevertheless did not diverge too disturbingly from what readers expected in their fiction. Emmeline, Celestina and Ethelinde had their Burneyan precedents but also a romantic colouring of their own: I have already traced the growing use of romantic landscape, gothic settings and foreign travel and adventure. The didacticism of Desmond had alienated some readers, but at least the work was again novel, though an early contribution to a developing genre. Charlotte Smith's work was not, prior to this time, tamely predictable. In The Old Manor House the author cut down on innovation and brought together the elements of her earlier fiction into a more harmonious, better-constructed whole. For the later reader the tighter plotting, deeper characterization and combination of characteristic Smith elements in a more satisfying blend make the novel her best; for the contemporary reader there may have been a slight feeling of disappointed anticipation.

B. G. MacCarthy confirms the modern reader's impression of the work:

Once again the elements which most interested her are apparent, but they are more evenly balanced, and they are not, as formerly, merely collateral, but are fused in the greater part of the story,<sup>242</sup>

242 MacCarthy, op. cit., 157.

and Baker writes of all the 'diversified ingredients' that are 'combined in The Old Manor House'.<sup>243</sup>

The plot shows more forethought than usual and an attempt to make the parts serve the whole, so that although the novel is full of intrigues and machinations at cross-purposes, they relate and cohere as a tightly-constructed whole. The main current of the plot is less interrupted by digressive meanders and delaying eddies than in many of Charlotte Smith's other novels. The author's typical plot, seemingly progressing randomly and casually, is a grievous weakness of her novels, but her desire to shine at Eartham seems to have made her take more care: the chronology, for instance, is painstakingly worked out and adhered to with one or two trivial exceptions. A tight plot may seem a limited virtue, but it is a welcome contrast to some of the author's later rambling tales.

The characteristic Smith elements previously mentioned also, on the whole, subserve the whole, are not overdone, and are not allowed to distort the tale. The sentimental landscape is pleasing, but the descriptions not tediously protracted, and scenery and climate are used often to enhance a character's mood or assist the tone of the story at certain points - this despite Charlotte Smith's notorious faux pas of stocking the banks of the St Lawrence with sub-tropical vegetation; a most uncharacteristic slip. The gothicism similarly is rarely gratuitous, and naturalistic explanations of seemingly supernatural phenomena are not held back until they become annoyingly anti-climactic. Monimia's fears of ghostly presences in Bayland Hall emphasize her insecurity and arise in part from guilt over the secret meeting with Orlando and her dread of discovery. When Orlando wanders through dark and sighing woods before his departure to America, the natural setting emphasizes his gloom and foreboding. The woods, now gripped by frost, are reintroduced when Orlando returns, this time to point his bleak desolation at the loss of Monimia. The element of foreign travel and adventure does represent a substantial break in the English domestic sentimental plot, but some attempt

243 Baker, op. cit., 187.



is made to make Orlando's American trip result credibly from his situation in England and to make his experiences amongst the Indians a yardstick by which to measure the European civilisation to which he returns.

There is general agreement that Mrs Rayland is Charlotte Smith's best realized character. Scott considered her 'without a rival; a Queen Elizabeth in private life',<sup>244</sup> and thought her letter to Mr Somerive encouraging his son's hopes, yet avoiding any direct expression of her intentions towards him 'a masterpiece of diplomacy, equal to what she of Tudor could have composed on a similar occasion'.<sup>245</sup> James Foster agreed that the 'testy' Mrs Rayland was Charlotte Smith's 'greatest characterization',<sup>246</sup> and B. G. MacCarthy thought her 'most effectively and consistently drawn'.<sup>247</sup> Mrs Ehrenpreis pronounced her 'Charlotte Smith's masterpiece. Domineering, capricious, an inveterate snob, she has been admired by many critics ...'<sup>248</sup> Mrs Rayland's character is not merely described, but conveyed in her every word and action and in the cowed, humouring or watchfully polite attitude of those who come into contact with her. Mrs Ehrenpreis indicates the subtlety of her characterization:

Her incredulity at finding the intruder on her land to be a baronet, her close enquiries as to what the parvenu Stockton serves at table - these are elegant touches in the creation of a fully realized individual.<sup>249</sup>

In Mrs Rayland, Charlotte Smith created a character that would not have disgraced one of the better novels by Scott or Dickens.

Charlotte Smith's characterization in general is rather better in The Old Manor House than in many of her other novels. Mrs Ehrenpreis remarks her skill in allotting her characters language suitable to their personalities, occupations and social positions - the 'insolence of Belgrave and Stockton, the hearty vulgarity of Philip Somerive, the man-of-the-world bravado of General Tracy (one of her most solid creations).'<sup>250</sup> Furthermore,

244 Scott, op. cit., 54.

245 Ibid., 55.

246 Foster, History of the Pre-Romantic Novel, 246.

247 MacCarthy, op. cit., 157.

248 Ehrenpreis (ed.), The Old Manor House, xvi.

249 Ibid., xvi.

250 Ibid., xvii.

Charlotte Smith does not forget to allow her characters to retain their initial vocabulary and idioms why they reappear after an absence from the action: they remain consistently individualized. Charlotte Smith was always adept at reproducing the language of servants and characters of similar social status, but in The Old Manor House she tends to allot them more space than usual in which to establish themselves as credible characters rather than briefly-glimpsed types. Betty Richards, the brassy, flirtatious servant girl, untroubled by moral reflections, is an example and a nice foil to Monimia's virtuous restraint and moral fastidiousness. Her progress to the position of 'kept woman' is inevitable rather than conventional and her pride in her improved material circumstances and unawareness of there being anything invidious in her new status is totally in accord with her character as first presented. The solidity of characterisation achieved with Mrs Rayland thus extends in a lesser degree to Charlotte Smith's other creations, compensating the sentimental insubstantiality of hero and heroine.

Perhaps more successfully than any other Charlotte Smith novel, The Old Manor House evokes the social and economic climate of its period. One would not call it a political or didactic novel in the same way as Desmond, since authorial comment and the abstract discussion of issues is kept to a minimum. Nor, despite satirical portraits of such figures as clergymen and lawyers, is it unduly caustic or tediously strident. Nevertheless, largely through the confrontations of a few well-drawn characters and families, it dramatizes the challenge of a growing middle class, enriched by trade, to the old hierarchical order represented by Mrs Rayland. To characterize the novel as a satire on pride of birth and fossilized gentility is to note only one side of its critical purpose, for equally it attacks the vulgar materialism of the newly rich and the social irresponsibility of parvenus who take to the pleasures and privileges of squirehood without embracing its duties. The method adopted is to settle the nouveau-riche

Stockton on an estate adjoining Rayland Hall and allow the juxtaposed sets of values represented by the old lady and her brash neighbour and his friends to reveal one another's inadequacies. The social vitality of the old squirarchy has hardened to a set of mechanical customs and usages, and to a snobbish superiority and local ascendancy based on little more than the accomplishments of ancestors. Mrs Rayland's spinsterish infecundity is wholly appropriate to her unfruitful social role. She is a local tyrant, insistent that all should serve her in ways that may be time-honoured but which freeze social development. The rituals her position demands are approached in a grimly dutiful spirit and seem barrenly anachronistic. A good example is the annual tenants feast, which must precisely follow a prescribed pattern and over which Mrs Rayland's stern presence throws a considerable cold shadow. The disinclination of human vitality to be quelled is effectively shown at this event by the flirtations and intrigues of the young people within the apparent decorum and order of the dances: the event is enjoyed despite the chilliness of Mrs Rayland's determined traditionalism.

The brash vigour of Stockton and his friends - who include Sir John Belgrave and Orlando's brother Philip - is hardly an improvement, for they are representatives of a new materialism which extracts maximum profit and personal gratification at whatever human and social cost. We are told merely that Stockton has made his money from war, but his and his friends' single-minded pursuit of pleasure - whether it consists in taking game on another's land or hunting down the daughters of the district in a similar spirit - adequately suggests his rapacious and unscrupulous business attitudes. Stockton's lavish house-parties are not indications of his generosity, but a means of advertising his wealth and consequence. A similar materialism infects the Church, as we see in Dr Hollybourne's case, and the irresponsibility of greed

is seen in Philip's adding gambling debts to his family's financial problems and in lawyers unscrupulously preying on their clients. Such characters appear in many other Charlotte Smith novels, apparently randomly introduced, but in The Old Manor House they contribute to the overall logic of the confrontation of enervated old values with new vulgarities and iniquities.

Charlotte Smith shows how materialistic values may affect all classes. When Orlando returns to England ragged and penniless, and in search of food and shelter, he is shocked by the indifference he encounters in innkeepers and ordinary people on his route. They cannot recognize him as a gentleman and thus consider they have no potential reward to gain by helping him: Orlando reflects that he was less appalled by the cruel violence of the Indians by whom he was captured in America. Charlotte Smith apparently shared Jane Austen's respect for sailors and her belief that life on board ship instils manly consideration, for two honest seamen assist Orlando at this time, and a gallant sailor helps Monimia in his absence.

Charlotte Smith's positive values have a hard time in The Old Manor House, beset by Raylands and Stocktons, even if they do conventionally and not wholly convincingly triumph at the end. The contrived happy ending following the hackneyed expedient of the discovery of a later will is less acceptable in this novel than most because it is so clearly at odds with a reluctance elsewhere in The Old Manor House to adopt a black-and-white view of vice and virtue and a comfortable assurance of the necessary triumph of the latter. Although Orlando and Monimia embody virtue rather too completely, even they very occasionally behave in ways contemporary critics found censurable, and The Old Manor House as a whole satisfies because of Charlotte Smith's disinclination to segregate her characters invariably into moral sheep and goats. Mrs Ehrenpreis has praised the author's 'moral realism' and lack of 'a stereotyped view of good and evil' in this novel: Wolf-hunter spares Orlando but remains a bloodthirsty savage; the stalwart,

courageous negro servant Perseus nevertheless can be contemptuous of a poor cripple; a despised mistress of one of Stockton's friends shows kindness and compassion to Orlando. There is even a decent lawyer amongst the knaves who is willing to reveal and condemn the iniquities of his fellows, though his efforts to help Orlando prove fruitless. Such fidelity to the admixture of good and evil in individual human beings - and in classes and occupations - gives the reader a measure of confidence that Charlotte Smith strove to produce a portrait of society as accurate and fair as she could make it in this novel. Some critics remark this moral and social realism, but attempt no explanation of why it should be prominent in this particular work: the explanation lies in the unusual circumstances of its composition, the uncertain contemporary political climate, and the book's relationship to earlier and subsequent Smith novels.

An obvious though not primary factor was the writing of the early parts at Eartham, which set the tone of the whole novel. I have remarked already that Charlotte Smith responded to the respite from her usual position of anxious isolation and to the encouragement of admired literary figures by striving to produce a work that would win the approbation of Hayley, Cowper and the other guests. The rarified atmosphere surrounding the 'Bard of Eartham' may seem at this distance to contain a precious, self-satisfied literariness, but it probably encouraged Charlotte Smith to concentrate on producing an artistically competent work and dissuaded her temporarily from a tendency to regard novel-writing as pot-boiling. In addition, her presenting her day's work to a group of friendly and, she thought, discerning critics, rather than an anonymous and indiscriminating readership, no doubt encouraged efforts at social realism and considered moral and political judgements. Hayley's household was neither a hotbed of radicalism nor a tory stronghold, and Charlotte Smith would be impelled towards a kind of moral and political reasonableness.

More importantly, the author was at an interim stage between the revolutionist optimism of Desmond in 1792 and the disgust with the practical progress of the Revolution apparent in The Banished

Man in 1794. No longer was ringing confidence in the triumph of libertarian values possible, nor could doubters be so easily lampooned; on the other hand, it was to take a little more time before Charlotte Smith could bring herself to redirect her sympathies for the oppressed to aristocratic French emigrés, and transfer her contempt to the new masters in France. Such a transitional stage, with the author caught between opposing certainties, could have manifested itself in her fiction merely as moral and political confusion; instead, it seems to have quickened her observation and compelled subtleties of moral and social analysis. A sense of life's ambiguities and an approach to a moral relativism for a time displaces a tendency apparent in her previous novel to make fiction prove doctrine rather than reflect reality. The structural deficiencies of Desmond previously and other novels subsequently arise not only from their author's limitations of talent and her need to produce popular works quickly but also from their partial subservience to doctrinal and polemical ends. In The Old Manor House solidity of structure, embodying a less decidedly political and simplistically moral point of view, replaces the distortion of plot and character by didactic fervour. Even a reader sympathetic to Charlotte Smith's ideological stance in Desmond may suspect that character and action are being tailored and moral complexities understated for the sake of polemic impact, and the later novels sometimes turn from realism to philosophical idealism as the author salvages what she can from the wreckage of her early hopes and creates characters of a moral perfection and rarified political idealism unlikely in citizens of the world as it is. The novel of purpose or doctrine may stray from realism as radically as the most sensational and escapist romance if its author's ideological predilections distort what she really sees. In The Old Manor House, however, Charlotte Smith was able to analyze both traditionalist and rising middle-class values undogmatically and, though she assesses all characters by what she would consider to be universal standards of decency and humanity, she could allow a number of them a certain moral complexity - mingled virtues and weaknesses -

whatever their political and social position. The result is that The Old Manor House satisfies more than Charlotte Smith's more propagandist or romantic works.

After The Old Manor House there is nothing radically new in Charlotte Smith's fiction. She had established her novelistic pattern of a basic love-story plot, with mingled elements of sensibility, adventure and suspense; she had developed a gallery of characters on which to ring minor changes in the remainder of her fiction (and she never equalled the characterisation achieved in The Old Manor House); she had substituted the hero for the heroine as the dominant figure; she had learned to introduce elements of nature-description and gothicism on the whole subserving the development of plot and character; and she had prepared her readers to anticipate some satirical comedy, social analysis and earnest politicizing in her novels. The remainder of her fiction may be dealt with rather more briefly here and this study henceforth treats mainly of what there is in the later fiction not stressed above in discussion of the earlier works. Of particular interest is the development of Charlotte Smith's political writing in response to the changing political climate and her attempts to find fictional novelties to reverse a slightly slackening popularity. Because copies of some of the works discussed are few and far between, brief plot-summaries are given.

I have characterized Desmond as Charlotte Smith's worst novel, but her most unfortunate essay in fiction was The Wanderings of Warwick (1794), a 'sequel' to The Old Manor House. By eighteenth-century standards, this one-volume duodecimo work of 288 pages, which sold for four shillings,<sup>251</sup> hardly ranks as

251 According to the Monthly Review Second Series XIV (May 1794), 113 and the Critical Review Second Series XI (May 1794), 84, though the British Critic prices the work at 4s. 6d. (III (June 1794), 678).

a novel, but is more a long short-story or novella of 'large print and broad margins.'<sup>252</sup> William Enfield in the Monthly described it as 'a mere supplement' to The Old Manor House.<sup>253</sup>

Charlotte Smith's relations with her publishers were rarely untroubled, but they reached an acrimonious nadir as regards Bell, the publisher of Warwick. Charlotte Smith had - rather rashly - promised her publisher and the public a two-volume sequel to The Old Manor House, but illness and financial problems coincided with the most intense period of literary labour of her career to frustrate this intention. Charlotte Smith had already in hand her next full-length novel, The Banished Man, published the same year as Warwick, and was also working on Rural Walks (1795). In addition to the strain of the eternal disputes over the family estate, Charlotte Smith had the misfortune to develop 'a very alarming rheumatic complaint',<sup>254</sup> which affected her hands and made writing difficult.<sup>255</sup> One might reasonably suspect psychological and not merely physiological origins for this ailment.

Bell expected two volumes of Warwick and claimed to have advanced monies for both. He was certainly protractedly enraged by the discrepancy between what Charlotte Smith promised and what she delivered, for it appears from an indignant letter from the author that, no less than four years later in 1798, she was 'arrested ... on the street' at Bell's behest and had to rely on Low, another of her publishers, for bail. She threatened legal action for this indignity, though apparently the quarrel subsided.<sup>256</sup>

At the time of the publication of Warwick, Bell took the unusual step of inserting a bitterly-worded 'Advertisement' in the work, dated 13th January, 1794:

252 Hilbish, op. cit., 163.

253 Monthly Review Second Series XIV (May 1794), 113.

254 Monthly Magazine XXIII (1807), 246b. Catherine Dorset calls it an 'Imperfect gout' (Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 40.)

255 Catherine Dorset in Scott, op. cit., 40 thinks the ailment 'probably increased by the constant use of the pen.'

256 See Turner, op. cit., 136-7. Letter of 9th October, 1793 to Joseph Cooper Walker.



So long a period having elapsed since the speedy publication of THE WANDERINGS OF WARWICK in two volumes was announced, the Publisher conceives he should be wanting in that respect which he owes to the Public, were he now silently to publish the work in one, without stating in his own exculpation, that both the delay, and the promising it in two volumes, are imputable solely to the author - to whom he leaves the task of justifying her own conduct.<sup>257</sup>

Bell's disgust did not prevent his advertising a second edition of The Old Manor House on the next page of Warwick but, not surprisingly, this was the last Smith work he published. The affair cannot have enhanced Charlotte Smith's reputation and in any case one can detect in the shortened Warwick the first signs of a weariness and flagging of inspiration frequently evident in the later fiction.

Warwick is something of a curiosity among 'sequels' in that its action takes place simultaneously with that of a part of The Old Manor House, rather than subsequent to it. In The Old Manor House Orlando's sister, Isabella, elopes with Captain Warwick, nephew of her despised old admirer, General Tracy. Warwick rejoins his regiment in America, taking Isabella with him and marrying her. After many adventures (not described), the couple return in the fourth volume of The Old Manor House to share in the general happy ending. Warwick itself covers the period when Warwick and Isabella are absent from the action of The Old Manor House, and partly duplicates its denouement. Charlotte Smith seems to have had grave doubts that sufficient suspense could be generated in such circumstances:

... you must divest yourself of the consciousness of the happy catastrophe /Warwick tells the reader/, at least while the story is telling; and suppose that it is possible your hero and heroine may perish in every one of the difficulties in which they are involved - for you know that, when once we are sure people will be happy, we no longer feel any interest for them; and therefore all novels, or at least most of them, close with a marriage, with which mine must set out.<sup>258</sup>

257 The Wanderings of Warwick (London 1794). Unnumbered page after title-page.

258 Warwick, 3.

Charlotte Smith's depressed spirits at this time are evident in her bitter criticisms of the traditional novel's portrayal of blissful marriage and friendships forged and tested in adversity:

... in real life it is just the reverse; for I have remarked that a long series of misfortunes gradually wearies out friendship itself, and dissolves, by the corrosive qualities of adversity, even the ties of kindred.<sup>259</sup>

This is not a cheerful start to the book, but it evinces some vigour at the cost of a great deal of implausibility as the author begins to string together the series of adventure and travel which makes up the story. The loose, episodic structure argues no clear plan in the author's mind, and the remarkable amount of travelling - from England to North America, to the West Indies, to Portugal, Spain, Gibraltar, and back to England via Ireland and Scotland - indicates a casting about for variety of incident and locale. The result is a kind of international picaresque, for Charlotte Smith retains the imperfections of character of Warwick and Isabella evident in The Old Manor House: Warwick is volatile, jealous and inclined to excessive gambling; Isabella is covetous of admiration and is possessive. One of Warwick's few strengths is its credibly flawed principal characters, and their weaknesses are exploited to contrive the plot. As regards the other characters, there are distinct signs of authorial improvisation. Don Juan, subsequently revealed to be the Conde de Villanova, seems to develop arbitrarily as the plot evolves in the author's mind; at first he travels with the hero and heroine for business reasons; later he is portrayed as wandering aimlessly in order to escape a romantically distressed past.<sup>260</sup>

Adventure abounds in Warwick, with war's alarms, tornadoes, threatened shipwreck and piratical attacks. Here too there are signs of flagging inventiveness in repetitions: British

259 Ibid., 8.

260 Ibid., 11, 26-7.

frigates save Warwick's ship from seizure by privateers on two occasions,<sup>261</sup> yet there are situations ripe for adventurous development which are allowed to pass unexploited. Lack of authorial absorption in the task in hand is evident too in the rather desultory treatment of misunderstandings between hero and heroine. Promising complications in the relationship are allowed to fizzle out inconsequentially and there is a half-hearted failure to pursue conventional love-entanglements - a relief no doubt to the modern reader, but not something Charlotte Smith usually neglected.<sup>262</sup> Certain aspects of the ending of the tale also demonstrate a cavalier indifference: a 'young man of fashion', formerly friendly with Warwick, is produced within three pages of the end of the work to help Warwick financially and smooth the way to a reconciliation with the disgruntled General Tracy. This invaluable friend apparently warrants only a paragraph and is disposed of within its confines by means of a casual reference to his subsequent death in a duel.<sup>263</sup> Such blatant contrivances, rather than foreknowledge of the happy ending, are what make it difficult for the reader to suspend disbelief.

In order to eke out the tale, Charlotte Smith introduced the story of Warwick's travelling-companion, Villanova, and his love for the faithless Xaviera. This is a highly improbable romantic tale, frequently melodramatic, of a good man's infatuation, in spite of family disapproval, with a femme fatale who has a greater appreciation of her Neapolitan lover than of Villanova's sterling qualities and unswerving devotion.<sup>264</sup>

261 Ibid, 12-22, 72-3.

262 See for instance pp 101-114.

263 Ibid, 285-86.

264 The increasingly romantic taste of the time may be gauged from both the Critical's and the British Critic's selection of the Villanova story for particular praise. To the Critical it was 'the most interesting part' (Second Series XI (May 1794), 88) and to the British Critic 'very pathetic' (III (June 1794), 680), though the latter disapproved of Villanova's being allowed to commit suicide: it would have been better if Xaviera and her Neapolitan had 'slipt down some of the precipices

The history of the affair is retailed in an inset narrative of some twenty-seven pages,<sup>265</sup> though it is eventually integrated with the main plot in the historical present. A three- or four-volume novel may absorb the digressiveness of inset narratives with some success, but Warwick is too short to prevent their being disruptive. The Villanova story ends with his suicide, which is affectingly handled: towards the end he likes to linger in gothic, or rather Moorish ruins encountered on a journey through Spain, which effectively symbolize his blasted life and decayed hopes, and it is in such a ruin that he turns his pistols on himself.<sup>266</sup>

Charlotte Smith even fails to exploit landscape to the full in Warwick, despite the opportunities afforded by settings new to her fiction, such as Portugal and Spain. Possibly she was hampered by lack of descriptive accounts accessible to her, though she does provide some details of Spanish and Portuguese life and diet suggestive of a literary source in their specificity.<sup>267</sup> Charlotte Smith's enthusiasm in writing of France did not extend to countries south of the Pyrenees, for she shows a pitying superiority in her attitude to Iberian poverty and what she sees as Catholic superstition. The only real attempt at romantic landscape occurs during her description of Montserrat, near Barcelona. This, a very Radcliffean passage in which setting sun and rising moon produce striking effects of light, was in all probability derived from the book by 'Mr Thicknesse' to which she refers nearby.<sup>268</sup>

Charlotte Smith's support for the American Revolution, evident in The Old Manor House, is confirmed in Warwick.

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of Montserrat', leaving Villanova to 'recover his tranquillity' and 'become happy in a better choice.'  
(Ibid, 680.)

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265 Ibid, 116-143.

266 Ibid, 222-29.

267 See for example pp. 179-81.

268 Ibid, 183-85. Probably the work was: Philip Thicknesse, A Year's Journey through France, & Part of Spain (Bath and London 1777), 2 vols. See I, 167-79 and II, 70-71.

Warwick fights on the British side, is captured, but praises the Americans' treatment of prisoners.<sup>269</sup> Sympathy for the noble savage in the shape of American Indians in The Old Manor House gives way to concern for West Indian Slaves in Warwick: chapters two and three contain what the hero calls 'a sort of dissertation on negro slavery',<sup>270</sup> which reveals some uncertainty of attitude in Charlotte Smith. The institution of slavery outrages her libertarian instincts, yet she seems anxious its horrors should not be overstated, and to wish to discover some partial excuses for the slave-owners. Warwick begins with the observation that

A number of beings condemned to perpetual slavery, beings who seem called into existence only to suffer, is an idea revolting not only to the mind of every Englishman, but to every European in whom habit does not blunt the power of reflection. I will own to you, however, that the subject seen nearer loses some of its horrors; though too many remain, and ever must remain, while slavery exists.<sup>271</sup>

Warwick admits that his sojourn in Jamaica has made him to some degree 'habituated' to the sight, worthy only of 'horror and indignation' of 'black people going into the fields under the discipline of the whip.'<sup>272</sup> This notion of the insidious power of custom to remove one's sense of horror and injustice is made much of: Warwick tells us that a friend 'in every other instance reasonable and humane' is severe in punishing trifling offences by his slaves because, he says, 'without such wholesome severity masters would not be able to keep their slaves in subjection'.<sup>273</sup> An inset narrative follows at this point telling the story of a white girl with apparently all the tender susceptibilities of the heroine of a novel of sensibility, who nevertheless administers a severe whipping to a mulatto girl.<sup>274</sup>

269 Ibid, 29-36.

270 Ibid, 67 (n).

271 Ibid, 44-5.

272 Ibid, 45-6.

273 Ibid, 46.

274 Ibid, 47-56.

Warwick comments that

... it is astonishing how habit influences the human character, and how little impression is made on our feelings by objects to which we are from our infancy or early youth accustomed.<sup>275</sup>

This may be true, though one would perhaps see it as a timely warning of the difficulties of abolition rather than justification of the owners. However, there is a curious paternalism in Charlotte Smith's comparing the sufferings of slaves with the harsh treatment of horses in other parts of the world;<sup>276</sup> in the tentativeness of her remark that the slaves possess '... some have contended, an equal portion of that reason on which we so highly value ourselves',<sup>277</sup> and in Warwick's remark that he felt more concern for the slaves than would have been the case had he not experienced the 'fidelity and intelligence' of his own slave, Perseus (whom he freed immediately after purchase).<sup>278</sup>

Other arguments are provided that slavery in practice is not as heinous as it might seem in theory. Most owners are 'careful of the lives' of their slaves 'on whose labour their incomes depend': men do not wantonly jeopardise their investments.<sup>279</sup> The slaves, it seems, often have a keen interest in the success of their masters, for they derive status from his wealth and social consequence.<sup>280</sup> Charlotte Smith, finding it hard to accept a lack of Anglo-Saxon sexual inhibition in the slaves, even implies that they may require European supervision for moral and religious reasons: the negro women love finery, and mulatto women in particular are often 'ebon beauties' of excessive vanity fed by the 'strange attachment' of some European men 'at the expense indeed of everything that resembles

275 Ibid, 57.

276 Ibid, 58.

277 Ibid, 45.

278 Ibid, 46.

279 Ibid, 59-60.

280 Ibid, 61.

morals and decency; and perhaps in no part of the Christian world are appearances of morality so little attended to as in the West India islands'.<sup>281</sup> One might deduce, however, that it is the European men who equally require moral supervision.

Charlotte Smith returns to her habit of using the social and political analysis of foreign lands to highlight deficiencies at home; a predilection that again annoyed staunch admirers of British institutions.<sup>282</sup> Warwick considers the slaves no worse off than the 'peasants of England'; indeed, their condition is 'even preferable to that of the English poor', who endure worse housing and crushing poverty in the attempt to live as free men, and in their demoralization take to excessive drinking and come to the ultimate horror of life in the workhouse. An Englishman who flees from such degradation to join the armed forces becomes truly a slave.<sup>283</sup>

Charlotte Smith's attitude to West Indian slavery is thus less unmitigatedly condemnatory than her views on European social abuses and injustices. It is not surprising that the struggle to abolish slavery was to prove a protracted business when even such ardent reformists as Charlotte Smith could be tentative. She contrived to reconcile general and theoretical condemnation of the institution of slavery with a concern that the European masters should not be blamed beyond their deserving:

281 Ibid, 61-2.

282 Ibid, 61.

283 The British Critic was particularly offended. It complained that Charlotte Smith referred to exceptionally unfortunate instances of poverty and misery amongst the British peasantry as if such were the norm. It denied workhouses were the deplorable institutions Charlotte Smith suggested; claimed that the legislators had done their best to alleviate poverty; and recommended that alehouses should be 'regulated with tenfold strictness' if poverty was to be further relieved (III (June 1794), 679). The British Critic, of course, gleefully quoted Charlotte Smith's mitigating remarks on Slaveowners (p 678). Overall, the Review was able to recommend the work (p 680). The Critical seemed surprised that Charlotte Smith thought the lot of negro slaves in some respects superior to that of the British

... dreadful as the condition of slavery is, the picture of its horrors is often overcharged.<sup>284</sup>

However, one may take Warwick's final words on the subject as Charlotte Smith's:

But let me, after having enumerated all these circumstances of palliation, declare against every species of slavery: let me protest my belief that it brutalises, while it degrades, the human character, and produces at once servility and ferocity.<sup>285</sup>

The criticism of lawyers continues in Warwick. The foreign settings are not allowed to frustrate Charlotte Smith's perennial animus against the profession, for she introduces a Spanish lawyer of unprepossessing appearance and dubious integrity. Warwick suspects he has been cheated of a legacy from Villanova, and muses thus:

I was ... forced to console myself as well as I could, in cursing lawyers of every description, which I did very heartily, convinced that the esprit de corps among them is the same in all countries, and that a lawyer must be a rogue par metier.<sup>286</sup>

In previous works Charlotte Smith had satirized dilettante authors and discussed literary genres; in Warwick she also attacked critics, booksellers and publishers, and it is tempting to see her dispute with Bell behind this satire, for it occurs near the end of the tale, when the penniless hero, newly returned to England, takes up the pen in order to keep body and soul together. Warwick is encouraged in this venture by an author and critic, MacGowan, who hopes to make the hero a 'party writer' of political pamphlets. Warwick resists such unthinkable degradation, but views what one might think to be more respectable writing with little enthusiasm:

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peasant, but on the whole thought she had written impartially, candidly and without 'declamation on either side.' (Second Series XI (May 1794), 88).

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284 Warwick, 65.

285 Ibid, 66.

286 Ibid, 254-55.



Behold me then no longer in any other light than one of those unfortunate beings who excite the contempt of the rich, and the wonder and fear of the ignorant: - the once gay and fortunate Warwick became a writer for bread, and depended entirely on the booksellers for support.<sup>287</sup>

Warwick assists MacGowan in reviewing, and finds to his disgust that 'frequently the merit of a work was to be estimated by the name of the publisher, and not by that which it intrinsically possessed'. Warwick regrets his critical steel, for he was

sometimes compelled, in the execution of justice, to crush the hopes of industrious intelligence - of a mother, perhaps, who had recourse to her pen to supply bread to a family for whom she had no other resource.<sup>288</sup>

One trusts Charlotte Smith's critics felt duly remorseful.

MacGowan's treachery is demonstrated in his dealings with Mrs Manby, in whose 'effusions' he claims to detect some 'traits of original genius'.<sup>289</sup> Mrs Manby enjoys universal praise on the strength of MacGowan's approval until she takes it into her head to publish some of her pieces 'incognito'. MacGowan immediately characterizes the poetry he had formerly puffed enthusiastically as 'intolerable nonsense'.<sup>290</sup> Charlotte Smith contrives to mock MacGowan and Mrs Manby simultaneously when he dismembers her verses, image by image, emphasizing their absurdity. Yet MacGowan's critical method is limited to proceeding on the assertion that 'the only way to distinguish good from bad poetry was to put it into prose, and see if it were sense'.<sup>291</sup> The outraged Mrs Manby confronts MacGowan in a scene Charlotte Smith deems indescribable. Petty literary jealousies, conceits, flatteries, back-bitings and betrayals were beginning to irritate Charlotte Smith and possibly her scorn of the reviewers<sup>292</sup> may in part have arisen from the failure of

287 Ibid, 274.

288 Ibid, 275.

289 Ibid, 278.

290 Ibid.

291 Ibid, 279.

292 See discussion of Charlotte Smith's reaction to adverse criticism of her Letters of a Solitary Wanderer below, pp. 411-13.

later fiction to provide the financial returns for which she hoped.

The Banished Man, despite its many faults, is an underrated Smith novel, commonly seeming to interest literary historians only as a record of its author's retreat from revolutionist enthusiasm after Desmond. Charlotte Smith began writing the work in the autumn of 1793, and the first three volumes were finished in a mere three months.<sup>293</sup> It was almost complete by May, 1794 - a deceleration in the author's work-rate - and Charlotte Smith received £200 for the copyright in July.<sup>294</sup> Apparently she first intended to call it The Exile; its eventual title may have been suggested by a line from the poet Prior, quoted by Charlotte Smith in the final volume.<sup>295</sup> The novel was published by Cadell junior and Davies in the summer of 1794, probably soon after the writing of its Preface, which is dated July 30th. The four-volume work, like The Old Manor House previously, sold for fourteen shillings.

Critics may have been unimpressed by The Banished Man, but Charlotte Smith herself wrote to Joseph Cooper Walker that she considered it her best novel to date.<sup>296</sup> Her publishers later disagreed, telling the author it had not contained 'that Degree of Superiority which had distinguished most of your former Productions' and that it bore 'evident marks of its having been hastily composed'.<sup>297</sup> There is truth in the latter remark, though The Banished Man is little worse than many another

293 See Turner, op. cit., 137.

294 Ibid, 138.

295 The Banished Man. A Novel in Four Volumes (London 1794) IV, 208.

296 Letter of 25th March, 1794. See Turner, op. cit., 8 n.

297 Turner op. cit., 138. Cadell and Davies easily could have been more upset: Mrs Denzil, a character closely based on the author, struggles to write for the support of her family despite being 'dreadfully ill', but is prostrated by the visit of a publisher who has advanced money. He rudely demands early completion of her latest work, ignoring her affecting plight.

Smith work in this respect; possibly the more highly-finished Old Manor House was in their mind as a model. The reading public apparently agreed with the verdict of the publishers, for sales were sluggish and Cadell and Davies at first resisted authorial pressure for a second edition. When they acquiesced, they reduced Charlotte Smith's payment from £40 for an edition of 'the usual Number' to £20 for the five hundred copies actually printed<sup>298</sup> (presumably the 1795 3-volume edition). There was much about France in the novel, with the author generally hostile to the authorities there. Partly because of this, but mainly owing to the war, the two Paris editions appeared much later in 1803 and 1814.<sup>299</sup> No English reprints followed immediately the half-hearted 1795 edition, nor, for that matter, have any appeared subsequently.

The work was written in cheerless circumstances:

Charlotte Smith was unwell throughout, her son Charles lost a leg at the Seige of Dunkirk and returned home an invalid as she began work, and Anna Augusta was ill in Bristol as the author neared the end of her task.

When Charlotte Smith, while working on the early chapters, wrote that this novel was her best, she was more perceptive than her publishers and early readers, for I shall argue that nowhere did she translate her sombre vision of life into fiction more effectively than in the first volume of The Banished Man. A first volume admittedly is not a whole work, but then it is primarily the first volume of The Old Manor House that leads

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(Banished Man IV, 105.) In the second volume, Mrs Denzil's publisher (Mr Clapper) writes to demand 'a hondred pages at least by Satturday night', (II, 231.) Possibly Cadell and Davies concluded Charlotte Smith was referring to other publishers who had treated her less considerately: Bell perhaps.

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298 Turner, op. cit., 140-141.

299 That is, the first at the time of the Peace of Amiens and the second during a time of armistice with France.

literary historians to acclaim the novel as Charlotte Smith's best. It must be admitted that volumes two to four of The Banished Man are in many ways a disappointment: Charlotte Smith displays a more-than-Dickensian prodigality in the creation of characters, switches the action cavalierly about Britain and Europe, lurches from high adventure to domestic sensibility and back again, and all-in-all produces an often confusing and seemingly interminable hotchpotch. A summary here of the convoluted plot and plethora of characters may therefore forestall confusion otherwise likely to arise from my discussion of segments of the novel later in this section.

The hero of The Banished Man is the Chevalier Armand D'Alonville, younger son of the Viscount de Fayolles, and he is transformed into an emigré in the course of the novel. The work begins with Austrian and Prussian forces retreating from the French into Germany in October 1792, and ends in July 1793 with the Jacobins in power in France, Robespierre the principal figure on the Committee of Public Safety, and the Terror under way. D'Alonville's elder brother is an opportunist republican, but the hero himself is a royalist and traditionalist of a sweetly reasonable kind and is obviously in part suggested by the Chevalier de Faville, Anna Augusta's husband, despite Charlotte Smith's denial in her Preface.

The tale starts dramatically with de Fayolles and his younger son, both wounded, fleeing from the French forces and finding shelter with the Baroness de Rosenheim and her married daughter, Madame Adriana D'Alberg, in Rosenheim Castle. Here de Fayolles dies of his wound (and shame at his elder son's Jacobinism). Adriana's husband, the Count D'Alberg, is a Lieutenant-Colonel in the retreating armies and the Baron de Rosenheim is in the Imperial Service in Vienna. D'Alonville and the ladies, with the shifty, boastful Castle Almoner, the Abbé Heurthosen, make for Vienna via Coblenz. However, D'Alonville, disguised as a peasant, returns to Rosenheim to recover vital family documents. He finds the castle destroyed

but secures the hidden papers, and reaches Vienna, only to discover that deurthosen has turned Count D'Alberg against him, by implications that he is a libertine. D'Alonville, disappointed by the coldness of some members of his new-found foster-family, turns to the French emigrés gathered in Vienna, which group includes an old acquaintance, the Marquis de Touranges, with his friend and former tutor, the Abbé St. Remi. D'Alonville finds the emigrés factitious and indecisive as to what course to pursue, and decides to join de Touranges on his journey to Berlin. De Touranges fears his wife and his mother have been killed or imprisoned in France, though he thinks it possible they have escaped via Rouen, so he decides to seek out a remaining relation in Berlin.

The narrative is already sufficiently complicated as regards profusion of characters, rapidity of events and variety of setting, but at this point a young Englishman who at times is to rival D'Alonville as hero enters the story. He is the 'candid, generous, humane, and good natured' Edward Ellesmere, younger son of Sir Maynard Ellesmere of Eddisbury Hall in Staffordshire. Edward, accompanied by the jingoistic Mr Melton, is making a Continental Tour and his coach has overturned on the road to Dresden when he is overtaken by D'Alonville and his friends. Ellesmere descends directly from Charlotte Smith's previous heroes, for his sentiments are liberal and libertarian; the author is thus able to maintain her reformist ideals in his person, criticize the Jacobinical turn of the Revolution through D'Alonville, and disapprove a position of extreme feudal reaction taken by the gloomy de Touranges.

The group travel to Berlin where they meet a couple fleeing another troubled country - the old Pole Carlowitz and his attractive daughter Alexina, who have left home to avoid the anti-libertarian reaction there. Ellesmere much admires Alexina, but Carlowitz wishes to return her to relations in Warsaw. At this point, de Touranges, disappointed at his failure to find his wife's uncle in Berlin, leaves in the night to join the French emigré forces, hastily pursued by his mentor, St. Remi.

The scene now switches to England as Ellesmere and D'Alonville leave the Poles and travel to Ellesmere's home in Staffordshire. A host of Ellesmeres, their friends and their neighbours now appear as the tale dwindles for a time into characteristic situations of domestic sensibility and love-complications. D'Alonville finds the mother and wife of De Touranges living in an English village, solicitously watched over by a female author, Mrs Denzil, and her daughter Angelina (Anna Augusta?). Angelina is, one is led to believe, even more beautiful than Adriana and Alexina, and D'Alonville loves her immediately.

All the principal characters have now been introduced, and the novel becomes not only complicated, but also packed with coincidence as the characters cross paths through the length and breadth of England and Western Europe. D'Alonville and Ellesmere return to the Continent, where they separate. D'Alonville disguises himself as a republican peasant and searches for De Touranges to acquaint him with the whereabouts of his family and extricate him from a dangerous position in his anti-aristocratic land. D'Alonville makes his way to the gloomily Radcliffean Castle of Vaudrecour near Meral, where rumour has it that De Touranges and his royalist comrades are situated. The authorities have attacked the castle however, De Touranges and St. Remi have fled, and D'Alonville is captured by peasants and taken to Rennes. His interrogators there prove to be his elder brother and Heurthosen, now Jacobinical commissioners, who refuse to admit they recognize him. D'Alonville is taken in chains towards Paris, is imprisoned on one occasion overlooking a scaffold and eleven executions thereon, but is spirited away in a covered cart by two mysterious men. D'Alonville's brother is behind this Pimpernel-like irregular occurrence and D'Alonville is freed to travel on to Paris, this time disguised as a student of the law. Sickened by revolutionary violence and the republican group to whom his brother introduces him, D'Alonville slips away to

Valenciennes, approaches the enemy lines, allows himself to be captured and joins a 'corps of loyal emigrants'. He hears that his brother has been rewarded for his familial piety by execution: Heurthosen has betrayed him and married his divorced wife. A timely three-to-four thousand pounds, prudently transferred by his brother to England, now devolves to D'Alonville.

The characters regroup at Bruges: Ellesmere is wounded in the shoulder and arm, and D'Alonville less seriously in the neck at Dunkirk. Carlowitz and Alexina, now thoroughly disillusioned with the regime in Poland, decide to follow the example of the two friends and cross, though separately, to England.

Back in Kent, D'Alonville finds De Touranges contemplating suicide on a bank of the River Medway, convinced that his mother and wife are dead. D'Alonville is able to disabuse him of this unhappy notion and arrange a meeting in London. As De Touranges is reunited with his loved ones downstairs, D'Alonville meets Angelina nursing her sick mother in an upstairs room. This two-storey scene of sensibility culminates in D'Alonville's asking Mrs Denzil for Angelina's hand.

The tale is now somewhat tediously spun out to fill the remainder of the fourth volume, and reverts to a story of love's complications. To supplement his inadequate financial resources D'Alonville is forced to take a post at the Castle of Rock-March in Merionethshire as tutor to the children of one Lord Abedore (a neighbour to Sir Edward Ellesmere). D'Alonville finds a local cottage for his new wife and her mother. Charlotte Smith contrives reasons for keeping the move and marriage secret, a young lady loses her heart to D'Alonville, and numerous embarrassments ensue. The author herself seems to run out of patience in this final volume, for she shamelessly kills Ellesmere's elder brother and his son in the space of five weeks, follows this precipitously with the death of Sir Maynard and all too conveniently provides an unexpected fortune for Edward so that he may marry the penniless Alexina. After surviving a conflagration at Rock-March and wounding a man in a duel for paying improper attentions to his wife, D'Alonville takes Angelina

and Mrs Denzil to Italy. They meet the Rosenheims and D'Albergs (all but forgotten by the reader) in Verona, and settle there. De Touranges leaves for Flanders to continue the struggle with other emigrés, but Ellesmere at the end proposes to join D'Alonville in Italy, since his mother in England cannot reconcile herself to his marriage to Alexina.

Turner remarks that Charlotte Smith, in The Banished Man, 'seems to have followed Sterne's avowed technique of writing a sentence and trusting to God for the next one'.<sup>300</sup> The plot indeed shows more marks of resourceful improvisation than careful pre-planning and the page of errata at the beginning of the novel suggests lack of thorough revision. The Reviews were as disappointed as the publishers and readership and the novel received a worse press even than Warwick. By this time Charlotte Smith's personal situation was widely known and The Banished Man makes that situation apparent. It contains more bitter invective than any previous work, the Preface is a lament of the author's sufferings and Mrs Denzil is more obviously based on the author than previous equivalents. Charlotte Smith was by now quite unable to maintain any artistic detachment in her portraits of lawyers, ne'er-do-wells and petty literateurs: the personal animus is glaringly apparent and the diatribes out of all proportion to the sins of her fictional characters. The Reviews were becoming progressively more unwilling to tolerate such querulous episodes and were coming to resent Charlotte Smith's grinding of personal axes in what were supposed to be entertaining works of fiction.

The Critical reviewer was the most severe in this matter and delivered ominous warnings that Charlotte Smith should not impose upon the patience and disappoint the expectations of the public if she wished to keep her hold on their affections:

300 Turner, op. cit., 138.



It is vain to think of preserving the notice of the world by any other means than those by which it was at first gained. The public, careless of the future, and little grateful for the past, reads a novel only to be amused, and, if amusement is wanting, quickly abandons the most favourite author, little enquiring to what cause the defect may be imputed.<sup>301</sup>

The Critical had some political observations: Charlotte Smith had attempted 'to reinstate herself in the opinion of those who have been offended by the turn of her politics in a former publication'. However, her main end seemed to be to 'furnish her bookseller with a certain number of volumes'.<sup>302</sup> William Enfield in the Monthly was kinder about Charlotte Smith's retailing of 'inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow', but his review equally was a warning to Charlotte Smith, despite his assumption that the public would grant her 'considerable indulgence' because so much indebted to her for entertainment in the past.<sup>303</sup> The British Critic was grateful for Charlotte Smith's criticisms of the course of the French Revolution, but was pointed in its criticism:

... the only reprehensible part of the work before us, is the eagerness with which our irritated, and perhaps injured novelist introduces her own story, and paints, with pencils dipped in corrosive sublimate, those persons (respectable ones, and her own relations) who have been concerned in her affairs. Private history should not be introduced for public perusal ...<sup>304</sup>

The European Magazine was particularly shocked by the vehemence of Charlotte Smith's language, which it thought unbecoming to the female pen. It would not object to the author's complaints

... provided she will not call harsh names: we would have her rail like a gentlewoman always. The epithets "rogues, fools, knaves," may perhaps be very justly applied to the characters she speaks of; but we are as much disconcerted by these epithets, when used by the

301 Critical Review Second Series XIII (March 1795), 275.

302 Ibid.

303 Monthly Review Second Series XVI (Feb 1795), 133.

304 British Critic IV (Dec 1794), 623.

elegant poetess, as she herself could be by the sanguinary expressions of a Paris Enragée. The English tongue, it is true, abounds with terms of abuse, but the male sex have long since appropriated them all, and will not suffer their rights to be invaded with impunity; except by those resistless nymphs who deal out the treasures of the ocean from a certain part of this metropolis.<sup>305</sup>

A significant feature of The Banished Man so far as the Reviews were concerned was Charlotte Smith's apparent change of political standpoint. Whereas previously in Desmond she had greeted the French Revolution as Liberty's dawn, she now joined the liberal recoil from the excesses of violence across the Channel. I have previously indicated the limits of Charlotte Smith's revolutionism and suggested that her daughter's marriage to de Paville gave her a personal stimulus to sympathy for the French emigrés; but she in fact retained her libertarian ideals and regarded events in France as a betrayal and not a confutation of them. However, it could be expected that Tory periodicals would congratulate themselves on the acquisition of a notable convert and the British Critic could not resist welcoming an erring daughter back to the fold:

We must not close this article without congratulating the lovers of their King and constitution, in the acquisition of an associate like Mrs Charlotte Smith. Convinced by observation, that the changes in France have only produced rapine and murder, and that the most worthy among the French have been forced to quit their country to avoid inevitable slaughter, she makes full atonement by the virtues of the Banished Man, for the errors of Desmond. Such a convert, gained by fair conviction, is a valuable prize to the common wealth.<sup>306</sup>

Such travesties of Charlotte Smith's actual position were possible in an atmosphere in which even the reformist Reviews were on the defensive. John Aikin in the Analytical acknowledged the excesses of the Revolution, but considered that Charlotte Smith had deserted the cause of liberty altogether:

305 European Magazine XXVI (Oct 1794), 276.

306 British Critic, 623.

/She/ has discovered, that on account of the various excesses and enormities, which have arisen in the course of this great effort for the recovery of freedom, the cause is to be abandoned.<sup>307</sup>

The Analytical regretted Charlotte Smith's 'high tone of hyperbole' against the French and remarked dryly that she displayed the vehemence of all new converts.<sup>308</sup> The Monthly was eloquent in its restraint when it said it was content to 'say nothing' of Charlotte Smith's 'political conversion' and the 'warmth with which she now expressed herself against the French government'. Like the Analytical reviewer, Enfield thought it 'natural for new converts to be zealous'.<sup>309</sup> Perhaps in the atmosphere of the time any modification of attitude was betrayal; nevertheless, such reactions mis-state Charlotte Smith's position as surely as those of the British Critic. The European reviewer came closest to summarizing Charlotte Smith's politics accurately:

Though on a slight reading Mrs Smith will be generally accused of having changed her political opinions, yet on strict examination she will be found as much the friend of real liberty as when she wrote ... Desmond, but she, like all other thinking people, is aware that even liberty may be bought too dear; and losing all interest for the maniacs of the day, she is at once conscious that they do not deserve liberty, and that, in the way they are going, they can never arrive at it.<sup>310</sup>

Charlotte Smith certainly had not changed her basic political philosophy,<sup>311</sup> but she had changed her portrait of France since Desmond. In the earlier work she had lost no opportunity to stress the peacefulness and prosperity she claimed for the early days of the Revolution; in The Banished Man she describes scenes of horror and confusion. When D'Alonville travels to Normandy, he finds agriculture stagnating and villages denuded of men folk, with women and children starving.

307 Analytical Review XX (Nov 1794), 204.

308 Ibid.

309 Monthly Review, 135.

310 European Magazine, 276.

311 In her Preface Charlotte Smith writes that she does not think she was in error in what she wrote formerly on French politics:

The bleak countryside D'Alonville sees on his journey to Vaudrecour is further desolated by civil strife.<sup>312</sup> Trade and manufacture are paralyzed in Paris,<sup>313</sup> and violence is endemic: a technique of government and a result of warring political factions. The executions of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette both occur during the period covered by the action of the novel,<sup>314</sup> and Charlotte Smith is bitterly outraged by both events: she argues that the king is essentially innocent, a victim of the times and a dupe of incompetent advisers.

On the other hand, Charlotte Smith demonstrates her continued adherence to libertarian ideals and her conviction of the inherent virtue of the French people. At various points in The Banished Man she is at pains to produce representatives of the ranks inferior to that of her principal characters so that they may criticize the course of the Revolution and imply that the governing cliques enjoy little popular support. The boatman who takes D'Alonville ashore at

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I still think however, that no native of England could help then rejoicing at the probability there was that the French nation would obtain, with very little bloodshed, that degree of freedom which we have been taught to value so highly. But I think also, that Englishmen must execrate the abuse of the name of liberty which has followed; they must feel it to be injurious to the real existence of that first of blessings, and must contemplate with mingled horror and pity, a people driven by terror to commit enormities which in the course of a few months have been more destructive than the despotism of ages - a people who, in place of a mild and well-meaning monarch have given themselves up to the tyranny of monsters, compared with whom, Nero and Caligula are hardly objects of abhorrence.

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312 Banished Man III, 91-2.

313 Ibid., IV, 7.

314 Ibid., II, 86-7, 120-21; IV, 77.

Granville bewails the course of events,<sup>315</sup> faithful servants at Rosenheim prefer the old days of aristocratic ascendancy,<sup>316</sup> and Charlotte Smith assures the reader earnestly that the French people are indignant but suppressed.<sup>317</sup> De Touranges cannot believe that the authorities dare execute the King

... lest the indignation of the people should conquer their fears; for be assured, by terror only the populace has been restrained, and that the atrocities that have been committed have so astonished and intimidated them, that they have suffered to pass as their actions the villainy of a hired banditti.<sup>318</sup>

When D'Alonville is introduced into Jacobin circles in Paris he ignores their 'rhodomontading' and instead studies 'the real sentiments of the people', concluding that 'revolutionary energies' are not at the height the republicans claim.

Why the Revolution should have taken such a bloody turn perplexes Charlotte Smith and she worries the topic throughout the novel: how could such 'tyrannical anarchy', bringing 'everlasting disgrace on the French name' have come about? The author, rather against her usual posture of denying the existence of significant differences between European nations, argues that the early promise of the Revolution failed only 'because of the headlong vehemence of the French National character' and thinks that

The impossibility of finding (in a very corrupt nation, and among men never educated in notions of real patriotism) a sufficient weight of abilities and integrity to guide the vessel in the revolutionary tempest, has occasioned it to fall into the hands of pirates, and utterly to destroy it.<sup>319</sup>

However, she retains her idealism on a theoretical level and contends that the Revolution was a noble affair in its early days. Ellesmere reproves D'Alonville:

315 Ibid., III, 77-84.

316 Ibid., I, 157-8.

317 Ibid., II, 120; IV, 8.

318 Ibid., II, 120.

319 Ibid., III, 92-3.

You think, that even in its first germinations it threatened to become the monster we now see, desolating and devouring France. I still think, that originating from the acknowledged faults of your former government, the first design, aiming only at the correction of those faults, at a limited monarchy and a mixed government, was the most sublime and most worthy of a great people that ever was recorded in the annals of mankind.<sup>320</sup>

Ellesmere concurs in deploring 'the misery and devastation ... brought on the finest kingdom of Europe', the 'death of dearest friends' and the 'dispersion and beggaring of families', but concludes:

I, as an Englishman, deplore the injury done to the cause of rational liberty throughout the world. I deplore, as a citizen of that world, the general devastation, the blood that has been shed in the field or on the scaffold, and the stupendous destruction that has overwhelmed a great nation.<sup>321</sup>

Events in France increased Charlotte Smith's appreciation of relative British stability. Old Carlowitz the Pole speaks of 'the happy constitution of England, and the flourishing situation to which she had arisen'<sup>322</sup> and St. Remi disagrees with De Tourange's condemnation of the 'proud, ferocious, and hardly civilized' English:

I know no nation of Europe more enlightened, more respectable, at least so they appear to me <sup>323</sup> by the translations we have of their best authors.<sup>323</sup>

Understanding between nations - especially between England and France - had long been Charlotte Smith's concern to promote. Despite peculiarly intense English dislike of France at this time (D'Alonville is rudely received and even abused and hissed in the street when he comes to England), Charlotte Smith continued to work to break down the barriers of prejudice. In a tongue-in-cheek reversal of national stereotypes, D'Alonville is made at times rather stolidly reserved in character, while

320 Ibid., IV, 321-2.

321 Ibid., 322-23.

322 Ibid., II, 56.

323 Ibid., II, 84-6; 89.

Ellesmere has an eye for a pretty woman and a readiness to engage in flippant banter regarding amours.<sup>324</sup> Inn keepers and servants display anti-gallic sentiments, but English prejudice is most tellingly caricatured in the absurd Melton, whose stereotyped views of various nationalities have proved remarkably enduring. Melton informs Ellesmere that he 'cannot love' the French:

'But it does not appear, my friend,' rejoined Ellesmere, 'that Italians please you better.'

'Oh! damn them - squeaking, fiddling, scraping, perfidious rascals.'

'Or Germans?' added Ellesmere.

'Humph! Yes they are a little better, I think they have a little more of Englishmen about them.'

'Or Spaniards, or Portuguese?'

'Oh curse them; I hate them, though I know very little of them. They are fellows one knows hardly anything about.'

'Or Russians, or Swedes, or Danes, or Dutchmen?'

'Dutchmen! Mah! The most cheating, money-getting, narrow-souled, bargain-driving scoundrels! - No, damme, a Dutchman is worse --'

'Worse than a Frenchman?' cried Ellesmere.

'No, nothing can be worse; but I think they are almost as bad.'<sup>325</sup>

Charlotte Smith's liberalism is evident in her conviction that tolerant goodwill can bridge national and ideological differences, though she does not think such differences then cease to exist. This tolerance is exemplified by the varied principal characters of The Banished Man, except for De Touranges who tends to sulky hostility towards those unsympathetic to his views. D'Alonville and Carlowitz bask in mutual respect and liking, despite opposing political views; they are, however, united by their both being 'banished men'. D'Alonville and Ellesmere are equally compatible, good-humouredly reducing potential tensions to reciprocal banter: a welcome characteristic of The Banished Man is the warmth of its principal male characters,

324 Ibid., 81.

325 Ibid., 18-19.

especially the lively Ellesmere.<sup>326</sup>

Praise of the literary quality of The Banished Man was not plentiful in the reviews. The British Critic's notice is evidence that the romantic description of scenery and gothicism had lost its first fascination: for the first time Charlotte Smith was praised for being sparing rather than lavish in the provision of 'romantic scenery, castles etc.'. With a glance at Ann Radcliffe, the reviewer remarked that 'some books, published not long ago' had been 'affectedly crowded with such imagery'.<sup>327</sup>

There is scenery in The Banished Man, but it appears largely as the desolated arena of war and revolution. In Desmond Charlotte Smith had employed variations of landscape and architecture to reflect different political attitudes; in The Banished Man she resisted gratuitous gothicism, but instead employs ruined castles in mournful surroundings to heighten her picture of the desolation of civil strife and war. When D'Alonville travels to Vaudrecour (finding everywhere 'the human figure deformed by famine and the human character rendered ferocious by despair'<sup>328</sup>), the castle proves to be partially ruined, 'though many parts yet retained their gothic horrors unimpaired.'<sup>329</sup> Yet the decay of this at-first-sight standard gothic pile proves to have been accelerated recently, and the lurid but safely unreal horrors of the gothic novel give way to disturbing contemporary despoliation and violence. The great woods around the castle have had

326 William Enfield, in the Monthly Review, wrote of 'a glowing and even comic representation of characters'. (Second Series XVI (Feb 1795), 135.)

327 British Critic, 621.

328 Banished Man III, 91-2.

329 Ibid., 114.



... the boundaries broken down, the young trees almost entirely demolished, and a great deal of fire-timber mangled, and even burnt, as no plan seemed to have been observed in the destruction, where the sole purpose was to destroy.<sup>330</sup>

D'Alonville enters the castle, with its dungeons and medieval torture-chamber, by way of a graveyard with ivy-covered tombs. In the gothic gloom of the cloister he is impeded by some obstacle and 'shuddering, recoiled from the clay-cold touch of a corpse.'<sup>331</sup> Immediately, though, the reader is taken far from the stagey horrors of Udolpho and the like: the body is that of a royalist killed in an attack mounted by the republican authorities of nearby Meral.

The first volume of The Banished Man is permeated by such manipulations of gothic conventions to heighten contemporary horror. Charlotte Smith's abiding detestation of war is here conveyed not only in authorial comment and argument,<sup>332</sup> but also in a graphic evocation of war's immediate aftermath. It was a shrewd stroke to avoid the vivid action of full-scale battles and concentrate instead on the residue of pain and desolation. No contriving of terror and suspense is necessary here as villagers dread the coming marauding bands of soldiers; Ian assists nature in the creation of desolate landscape as contending armies move on; the horror of sudden violence is endemic in a situation of a plundering soldiery and the casual encounters of armed bands; fortresses are ruined before the eyes and villages destroyed wantonly, with no comforting and picturesque gradualness and no distancing such as the hand of time could provide. The dark, sombre

330 Ibid, 109-110.

331 Ibid, 125.

332 The Banished Man is Charlotte Smith's most comprehensive denunciation of war and the subject permeates the novel: D'Alonville, for instance, is

tone is set in the opening paragraph of the novel in a conventionally gothic manner:

It was a gloomy evening of October, 1792, the storm which had never ceased the whole day continued to howl round the castle of Rosenheim; and the night approached with ten fold dreariness ....<sup>333</sup>

Yet the date insists on contemporaneity and hints at the chronicling of actual events; and the occupants of Rosenheim are disturbed not only by thunder, but also by 'the distant sound of cannon on the French frontier'.<sup>334</sup>

The sound of battle is always threateningly near - just over the horizon - in the early chapters of The Banished Man, rather as ghosts lurk down the dark stairways and corridors of the common run of gothic novels.

Against this dark background move the figures of the wounded D'Alonville and his father seeking sanctuary in Rosenheim, deprived of their homeland. The reality of war becomes indistinguishable from nightmare in a manner prophetic of the First World War poets. D'Alonville's memories of the preceding days

... all passed through his mind as an uneasy dream is recalled after a restless night; but with this difference that all these events, which a little time before would, if they could have been prophesied, have appeared more improbable than the wildest fiction of a disordered imagination, were now too real ...<sup>335</sup>

The rest of the novel is filled with the restless wonderings of exiles and vulnerable groups without a fixed

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depressed by Berlin because of its militaristic atmosphere and garrison-like appearance. Madame D'Alberg is made to reflect on the contrast between war's alleged glory and its cruel and destructive reality (Ibid, II, 68; I, 57-8).

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333 Ibid I, 1.

334 Ibid II, 6.

335 Ibid.

home. Charlotte Smith here for once found a macrocosmic image for her own sense of loneliness and rootlessness, and the early chapters take on a greater intensity because of the pressure of the author's own sense of abandonment in a hostile world. One sees Charlotte Smith's constant changes of residence and nagging financial and emotional insecurity behind D'Alonville's 'alone upon this earth, I know not to what part of it chance or fatality may lead me'.<sup>336</sup>

Mrs Denzil, closely modelled on the author, is charged by a friend with being of a 'restless temper',<sup>337</sup> which induces her to make frequent expensive removals. Mrs Denzil indicates in reply that she is indeed a 'female Prospero' tempted to 'set forth for some desert island',<sup>338</sup> if only her writings were marketable elsewhere. Wherever she lives she cannot settle to her writing for she is harried by impatient publishers, importunate tradesmen and unprincipled lawyers, and deflected by mundane domestic duties and calls on her charity.<sup>339</sup> Whatever her need for peace, however, Mrs Denzil cannot bear to remain too long in any one place. Paradoxically, she feels both an alien and a prisoner in England:

... do not wonder if I want to move about in my prison, and have a horror of being planted here, like a cabbage, to grow white-headed and hard-hearted.<sup>340</sup>

Through the character of Mrs Denzil Charlotte Smith expressed herself directly; in creating the exiles of her story and tracing their journeyings she transmuted more nearly into art her sense of being bounded from her place in the sun, and her constant wanderings to escape dissatisfaction.

336 Ibid I, 187.

337 Ibid II, 213.

338 Ibid II, 217.

339 Ibid II, 225.

340 Ibid II, 220.

Charlotte Smith's yearnings for an end to her troubles are less satisfactorily but nevertheless affectingly reflected in the novel's final pages. The last 'banishment' of the principal characters is to Italy, a country then relatively untouched by the upheavals elsewhere in Europe and, for Charlotte Smith, the sour associations of England. The settlement in the genial climate of Verona of the D'Alonvilles, Rosenheims, D'Albergs and, prospectively, the Ellesmeres, is a gathering of exiles into community, a new beginning with old bitternesses sloughed away. It is of course escapist, but the finding of a promised land - one wonders why America was not chosen - was a seductive notion to the beleaguered Charlotte Smith.

The Banished Man contains little that is new by way of characterization, especially in the English domestic sections. Indeed, Sir Maynard Ellesmere is a pale recapitulation of certain aspects of Mrs Rayland of The Old Manor House, though he is more warmly companionable and hospitable. Like his predecessor he is a staunch royalist who belongs to more feudal days: he 'observed much of the ceremony now so generally exploded'<sup>341</sup> with the 'politeness of a courtier of fifty years ago'.<sup>342</sup> As in The Old Manor House, this representative of the old order is outraged by the advent of a parvenu to a neighbouring estate. Mrs Nodes, a dissenter, has 'risen to great wealth, by being concerned in a manufacture in an adjoining county'<sup>343</sup> (he makes buttons, we are subsequently told), and purchases an estate larger than Sir Maynard's own. Sir Maynard execrates Nodes as a republican, for he places a bust of Franklin in his vestibule, reads and quotes Ludlow and Milton, hangs pictures

341 Ibid II, 98.

342 Ibid, 104.

343 Ibid, 98.

of Price and Priestly, and drinks to the rights of man.<sup>344</sup> Charlotte Smith must have appreciated her earlier success with Mrs Rayland and her nouveau-riche neighbour, but in The Banished Man she fails to exploit fully the potential of the situation. Eodes dies and is replaced by Mr Danby, newly returned from India, who replaces the republican decor with oriental hangings and furnishings: another fashion unlikely to impress the solidly traditional Sir Maynard.<sup>345</sup>

Charlotte Smith's bitterness makes her satirical portraits unduly sharp, but she retains some detachment in her portrayal of the Abbé Heurthosen, despite his selfishness and despicable treacheries. He is the most successfully drawn of the satirized characters and the author manages to inject some humour into his portrayal. Heurthosen is a man only nominally religious: his guiding principle is self-advancement and self-preservation at whatever cost to others. He adheres, in a pre-Darwinian age, to notions of the survival of the most ruthless. Later in the novel he expediently espouses revolutionary views and rises to provincial authority in France, partly through compunctionless betrayals of political allies. It is early in the novel, when he is attached to the Rosenheim family, that Charlotte Smith views him with a wry humour. Heurthosen thinks the Rosenheims' helping D'Alonville places them in danger from the advancing French forces. Adriana asks him indignantly if he would have refused assistance to D'Alonville:

'I would have everybody,' answered he, 'consult their own security first; - it is the first law of nature.' 'Go then, Sir,' cried the lady, 'consult yours by quitting Rosenheim ...'<sup>346</sup>

A little later, as the Rosenheims travel to Vienna, Heurthosen is swept away, with his horse, while leading a coach across a swollen tributary of the Moselle. A servant girl in a coach

344 Ibid IV, 37-9.

345 Ibid, 39.

346 Ibid, I, 56-7.

... as the first law of nature operated strongly on her, scuffled so well for herself, that, she disengaged herself, and sprang into the stream, whence she walked to the bank.<sup>347</sup>

Heurthosen, at first given up for drowned, subsequently reappears, highly indignant that he was 'abandoned', 'left to struggle alone'.<sup>348</sup> He says he left his horse to his fate 'as I had been before left to mine',<sup>349</sup> and struggled in the water for survival. The essentially cowardly Abbé likes to be thought a brave fellow and spins a fine yarn as to subsequent events:

... imagine what were my sensations, when I heard the rush of waters, which I knew to be the torrent of a mill-stream.' 'It is singular,' said Madame D'Alberg, 'indeed, that among this mighty rush of waters, you should distinguish the noise of a mill-stream, from the stream you were struggling in.'<sup>350</sup>

Heurthosen, unabashed, continues his tale and rapidly gets into deep water, this time metaphorically. He was rescued and

'... was dragged on shore - I mounted my horse.' 'Your horse!' said Madame D'Alberg - 'I thought he had been drowned in the first setting out.' 'No, Madame,' replied Heurthosen, 'I did not say so ... He - he - swam ashore higher up; and was - I know not by whom, caught.' 'But would it not have been better,' said Madame D'Alberg, 'since you were so nearly exhausted, and had suffered so much ... to have gone into the mill for refreshment?' 'I could not,' replied Heurthosen after a moments pause; 'for no sooner had the man who had assisted me - - and another - - surveyed my figure than they declared I was a spy, and they had some inclination to precipitate me again into the raging cataract!' 'A spy!' cried Madame D'Alberg, 'what extraordinary notions these people must have of spies, to imagine that one of them would proceed on his mission by water at such a time of night!' 'I cannot answer for their notions,' said Heurthosen ...<sup>351</sup>

347 Ibid, 86-7.

348 Ibid, 98.

349 Ibid.

350 Ibid, 99.

351 Ibid, 99-100.

By means of such scenes Charlotte Smith elevates an initially unpromising Abbé to a comic character: needless to say, a witness subsequently appears to testify that Heurthosen, seeing the overturned coach in the water, disappeared to avoid the danger of engaging in any rescue attempts and was well entertained in the nearby mill. Heurthosen subsequently proves too vicious for comedy, but the early scenes in which he appears allow a shaft of light to penetrate a sombre novel.

Montalbert was published by Low in 1795, some time before July, in three volumes at a cost of twelve shillings. Wogan published a two-volume Irish edition in 1795 and a three-volume French edition appeared in Paris in 1800. It seems probable that Montalbert was an extended or reworked version of an earlier unpublished two-volume tale entitled Rosalie (the heroine of Montalbert is Rosalie Lessington). Turner's discussion of Charlotte Smith's letters reveals that she sent the greater part of a novel in two volumes to William Davies on 25th August, 1794, and that Cadell and Davies returned 'The MSS called Rosalie' to her on 6th September. Charlotte Smith confessed that she had toyed with the idea of publishing Rosalie privately - perhaps a further reflection of her dissatisfaction with her publishers.<sup>352</sup> Cadell, disappointed with The Banished Man, declined to publish Rosalie, Charlotte Smith had quarrelled with Bell over Warwick, so it seems she reworked the tale and offered it to Sampson Low. Low made advance payments and, despite having presumably a great deal of the work roughly ready, Charlotte Smith was compelled to hurry to finish it in 1795 in trying circumstances: her beloved

352 Turner op. cit., 134.

Anna Augusta died in April of that year, leaving a babe-in-arms to be cared for.<sup>353</sup>

Montalbert is the odd-man-out of Charlotte Smith's later novels, for it represents in large part a return to the formula that had made the early novels successful. There is no preface - the presence of which usually signifies that the author is in didactic and complaining mood - and politics and private problems are not allowed to intrude except rudimentarily. There is little of the Novel of Purpose or Doctrine about Montalbert,<sup>354</sup> though it contains the usual comedy of manners as regards disapproved minor characters.<sup>355</sup> The novel is a sentimental love-story spiced with adventure and travel, with a restrained use of gothicism and nature-description.

Charlotte Smith returns temporarily to the heroine as the central consciousness and Rosalie is a welcome relief from the rather palely unassertive principal female characters of The Old Manor House and The Banished Man. Possibly Ann Radcliffe's successes with isolated heroines in gothic scrapes in distant parts had encouraged Charlotte Smith to place her heroine at the centre of things once more.

353 See Charlotte Smith's preface to Marchmont: A Novel (London 1796). The author here excuses 'the defects of Montalbert'. The shock of Anna Augusta's death had disabled Charlotte Smith and a Bath physician treated her. The work on Montalbert was thus interrupted.

354 Turner's remark that Montalbert 'speaks thematically against marriages arranged by autocratic parents' (op. cit., 142) is correct, though I have shown that many other Smith novels do the same, and Montalbert is not exceptional.

355 The only really sustained attack is the condemnation of the literary dilettanteism of Lady Llancarrick and Miss Gillman. (Montalbert (London 1795) III, 166-74.)



The plot yet again turns initially on the obstacles to the happy and secure union of heroine and hero. Rosalie is (apparently) the daughter of a country clergyman of limited financial resources, and the Roman Catholic Harry Montalbert must contend with his Italian mother's prejudice against English protestants - no small matter, since she holds the key to Montalbert's potential fortune. Montalbert is similar to the early novels in that the worldly Lessingtons, indifferent to Rosalie's superior accomplishments and sensibility - her 'romantic singularity',<sup>356</sup> - try to force her into marriage with coarsely objectionable suitors. One difference though is that Rosalie is secretly married to Montalbert before the end of the first volume and, like Shakespeare's Juliet, must avoid being carried along by the machinations of others into a second bigamous marriage or forced revelation of her secret. A further well-worn element is Rosalie's discovery that she is of higher birth than she knew. The Lessingtons turn out to be foster-parents; Rosalie is in reality the illegitimate daughter of Mrs Vyvian, Mrs Lessington's friend, of the neighbouring great house of Holmwood. Mrs Vyvian, daughter of a branch of the Montalbert family herself, had an affair with Charles Ormsby, younger son of a noble Irish Catholic family. Despite both the Ormsbys and Montalberts having fallen on relatively hard times since their adherence to the Stuart cause, Rosalie is delighted to discover she is of a family 'not formerly ... inferior, either in antiquity or honour, to the most illustrious of the British nobility'.<sup>357</sup> Ormsby is suspected to be dead, but an affecting reunion with his daughter elevates the final volume. The marriage between Rosalie and Montalbert must be kept secret until the hero can persuade his mother to receive his young wife, though the

356 Montalbert I, 2.

357 Ibid., 258.

secrecy gives rise to many a dramatic moment in the novel. Even when Rosalie confesses to Mrs Vyvian that she is married, tears and swoonings in plenty result: Mrs Vyvian misunderstands and thinks Rosalie has married her son Charles, the heroine's half-brother.

Early in the second volume, love-complications, hints of incest and mysteries of birth give way to adventurous travel. The now-pregnant Rosalie accompanies her husband to a Sicilian villa belonging to his friend, Count d'Alozzi. Here her son Henry is born. While her husband is absent, returning from a visit to his tyrannical mother, the author makes good fictional use of the Messina earthquake to throw all into confusion. Vivid descriptions of devastation colour the narrative as Rosalie, afraid her husband is dead, accompanies d'Alozzi to Naples. Uneasy with her 'improper situation' in the protection of the allegedly libertine d'Alozzi, Rosalie throws caution to the winds and writes to Signora Belcastro, her mother-in-law, revealing her marriage to Montalbert. The inexorable Signora has Rosalie seized and carried off by a villainous gang of her henchmen to the mountainous seacoast of Calabria, where she is imprisoned in a gloomy Montalbert castle at Formiscusa. Turkish corsairs and heathen 'Algerines' harry the coastline and a young Englishman, Walsingham, comes ashore from a Maltese galley after an engagement with pirates in the bay. Rosalie, by now allowed to wander in the locality, plots her escape with Walsingham. We are now briefly in the gothic world of Ann Radcliffe as Rosalie that night passes fearfully through the dark vaults of the castle, her flickering candle protected by a hurriedly improvised paper screen, to make her escape. She sails with Walsingham,<sup>358</sup> his affection for her growing dangerously, and they eventually reach England.

358 Not with d'Alozzi as stated by Turner. Nor does Walsingham die in Rosalie's service (*op. cit.*, 143).

The latter part of the tale retails the complications arising from Rosalie's involvement with Walsingham. She repulses his amorous advances firmly and he is content in the end to consider her a 'sister' and help her disinterestedly. However, local gossip near Eastbourne, where Rosalie lodges, insists she is Walsingham's mistress. The jealous Montalbert, alive and now in England, seizes his son and will have nothing to do with her. Rosalie suffers a brain-fever and hovers between life and death. All is resolved and explained in the end, but not before Montalbert has wounded Walsingham in a duel. Signora Felcastro relents sufficiently to settle the fortune meant for Montalbert on his children and allow him an ample annual income, and the family enjoys security at last.

There were further signs in Montalbert - especially in the final volume - of Charlotte Smith's tendency to hasty writing. In the eight years since Emmeline she had published eight novels (averaging some three volumes each), a volume of poetry and a book for young people, and was under constant financial pressure to maintain or even increase this high work-rate. It is not surprising that by now her English was not always impeccable, and both the Monthly and British Critic reviewers compiled lists of errors.<sup>359</sup>

The Monthly and Analytical each gave the novel only a page or so, and in the Critical, Charlotte Smith suffered the indignity of being overlooked at first and then relegated to the Monthly Catalogue. However, the Reviews were not on the whole unfavourable. The reviewers, satiated with Radcliffean gothic horrors, were pleased by Charlotte Smith's moderation in this respect and her restraint in the use of romantic landscape. Arthur Aikin in the Monthly wrote that

359 Monthly Review Second Series XIX (June 1796), 87; British Critic VII (Feb 1796), 129.

... though she relates a journey across the Alps, and many of the scenes are set in Italy, Sicily, and the South of France, yet we find no instance of protracted description. Other writers, and Mrs Smith herself in former publications, have minutely and much too frequently entered into long descriptions of scenes, which, however beautiful and grand they may be, and however, when sparingly introduced, they may enrich a novel, have often by immoderate repetition created disgust.

Though Charlotte Smith shone in 'the delineation of ... poetical landscapes,' she had 'sacrificed glare to propriety, and ... reduced fancy under the direction of taste'.<sup>360</sup> The Critical regretted missing the novel when it first appeared, 'as it might have sooner relieved us from the inundation of romantic horrors with which the press has lately groaned'.<sup>361</sup>

Another reason for approval of Montalbert was Charlotte Smith's determined avoidance of any attempt to 'engage the attention of the public to her own private calamities'.<sup>362</sup> The novel also won approval for its allegedly less loose and episodic structure than The Banished Man. The Critical praised the unification of its numerous incidents 'in one great design',<sup>363</sup> and the Analytical vied with it in complementarity:

The story is original, natural, and interesting. It comprehends a great variety of incidents, combined together with the skill of an experienced artist, to excite, suspend, and gratify curiosity, and to afford the reader a strong and pleasing perception of unity of design.<sup>364</sup>

Though Montalbert is no less episodic than The Banished Man, it does indeed seem more unified. This is mainly because the heroine is at the centre of the action throughout the novel, apart from an inset narrative in which Mrs Vyvian tells Rosalie her life-history; but even here the tale helps

360 Monthly Review Second Series XIX (June 1796), 87.

361 Critical Review Second Series XX (Aug 1797), 469.

362 British Critic VII (Feb 1796), 129.

363 Critical, 469.

364 Analytical Review XXII (July 1795), 59.

elucidate Rosalie's birth and early years. Charlotte Smith also reminds the reader that Mrs Vyvian's story is an inset narrative by interrupting it with conversations between Rosalie and her mother at the ends and beginnings of the chapters that comprise it. In Montalbert, the thread of the Rosalie-Montalbert affair runs unbroken throughout as the main theme (apart from the inset narrative), to which all others are subservient and supportive. In The Banished Man the reader's attention was switched frequently from character to character, couple to couple, relationship to relationship, with many strands of interest running parallel. A further reason for the impression of tighter construction in Montalbert was its comparative shortness - 339 pages as compared with 1032 of The Banished Man and the 1285 of the immediately succeeding Marchmont. Much less padding-out of the story was required, though, even so, the final volume does show evidence of casting around for material.

The Reviews were thus rather kind to Montalbert, recognizing in it an echo of Charlotte Smith's earlier novels which, at that time, seemed a chaste relief from the recent crop of lurid fiction. Yet this critical warmth represented merely a temporary check of a waning enthusiasm for Charlotte Smith's novels.

Charlotte Smith had learned from Emmeline not to make her heroines too talented, with no personal history to account adequately for their accomplishments. Rosalie, like Emmeline, is far superior not only in intelligence and sensibility, but also in education and manners to the Lessington family among whom she grows up. However, the author makes it clear that this is partly a result of her spending time with the cultivated Mrs Vyvian at Holmwood - where she learns French - and exposure to the friendship of

Charles Vyvian and to the Abbé Hayward, a Catholic priest. Thus the reader is not asked to accept that her unerring knowledge of 'good form' and her store of wisdom are purely instinctive (though Charlotte Smith hints it comes in part from her unrealized noble birth), nor need the reader believe she is completely self-taught. Rosalie is an attractive heroine, displaying resourcefulness and determination in difficulties, and marital fidelity without prudery. Interestingly, Charlotte Smith has Mrs Vyvian speak in detail of her affair with Ormsby and Rosalie's illegitimate birth; the author then allows Rosalie and Montalbert to marry secretly and allows them brief escapes by coach from their pretence to an unspecified haven, to account for the conception of their son; and finally she makes great play of the sexual attraction Rosalie holds for D'Alozzi and Walsingham when she is vulnerably under their protection. Charlotte Smith must have assessed correctly the moral climate as less stringent, for there is no sign in the Reviews of the raised eyebrows that much less overt sexuality provoked in notices of earlier works.

Montalbert is the standard Smith hero, with jealousy his only fault - though Charlotte Smith followed up her novelty of a foreign hero in The Banished Man by making him half-Italian, and allowing the Montalberts, though 'of Norman extraction' to boast they can trace their ancestry to 'the Emperors of the East'.<sup>365</sup> More interesting is Montalbert's Roman Catholicism, another obstacle to marriage to Rosalie which the couple refuse to accept as such. One would not argue that Montalbert provides at all a realistically detailed study of the barriers that religious differences may erect, but implicit in the refusal of the hero and heroine to make much of the different modes of worshipping the same God is the superiority of the religion of sensibility and romantic love

365 Montalbert (London 1795) II, 11.

to sectarian considerations. It is the worldly and coarse characters who see Protestantism and Catholicism as irreconcilable. Thus Charlotte Smith firmly characterizes differences of religious denomination as divisive conventionalities - of a piece with the social and economic divisions which the imperfect characters think immutable and desirable, but which pain sensibility.

Rosalie is pressured to marry another for economic and social rather than merely religious reasons, however, and the novel shows that Charlotte Smith's horror of 'forced' marriages had, if anything, strengthened, for she finds a stronger image than previously for such humiliation. Rosalie is instructed to look as attractive as possible in public when a wealthy husband is being sought; she must be 'dressed up and offered like an animal to sale'<sup>366</sup> and, as she later puts it, 'exposed as an animal in a market to the remarks and purchase of the best bidder.'<sup>367</sup> Charlotte Smith had indeed conceived of the preliminaries to marriage as a cattle-market, and her despicable males use animal images too in relishing the prospect of having Rosalie in their sexual power. When Rosalie repels the attentions of her principal suitor, Hughson, her brother-in-law Blagham addresses him thus:

'Aye! aye! Sir, thus it is - thus it is - thus do these imperious little divinities treat us till they are married ... Why now, there's my Kitty as great a tyrant as that little lioness her sister; but you see she begins to look tame and demure already. Come, come, Miss Rose, frowns do not become the fair, child.'<sup>368</sup>

When suitors try to take Rosalie's hand, it is made to seem they wish to lead a tethered beast or are grasping a piece of property.<sup>369</sup>

366 Ibid I, 75.

367 Ibid, 81.

368 Ibid, 79.

369 See I, 80 and 87.

Walsingham is the worthy but unsuccessful lover so often found in Charlotte Smith, but anticipates the Byronic hero more closely than most. As early as Emmeline, Delamere had his dark moods punctuated by outbursts of passion and reckless action, but Walsingham, though more controlled, has the whole complement of romantic characteristics. He has moods of 'the deepest dejection', though he can be 'careless and gay'.<sup>370</sup> Brooding broken-heartedly on an unsuccessful affair and lost love, he travels restlessly trying to forget and is indifferent to the World's opinions and matters it thinks important. 'Silent, absent, and with a countenance where melancholy and regret were strongly expressed',<sup>371</sup> he nevertheless has 'general and brilliant talents, a mind highly cultivated, and a taste elegant and correct'. There was, we are told, 'no science to which he was a stranger, and every European language was familiar to him'.<sup>372</sup> His moodiness gave way to 'a sharp wit',<sup>373</sup> on occasions. He identifies with the wild and sombre in nature, writing mournful sonnets and contemplating at one point taking up a hermit's life in a cave under Beachy Head, yet the brighter beauties of nature do not console:

'Ah! do not talk to me of the splendour of the sun - of the beauty of nature! All - all is dead to me! - I enjoy nothing - - -'<sup>374</sup>

Werther-like, he is often close to suicide ('I envy those who are dead',<sup>375</sup>) and counts his life as worthless except as it may be spent or sacrificed in helping Rosalie. Despite his early passion for the heroine, he mournfully sublimates it, and reveals his heart of gold when he refuses to aim at Montalbert in a duel, and tries to reconcile Montalbert's mother to her son's marriage. Charlotte Smith even allows him the dignity of departing the novel free

370 Ibid III, 67.

371 Ibid.

372 Ibid, 57-8.

373 Ibid, 68.

374 Ibid, 120.

375 Ibid, 161.



of a contrived consolation marriage. Despite gay letters, he continues an unhappy wanderer:

... no longer animated by the hope of Rosalie, he sunk again into that cold despondence, which a sensible heart feels when the world around is a desert.<sup>376</sup>

With Charlotte Smith developing such characters, it is not difficult to discern one reason why Foster characterized her fiction as strongly 'pre-Romantic'.

Begun 'some months'<sup>377</sup> after Montalbert, Charlotte Smith's next novel, Marchmont, appeared the following year in 1796. Sampson Low had been encouraged sufficiently by the sales of Montalbert to publish the new four-volume work, which sold for sixteen shillings.<sup>378</sup> Wogan published a four-volumes-in-two Dublin edition in 1797. According to Charlotte Smith, Low printed 1050 copies of Marchmont and only 130 remained unsold by June, 1797. She thought this 'not a bad sale for the times', especially as, she considered, Low was not in the first rank of booksellers.<sup>379</sup> Later, in 1805, she wrote that Low had contrived to make a profit of £120, despite being left with seventy copies unsold.<sup>380</sup>

The Reviews do not support Charlotte Smith's good opinion of Marchmont. Despite the better notices received by Montalbert, the reviewers never regained their initial enthusiasm for Charlotte Smith's work. Some ignored Marchmont altogether - perhaps the author's return to extensively airing her personal problems was too much to bear - and those who did notice it were lukewarm in their response. Mary Wollstonecraft in the Analytical considered the novel 'certainly spun out at the beginning, and wound

376 Ibid IV, 325.

377 See the Preface to Marchmont: A Novel (London 1796), X

378 According to the Monthly Review (Second Series XXII (Apl. 1797) 469), though Hilbish gives its price as twelve shillings (op. cit., 129).

379 Turner op. cit., 146-7.

380 Ibid, 147.

up too hastily in the conclusion' and was not lavish of praise for what came between.<sup>381</sup> Arthur Aikin in the Monthly was again relieved by the lack of 'the vaulted galleries and castle-dungeons of some modern romances', and contented himself with a general but unconvincing recommendation.<sup>382</sup>

One is inclined to share Mary Wollstonecraft's lack of enthusiasm. Marchmont offers nothing really new and little Charlotte Smith had not done as well or better in the past. Despite its length, Marchmont seems a tired performance, with the author merely shuffling her standard characters and situations so that they emerge in a different order to give spurious novelty. The novel does however mark another stage in Charlotte Smith's political development.

Charlotte Smith herself felt the need to apologize in advance for Marchmont: financial stringency forced her to start the novel when 'suffering in health from the incurable wounds of her mind'. 'I was', she wrote,

unable to remain in any fixed habitation, and still more so to return to the country, where alone I had the benefit of literary conversation, for there every scene would remind me of my murdered happiness.<sup>383</sup>

Thus there had been no 'friendly critic' to point out 'errors of judgement', no library by which to check quotations and allusions, and she had not been able to muster sufficient patience and concentration to detect

the more trifling faults of style which will sometimes happen, or of orthography, which those who write to live, and consequently write in haste, can seldom escape committing.<sup>384</sup>

Turner remarks that the rancour against lawyers and the law which Charlotte Smith had been nursing in Desmond and The Banished Man 'explodes into fury in Marchmont. In many

381 Analytical Review XXV (Apr. 1797), 523.

382 Monthly Review, 469.

383 Preface to Marchmont, X.

384 Ibid.

places artistry has been abandoned for invective'.<sup>385</sup> The long Preface sets the vitriolic tone, with its searing condemnation of lawyers and trustees as robbers, 'inhuman oppressors', reptiles, 'poisonous and noxious specimens', scorpions, 'scourges of the earth', evil spirits and vultures. Similarly lurid epithets appear in the text, and a great part of the novel traces the havoc lawfully wreaked on the Marchmont family. The hero is again descended from a family which, to its cost, supported the royalist cause against Cromwell. The Marchmonts compounded their problems by marrying unmoneyed brides for love, and by refusing to sell or let any of their estates, preferring to mortgage them instead. Marchmont is thus left with the crippling burden of these mortgages and accumulated debts. The principal gothic Marchmont seat at Eastwoodleigh in Devon crumbles from neglect, estate villages sink into poverty, and timber is wantonly stripped away by creditors. The locals mock the humiliation of the Marchmonts, though the remaining retainers, imbued with the family pride, defend them staunchly. Charlotte Smith's principal ground for indignation is that the Marchmonts have been reduced to this sorry plight largely as a result of their disinterested and generous qualities - their refusal to follow paths of financial aggrandizement - while the law and constitution sanction and assist the greedily remorseless destroyers of the family. The estates lie at the mercy of the mortgage-holders who may demand repayment at will, and indeed it is family of the heroine, Althea Dacres, who mercilessly demand repayment from Marchmont despite being already rich. It is obvious that Marchmont's helplessness before the legal correctness but moral iniquity of these persecutors reflects Charlotte Smith's persuasion that the law was actively working against justice in her own financial affairs.

385 Turner op. cit., 146.

The heroine, naturally, is a virtuous contrast to her father, step-mother and their family, and duly falls in love with the troubled Marchmont. The first volume follows the established pattern of tracing the troubles of a beleaguered heroine of sensibility in a worldly environment. Alone after the death of her protectress, Mrs Trevyllian, and without a house she can truly call home, Althea is pressured by her callous father to accept an advantageous marriage with the lawyer Mohun. An array of shallow, fashionable men and hard-hearted, selfish women pass before the disgusted heroine but are unable to corrupt her. A Mr Eversley and his family afford a temporary refuge, but Eversley, remarkably similar to Sir Edward Newenden of Ethelinde, complicates the plot by his growing affection for Althea, whose virtues are highlighted by his wife's shortcomings.

Relief from the English domestic portions is provided by Marchmont's having to flee from his creditors to France, just as did Benjamin Smith. From Marchmont's reports it is clear that Charlotte Smith had given up any lingering hopes of the Revolution. Marchmont sees the lot of the French rural peasantry not a whit improved and despairingly characterizes all political systems as invented by the cunning to subjugate the weak. The French is no exception:

Do not imagine ... that I have any intention to plead in favour of that universal licence, that wild and impracticable scheme of general equality, which has, within a few years, gained grounds from the writings of visionary speculatists, and from the propensity of mankind to run into extremes, and to pervert the best general rules to the most unworthy private purposes ...<sup>386</sup>

A despondency pervades Marchmont. The hero admires the scenery of the South of France and would prefer it to the 'country fogs, bailiffs and attorneys of England', despite the 'summer verdure and boasted freedom' of the

latter, if only the regime were tolerable.<sup>387</sup> The attitude to Britain is very bitter:

Whoever has had, as a distressed man, much to do with the money-getting and money-saving part of the British nation, will not talk in a very elevated strain of its liberal minds and noble spirits in exclusion of all others.<sup>388</sup>

Furthermore,

... nowhere is he who is struggling to rise, or he who has fallen from his rank, kept down with more inveterate malignity, more over-bearing pride than in England. - There it is, that he who is once able to make a figure, and is esteemed rich, sees all the crimes forgotten by which he became so. There the profligate pensioner, the titled parasite, the plunderer of his own country or of any other, and even the private robber who has address enough to rob within the pale of the law, is not only tolerated, but respected.<sup>389</sup>

The perversion of the processes of law to serve evil ends is particularly condemned. In a section that could have come from Dickens the delays and ruinous expense of Chancery suits are indicated. Marchmont imagines a conference with his Counsellor on a projected suit:

'Calculate,' say I, 'the costs and the time,' - 'Why,' returns my friend, 'as to the costs, it is not easy to say what they may amount to among so many parties: and then, as for the time, it will be at least three terms, but more likely six, nine, twelve, or fifteen, before your adversaries will put in their answers; and if they are hostile, why it may be three or four years; and then your bill must be amended perhaps: and then, if any of the parties die among the three-and-twenty individuals whom you must make parties (people of all ages from the old man of seventy-five to an infant born last week), why in that case, you know, you will have all the business to begin over again.'<sup>390</sup>

Charlotte Smith's loss of faith in the possibility of 'general equality' since The Banished Man is accompanied by

387 Ibid, 52.

388 Ibid, 70.

389 Ibid, 71.

390 Ibid IV, 41.

grave doubts as to the innate virtue of man. She is distressed by the possibility that vice may not be wholly attributable to environment and education - to society's corruption of the innately noble man. Marchmont speaks of two French surgeons: one, who hates Englishmen, would readily let him die; the other is solicitous for his welfare.

Yet these two men were both educated in the same profession, and the same principles, under the same animating sun: the one was proud, morose, vindictive, and a bigot to he knew not what chimaeras; while the other was liberal-minded, generous, and humane, considering nothing but how he might do good to his fellow men, whatever might be their country, their religion, or their politics.<sup>391</sup>

Marchmont, puzzled, worries the topic, instancing two contrasting vicious and virtuous army captains; yet they were born with equal personal advantages, both of noble families, both younger sons of nearly equal expectations, and both, after the same course of education, entering at the age of sixteen into the army.<sup>392</sup>

He continues:

If climate, education, or the government under which they have lived; influence the characters of men, surely these two could never so radically, so totally differ.<sup>393</sup>

Charlotte Smith's perfectibilism had been severly shaken, and Marchmont shows her beginning to divorce her notions of the ideal state from any hope of its practical implementation. I have indicated how Charlotte Smith's later poetry in Beachy Head seems to hold seeds of doubt that Nature's influence can harmonize and humanize relationships and society, whatever its consolatory effect on certain individuals. The same doubts pervade Marchmont:

Those who have imagined that a great distance from London there reigns Arcadian simplicity, and that envy, detraction, and malice, only inhabit great cities, have been strangely misled by romantic description. Every bad passion of the human heart thrives as luxuriantly under the roof of the old-fashioned farm-house, two hundred miles from the

391 Ibid, 119.

392 Ibid, 121.

393 Ibid, 121-22.

metropolis, as in that hot-bed itself; and some are even more flourishing ...<sup>394</sup>

Earlier in her career, this would have been amused realism on Charlotte Smith's part: the clear-sighted country-woman diverted by the idealized pastoral assumptions of the townsman. Yet such realism would not have negated her hopes for better things, though it would have warned of the difficulties of their implementation. In the general gloom of Marchmont, however, the harmonizing power of nature seems severely limited. A withdrawal into a private idealism and the notion of an abidingly vicious world relieved by isolated virtuous individuals are developing.

Charlotte Smith's retreat from the world of practical politics and the hope of general reform is articulated by Mr Desborough in Marchmont, who has withdrawn into the country and contents himself in charitably assisting a limited circle of individuals and in trying to redress local abuses:

They say I am a reformer. They say wrong: for I have long since given up any such chimerical idea, as that of being able to make men happier who are wicked and miserable by prescription. Withdrawing, therefore, from any such Utopian and hopeless attempt, I believed the best thing I could do was, to relieve, where I could, individual distress, and to lighten the chains that villainy often imposes on simplicity under the name of law.<sup>395</sup>

Such a passage seems a more fitting end to a novel with the pessimistic implications of Marchmont than the actual, contrived, conventional denouement.

Charlotte Smith returned to her old publishers for her last novel. She wrote to Cadell and Davies on 22nd June 1797,

394 Ibid, 276-77.

395 Ibid, 435.

telling them she had produced about one hundred pages of a work to be called The Young Philosopher, though she had laid it aside in despair of being able to finish it as well as she wished, since her 'plan' required leisure and books.<sup>396</sup> She probably started the tale while she was living at Oxford and making occasional visits to London in connection with her financial affairs. Her residence at Headington, near Oxford, in the summer and autumn of 1797 was a period marked by 'nervous fever' and insomnia.<sup>397</sup>

Charlotte Smith knew Cadell had stated he 'absolutely refus'd to purchase any Novel before it was complete', but insisted she must 'sell it beforehand': as usual she obviously needed money urgently. Rather surprisingly in view of past difficulties, Cadell and Davies agreed to pay the author's price of £50 per volume, whereupon she got down to work and finished the first volume by October, 1797 (though she had stated in June that it would take only 'about five weeks').<sup>398</sup> The four-volume novel, selling at sixteen shillings, finally appeared in June, 1798.<sup>399</sup> According to Hilbish, there was a four-volume-in-two 1798 reprint and a three-volume Paris edition in French in 1799.<sup>400</sup>

The Young Philosopher: A Novel<sup>401</sup> is Charlotte Smith's most utopian work. It bears most strongly the marks of the influence of Rousseau, who is referred to frequently and quoted approvingly: at one point a page is devoted to an extract in French from the Confessions. George Delmont,

396 See Turner op. cit., 147.

397 Ibid, 81

398 Ibid, 148.

399 The Preface is dated 6th June 1798 and the Analytical reviewed the work in its July issue (Analytical Review XXVIII (July 1798), 73).

400 Hilbish op. cit., 584.

401 Turner gives its title as The Young Philosopher, Nature his Law and God his Guide (op. cit., 148). Hilbish traces this title to Joseph B Heidler in



the hero, rejects gentlemanly ease and the fashionable world for the life of a working farmer, and the heroine, Medora Glenmorris, is an innocent child of Nature who passed her infancy in uncorrupted America. The whole novel is suffused by a yearning for an idyllic primitivism, a withdrawal from the world's corruptions.

After descriptions of the hero's unconventional early education and the development of his sturdily independent though eminently reasonable mind, the novel tells the story of his love for the guileless Medora and his resistance to all temptations to marry a rich heiress and to the lures of a fashionable but idle life. Most of the second volume comprises a highly romantic inset narrative of the life and adventures of Medora's mother, Laura Glenmorris. The third and fourth volumes return to the story of Delmont and Medora. As in Marchmont there is a lengthy portrayal of the manipulation of the law by unprincipled lawyers, ill-disposed relations and powerful but selfish men, to destroy the hero and heroine. In this novel, the forces of reaction, convention, self-interest and pure malice combine to attempt preventing Medora's receipt of monies devolving from her mother's family. It is clear that the legal obstacles and frustrations derived very much from Charlotte Smith's current London experiences.

The latter half of the novel - especially Volume Three - shows signs of padding as Charlotte Smith introduces melancholy sonnets and other verses, inessential sentimental vignettes, and much satire of mealy-mouthed lawyers, monied

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The History of English Criticism of Prose Fiction (Urbana 1928) (op. cit., 584), but Charlotte Smith did not give her novel this title. The first edition title-page has 'The Young Philosopher, a Novel, in Four Volumes, By Charlotte Smith', followed by some verses:

Of MAN, when warn'd by Reason's purest ray,  
No slave of Avarice, no tool of Pride:  
When no vain Science led his mind astray,  
But NATURE was his law, and GOD his guide.

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upstarts, absurd fops, bluestockings, pretentious language and bourgeois vulgarity. It is all very entertaining - or at least would be to the reader who had not encountered the same kind of thing so often in the preceding fiction. Inspired by Laura Glenmorris's husband's enthusiasm for America, Delmont finally shakes the earth of England from his boots and takes his Nedora to a new frontier life across the Atlantic. A reader otherwise unfamiliar with Charlotte Smith's novels would have a good idea of her fiction as a whole if he confined his reading to this final novel.

The Critical Review greeted The Young Philosopher in a tone of genial familiarity. Charlotte Smith had attained the equivocal status of an old favourite, who could be relied upon to produce a readable novel, but also, perhaps, to refrain from distressing the reader with unpredictable innovation:

Few writers have laboured more indefatigably, or with greater success, than Mrs Smith, in this popular species of composition. The readers of novels consider her almost as an old friend; and the recollection of [earlier novels] may predispose them to be pleased with this new production from the hand that has so often delighted them.<sup>402</sup>

Familiarity had not induced contempt, but the succeeding remarks were not uniformly gratifying:

If there is a kind of family likeness in her heroines, we do not wish to see the character altered, as we can hardly expect it to be improved. Her stories do not agitate like the mysterious horrors of Mrs Radcliffe; they do not divert like the lively caricatures of Mrs D'Arblay, but, more true to nature than either, they awaken that gentle and increasing interest which excites our feelings to the point of pleasure, not beyond it.

The Reviews were beginning to be irritated by the author's lengthy inset narratives. An objection by the Critical should have forewarned Charlotte Smith that her stringing together unrelated narratives in The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer would not give universal pleasure. The Critical objected to the inclusion of the history of the

402 Critical Review Second Series XXIV (Sept 1798), 77.

403 Ibid.

Gleanmorris in The Young Philosopher as

... a great fault in the work. Such an interruption to the course of the story disappoints the reader, and the effect is always unpleasant.<sup>404</sup>

Yet another device, previously one of Charlotte Smith's strengths, had lost its novelty.

The Critical, like the Analytical and the Monthly,<sup>405</sup> strongly regretted Charlotte Smith's introducing yet again her private vendetta against lawyers, and was sceptical of her plea that she should not be thought of as necessarily sharing her hero's libertarian philosophy.<sup>406</sup> It also pointed out some inconsistencies in the hero's character,<sup>407</sup> which, however, were compensated by his love for Medora which was 'what we rarely observe in novels - a manly and rational attachment'.<sup>408</sup> The reviewer liked the tale as a whole, but produced a paradoxical comment:

The story itself ... is very interesting; and though the events are romantically strange, they do not exceed probability.<sup>409</sup>

What this can mean, unless the reviewer appreciated Charlotte Smith's continuing attempts to combine lively and interesting events with a basic social realism, it is hard to understand.<sup>410</sup>

The Analytical was very complimentary and produced the kind of notice any writer might hope for in response to her last novel. The Young Philosopher was 'not calculated to lessen [Charlotte Smith's] reputation' and

404 Ibid, 79-80.

405 Analytical Review XXVIII (July 1798), 74; Monthly Review New Series XXVIII (March 1799), 347. In this Monthly notice, Samuel Rose thought that the guying of lawyers in the novel might confirm 'narrow and illiberal prejudices' in readers. Rose was an acquaintance of Charlotte Smith. (See above p 86).

406 Critical, 82.

407 Ibid.

408 Ibid, 80.

409 Ibid.

410 In her Preface, Charlotte Smith - after warm praise for the recently published Wrongs of Women - expressed her

... the story ... possesses considerable merit and interest; the characters are drawn with spirit, and well sustained; the incidents contrived and managed with ingenuity and effect; the whole is pervaded by a vein of good sense, liberal sentiment, and just observation; enlivened by a fertile and cultivated imagination; and composed in a style very agreeable, and appropriate. Curiosity is excited and attention kept alive throughout; in the perusal of four volumes, containing 1236 pages, we were sensible of no degree of languor or satiety.<sup>411</sup>

There were minor criticisms though: Delmont was 'too much the victim of his affections ... to merit the appellation of a philosopher'. The reviewer also questioned Charlotte Smith's ability to manage dialogue convincingly.<sup>412</sup>

The Analytical's review was largely favourable, but the Monthly, so often sympathetic to Charlotte Smith in the past, was chilly in tone. The reviewer remarked tartly that the author could not 'claim the praise of consistency in her political opinions',<sup>413</sup> before expressing a more general disenchantment. He had felt 'certain of entertainment' when he heard of 'a new performance from her pen', yet

... though we have not been altogether disappointed in the present instance, our pleasure has not been so great as on some former occasions; for we think that the interest of this work is by no means equal to some of her earlier pieces, and that the characters are not so well supported.<sup>414</sup>

The reviewer did acknowledge however that the work contained many of Charlotte Smith's 'distinguished excellencies' and praised her 'poetical effusions'.<sup>415</sup>

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fears that The Young Philosopher provided less sensationalism than the 'new school'. She claimed to prefer following a more realistic fictional mode.

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411 Analytical, 73.

412 Ibid.

413 Monthly, 346.

414 Ibid.

415 Ibid, 347.

Thus the reviewing of Charlotte Smith's novels ended on a mixed note, but in themselves the notices certainly should not have been sufficient to deter her from novel-writing. Indeed they did not discourage her from fiction as a whole, for The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer was to follow.

The Young Philosopher is unique amongst Charlotte Smith's novels in that it begins in a comical-satirical mode with minor characters filling the scene and evidence of Charlotte Smith having regained somewhat her spirits, much depressed in Harchmont. Mr Winslow, an affluent conservative clergyman, and his nervous, hypochondriacal wife are involved in a near-farcical carriage-journey culminating in the bolting of a horse and their rich niece, Miss Goldthorp, injured. This proves to be an elaborate means of introducing the hero, who renders assistance to the shaken Winslows.

George Delmont is much more rustically robust than the usual Smith hero. He is a well-built young man, six feet tall, tanned, with his hair cut 'like that of a farmer or peasant, while his dress was plain even to rusticity'.<sup>416</sup> Though the son of a deceased younger brother of the Earl of Castledane, Delmont is content to farm less than one hundred acres at Upwood, his only estate. He has refused to enter the Church as he cannot sincerely preach its doctrines, to study for the bar because it involves living off the distress of others, and to enter the army because he believes he should be the benefactor and not the destroyer of his fellow men. George thus resolutely turns his back on the traditional professions of younger sons and minor gentry, and indeed regards the expectations and conventions of society in general as 'fettters'.<sup>417</sup>

416 The Young Philosopher I, 27.

417 Delmont has a rather modern notion of men's characters being determined by their roles: we all carry our little 'worlds' around with us like 'atmospheres' and are mutually isolated by the assumptions of our professions (I, 228-9).

Charlotte Smith had discussed previously the shortcomings of female education; in The Young Philosopher she is critical of the schooling of gentlemen. George's unconventionality is accounted for in a detailed survey of his education. The crucial factor was his independently-minded mother, who refused to corrupt him, as she saw it, by a grammar school education. She taught him at home to approach all accepted wisdom critically and to subject it to the test of reason, free from prejudice, deference, or, for that matter, wanton hostility. 'She made him a Philosopher, it seems, in baby clothes'.<sup>418</sup> George thus acquired a set of opinions of his own which he was 'never flogged out of',<sup>419</sup> at Eton subsequently. Delmont's mother is contrasted to an unprincipled Eton master who seeks to inculcate vicious worldly attitudes in his pupils; to pervert or extirpate innate virtue, which will be of no use in making one's way in a corrupt world. It seems that Charlotte Smith had shed the uncertainty evident in Marchmont as to whether education and environment are the principal determinants of character, for Delmont's early education enables him to resist his Eton and Oxford 'conditioning'. The author though is anxious that Delmont should be seen to have masculine vigour rather than piggish self-conceit as a boy: he is not studious and involves himself in high-spirited games. Yet he is generous and humane and already charitable at Eton to the weak and needy. Delmont develops 'a peculiar taste for the beauties of nature'.<sup>420</sup> He contrives to combine a peasant-like attachment to the soil - evident in his urge to farm with his own hands - with a gentleman's appreciation of nature's aesthetic appeal. Delmont finds all his instincts and ideas clarified and elaborated in the works of Rousseau and is thus encouraged to determine on a life of rustic simplicity and democratic benevolence. George is by no means

418 Ibid, I, 34.

419 Ibid.

420 Ibid, 66.

untutored, although Charlotte Smith shows him as rarely needing to draw on more than his honest good sense and sweet reasonableness to ensure the discomfiture of the wily and worldly characters seen throughout the novel - though it rarely has much effect on their conduct.

Medora, as already indicated, is the daughter of Laura Glenmorris, who was a heroine of sensibility herself. Medora spends her infant years in rural America and is even more the child of nature than Delmont. In fact, her sweet simplicity and innocence of the ways of world make her too childlike for credibility and respect. She is a 'fair and pretty girl ... with loose hair hanging wild about her ears and quite simple',<sup>421</sup> and has 'a soft and musical voice'.<sup>422</sup> We first see her with her 'straw hat filled with nuts and her gown held out to receive more',<sup>423</sup> as George shakes the branches of the hazel trees and she is thenceforth constantly placed in a sylvan setting. The novel's most glowing moments come whenever George is able to escape from the perplexities of social life into such rural idylls with Medora: summer seems perpetual when she appears. Delmont himself acts as tutor to the girl, taking care not to mar her innocent goodness. He need have no worries, for, like a noble savage, Medora cannot begin to comprehend the convoluted wickednesses of civilization. It is a relief when Medora is returned to Charlotte Smith's imagined American Arcadia at the end, for one cannot see her surviving European fashionable life. Even when Delmont marries her, she seems the archetypal child-bride.

Charlotte Smith must have needed a place in which to escape at least in imagination from pain and perplexity. In The Banished Man that place had been Italy; in The Young Philosopher it is North America, which does seem a more promising prospect for the primitivistically inclined. The action of the

421 Ibid, 129.

422 Ibid, 185.

423 Ibid, 184.

Glenmorris inset narrative is set during the American War of Independence and in that narrative Glenmorris, later Nedora's father, is kidnapped from his Scottish family seat by the crew of an American privateer. He is taken across the Atlantic, but returns later with a glowing picture of the American character:

I was now among a race of people ... who ... had one great and predominant feature in their character which I loved and honoured - they were determined to be free, and were now making the noblest exertions to resist what they deemed oppression. I found that with a few of them the inveterate hatred generated by the unnatural war they had been driven into extended to me ..., but in others the noble frame of liberty seemed to have purified their minds from every narrow and unmanly prejudice, and when they found that my heart beat in unison with theirs ... they embraced me as a brother.<sup>424</sup>

America, it seems, is the only place where young philosophers might realise their visions of a virtuous society, for Charlotte Smith continues in that pessimism as regards the establishment of a new order of society in Western Europe that informed Marchmont. The Young Philosopher confirms the retreat from real hopes of substantial improvements resulting from political action, into private philosophical idealism, evident in the earlier work. Society as a whole now appears too inveterately corrupt and too complex to yield to the efforts of the virtuous few, and great social political upheavals merely replace one set of bad masters with another. The approved characters of the later novels act in the light of a personal vision of a democratized, free, benevolent life, but without any real hope that such a state of affairs can be universally achieved. They strive for a better life on a severely localized basis amongst their acquaintances, on their estates and in their parish.<sup>425</sup> Armitage, a radical writer whom Delmont takes into his patronage is, like Mr Desborough of Marchmont, content with dispensing charity locally. He has seen the world,

424 Ibid, II, 241-2.

425 Delmont does not wish to live in Ireland because he would be powerless to 'materially alleviate' the higher degree of suffering there among 'the lower classes of people' (III, 138).



visited America, was present at the taking of the Bastille and applauded Mirabeau; but now 'sat down in literary and philosophical retirement, at Ashley Coombe, the seat of his ancestors ...'<sup>426</sup> Armitage now has his charitable works, is a good master and friend, and his helping the local poor is circumscribed only by his financial circumstances, which are 'not affluent'.<sup>427</sup> For every Armitage though, there is a reactionary Mrs Crewkerne (Delmont's aunt) - who is deliberately placed in contrasting juxtaposition with him in the novel - not to mention a handful of crooked lawyers. The virtuous are oases in a desert of reaction and vice: Mrs Crewkerne indulges in 'paroxysms'<sup>428</sup> of anti-gallic sentiment and prejudice against anything other than the familiar and traditional.

Despite the utopian dreams of The Young Philosopher, Charlotte Smith had recovered her political nerve a little since Marchmont, and returned to commentary on actual political events with some spirit. The nadir had been reached in Marchmont with the author's denunciation of the 'wild and impracticable' schemes that inspired the French Revolution. In The Young Philosopher, though Charlotte Smith has no hope for its successful outcome, she returns to staunch defence of its first manifestations, and to explanations of its perversion. The contemporary Reviews made much of Charlotte Smith's political changes of mind: I have argued that this analysis was inaccurate and that she retained her basic libertarianism and reformist impulses throughout. What change there was was a development from hopes of immediate practical implementation of desired reforms to the kind of personal philosophical idealism linked with limited practical intervention indicated in this section. In Marchmont the combination of the failure of Charlotte Smith's hopes for large political movements and disappointment in her private affairs had momentarily made her

426 Ibid, I, 175.

427 Ibid, 173.

428 Ibid, 178.

despair of all hopes for betterment as vanity. Nevertheless, accounts that characterize her as swinging from revolutionist to Tory constitutionalist between Desmond and The Banished Man, and back again to philosophical revolutionist in The Young Philosopher, are misleading - especially when they imply insincerity and bandwagon-mounting. Her confidence in practical improvement waxes and wanes, but her ideals remain constant, except for that momentary doubt in Marchmont.

I have also argued that Charlotte Smith was a gradualist and a liberal rather than a root-and-branch revolutionist. In Desmond she had revealed that she conceived of the French upheavals as very much a bourgeois revolution, which became disturbing and reprehensible only when it threatened to go beyond breaking the old feudal order. She had a genuine concern for the welfare of the peasantry, but ~~no~~ notion of its being taken fully into new democratic processes. Paradoxically, in The Young Philosopher, as her revolutionism became more theoretical, her impulse to spread power became more radical. Armitage speaks of the rights and virtues of 'mechanics' and labourers and Mrs Glenmorris, in a daring image, identifies corrupt politicians and lawyers, money-grubbers, the rising, ambitious middle-class and the fashionable world in general as the 'mob':

Of people like these is made up the bulk of that world, to which prejudice and fear induce us to sacrifice real happiness. - It is this mob, which overbears all retiring and simple virtues, and destroys all simple pleasures ... Ah! it is not the swinish multitude - the "plebs et infima multitudo;" that disgust one with the species. It is such people as these: people who hold the honest labourer and the industrious mechanic in contempt, yet are indeed "poor in intellect and vulgar in all they do or say." - Gross, stupidified, and ferocious, yet affecting aristocratic ideas - not knowing even the meaning of the word - and fancy their opinions of importance, and that they belong to a party!<sup>429</sup>

The Critical's comment that the Glenmorris inset narrative mars the artistic unity of The Young Philosopher is fair, since it

fills eleven of the twelve chapters - 255 pages - of the second volume. Commercially though, the inclusion of this sensational tale probably was justified, for its gothic trappings and suspenseful episodes provide material in tune with the popular taste of the day, and a contrast to the sober didacticism and earnest realism woven into the rest of the work. In her final novel, Charlotte Smith was still attempting a blend of serious writing and immediately appealing popular material.

The inset narrative is indeed colourful stuff. Laura tells of her early love for the impoverished Glenmorris, a Scottish laird with a barren estate. Laura elopes at dead of night from her family's northern seat, narrowly escapes drowning on the nearby sands, and flees with Glenmorris to his grim castle, situated on the rocky sea-coast of Sutherland. Glenmorris intends to exercise his feudal power over his clan benevolently, and his men display a fierce if anachronistic loyalty, rather reminiscent of Scott's highlanders. The land, though, is poor and the abjectly impoverished natives customarily go barefoot. Glenmorris is separated from his new and newly-pregnant wife when American privateers land and carry him off. Laura is left to the none-too-tender mercies of Glenmorris's grandfather's sister, the Lady of Kilbrodie. She hopes Glenmorris's estate will devolve to her son and thus wishes Laura to lose her unborn child. To this end she in effect imprisons Laura in the half-ruined monastery in which she lives, and conspires with her son, Colonel Kilbrodie, to stage 'supernatural' harbingers of disaster. We are now in a Radcliffean world of terror-romance, and Charlotte Smith's Scotland is a place where law and religion hardly exist, and arbitrary feudalism and superstition hold sway. Lady Kilbrodie is nominally Roman Catholic, but displays a witch-like adherence to the 'wild dreams' of local superstition.<sup>430</sup> In the barren 'frightful solitude' of the region of the monastery,

430 Ibid, II, 97.

where eagles scream overhead, Laura is terrified into premature labour and gives birth to a son of seven months gestation, who dies within three days.

Lady Kilbrodie and her son are both gothic monsters: the former looks like a 'female warlock' with 'a shrivelled and distorted countenance, disfigured ... by evil passions' and red-rimmed eyes.<sup>431</sup> She dresses in witch-like black. Her son's eyes are 'wild and fierce' with 'a sort of light flashing occasionally from them, like flames of sulphur'. His nose and the lower part of his face are of 'a dull purple hue' and 'on one cheek was a scar, which seemed to have been a continuation of his immense mouth, where appeared a tremendous row of great teeth, still white and strong ...'<sup>432</sup> This forbidding creature conceives a passion for Laura, whereupon she flees to the coast and takes refuge in a cave, contemplating suicide. Three highlanders afford her help and shelter in their rough, circular hut 'not at all better than a wigwam'<sup>433</sup> and roofed with turf. A primitivism in keeping with the main body of the novel - but more romantically portrayed - now prevails. Laura, to be safe from the seaching Kilbrodies, transfers to what was formerly a hermit's dwelling, hollowed out of solid rock, in a wooded dell, where she sleeps on a bed of heather and eats simple highland food, amid a profusion of wild flowers (all scrupulously identified by Charlotte Smith in many a footnote). Here she is found by Lord Macarden, a friend of Glenmorris, who shelters her but also falls in love with her. Glenmorris returns and some acrimony ensues, but Laura and he eventually emigrate to America after a spell in Switzerland awaiting the end of the War of Independence. There, Medora is born, and the inset narrative flows back into the novel proper.

431 Ibid, 103.

432 Ibid, 116-17.

433 Ibid, II, 152.

Charlotte Smith's last work of adult fiction was The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer, Containing Narratives of Various Description, which comprises a number of distinct tales, as the title suggests. Apart from the first, all are preceded by letters, which introduce and connect the stories 'in a manner somewhat similar to the transitional function performed by the prologues and epilogues in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales', as Turner says.<sup>434</sup> This series of novelettes enclosed by a 'frame device' was originally intended to extend to six volumes, 'each containing a single narrative, which the Solitary Wanderer is supposed to collect in the countries he visits'.<sup>435</sup> The last was to contain the story of the Wanderer himself. In the event, only five volumes appeared.

There is some uncertainty as to whether any of the volumes were published in 1799. Hilbish points out that Sampson Low appended a note to the end of the second edition of Minor Morals (1799) to the effect that the Solitary Wanderer was 'in the press'.<sup>436</sup> She also considers that a remark in Charlotte Smith's Preface of October, 1800 to an edition of the first three volumes implies that the first two volumes had already appeared in 1799. Hilbish herself, 'from various editorial criticism' as she unhelpfully puts it,<sup>437</sup> considers it probable that only one volume (the first, one assumes) had in fact appeared in 1799: presumably she thinks Charlotte Smith's remark was casually made and imprecise. Turner follows Hilbish in giving 1799 as the publication date.<sup>438</sup> It should be pointed out that Hilbish did not actually find a copy bearing the date 1799. In her

434 Turner op. cit., 150.

435 Preface of October 20th 1800 to The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer (London 1800), I-III. Quoted by Hilbish, op. cit., 205.

436 Hilbish op. cit., 205.

437 Ibid.

438 Turner op. cit., 149.

bibliography she contradicts her earlier assumption of a one-volume 1799 edition by listing the first edition as being of two volumes. This 1799 edition of volumes one and two seems speculation on her part, as she gives no detail of the publisher or place of publication. 439

Charlotte Smith had sold the copyright of five volumes to Low in 1799, but on his death volumes I-III apparently were sold as part of his estate to Messrs Crosby and Letterman (though they appeared in the 1800 edition still under his name: probably they were printed at the time of his death). Volumes IV-V went to Longman and Rees, by whom they were published in 1802, but not under Low's name. 440

I doubt that any volumes appeared in 1799, having found no reviews of one- or two-volume editions of the Solitary Wanderer, nor any notices attributing a publication date of 1799 to the work. It is unlikely that any such publication would have been universally missed or ignored in the Reviews. When the 1800 edition of volumes I-III appeared, it was noticed by the Critical in May 1801, the Monthly in July 1801 and the Monthly Magazine also in July, all agreeing on a publication date of 1800 - except for the Critical, which apparently erred in giving the date as 1801. 441

My best deduction is that volumes I-III had been printed before Low's death and were intended for early publication, but were not published until 1800, which year their title-pages bore. The copyright of volumes IV-V passed to Longman and Rees and there was a delay in publication until 1802. It may be that Charlotte Smith did not finish writing and preparing for the press the two final volumes until 1802, which would be why she provided a new preface for this edition of volumes IV-V, dated 1st February, 1802. In April 1801 she had written to Joseph Cooper Walker telling him she had been compelled to finish 'the

439 Hilbish op. cit., 585.

440 Ibid, 265. (Charlotte Smith's Preface of October 1800 as summarized by Hilbish.)

441 Critical Review New Series XXXII (May 1801), 35-42;  
Monthly Review New Series XXXIV (July 1801), 332;  
Monthly Magazine XI (Sup., July 1801), 606.

three volumes' of the Solitary Wanderer, which she 'had been two years about', 442 despite family troubles, but Turner's report of the letter - and possibly the letter itself - does not make it clear which two years precisely she means. It seems unlikely she would be harking back as far as a two-year period ending in or just before 1799 in a letter written in the spring of 1801. Confidence is impossible in the face of these imprecisions, but I would tentatively date the publication of the Solitary Wanderer as 1800-1802, rather than Hilbish's 1799-1802 and Turner's simple 1799. Unfortunately, Turner's study of the American letters apparently did not throw light on this problem: he tells us that Charlotte Smith spent two years 'crowded with family problems, money worries, poor health and other writing tasks' writing this work.<sup>443</sup>

The Monthly Review provided merely a two-sentence notice of the first three volumes of the Solitary Wanderer. Ollyett Woodhouse, the reviewer, remarked that each volume contained a narrative supposed to have been collected in the countries which the wanderer visits, and assessed the tales as 'entertaining and interesting; and the composition does no discredit to the established reputation of Mrs C Smith'.<sup>444</sup> The notice when volumes IV-V appeared was no less brief - a single sentence in fact - and it was merely an announcement of the work by George F. Griffiths.<sup>445</sup> Charlotte Smith must have thought the Monthly had lost interest in her, and the Critical, though it devoted some six pages to the first three volumes, considered the author a spent force:

Genius has its dawn, its maturity, and decline. While we admit that Mrs Smith has possessed this quality in a considerable degree, we must also confess that it now only sparkles in occasional comuscatations, and that she often borrows from 'meaner spirits of the Muses' train,' and not infrequently from herself.<sup>446</sup>

442 Turner op. cit., 149-50.

443 Ibid, 149.

444 Monthly Review Second Series XXXV (July 1801), 332.

445 Ibid XXXIX (Dec 1802), 428.

446 Critical Review Second Series XXXII (May 1801), 35-6.

Further imputations of flagging inspiration followed:

The letters of the Wanderer offer a convenient form to weariness or indolence: they are convenient also for varying the scene, and had the author chosen it, the language; as well as for returning to a story, if the public mind be not satiated, or the genius of the author weary and anxious for rest.<sup>447</sup>

The reviewer hoped Charlotte Smith would abandon her intention to produce further volumes. However, he ended on a less severe note, praising the author's story-telling powers and 'elegant impressive language' which 'for a time, hides every fault.'<sup>448</sup>

That Charlotte Smith was mortified by this and other critical reviews is apparent in her Preface to Volumes IV and V. There she remarks that she received more praise from reviewers than she deserved in the early years of her career, and what criticism there was seemed to her constructive. However, reviewers of late had taken to criticizing the private lives of authors and tracing them in fictional characters and events, she alleged. Charlotte Smith was stung also by charges of self-idealization in certain characters in her novels, and rather disingenuously denied she could be guilty of 'such foolish egotism as to represent [herself] under these different characters.' Charlotte Smith suspected that her lawyers were disliked because many a reviewer was originally of that profession, and she concluded by claiming that the Reviews had become 'for the most part, ... the mere vehicles of political animosity, written by the humblest retainers of party'. Qualified reviewers could be found still, but were rare.<sup>449</sup>

The Critical took these asperities as directed principally at itself, and introduced its review of Volumes IV and V thus:

447 Ibid, 36.

448 Ibid, 41.

449 Preface printed in full by Hilbish, op. cit., 207-208.



We are sorry to have incurred Mrs Smith's displeasure, and beg leave to observe, in our own defence, that the remarks were not designedly invidious. Certain it is, that we have drawn on ourselves her direct vengeance. We are ladies (not old women) - attorneys or bun-bailiffs - the retainers of party - our 'malignity' (for we are really) 'supplies the want of learning and integrity'; and 'we are inadequate to the task of correcting the advertisements in a country newspaper.' - 'Can a woman rail thus?'<sup>450</sup>

That Charlotte Smith's troubles and frustrations so overwhelmed her as to make her offensive is regrettable, but the significance of her reaction lies in the fact that she bothered to rail at all. In former days an unfavourable comment here or there could do little to damage her popularity and could be loftily ignored, but now a hostile notice was a matter of concern to a writer who was desperately dependent on her writing for financial support and could no longer bank on her works being automatically successful.

The Critical's review of volumes IV and V could not have improved Charlotte Smith's temper, for it adopted a tone of facetious complacency. In effect it reviewed its own notice of volumes I - III (stressing the Olympian detachment and judicious fairness of its reviewer), and expressed innocent surprise that substantial criticisms had failed to move Charlotte Smith, while a 'casual observation' on an old lady should prove 'the spark which occasions the explosion'. Its conclusion was that the author had seized on this as a pretext for her resentment because she could find no reply to the other, more telling criticisms.<sup>451</sup> Charlotte Smith never again wrote fiction for adults, and the reviews of The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer could not have encouraged her to do so.

The novelettes which make up the Solitary Wanderer are: 'The Story of Edouarda' (Volume I), 'The Story of Henrietta'

450 Critical Review Second Series XXXVII (Jan 1803), 54.

451 Ibid, 54-56.

(Volume II), 'The Story of Corisande' (Volume III), 'The Hungarian' (Volume IV and part of Volume V), 'Lenora' and 'Guillemine de Mortivalle' (remainder of Volume V). I have not seen an English edition of the work, but have consulted the British Library's French editions covering the stories in the first three volumes.<sup>452</sup>

'Edouarda' is a lurid gothic tale. Hilbish goes so far as to call it Charlotte Smith's only 'true Gothic romance':<sup>453</sup> that is, gothic from beginning to end, though gothic episodes were nothing new in her fiction. Charlotte Smith does not, however, desert the supernatural *expliqué* for full-blown supernaturalism, for she remains true to her disbelief in spirits to the end of her career. In the past though, she had always provided her rational explanation without undue delay, whereas in 'Edouarda' the suspense is maintained until close to the end. The story is saturated with mystery and superstition, terror and ghostliness; it also has the preposterous incredibility of the full-blown gothic romance. Sir Mordaunt Falcoberg of Palsgrave Priory is confined to his room as insane, and his daughter banished. Golgota and Galezza, two totally wicked Spanish priests - hotfoot one might think from the Inquisition - dominate Sir Mordaunt and the household. The servants are sullen and terrified, convinced the Priory is haunted. A full complement of Radclifflean horrors is assembled: Catholicism is viewed with dark suspicion, and there are hints

452 Marchois de Migneaux, L'Abbaye de Palsgrave; ou le Levant (Paris 1818), 3 vols. (Translation and extension of 'Edouarda'.)

Marchois de Migneaux, Les Cavernes des Montagnes-Bleues; ou Orgueil et haine (Paris 1819), 3 vols. (Translation and extension of 'The Story of Henrietta'.)

Isabelle de Montolieu, Corisande de Beauvilliers. Anecdote français du 16<sup>e</sup> siècle (Paris 1806). (Translation of 'The Story of Corisande'.)

453 Hilbish op. cit., 349.

of black magic being practised; a live-burial which turns out to be a mock-funeral occurs; a spectre moves in the vaults beneath the Priory. Edouarda, determined to see her father, moves through the Chapel but is terrified by a fearful shape behind a curtain covering the organ, and by ghostly sighs. In due course Edouarda discovers her long-lost brother, the pale spectre under the Priory proves to be her mother, and all is explained as a diabolic, protracted, avaricious plot of the Jesuits. Amongst this unlikely company, there is an idealized American, Mr Warren, who Robert B. Heilman considers may be based on Benjamin Franklin.<sup>454</sup> Charlotte Smith's interest in America, revived in The Young Philosopher, continued in the Solitary Wanderer.

'Henrietta' is more realistic. The tale portrays a tyrannical West India planter, Mr Maynard, who tries to force his daughter to marry a man even more vicious than himself. The story includes an examination of slavery and follows The Wanderings of Warwick as a vehicle for Charlotte Smith's abolitionism. There are vivid descriptions of a fearful negro uprising, a hurricane and an earthquake. Hilbish considers that Charlotte Smith's attractive scenic descriptions may have been inspired by William Beckford's 'A Descriptive Account of the Island of Jamaica', published in London in 1790.<sup>455</sup> By way of digression, the tale includes the story of a hermit who has repented the former ideas he held of his own importance, and an interesting inversion of Charlotte Smith's usual unsatisfactorily married couple: the wife, Mrs Halwyn, is dissipated; her husband, a model character, is rather reminiscent of Sir Edward Newenden in Ethelinde.

'Corisande' is full of the bloody action of war. It is set during the War of the League and traces actions of Henry IV of France, leading the Protestant Huguenots. It is an adventurous tale and, as Hilbish says, 'highly romantic and improbable',

454 Robert B. Heilman, America in English Prose Fiction 1778-1800 (Eaton Rouge 1937), 362.

455 Hilbish op. cit., 296.

though perhaps not as she claims quite 'the most so of all Mrs Smith's stories',<sup>456</sup> if one remembers the gothic 'Edouarda'.

Hilbish thinks 'The Hungarian' perhaps the best tale. She describes it as treating of Revolutionary France and of Austria-Hungary in the time of the campaign in Germany under the Directorate (1796). The atmosphere of war forms an appropriate background for a Hungarian officer to tell his pathetic story of the confiscation of his castle in the name of the Emperor, and of his troubles as a Protestant and conservative.<sup>457</sup> It sounds rather like The Banished Man, and indeed Hilbish mentions that it contains a mutually devoted father and son, horrified by two other sons who defy and condemn the filial bond:<sup>458</sup> a family reminiscent of D'Alonville, his father and his self-seeking republican brother in the earlier work. As in The Banished Man also, Charlotte Smith condemns war, but lauds England, its government, its literature and its ideals.<sup>459</sup>

'Lenora' is a sequel to 'The Hungarian' in the way Warwick was a sequel to The Old Manor House: certain minor characters in the earlier work move to the centre of the stage in the latter. The story includes a Mr Leicester, whom Hilbish thinks based on Benjamin Smith.<sup>460</sup> Lenora, his daughter, is cajoled into marriage with a ne'er-do-well based on yet more aspects of Charlotte Smith's husband. He goes in for 'projects' and a series of 'rages' - picture-collecting, for instance - which his wife endures with saintly resignation. Hilbish describes both 'Lenora' and 'Guillemine' as 'short romances in the manner of Fielding's histories.'<sup>461</sup> 'Guillemine'

456 Ibid, 296.

457 Ibid.

458 Ibid, 386.

459 Ibid, 296.

460 Ibid, 38-9.

461 Ibid.

is a history of the heroine's love, though Hilbish gives few details.<sup>462</sup> Again The Young Philosopher may be seen to be lingering in Charlotte Smith's mind, for the heroine is made an ardent disciple of Rousseau and will hear no arguments against him.<sup>463</sup>

The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer form an unsatisfying yet rather appropriate conclusion to Charlotte Smith's career as a writer of adult fiction. The varied tales contain many of the elements familiar in her novels - gothicism, foreign travels and exotic adventures, romantic scenery, contemporary politics and political philosophy, social satire and comedy of manners - but she seems at the end to have been too weary and uninspired to harmonize and unify them in anything more than a mechanical and spurious fashion. Plotting was always her weakness, but in her last work of adult fiction, she abandoned her never wholly-successful attempts to integrate all these elements within a basic sentimental love plot. Charlotte Smith's contribution towards retaining realism and serious artistic purposes in a period of trivialization, her development of a kind of restrained, functional gothicism, and her introduction of romantic scenery have been stressed in this chapter as positive achievements. On the other hand, it must be admitted that her talents were stretched and creative energies exhausted by the need to provide one multi-volume novel after another. Financial expediency forced her to strive for novelty yet also provide the sentimental conventionalities her readers required, and militated against artistic economy and the realistic mode she preferred. Because she never wholly reconciled the roles of artist and popular entertainer,

462 Ibid, 429.

463 Ibid, 511.

she remains only a middling novelist, but she retains a limited significance in the history of English fiction as one who helped save the novel-form from utter mediocrity in a relatively undistinguished period, and who assisted its continued development. Her role as a didactic novelist has been consistently undervalued and her gothicism, landscape and sentimentalism rather overstressed. This study has shown that she was, for a time much closer to radicalism than previous accounts suggest and her handling of plot and character - particularly her heroines - more deeply conditioned by her political views than has been recognized. Hilbish's tracing the reflections of Charlotte Smith's distressed private life in her novels and poetry had the unfortunate side-effect of confirming the traditional view of her as rather more self-absorbed and disengaged from the national and international issues and events of her day than was the case. It is hoped that this study demonstrates that she was vitally concerned with such matters and that her liberal reformism and feminism is a consistent and insistent feature of her writing and not a gentlewomanly dabbling or temporary aberration. Turner's dissertation, mainly devoted to a comprehensive survey of Smith letters, briefly summarized Charlotte Smith's works and their principal features but did not attempt (apart from the implications of the letters themselves) to ground Charlotte Smith's writings more firmly in the social and political ideas and movements of her time. Previous studies have also tended to underrate Charlotte Smith's importance in literary history and her influence on her literary successors, in viewing her work as belonging to the tail-end of the sentimental tradition rather than as the productions of a writer involved in the modulation of the sentimental novel to a more overtly didactic form. Charlotte Smith's catering for the contemporary taste for romance should not be allowed to obscure the social realism also frequently to be discerned. It is true, however, that her fiction is uniquely indicative of all the major strains of the novel of her time.

## III

Books for Young People & a Pamphlet

<u>Rural Walks</u>	1795
<u>Rambles Farther</u>	1796
<u>Minor Morals</u>	1798
<u>Conversations Introducing Poetry</u>	1804
<u>The History of England</u>	1806
<u>A Natural History of Birds</u>	1807
<u>A Narrative of the Loss of the Catharine Venus and Piedmont Transports</u>	1796

When inventiveness flagged and her popularity slackened, Charlotte Smith moved from novels to books for young people. The idea that she should turn her talents in this new direction apparently came from Thomas Cadell some time before, but it was in June 1794 that the author wrote to her publisher summarizing the contents and giving the title of her proposed first book for young people.<sup>464</sup> Hilbish and Turner suggest that Charlotte Smith, distracted by her own declining health and the illness of her daughter Anna Augusta, may have considered that children's books would be less demanding.<sup>465</sup> Charlotte Smith herself claimed that the first such book, Rural Walks, was written to supply a deficiency in the

<sup>464</sup> See Turner, op.cit., 152.

<sup>465</sup> Hilbish, op.cit., 175 and Turner, op.cit., 152. In her Preface to The Banished Man (1794), Charlotte Smith stated she intended to abandon novel-writing.

moral training of her twelve-year-old daughter Harriet, arising from her mother's preoccupation with the 'incessant necessity' of writing for a living.<sup>466</sup>

If one is to understand the rise of the Georgian moral tale and Charlotte Smith's contribution to it, it is necessary to survey briefly the progress of education in the late eighteenth century, for educational developments and the sudden eruption of books for young people after the 1780's are inextricably intertwined.

Since the Restoration the Church had reasserted much of its ancient control over education so that, as Brian Simon has put it:

Oxford and Cambridge ceased to be national educational institutions; they tended to become seminaries for the clergy of a Church which was now only the most powerful of a variety of religious sects, a Church which had reached a low moral and intellectual condition by mid-eighteenth century,<sup>467</sup>

Traditional pre-university education was also in the doldrums:

With some exceptions - notably the developing public schools in or near London, the old collegiate schools of Winchester and Eton, and some well-placed local schools under masters of some reputation - the grammar schools no longer attracted the gentry as they had in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. A recognized form of education became tutoring at home, often followed by the Grand Tour of the Continent. Lesser gentlemen sent their sons to board with some local vicar ...<sup>468</sup>

466 Preface to Rural Walks: in dialogues intended for the use of young persons (London 1795).

467 Brian Simon, Studies in the History of Education 1780-1870 (London 1960). I am indebted to this study in my subsequent discussion of educational developments.

468 Ibid., 23. See also Simon's surveys of the moribundity of the universities (pp.84-94) and the decay of the grammar schools (pp.94-102). But Sir Charles Mallet has shown that the grammar schools were not uniformly bad (they differed according to the competence and keenness of their headmasters, and the same school tended to vary greatly from one headmastership to the next); nor were the universities (Cambridge especially) totally archaic in all aspects. See 'Education, Schools and Universities' in: A.S. Turberville (ed.) Johnson's England. An Account of the Life and Manners of His Age (Oxford 1933) II, 209-42.



The aim of a fashionable gentleman's education, says Simon, was acquaintance with polite literature through study of the classics, and the positive avoidance of the acquisition of specialist knowledge. The more traditionalist and moribund grammar schools also suffered more and more criticism for their narrow classical curriculum, rote methods of learning, restrictive and harsh discipline, lack of systematic attention to the formation of the moral character, the frequent indifference or incompetence of their masters, and the irrelevance to the modern world of much of the education they provided.

The moral tale was one result of the progressivist interest in education in the last twenty years of the eighteenth century, and of dissatisfaction with the traditional institutions, curricula, aims and methods of education tailored to the creation of fashionable gentlemen or the training for clerical and other gentlemanly professions. Scientific and technological advances linked to developing industrialization, and increasing capitalist enterprise requiring business skills and a wide knowledge of contemporary affairs and innovations, seemed to dictate the need for a 'modern' education and the inculcation of the values of industry, usefulness, prudence and self-control. A free spirit of inquiry, the encouragement of inventiveness, and the rational scrutiny of accepted ways and wisdoms were also felt to be desirable in a society beginning to transform itself industrially and commercially.

One must beware here, in a period of a remarkably homogeneous moral and literary culture, of over-simplification. It will not do for instance, to imply a British landed interest out of touch with the life of the country like the French aristocracy at Versailles and uniformly standing in the way of progress. Nor was the urge for innovation in education to reflect changing conditions limited to the radical elements with whom Charlotte Smith had connections. As a body, English country gentlemen had important responsibilities and were carrying out, however self-interestedly and unjustly at times, a major agricultural revolution which required innovative

attitudes and a 'modern' education just as much as did manufacturing and commerce. Doubtless some country gentlemen were more hard working, responsible and interested in intellectual developments than others, but many a lesser gentleman (not merely the famous such as Coke of Holkham) kept their libraries stocked with important new literature, instituted schemes for agrarian improvement, and supported the need for education and training in 'new' subjects and skills. Many a gentleman had much in common with progressivist manufacturers and men of commerce though, like most of them, he would have had no truck with Godwin and the radicals. The situation in education is not a simple landed interest - middle classes confrontation, nor one of radicalism as the only reformist force.

Apart from such gentlemen, leading the way towards an extension of the bounds of knowledge and inquiry were the various societies - of which Simon cites the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society and the Midlands-based Lunar Society as the most remarkable - containing an impressive array of leading scientists, inventors, engineers, medical practitioners, manufacturers, philosophers, literary men and educationalists who met for varied debate and mutual enlightenment. The list of members of the Lunar Society reads like a page from a modern school history of the early days of the industrial and scientific revolution: Matthew Boulton, James Watt, Joseph Priestley, Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood all belonged, with Thomas Day and Richard Lovell Edgeworth of particular interest so far as education is concerned. There were many similar societies in other provincial centres perhaps less illustrious in their membership - though Coleridge and Southey had connections in their young days with the Bristol Society under the aegis of Dr. Thomas Beddoes in the 1790's. Many societies had connections with metropolitan radicals such as William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Henry Fuseli and Joseph Johnson, who published two of Charlotte Smith's books for young people. Amongst such leading articulators of progressivist aspirations and enterprize

were many dissenters who, 'largely cut off from traditional and official culture',<sup>469</sup> excluded under the Test Acts from holding public office and debarred from taking degrees at English universities, developed the dissenting academies where teaching was extended to cover science and modern subjects and where new theories of the purposes and methods of education were put to the test. Like the radical novelists discussed in an earlier section,<sup>469a</sup> such men tended to a rationalistic, necessitarian outlook, owing much to the French philosophes of the Enlightenment and the social and educational ideas of Rousseau. They adopted the inquiring, innovating attitude to education previously associated in England with Francis Bacon and influential at the time of the Commonwealth. They saw a need for a 'relevant' education and an extension of the curriculum, and the dissenting academies led the way, with an ethos favourable to scientific inquiry and the provision of new subjects: mathematics, chemistry and natural science, modern history, geography, political economy, jurisprudence and constitutional law, modern literature all had their place.

It was inevitable with such concern for the proper education of children up to and including university level, that there should have been a renewal of interest in children's literature - and not only schoolbooks, but also the books read by children at home, for children are not educated solely in classrooms and lecture theatres, but, as Rousseau knew, by their total environment and experiences.

I have already traced in earlier sections Charlotte Smith's affinities and acquaintance with the literary radicals and dissenters, indicated her debt to Rousseau in more purely political and more generally social fields, and, in general, shown her membership of the 'alternative political nation'<sup>469b</sup>; so it is not surprising that she was affected by the ferment of ideas in education and was moved to make her contribution to the children's literature of the 1790's and first decade of

469 Ibid., 24.

469a See above, pp. 235f - 235r.

469b See above, pp. 42 - 56; 235a - 235r.

the nineteenth century. If the Lunar Society, the growing towns of the north and midlands and the dissenting academies seem remote from her rural situation, they are no more so than were the Corresponding Societies and the like of political radicalism, in which she, of course, played no part. Yet her lack of physical involvement in the institutions of political reformism did not prevent her writing didactic novels; similarly, her distance from institutional innovations in education did not stop her, as a writer, from contributing to a new educative genre of children's literature.

It is particularly difficult in the late eighteenth century to make a distinction between works for the entertainment of children and those for their instruction and edification. This is evident in the case of Charlotte Smith's books for young people which fall most readily into the category of the 'Moral Tale' as discerned by historians of children's literature.<sup>469c</sup> Such tales, writes Mrs. E.M. Field, were the outcome of sensibility and bourgeois gentility and respectability: every incident, however trivial, was to be milked for a moral - not to show the way to heaven, nor to avoid that to hell, but to inculcate a respectable virtue.<sup>469d</sup>

Moral Tales abounded in the later years of Charlotte Smith's writing career, having displaced earlier specifically religious books, fairy tales from Germany and juvenile chapbooks, 'some coarse, ... some indecent ... all written in wretched English'.<sup>469e</sup> D.E. McWhorter Harden writes of the 'very limited curriculum of entertaining literature designed especially for the young' and points out that before the eighteenth century children had very few books of their own: 'no one had taken such books seriously or, considered them as a necessary branch of the book trade'. There were

469c See: E.M. Field, The Child and His Book. Some Account of the History and Progress of Children's Literature in England (London 1891); and F.J. Harvey Darton, Children's Books in England. Five Centuries of Social Life (Cambridge 1932).

469d Field, op. cit., 248.

469e Hilbish, op. cit., 476

various kinds of lesson books, moral treatises in prose and verse, and adult works decayed by time. But as yet, nothing had been designed for children with the twofold purpose of profit and pleasure.<sup>469f</sup>

During the eighteenth century, works by such religious writers as John Bunyan and Isaac Watts remained popular as children's reading matter, but works of fantasy came under great pressure in the period, roughly, of 1790-1820, when Wordsworth and Coleridge were afraid that the fairy-tale might be utterly extirpated. This was the period when the moral tale dominated children's literature. By about 1825 the fairy-tale had re-emerged triumphant, and Gillian Avery has shown how the moral tale lost its earlier rationalistic, secularly didactic nature and became recognizably 'Victorian' in its aim to inculcate religious piety by means of hair-raising descriptions of divine punishment and nightmarish tales of the earthly consequences of sin.<sup>469g</sup> If the Georgian moral tale had its repressive aspects, it did at least avoid that relish for violence and torment which is apparent in some of its Victorian successors.

Charlotte Smith's moral tales were influenced by various figures, both educational theorists and writers of children's books; or, more fairly and accurately, one may say she developed her ideas on children's literature contemporaneously with those figures during the period from 1795, when her first children's book appeared, to her death in 1805.

Perhaps the first book recognizably a forerunner of Charlotte Smith's kind of moral tale was A Father's Instruction to his Children (1775) by Dr. Thomas Percival, the Founder of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. Far more popular and influential, however, was Thomas Day's The History of Sandford and Merton (1783-9), with its advanced radical educational and social ideas. Sandford and Merton was written to 'popularize Rousseau's educational method', with its theme 'presented for children in such a way as to engage their interest and arouse their amusement'.<sup>469h</sup> Such was to be

469f D. Elizabeth McWhorter Harden, Maria Edgeworth's Art of Prose Fiction (The Hague 1971), 16.

469g Gillian Avery, Nineteenth Century Children. Heroes and Heroines in English Children's Stories 1780-1900 (London 1965).

469h Simon, op. cit., 40.

Charlotte Smith's formula, and she too was to introduce occasional basically good-natured children marred by the vices of fashionable, upper-class life, like Tommy Merton in Day's book.<sup>469i</sup> In Sandford and Merton, Tommy is re-educated through the constant care of his wise tutor, Mr. Barlow, but also by exposure to the sterling and stalwart qualities of the farmer's son, Harry Sandford. Charlotte Smith was to substitute a mother-teacher figure for Barlow, but her charges similarly learn Day's virtues of independence, initiative, fortitude, compassion, active benevolence, integrity and generosity as they take walks in the countryside and meet hard-working farmers and labourers whose simple and productive lives emphasize the dignity of labour over gentlemanly uselessness. There are also the needy poor, whose usual constant toil yields no accumulated resources to shield them from want when sickness or misfortune strike. Such characters are employed to highlight the immorality of the extravagance of the rich and the emptiness of fashionable life. In Day are also found other elements which became the staple of the moral tale and of Charlotte Smith's contributions: the interspersion of a variety of stories designed to entertain children, but tailored to reinforce the notions of truly moral or vicious behaviour conveyed by the work as a whole; the inclusion of more purely educative material, especially on Natural History, but also on geography, history, literature and other sciences; the subjection of all existing institutions to a coolly rational scrutiny.

In addition to actual books for children, influential works on pedagogy were appearing in the 1790's as Charlotte Smith began to write moral tales. Erasmus Darwin published his Zoönomia, but possibly of more interest to students of Charlotte Smith was his Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools (1797). Charlotte Smith's feminism ensured that she had a particular interest in the education of girls, though she gives no sign that she approves of segregation of the sexes for educational purposes - at least, not before they

469i An example is Caroline in Rural Walks (1795).

See my discussion of this work below, pp. 423 - 6.

reach puberty. Her children's books usually contain a family of boys and girls under their mother's tutelage, but Charlotte Smith firmly exposes her boys and girls to a common curriculum - ignoring, for instance, criticism common in the conservative periodicals of the time of the 'immodesty' of girls studying the reproductive systems of plants. Erasmus Darwin insisted that female education should be extended to include science, mathematics, geography and history. This was not so that women should stand shoulder-to-shoulder with men in the active business of life, but was based on the view that women should be more widely educated for their own mental and moral betterment, should form stimulating and understanding companions for their husbands, and should be able to transact the business of life in the event of the disablement or death of their spouses. No one knew better than Charlotte Smith how necessary an ability the last of these might prove to be. Her books, therefore, resolutely subject her girl characters to instruction in natural history, modern history, geography and miscellaneous useful general knowledge on an equal footing with the boys, though she was apparently insufficiently confident of her abilities in mathematics to include much in that way. She deviated from her co-educational approach in The History of England (posthumously published in 1806) by designing it specifically for girls, but this was owing to her distress at the inadequacies particularly to be found in the teaching (or omission) of this subject in fashionable female education. Charlotte Smith's contempt for the limitation of girls' education to fashionable accomplishments is clear from her many references to it and her satirizing of its products in her novels. When it came to the education of boys, Charlotte Smith shared the progressives' unease with traditional schooling, as is shown by her characterization of Eton as a worldly and vicious educational environment in The Young Philosopher (1798), which also dismisses the grammar schools.<sup>469j</sup> She had perhaps displayed some inconsistency by sending her son Lionel to Winchester, though she admired Joseph Warton, the school's headmaster.

469j See above, p.402.

That Charlotte Smith knew and admired the works of Erasmus Darwin is clear from her occasional references to him in her works. Of particular interest to her was his bringing of science into poetry in The Botanic Garden (1789-91), for her books for young people contain much in the way of botanical instruction conveyed in verse. A good example is the 'Calendar of Flora' in Minor Morals (1798), which was admired by Maria Edgeworth,<sup>469k</sup> herself a writer of moral tales.

The Edgeworths themselves were much concerned with the reform of education and the development of new kinds of books for children. Maria and her father produced Practical Education (1798), and the effect of Rousseau's ideas is seen in Richard Lovell Edgeworth's application of the system of Emile to the early education of his eldest son (as it is seen also in Thomas Day's attempt to create a Rousseauistic wife for himself by educating two orphan girls according to the Frenchman's principles). Charlotte Smith's admiration for Rousseau has been indicated already, and she therefore shared the progressive educational notions: a belief in nurturing and encouraging natural virtue rather than fitting the child to prevailing social patterns through harsh and arbitrary discipline. She departed from Rousseau most radically in her ignoring the Frenchman's recommendations that girls should not be troubled with much 'academic' education but should be prepared for a domestic role. Some disenchantment with Rousseau's theories in practice did lead to more concern with the active formation of human and moral qualities, but progressives retained the belief that, given a correct education, man was a rational being capable of advancing towards perfection:

The child should be brought up to be pure, honest, truthful, inventive and self-reliant, interested in the world around him, usefully engaged and concerned with his own improvement. He was to be capable of hard work, perseverance and concentration, able to use his hands and to unite theory and practice; he must develop an affection for humanity and be concerned to better the human condition.<sup>469l</sup>

469k See above, p.96.

469l Simon, op. cit., 40.



The deterministic philosophy and associationist psychology of the radicals, most clearly enunciated by Godwin in Political Justice, supported their view of the importance of education: man's mind is formed by his circumstances, experiences and environment. Ideas become inextricably 'associated' in patterns in his mind, determining future conduct, so it follows that education should organize a child's experiences in order to establish the mental and moral development considered desirable. Education cannot be an intermittent, loosely organized business, nor ignore any areas of the child's experience. The moral tale, with its recognition of non-institutional education, its concern with the amusements and play of children, and its conviction that all the events of a child's life have their 'moral' and their educative potential for good or ill, follows naturally from such theories. Maria Edgeworth herself produced such collections of moral tales as The Parent's Assistant, which largely adhered to the Edgeworthian principles of education.

The early exponents of the moral tale included Mrs. Trimmer and Mrs. Sherwood, but an august, or at least a varied company of writers tried their hand at versions of the moral tale: Arabella Argus, Madame de Genlis, Anna Barbauld, William Jones, Oliver Goldsmith and Mrs. Pinchard all contributed. The efforts of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft confirm the genre's radical connections, but even conservatives were moved to write moral tales in resisting the educational and moral ideas such works normally conveyed. A typical conservative strategy was to transform the normally secular, rationalistic moral tale into a work designed to instil piety, and Hannah More's religious works - essentially politically conservative - anticipate the Victorian religious moral tale. Such was the dominance of the moral tale in the 1790's and the first decade of the nineteenth century that those who opposed Charlotte Smith and the radical or liberal progressivist movements were forced to adopt and remodel the moral tale itself as their weapon of resistance, thus implicitly conceding their opponent's case that no part of a child's experience is irrelevant to his education.

Charlotte Smith's contributions are not really children's books, but rather intended for adolescents or near-adolescents. Such a weighty mass of morality had been provided already for this age-group, that Charlotte Smith was hard-pressed to provide didactic originality:

So numerous and so excellent are the books which have been written for the use of Children and Young Persons, within a very few years, that, on the great duties of life, nothing can, perhaps be added, which is either new, or which can be addressed to them in any new form.<sup>470</sup>

However, she thought she had found a remaining need to satisfy. Her remarks in the Preface to Rural Walks indicate, roughly, the programme adopted in her books for young people, as well as the improving flavour of the late eighteenth century Moral Tale in general:

In this little work . . . I have confined myself . . . to what are called les petites morales. To repress discontent; to inculcate the necessity of submitting cheerfully to such situations as fortune may throw them into; to check the flippancy of remark, so frequently disgusting in girls of twelve or thirteen; and to correct the errors that young people often fall into in conversation, as well as to give them a taste for the pure pleasures of retirement and the sublime beauties of Nature; has been my intention.<sup>471</sup>

However, Charlotte Smith did wish to leaven this rather heavy mixture:

I wished to unite the interest of the novel with the instruction of the schoolbook, by throwing the latter into the form of a dialogue, mingled with narrative, and by giving some degree of character to the group.<sup>472</sup>

Charlotte Smith followed this recipe quite closely; indeed, the narratives tended to become longer after Rural Walks. In the first work, she closed each 'dialogue' with some

470 Preface to Rural Walks.

471 Ibid.

472 Ibid.

lines of poetry, using pieces 'likely to encourage a taste for simple composition';<sup>473</sup> and poetry too became a regular feature of her books for young people. The first three such books were based on rambles in the countryside and garden, with occasional visits to country houses and to town. They combined education in natural history with that in morals and manners by the drawing of analogies between the processes of nature and human conduct. Conversations had much the same groundplan and intention, but contained much more poetry, chiefly on topics of natural history. The books also occasionally provided literary, historical and geographical instruction and oddments of general knowledge. The two later works, The History of England and A Natural History of Birds were, as their titles suggest, rather closer to being textbooks.

By the first decade of the nineteenth century, fairy-tale and fantasy were reasserting themselves and breaking through what Darton calls the 'icy grip' of the Moral Tale. It is difficult for the modern reader, confronted with the mass of Moral Tales, to dissent from Darton's distaste for their 'sense of fear', 'inhibiting of joy' and 'stuffy atmosphere of repression'.<sup>474</sup> It also seems just that he should list the characteristics of the Moral Tale in largely negative terms: the opposition to belief in fairies and fairy-tales and the severe avoidance of 'love and gallantry'.<sup>475</sup> Such tales also tended to a rather chilling utilitarianism: toys must be 'really useful', animals are ordained by Providence as being for man's use and benefit, and the natural world exists, apparently, to point severe morals.

There was a certain dissatisfaction with the moral tale even when it was at its height. Blake's Songs of Innocence, with their celebration of spontaneous joy and

473 Ibid.

474 Darton, op.cit., 222.

475 Ibid.

delight in nature, and their avoidance of prudential and ratiocinated moral systems, take on an additional significance when seen against the Moral Tale. On a less exalted level, a reviewer in The British Critic shows that a certain nostalgia for earlier, less severe children's books lurks behind his praise for the moral excellencies of Rural Walks:

This entertaining author has now directed her active imagination towards the entertainment and improvement of rational children . . . The rising generation ought, indeed, much to exceed their ancestors in the practise of every grace and virtue, since their libraries (formerly furnished with the Adventures of Woglog the great Giant, and the Tales of Mother Goose) may now boast of being supplied by the didactic pens of Berquin, Barbauld, Smith, and other writers above the common rank.<sup>476</sup>

Darton detects an unease in Charlotte Smith herself with the denial of fantasy and the imagination in the Moral Tale. It would be odd indeed were this not so in an author who had provided her share of unlikely events and romantic episodes in her novels for adults. Darton mentions a passage in Conversations in which Charlotte Smith labours to discourage priggishness in her young readers,<sup>477</sup> but the books for young people as a whole make it clear that it would be unfair to condemn the author as solely and severely concerned in forming little adults. In an age when, it seems, every clergyman aspired to publish his sermons, and improving literature generally flourished formidably, Charlotte Smith tried to build a kind of half-way-house between the dryness of the textbook and tract and the excesses of the purely fantastic. As in her novels, she was not sufficiently original to develop a radical departure from prevailing models, but she did modify the Moral Tale by providing narratives of

<sup>476</sup> British Critic V (May 1795), 553.

<sup>477</sup> Darton, op.cit., 222.

an intrinsic interest beyond their moral-pointing function, and in conveying at times a genuine, refreshing joy in nature. Possibly children were in any case more resilient and determinedly young than execrators of the Moral Tale appear to think; otherwise it is difficult to see why adults considered such works necessary. Certainly it is difficult to swallow Hilbish's contention that 'To be very good was the spontaneous desire of every child'.<sup>478</sup>

Perhaps quotation most effectively demonstrates how Charlotte Smith both adhered to and diverged from the Moral Tale. A passage from Rural Walks illustrates its severely improving tone. Mrs. Woodford has taken her young charges to dispense charity to a sick cottager in a half-ruined dwelling. In the visiting party is Mrs. Woodford's niece, Caroline (spoilt by a recently-deceased dissipated mother), who must be divested of selfish, fashionable notions and manners:

Mrs. Woodford Well, Caroline, what do you think of the scene we have just witnessed? Are not sickness and poverty real evils? And do not such spectacles teach us the wickedness and folly of that discontent we are so apt to indulge, if we are not exactly in the place which we prefer, or with the people who amuse us? Tell me, my dear, have you been used to consider the situation of millions of your fellow-creatures, who are not better situated than the poor family we have just seen?

Caroline You know, Madam, that we did not live in the country at all when my mamma was alive; and in London one never thinks of the poor people -

Mrs. Woodford Though in no place on earth is there so much misery! When we return home, my dear Caroline, you shall copy for me a few lines from Thomson, on the subject of the thoughtlessness of the affluent and fortunate. I wish to teach you to think on subjects which, I believe, you have never yet been led to reflect upon; you have a very good understanding, and I think you have a good heart.

Caroline I hope, Madam, I have not a bad heart. I am sure I wish no ill to anybody; but in

<sup>478</sup> Hilbish, op.cit., 476.

regard to acts of charity, Madam, I suppose I was too young for mamma to require me to give away what we could spare.

Mrs. Woodford No person is too young to be taught to think, my dear Caroline . . . 479

Poor Caroline has further mortifications to come. Mrs. Woodford mentions that a ball is to be held locally, Caroline represses her desire to go, but Mrs. Woodford sees through her self-control: in fact, she is testing Caroline to see if she will rise to temptation, and promptly slaps her down:

. . . I have no intention of going; the weather is too cold, and the expence greater than I can afford. But that is not all. You are in your first mourning for your mother; she has not been dead more than six weeks; and, though fashionable folks have got above all such forbearance, it will little become a young person of very small fortune to emulate such unfeeling carelessness; for, if ever you hope to amend that fortune, it must be done by shewing that you possess the virtues of sensibility, gratitude and humility.

Caroline sighed deeply, but did not reply. 480

The modern reader too may be tempted to sigh, but it must be stressed that Charlotte Smith does not invariably maintain this oppressiveness she seems to think the genre demands. There is some countervailing generosity of spirit, albeit still mixed with self-satisfaction, in Mrs. Woodford's refusal to find convenient social reasons for not aiding a beggar:

I have not, for my part, sagacity enough to distinguish what are called common beggars, from poor men disabled by illness from working, or accidentally distressed in a strange country, where they have no claim to parochial relief. I only know, that in giving a few halfpence, it is also possible I may relieve an unfortunate fellow-creature; and it is best to do that which may afford a chance of doing good. 481

Charlotte Smith could not avoid a note of regret when she discussed the demise of fantasy with the advent of

479 Rural Walks I, 17-19.

480 Ibid., 22.

481 Ibid., 52.

the Moral Tale, and seemed uncertain of the value of the fantastic in children's books: we are 'almost unwilling' to give up 'the pleasant fables with which our imagination has been enchanted and amused, for sad reality', even though our childish 'books of amusement' are often more calculated 'to mislead the fancy than correct'.<sup>482</sup> Could Mrs. Woodford be amused by the Arabian Nights, 'it would be with those parts of it that are the most wild and improbable'. Pleasure with such parts arises from our 'love of the marvellous' and from the 'agreeable recollection' of stories heard in the 'happy days of our childhood'.<sup>483</sup> Mrs. Woodford concludes with something very close to a nostalgic valediction:

"The tester'd slipper, and the circled green," are now no longer the foundation of our children's books. The moonlight revels of the trains of Oberon and Titania are heard of no more; they are gone with all their pleasing train of images, as well as the spectres that rattled their chains through almost every old mansion-house, and the signs and tokens with which weak minds anticipated or encreas'd the too certain evils of life.<sup>484</sup>

Charlotte Smith is close to the realization that the fantastic figures of terror and delight in fairy-tales are not noticeably inferior or different in function from characters of extreme goodness or wickedness in the common run of novels: both sets isolate and intensify abiding human characteristics. She compares ogres, genies, fair princesses in adamantine towers, gallant princes, griffins and dragons with the repressive uncles and guardians and the young ladies abducted to isolated strongholds of popular adult fiction.<sup>485</sup>

It is noticeable that with the successive books for young people, the moral didacticism is progressively

<sup>482</sup> Rambles Farther: a continuation of Rural Walks: in dialogues intended for the use of young persons. (London 1796) I, 62.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid., 64-5.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid., 63-4.

relaxed and more elements of fantasy are included. Minor Morals for example, despite its uncompromising title, contains 'a true gossip's tale', 'The Witch of the Wold', which is strongly gothic.<sup>486</sup> It includes a madman, a skeleton in a wood, an empty and half-ruined manor house with strange lights and 'unaccountable noises' and pale and ghastly faces at its windows. A man stricken with guilt 'haunts' the house and the 'witch' is his servant: the tale has its naturalistic explanation and its moral, but the over-riding impression is of gothic sensationalism. One suspects that only the mingled gothicism and orientalism that concludes the second volume would have rivalled 'The Witch of the Wold' as the most popular section of Minor Morals with its young readers.

Conversations Introducing Poetry is perhaps the best of the books for young people, and that not only because it is the most elegantly produced and finely printed of them all. In Conversations, the family group - Mrs. Talbot and her children George and Emily - is more warmly relaxed and the instruction less sternly moralistic. Charlotte Smith had by this time extended her botanical and zoological knowledge considerably through research for previous children's books, and a genuine concern to transmit information and enthusiasm rivals the urge to deliver moral lectures, though the latter are still in evidence. The natural history is more ambitiously presented, and the generous helpings of poetry consequent on the author's desire to introduce young readers to approved

<sup>486</sup> Minor Morals, Interspersed with Sketches of Natural History, Historical Anecdotes and Original Stories (London 1796) I, 132.



and beloved poets also help create a more warmly human atmosphere.<sup>487</sup>

As a mother of twelve children herself, Charlotte Smith seems admirably qualified to write books for young people and she appears, thinly disguised as the mother - or kindly aunt-figure, at the centre of her essays in the genre, directing the education of offspring and nephews and nieces: as Mrs. Woodford in Rural Walks and Rambles Farther, as Mrs. Belmour in Minor Morals, and as Mrs. Talbot in Conversations. Her sister, Catherine Dorset, assisted her in the preparation of at least some of the books for young people, though the extent of her assistance is not precisely known. She contributed eleven poems on plants, animals and insects to Conversations<sup>488</sup> and possibly further assisted this work.<sup>489</sup> Catherine Dorset evidently benefited from this collaboration with her sister, for she subsequently produced children's books of her own,<sup>490</sup> which earned her a slightly more prominent place in the history of children's literature than is normally afforded Charlotte Smith.

A collaborator also provided the final volume of The History of England, the first two volumes of which Charlotte Smith wrote in 1801 and 1802. This work was published eventually by Phillips in 1806.<sup>491</sup> Charlotte Smith found the writing of these volumes 'tedious and

487 Conversations, Introducing Poetry; chiefly on subjects of natural history for the use of children and young persons (London 1804), 2 vols.

488 Later re-published in Catherine Dorset's The Peacock at Home; and other Poems (London 1809).

489 Hilbish, op.cit., 156.

490 The Peacock at Home (London 1807) and The Lion's Masquerade (London 1808) are the best known.

491 The History of England from the Earliest Records to the Peace of Amiens. In a series of Letters to a Young Lady at School (London 1806).

disagreeable' and 'extremely laborious' and complained that she was 'very ill paid' for her labours.<sup>492</sup> I have not been able to find a copy of this work in England and must rely on Hilbish's account of it.<sup>493</sup> The third volume was stated to be 'by another hand', with no further indication of authorship. Hilbish conjectures very tentatively that this 'hand' may have been that of Charlotte Smith's eldest daughter, Charlotte Mary.<sup>494</sup> The third volume, she thinks, shows evidence of guidance or attempts at imitation and most of the proof sheets of Volume III passed through Charlotte Smith's hands, both of which may suggest an author within the family. However, Catherine Dorset says merely that she believes the work was 'incomplete, and finished by some other person'.<sup>495</sup>

<sup>492</sup> Turner, op.cit., 157.

<sup>493</sup> See Hilbish op.cit., 213-15, 491-94. It would be useful to know where the copy consulted by Hilbish is, or was, located. Turner did not find a copy in the many University and College Libraries he approached.

<sup>494</sup> Hilbish op.cit., 214. Hilbish wonders whether this daughter wrote the three-volume novel, The Republican's Mistress (1821); but see Catherine Dorset's repudiation as a fraud of a 'novel published just three years ago, with her [Charlotte Turner Smith's] name affixed to it, with an intention of imposing it on the public as her work.' (Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works IV, 47-8.) If Catherine Dorset was referring here to The Republican's Mistress, it seems odd that she would either not know the author, or would repudiate the novel so harshly if it was by her niece, Charlotte Mary Smith. See also Turner op.cit., 171-72, who refers to eight novels published between 1862 and 1878 under the name 'Kenner Deene, the pseudonym of Charlotte Smith'. I have looked at the British Library copies of some of these novels, and consider Turner correct in rejecting them as not the work of 'our author', despite attribution of them to her in certain bibliographies, notably Halkett and Laing's Critical Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature. We know Charlotte Smith's literary papers were burned after her death: it seems very unlikely that eight novels would survive to be published sixty years later.

The third volume treats of what was recent history - the reigns of James II to George III - and the first delves back to material gleaned from 'The Earliest Records' of pre-Conquest days. The work was intended for young people in their 'teens and written informally in a series of short-letter narratives. Hilbish states that Charlotte Smith intended originally 'a very simple history in a single volume which should contain basic facts without tedious or improper material for young ladies' and should also 'touch on the manners dress, and arts of the various periods'.<sup>496</sup> Despite Hilbish's contention that Volume Three ('by another hand') is 'strikingly different from any of the work that precedes it' and is 'noticeably more animated, vigorous and interesting',<sup>497</sup> she has praise for Charlotte Smith's two volumes (though the second is inferior owing to Charlotte Smith's flagging interest and deteriorating health). Hilbish writes that Charlotte Smith 'anticipated a girl's interest and treated only of those things which would appeal to her':<sup>498</sup>

Attention to trifles of dress and manners, therefore, arouses interest in the minds of her young readers. Details, her characteristic mannerism, here lend background to great issues and realism to customs. Wars, when mentioned, are subordinated to the characters of those individuals instigating them. She drew chiefly upon character and sensational episode of fact and tradition to sustain interest.<sup>499</sup>

Yet, though the narrative history is 'fascinating', Charlotte Smith 'lacks the essentials of a historian. She is not objective, impartial, penetrating in her judgement,

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495 Catherine Dorset in Scott, op.cit., 41.

496 Hilbish op.cit., 213.

497 Ibid., 214.

498 Ibid., 492.

499 Ibid., 492.

or even accurate', and allows her 'own feeling' to 'creep into her remarks'.<sup>500</sup>

The History of England was published in 1806, just after Charlotte Smith's death. Her final book for young people, like Beachy Head, appeared posthumously in 1807. A Natural History of Birds, a two-volume work, was 'edited by T. C.'. I have been unable to establish the identity of this editor. On the face of it, Thomas Cadell might appear a likely candidate: one might think her old publisher prepared the manuscript for publication after Charlotte Smith's death. However, this theory recedes into implausibility when one notes that it was Johnson who published the first edition. If a member of the family was involved - Charlotte Mary or Catherine Dorset - it is difficult to see why they chose the initials 'T. C.'.<sup>501</sup>

This work is, it seems, universally mis-titled in bibliographies and literary histories as The Natural History of Birds, a mistake that probably derives from the same error in the British Library Catalogue.<sup>502</sup> Hilbish

500 Ibid., 493.

501 Catherine Dorset merely names the work without further comment (Scott, op.cit., 41).

502 The British Library possesses a copy of Johnson's first edition of 1807, but the Catalogue entry is misleading when it states: 'Each vol. has an engraved titlepage, bearing the date 1816. Vol. 2 is without the printed titlepage' (that is, without Johnson's titlepage). These engraved titlepages appear to have been added later to this particular copy of the 1807 first edition, for they bear the names of 'Whittington and Arliss, Juvenile Library' of 'Paternoster Row' as publishers. I suggest that the two 1816 engraved titlepages were bound into the 1807 edition as a further embellishment of the work - they include two engravings of birds to supplement the original illustrations - by the owner of this copy, rather than either of

was unable to find a copy in the U.S.A.,<sup>503</sup> but listed the work, with incorrect title, in her bibliography,<sup>504</sup> following the British Library Catalogue entry. Turner says very little about the work, though he traced three copies in different United States university libraries.<sup>505</sup> He too gives the incorrect title.<sup>506</sup> Since this work appears to have escaped description and critical comment previously, I shall deal with it in rather more detail than the other books for young people.

Without indicating to which book Charlotte Smith was referring, Turner summarizes a letter from her to Cadell and Davies of 1st August 1797, in which she 'proposed a book to be produced in collaboration with Mrs. Dorset.' Her sister, said Charlotte Smith, 'possessed great skill . . . in botanical drawing.' The work would 'contain a drawing and a page of copy to illustrate each of "Linneas's orders".'<sup>507</sup> Possibly this project came to nothing; possibly it was changed, and developed into Minor Morals or Conversations. It is known that Catherine Dorset contributed to the latter, though both Minor Morals and Conversations depart radically from the proposed recipe and contain much that is not natural history. A further possibility, though, is that the scheme came to fruition a decade later in A Natural History of Birds. In that work, Charlotte Smith states that she intends to provide 'a general view of the six orders of birds',<sup>508</sup> and tells the reader that

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the two publishing houses. The plain Johnson titlepage to volume II has, at some stage, become detached and been lost (the binding is not in good condition). There was thus either an entirely new 1816 edition by Whittington and Arliss from which the title pages in the British Library copy were taken, or, in effect a re-issue of remaining copies obtained from Johnson with Whittington and Arliss's imprint, but Johnson's original titlepage also retained. In either case, this makes the 1819 copy in the British Library a third issue of the work.

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Linnaeus, the great Swedish naturalist, divided birds into six Orders, and these orders into Genera and Species; I adopt his as the best authority.<sup>509</sup>

She does indeed adhere to this scheme, though not following exactly the pattern proposed in the August 1797 letter: eleven ornithological engravings of quite fine detail and subtle hatching appear at the front of each volume, keyed to the appropriate page of text. Though it cannot be proved - the plates include no indication of the artist - it is possible that Catherine Dorset was responsible for these illustrations; or at least for some of them, for Charlotte Smith herself often turned to drawing as a relief from her writing.<sup>510</sup> However, the August 1797 letter, on the face of it, implies that the projected book was to be botanical rather than ornithological, unless Charlotte Smith meant that her sister was capable of producing good quality natural history illustrations in general when she spoke of her skill in 'botanical drawing'.

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503 Ibid., 217.

504 Ibid., 586.

505 Turner, op.cit., 192, 193, 195.

506 Ibid., 151, 155.

507 Turner, op.cit., 156.

508 A Natural History of Birds, intended chiefly for Young Persons (London 1807) I, 5.

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509 Ibid., 6.

510 See Turner, op.cit., 156.

The editor, 'T. C.', was impressed by A Natural History of Birds:

The poetical pieces, with which they [the parts giving ornithological information] are interspersed, are not the laboured efforts of a determination to write on a given subject: they evidently breathe the sentiments of the heart, and were dictated by the feelings of the moment.<sup>511</sup>

It would have been 'out of the question' to 'attempt a complete system of ornithology in so small a compass': the author had been more 'useful and novel' in 'noticing only birds of our own country, or such of foreign climates as are in some way remarkable' and by 'introducing the stories of heathen mythology that relate to the feathered race', which would 'not only convey information to many young persons, but prove an incitement to them to the farther pursuit of classical learning'.<sup>512</sup>

Occasionally too anecdotes are interwoven, facts noticed, and observations made, that distinguish the original writer from the mere compiler: while the moral reflections that occur will probably be the more impressive, as they naturally arise out of the subject. Nor will the quotations from some of our best poets, who have alluded to the manners of particular birds, be found superfluous: as they are not only beautiful themselves, but tend to promote the general scope of the work; which was, not so much to gratify, as to excite, a thirst for the attainment of knowledge.<sup>513</sup>

In addition to Linnaeus, Charlotte Smith referred extensively to Gilbert White's Natural History of Selborne<sup>514</sup> and recommended her young readers to read Aristotle, Pliny, Bacon, Boyle and Erasmus Darwin on natural history.<sup>515</sup> The author was now sufficiently confident of her knowledge of the subject, and her

511 Preface to A Natural History of Birds I, ii.

512 Ibid., ii-iii.

513 Ibid., iii-iv.

514 Ibid., 46-50; 137-39.

515 Ibid., 5.

observations in the field, to question the accuracy of many descriptions of birds and natural history in other books: in particular, descriptions of plumage-colour were often wrong, she thought.<sup>516</sup> The book is packed with curious scraps of information giving fascinating glimpses of everyday late-eighteenth century life:

Young rooks are sometimes eaten, and when skinned and baked in pies are said to be not much inferior to pigeons . . . ,<sup>517</sup>

we are told, and the reader discovers that cormorants could once be called 'corvorants', bitterns were 'bittems', long-eared owls were more commonly 'great horned owls', night-jars were 'goatsuckers' and blue titmice were 'nuns'. There was the old emphasis on birds being useful to man,<sup>518</sup> but perhaps more appreciation of them for their own sakes than in the early children's books. Charlotte Smith does not avoid social comment: the cuckoo is like the reprehensible human mother who puts out her child to a wet-nurse<sup>519</sup> and cock-fighting, like bull-baiting and prize-fighting, is a 'barbarous diversion'.<sup>520</sup> There are unfortunate errors in the work too: the reader finds to his surprise that Derbyshire has a coast with a 'salt-water creek'.<sup>521</sup>

Poems that also appeared in Beachy Head are included in A Natural History of Birds ('The Truant Dove', 'The Lark's Nest', 'To the Swallow'). Even at the end Charlotte Smith was making maximum use of her poems. She printed 'To a Nightingale' and 'To the Same' from her Elegiac Sonnets. A Natural History of Birds concludes

516 Ibid., 67.

517 Ibid., 57.

518 Ibid., 2.

519 Ibid., 73.

520 Ibid., II, 16.

521 Ibid., 93.



with elaborate indexes: the British names of birds in the first and the Linnaean Latin nomenclature in the second. These indexes take up no less than twenty-eight pages of the second volume.

If the reviewers ever had reservations about the Moral Tale, they never showed it in their notices of Charlotte Smith's books for young people. They received the works with unanimous approval, all concurring that they contained agreeable 'instruction and amusement'<sup>522</sup> dedicated to 'promoting mental improvements, and forming pleasing manners'.<sup>523</sup> Charlotte Smith's techniques of providing 'a sufficient portion of narrative to attract the attention of readers', yet making each work more than 'a novel for children'<sup>524</sup> won general approval. Ever vigilant that only accurate information should be imparted to tender minds however, the specialist reviewers were prompt to point out errors in Charlotte Smith's natural history, especially the mistakes she frequently made in her Latin nomenclature.<sup>525</sup> Conservative reviewers, mindful of Charlotte Smith's political novels, were vigilant for signs of dangerously radical ideas being conveyed to children, but found little at which to protest. An exception

522 British Critic XXV (Apr. 1805), 455. (Review of Conversations Introducing Poetry.)

523 Jabez Hiron in Monthly Review Second Series XXI (Dec. 1796), 458. (Review of Rambles Farther).

524 John Aikin in Analytical Review XXI (May 1795), 549. (Review of Rural Walks.)

525 See for instance Lockhart Muirhead in Monthly Review Second Series XLIX (Jan. 1806), 82. (Review of Conversations Introducing Poetry.)

was Minor Morals, in which the British Critic found 'here and there some political insinuations . . . calculated rather to mislead than inform a tender mind',<sup>526</sup> and, in reviewing Conversations Introducing Poetry, the same periodical repeated a favourite criticism:

Why should Mrs. Smith characterize individuals of rank and fashion, with the most distorted features of vice and folly? That they have their share of both nobody will presume to deny, but it is very unfair and extremely mischievous to insinuate that they are destitute also of the virtues which adorn humanity.<sup>527</sup>

An amusing feature of the reviews is their readiness to find the books for young people 'not unacceptable entertainment to many of riper years'<sup>528</sup> and to slip easily into discussing the works as if they were designed for adults. In fact, a common criticism was that the works tended to aim too high for their intended readers. The British Critic found parts of Minor Morals 'rather abstruse for very young personages'<sup>529</sup> and the Monthly, in reviewing Conversations, thought that 'the style sometimes soars above the comprehension of the young' and that the book was 'rather too uniformly serious'.<sup>530</sup> Certainly, Charlotte Smith's fictional children often seem remarkably and soberly adult in their sophisticated choice of vocabulary and elegant structuring of sentences. Charlotte Smith had anticipated this criticism of Conversations and admitted she had found it difficult to make her characters speak in a manner that satisfied her:

526 British Critic XII (Sept. 1798), 322.

527 Ibid., XXV (Apr. 1805), 455.

528 Lockhart Muirhead in Monthly Review Second Series LVII (Nov. 1808) 213, (Review of Natural History of Birds.)

529 British Critic XII (Sept. 1798), 322.

530 Lockhart Muirhead in Monthly Review Second Series XLIX (Jan. 1806), 82. (Review of Conversations.)

I shall perhaps hear that my children, in this book, do not talk like children; but the mere prattle of childhood would be less in its place here, than language nearer to that of books, which however will probably be criticised as affected and unnatural. There is a sort of fall-lall way of writing very usual in works of this kind, which I have been solicitous to avoid, and perhaps have erred in some other way.<sup>531</sup>

Even taking into account such small critical reservations, no Smith works of any other genre received as a whole such unanimity of praise in the reviews as did the books for young people, albeit usually briefly, in the 'Monthly Catalogue' or its equivalent. All were pleased that Charlotte Smith had 'condescended' to write such works and assured her she need not regard them as trifles:

Genuine talents, and amiable dispositions, cannot be more honourably employed than in contributing to perpetuate their own benign influence.<sup>532</sup>

Hilbish finds the books for young people a rich biographical source because they reflect Charlotte Smith's own interests, and their settings and situations often arise from her own experiences.<sup>533</sup> Indeed, it is tempting though hazardous to look for the author's acquaintances in those characters she introduces to point some moral or illustrate manners and behaviour. The works are perhaps more significant though in their revelations of Charlotte Smith's literary opinions, as she labours to instil good taste in literature in her young readers. One must allow

531 Preface to Conversations Introducing Poetry, II, 134.

532 Monthly Review Second Series XLIX (Jan. 1806), 79.

533 Hilbish, op.cit., 479.

for a certain simplification for the sake of the young mind, but nevertheless there are more explicit statements of Charlotte Smith's literary ideas in the books for young people than in her novels and their prefaces, and possibly than in her letters. This study has drawn on the children's books already in this respect,<sup>534</sup> but, to summarize, we find criticisms of the fatuous novels of the circulating libraries,<sup>535</sup> literary assessments of writers, living and dead<sup>536</sup> (showing Charlotte Smith to be remarkably free of envy of successful contemporaries<sup>537</sup>), distinctions drawn between the novel and the romance,<sup>538</sup> discussions of the place of imagination and fantasy in literature,<sup>539</sup> discussions of prosody and the nature of poetry and the poetic character,<sup>540</sup> and even a digression on the subject of dialect.<sup>541</sup> Charlotte Smith's literary ideas are not strikingly original, but they are discriminating.

If Charlotte Smith expected her books for young people to prove more lucrative than her novels, then it seems she was disappointed. Cadell and Davies paid £100 for Rural Walks<sup>542</sup> (which sold for five shillings per copy),

- 534 See above, pp. 146, 251.  
 535 Rural Walks II, 2-7.  
 536 Ibid., 7-10, 141.  
 537 See her remarks on Hannah More and Anna Seward, Ibid., I, 81 and II, 85.  
 538 Rambles Farther I, 63; Conversations Introducing Poetry II, 84-6.  
 539 Rambles Farther I, 62-6; Conversations Introducing Poetry I, 103.  
 540 Conversations Introducing Poetry II, 27, 52-3, 55-6, 137-8, 159-70.  
 541 Ibid., 120-23.  
 542 Turner, op.cit., 155.

but sales showed this to have been over-generous from their point of view. They refused to accept Rambles Farther on Charlotte Smith's terms, offering £50 instead.<sup>543</sup> Neither did the change to a new genre improve Charlotte Smith's uneven relations with her publishers: she slipped into her old habit of drawing bills on them before delivering the manuscript of Rural Walks,<sup>544</sup> and she fell behind schedule in her writing.<sup>545</sup> Cadell and Davies complained of imperfect revision of the work.<sup>546</sup> Mutual dissatisfaction apparently was not resolved, for Charlotte Smith's next book for young people after Rambles Farther, Minor Morals, was published by Sampson Low.

A publisher's note at the end of Minor Morals did refer to the 'success' of 'the former Productions of the Author in this line', and informed the reader that it was proposed to add 'Two other Volumes on the same Plan, in the course of Six or Eight Months' if Minor Morals enjoyed a similar success.<sup>547</sup> Apparently, as with her novels, Charlotte Smith found difficulty in maintaining the level of popularity of previous works, for no such sequel appeared. There was no further children's book for six years and then Charlotte Smith changed publishers yet again, for Johnson published Conversations Introducing Poetry. This troubled publishing history suggests that Charlotte Smith managed no real resolution of her financial problems in her closing years.

It remains to say something of a work by Charlotte Smith of some biographical interest. The Narrative of the

543 Ibid., 154-5.

544 Ibid., 152-3.

545 Ibid., 153.

546 Ibid., 153-54.

547 Minor Morals II, 174.

Loss of the Catharine, Venus and Piedmont Transports, a forty-one page pamphlet published by Sampson Low before the summer of 1796, is a minor work, but indicates Charlotte Smith's journalistic talents and compassionate nature. It records a multiple shipwreck on the night of 18th November, 1795 on Chesil Beach, near the Isle of Portland, Dorset. It was written 'for the Benefit of an Unfortunate Survivor from one of the Wrecks, and her Infant Child'. Six ships had been involved and 234 bodies were recovered. The work was 'drawn up from Information taken on the Spot'<sup>548</sup> and was published by subscription: there were 120 subscribers for 141 copies in all. Though Sampson Low published it in London, the pamphlet was offered also at Delamotte's and Wood's Libraries in Weymouth, close to the fatal spot.<sup>549</sup>

It is interesting that Charlotte Smith should have been chosen by 'benevolent gentlemen', relations of those drowned in the wrecks, and certain local citizens to record the disaster. She was living in Exmouth from July 16th 1795 through the summer and autumn of that year, though she may have stayed in Weymouth the following winter.<sup>550</sup> Sonnet LXXI, first published in the first edition of Volume Two of the Elegiac Sonnets in 1797, is entitled 'written at Weymouth in Winter' and 'A Descriptive Ode', also first published there, refers to ruins on Portland, though both could have arisen from a short visit; perhaps, indeed to gather material for the pamphlet. Charlotte Smith says merely that some gentlemen who had 'benevolently exerted themselves on behalf of the unfortunate person who escaped (with her life only) from the scene of destruction' furnished her with information on

548 A Narrative of the Loss of the Catharine, Venus, and Piedmont Transports, and the Thomas, Golden Grove, and Aeolous Merchant Ships, Near Weymouth, on Wednesday the 18th November Last (London 1796). See titlepage.

549 see Turner, op.cit., 144.

550 See Hilbish, op.cit., 182, 184; and Turner, op.cit., 144.

the disaster. These gentlemen believed the popularity of Charlotte Smith would materially increase sales of the pamphlet. In addition, relations of many of those members of the armed services who had perished wished for a competently-written record as a memorial to their dead, of which the whole nation would be aware.<sup>551</sup>

It is immensely to Charlotte Smith's credit that she interrupted work then in hand on, as she put it, 'the labour I am condemned to for the support of my own plundered family',<sup>552</sup> to produce a work of no financial benefit to herself, especially as this 'mournful'<sup>553</sup> task followed the death of her favourite daughter, Anna Augusta, early in 1795.

Charlotte Smith devoted time and thought to the Narrative. She undertook a limited amount of research, referring to books and reports on the geology, meteorology and history of Chesil Bank.<sup>554</sup> However, she also brought her novelist's instinct for the generation of suspense to the work: we are told that

Sensations . . . not unlike presentiments of impending evil, hung upon the minds of some of the passengers . . .,<sup>555</sup>

even when the weather was still favourable before the disaster. Distressing ironies are also neatly worked in, such as a drowned Lieutenant Jenner's letter to his mother, telling her how fortunate he had been to overtake

551 Narrative, 1-2.

552 Narrative, 2-3. This particular 'labour' was almost certainly the writing of the novel Marchmont (1796) which contains an episode - the Phoebe story - which involves the loss of a husband in a shipwreck. This episode, superfluous to plot requirements, is reminiscent of some of the details of the Narrative. (See Marchmont II, 128-32).

553 Narrative, 1.

554 Ibid., 4.

555 Ibid., 4.

by means of a small boat, his ship that was subsequently wrecked.<sup>556</sup> Charlotte Smith contrives to combine these literary touches - the pamphlet is decorated with an occasional poetical quotation<sup>557</sup> - with a clear, brisk report and cataloguing of events. Description of the catastrophe itself and its melancholy aftermath is at times vividly atmospheric.<sup>558</sup> The author also lists some of the more distinguished victims and supplies personal details where they are particularly affecting. Attempts to render assistance are recorded approvingly, though Charlotte Smith does not flinch from recording contemptuously the activities of villagers more interested in securing booty from the wrecks and plundering the dead.<sup>559</sup> One portion of the work consists of the narrative of a survivor written in the first person, though it seems so skilfully graphic that one detects Charlotte Smith's improving editorial hand.<sup>560</sup>

Although Charlotte Smith was asked to write the pamphlet because of her literary popularity and, perhaps, proximity to the scene, it is possible that her vivid descriptions of storms at sea in The Old Manor House and The Wanderings of Warwick suggested her suitability as chronicler of this terrible multiple shipwreck.

556 Ibid., 4-5.

557 See pp. 4, 8, 25-6, 30.

558 See for instance p.6.

559 Ibid., 16-17, 23.

560 Ibid., 17-26.



## APPENDIX I

CHRONOLOGY OF CHARLOTTE SMITH,  
INCLUDING FIRST EDITIONS OF HER WORKS.

This Chronology collates biographical and bibliographical information from many of the sources referred to in this study. Where biographical material is not in dispute, no source is cited. In general, the purely speculative has been omitted, though such uncertainties as are included are indicated by question marks. Where sources disagree, what seems the more probable version has been adopted, but variants, with the abbreviated sources in parentheses, are included when they form distinctly possible alternatives. Abbreviations used are as follows:-

- C.S.: Charlotte Smith.
- Dorset: Catherine Anne Dorset, 'Charlotte Smith' in: Sir Walter Scott, Miscellaneous Prose Works (Edinburgh 1827) IV, 3 - 48.
- Hilbish: Florence M.A. Hilbish, Charlotte Smith, Poet and Novelist (1749-1806) (Philadelphia 1941).
- Phillips: Richard Phillips, 'Mrs Charlotte Smith', Public Characters of 1800-1801 (London 1807), 44-67.
- Turner: Rufus Paul Turner, Charlotte Smith (1749-1806): New Light on her Life and Literary Career Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Southern California, January 1966 .

1749 4th May: Birth of Charlotte Turner at King Street, St James's Square, London. (Perhaps at Stoke, nr. Guildford, Surrey: Turner.) Eldest child of Nicholas Turner of Stoke House, Guildford, and Bignor Park, Sussex, and of Anna or Ann Turner (née Towers) formerly of Petworth, Sussex.

Sister of Catherine Anne (later m. Captain Michael Dorset and became a writer of books for young people).  
 Brother of Nicholas (subsequently Rector of Lugasale and Bodecton-cum-coates).

12th June: Baptized at Stoke Church on her father's estate.

Infancy spent at Stoke.

1752 Death of Mother in giving birth to Nicholas, in Charlotte's third year.

Her father travels abroad to mitigate his grief.

Charlotte and Catherine Anne placed in the care of their mother's spinster sister - very fond of Charlotte.

Charlotte removed from Stoke aged 4 - 6 and began formal education under aunt's direction: taught reading and dancing before the age of six.

1755 Charlotte placed at 'respectable school' in Chichester (Hilbish).

Living at Bignor Park?

Instructed in the fine arts by the artist George Smith (1714-76) at his Chichester home.

Begins to write simple verses.

1757 Some time before May, attends 'distinguished seminary' at Kensington (Dorset).

Charlotte proved to be a good actress and dancer, and excelled most pupils in writing and drawing (though never good at landscape owing to myopia). Better reader than the other pupils.

1760 Father sells Stoke estate.

1761 Charlotte leaves Kensington School aged 12, and is entered into Society.

Receives expensive instruction in music, drawing, dancing and French from masters visiting her father's London house.

Reads omniverously, encouraged by her father.

Her brother Nicholas attending Westminster School.

- 1763 Aged 14, Charlotte submits poems to the Lady's Magazine. Her maturity of form and manner elicits a proposal of marriage from 'a man of position and wealth', which is refused.
- 1764 Father marries a Miss Meriton of Chelsea (for financial reasons: Phillips).
- 1765 23rd February? Charlotte marries Benjamin Smith (but perhaps 1764 according to Turner: Charlotte claimed to be not quite 15 on her wedding-day). Benjamin Smith, said to be 21 (23: Turner), was second son of a West Indies merchant and Director of the East India Company. Charlotte persuaded into the marriage - not a love-match. The couple live in a dark lane in Cheapside, above the business premises, with Smith's parents. C.S. becomes a favourite of her father-in-law, Richard Smith, whom she assists in the writing of business documents. Benjamin a reluctant employee in father's business. C.S. becomes a mother at 16. Depressed by City life - has to nurse her sick mother-in-law, who dislikes her.
- 1766 Death of first male child. Second born: Benjamin Berney. Infection that killed first child rendered the second sickly for ten years.
- 1768 Move to Southgate for health reasons. Birth of third child, William Towers (d. 1827).
- 1770 Birth of fourth child, Brathwaite. Birth of fifth child, Charlotte Mary?
- 1771 Birth of sixth child, Nicholas Hankey (d. ?). Smiths living at Tottenham, so as to be closer to the family firm.
- 1773 Birth of seventh child, Charles Dyer.
- 1774 Smiths move to Lys Farm (now Brookwood Park): 100-acre estate at Hinton Ampner, near Alresford, Hampshire, purchased for them by Richard Smith. He despairs of his son's succeeding in the family business. Benjamin Smith proves an inept farmer. Over-extends

- himself by land-purchases and extravagant schemes.  
Becomes involved in County politics: C.S. writes election propaganda.  
Birth of eighth and favourite child, Anna Augusta.  
Death of Nicholas Turner, father of C.S., 'some years' before 1775.
- 1776 Birth of ninth child, Lucy Eleanor (d. ?).  
Death of Richard Smith, who leaves £36,000. Start of long family disputes and legal wrangles over his complex home-made will. Richard Smith's wife, Benjamin and Charlotte appointed executors. £20,000 lost through a bad debt owed to Richard Smith.
- 1777 Death of Benjamin Berney.  
Birth of tenth child, Lionel (d. 1842).
- 1781 Benjamin Smith appointed Sheriff for County of Southampton.
- 1782 Birth of eleventh child, Harriet (d. ?).
- 1783 December: Benjamin Smith imprisoned for debt in King's Bench Prison, Southwark. Result of expensive schemes and other pastimes.
- 1784 C.S. joins him in prison for some part of his seven months there: children left with brother Nicholas at Bignor.  
Lys Farm sold.  
C.S. determines to publish some of her poems to raise money.  
May 10th: ELGIAC SONNETS AND OTHER ESSAYS. LONDON: J. DODSLEY. Dedicated to William Hayley, a neighbour. Gradually, with further editions, the work proved immensely successful.  
July: Benjamin released after efforts by C.S.  
September: friendship with Hayley begins.  
Benjamin flees to France to escape creditors. C.S. joins him in October.

- 1785 Severe winter spent at gloomy, dilapidated chateau, twelve miles from Dieppe, Normandy.  
 Birth of twelfth child, George Augustus, in Normandy.  
 French priests break in to remove the child and baptize him a Roman Catholic.  
 C.S. begins translation of Prévost's Manon Lescaut.  
 Smiths return to England and settle at Woolbeding House, nr. Midhurst, Sussex.
- 1786 MANON LESCAUT. LONDON: THOMAS CADELL. 2 VOLS.  
 Withdrawn by C.S. to save publisher embarrassment after allegations of literary fraud.  
 Spring: William goes to India to accept Government Writership.  
 Death of Brathwaite after a short illness.
- 1787 THE ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE. LONDON: THOMAS CADELL. 3 VOLS.  
 Separation from Benjamin Smith. C.S. alleges prolonged infidelities and cruelties. Little contact maintained.  
 C.S. moves, with children, to a Sussex cottage at Wyhe (Whyke?), nr. Chichester in the summer.  
 Translations prove financially unrewarding. C.S. determines to turn to original prose composition.  
 Begins Emmeline at Wyhe. Continues to write sonnets.
- 1788 April: EMMELINE, OR THE ORPHAN OF THE CASTLE. LONDON: THOMAS CADELL. 4 VOLS.  
 Written in eight months. Proves very successful - 3 editions by spring, 1789; 2,000 copies sold in roughly one year. Cadell voluntarily increases his price paid to C.S. for the work.  
 C.S. otherwise reliant on a small share of the interest from her own fortune.  
 C.S. makes visits to London on business and lodges there with her children.

- 1789 Quarrel with Cadell over advance payments. C.S. approaches Johnson, then Robinson, with a view to their publishing her future works.  
ETHELINDE, OR THE RECLUSE OF THE LAKE. LONDON: THOMAS CADELL. 4 VOLS. Thomas Cadell takes over from Dodsley, Gardner and Bew as publisher of the fifth and subsequent editions of the Elegiac Sonnets.  
 Autumn: Wordsworth visits C.S. at her Brighton home en route to France.
- 1791 CELESTINA; A NOVEL. LONDON: THOMAS CADELL. 4 VOLS.  
 C.S. prepares materials for, and begins writing Desmond. Lionel at Winchester School.  
 While living in Brighton, C.S. makes acquaintance of supporters of the French Revolution.  
 Also makes business trips to London and stays with her friend Lady Henrietta O'Neill.
- 1792 DESMOND, A NOVEL. LONDON: G.G. AND J. ROBINSON. 3 VOLS.  
 Many readers offended by radical politics and alleged immoralities of the love-story.  
 August-September: attends William Hayley's house party where she writes first volume of The Old Manor House. Meets William Cowper and George Romney.  
 First signs of - seemingly - an arthritic complaint. Begins work on The Emigrants.
- 1793 THE OLD MANOR HOUSE, A NOVEL. LONDON: J.BELL. 4 VOLS.  
 Joseph Cooper Walker safeguards literary interests of C.S. in Ireland.  
 Charles, by now in the army, loses a leg at the Siege of Dunkirk. Sent home an invalid.  
 Benjamin Smith now living in Scotland under assumed name to avoid paying money to C.S. for the support of the family.  
 Anna Augusta marries a French emigré, the Chevalier de Faville.  
THE EMIGRANTS, A POEM; IN TWO BOOKS. LONDON: THOMAS CADELL.

The novel D'Arcy published in Dublin and falsely attributed to C.S.

C.S. working on The Exile - subsequently re-titled The Banished Man.

1794 THE WANDERINGS OF WARWICK. LONDON: J. BELL.

A sequel to The Old Manor House. Bell appends a note of his dissatisfaction with this work.

Charles's commission transferred to Lionel.

C.S. at Storrington, Sussex, then, April-December, living at Bath in poor health.

Anna Augusta also ill.

THE BANISHED MAN. LONDON: T. CADDELL, JUN. AND W. DAVIES. 4 VOLS.

Cadell and Davies dissatisfied with the quality of this novel.

C.S. writes Rural Walks and De Faville translates it into French.

The novel Rosalie (subsequently reworked and retitled Montalbert?) rejected by Cadell and Davies.

1795 RURAL WALKS; IN DIALOGUES INTENDED FOR THE USE OF YOUNG PERSONS. LONDON: CADELL AND DAVIES. 2 VOLS.

Written partly for Harriet, now aged 13, to compensate a deficiency in her moral training owing to the preoccupation of C.S. with her literary labours.

C.S. at Bath, then, from July, Exmouth.

January: Charles and De Faville in court for challenging Mr Dyer, a trustee of the Smith estate, to a duel.

Death of Anna Augusta, probably from tuberculosis, after the birth of her first child.

De Faville lends money to C.S. (owing to him from his marriage settlement?).

MONTALBERT; A NOVEL. LONDON: SAMPSON LOW. 3 VOLS.

1796 A NARRATIVE OF THE LOSS OF THE CATHERINE, VENUS AND PIEDMONT TRANSPORTS, AND THE THOMAS, GOLDEN GROVE AND AEOLUS MERCHANT SHIPS NEAR WEYMOUTH; NOV. 18 1795. LONDON: SAMPSON LOW.

Written for the financial benefit of a survivor and her child. C.S. interrupted work on her next novel.

C.S. at Exmouth in January, Weymouth until July, then Heddington, now Headington, Oxford.

RAMBLES FARTHER: A CONTINUATION OF RURAL WALKS IN DIALOGUES INTENDED FOR THE USE OF YOUNG PERSONS. LONDON: CADELL AND DAVIES. 2 VOLS.

MARCHMONT: A NOVEL. LONDON: SAMPSON LOW. 4 VOLS.

C.S. appeals to Lord Phillip Egremont, her father's friend, to help with difficulties over Richard Smith's estate. He exerts himself on her behalf.

1797 ELEGIAC SONNETS AND OTHER POEMS, VOLUME TWO. LONDON: CADELL AND DAVIES. 817 subscribers.

C.S. lives at Oxford, then London in June-July. Then at Heddington.

Lucy marries William Newhouse, who resigns fellowship at New College, Oxford. The couple have a child.

Newhouse studies as a Physician, requiring financial help from C.S.

August: C.S. ill with nervous fever and insomnia.

1798 MINOR MORALS; INTERSPERSED WITH SKETCHES OF NATURAL HISTORY, HISTORICAL ANECDOTES, AND ORIGINAL STORIES. LONDON: SAMPSON LOW. 2 VOLS.

July: Return of William from India. Gets into debt and disappoints C.S.

THE YOUNG PHILOSOPHER, A NOVEL. LONDON: CADELL AND DAVIES. 4 VOLS.

November: C.S. on brink of legal action with Bell arising from the dispute over The Wanderings of Warwick.

1799 Benjamin Smith, living in Scotland, comes to London to oppose projected distribution of monies from his father's estate.

April 2nd: William returns to India, taking Harriet with him.

Charles now paymaster to a regiment in Bermuda.

Lionel, stationed in Canada, requires family help with a debt.



C.S. lives in London, where she meets Coleridge, who visits her house.

C.S. also acquainted with William Godwin and Charles Lamb.

WHAT IS SHE? A COMEDY IN FIVE ACTS, AS PERFORMED AT THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN. LONDON: LONGMAN AND REES. Attributed to C.S., but authorship uncertain. Play a failure in performance: ran for five days from 27th April.

1800 LETTERS OF A SOLITARY WANDERER. LONDON: SAMPSON LOW. VOLS I - III (1800? - though Hilbish claims a 1799 edition of Vols I and II); LONDON: T.N. LONGMAN AND O. REES, 1802. VOLS IV AND V.

Spring: C.S. at Hastings.

October: Harriet returns home after a dangerous recurrent fever in India. Continues in poor health.

C.S. acquainted with Samuel Rose, who comes to act for her in a legal and financial capacity. C.S. confides many of her personal problems to his wife Sarah.

C.S. at Tunbridge Wells.

1801 Death of Charles from yellow fever in Barbados while attending to settlement of Richard Smith's property there.

Lucy, mother of two children and pregnant with a third, now separated from Newhouse, who dies on 28th March.

C.S. gives Lucy financial help.

May: Lionel promoted to Major.

October: C.S. at Bignor.

December - January 1803: Living at Frant, nr. Tunbridge Wells.

Health of C.S. further deteriorates.

Nicholas, garrison paymaster in Bombay, sends remittances to help C.S.

December? C.S., in London, meets Robert Southey and they become friendly for a time.

- 1802 Benjamin Smith appropriates a proportion of the income from the capital of C.S. to his own use.
- 1803 C.S. complains of 'seizures' and crippled with arthritis. At Elsted, now Elstead, nr. Godalming, Surrey.
- 1804 C.S. quarrels with Lord Egremont and later her brother over their handling of the affairs of the trust. Catherine Dorset stays with her sister in the winter and assists in the preparation of Conversations, Introducing Poetry.  
CONVERSATIONS, INTRODUCING POETRY; CHIEFLY ON SUBJECTS OF NATURAL HISTORY FOR THE USE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS. LONDON: J. JOHNSON. 2 VOLS.  
 George Augustus with army in West Indies, then Ireland. Requires financial help from C.S. Becomes adjutant. Lionel in West Indies with his regiment. C.S. all but incapacitated by illness and taking laudanum.  
 Some time after 1804 and before the final settlement of Richard Smith's estate, Harriet marries William Geary.
- 1805 C.S. at Elsted until August, then Tilford House, nr. Farnham from October.  
 Develops dropsy.
- 1806 February: death of Benjamin Smith in debtors' prison in Berwick-on-Tweed.  
 September: death of Lieutenant George Augustus Smith from fever in Surinam. News does not reach C.S. before her death.  
 October 28th: death of Charlotte Smith at Tilford, aged 57 (result of an abdominal tumour?). Buried at Stoke Church, Guildford.  
THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND, FROM THE EARLIEST RECORDS, TO THE PEACE OF AMIENS; IN A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG LADY AT SCHOOL. LONDON: RICHARD PHILLIPS. 3 VOLS (Vols I and II only by C.S.)

Charlotte Mary said to be collecting the letters of C.S. in order to write her biography in consultation with Catherine Dorset.

1807

July: final settlement of Richard Smith's estate.

BEACHY HEAD, WITH OTHER POEMS. LONDON: J. JOHNSON, 1807. (Unfinished.)

A NATURAL HISTORY OF BIRDS, INTENDED CHIEFLY FOR YOUNG PERSONS. (ed. by 'T.C'.) LONDON: J. JOHNSON. 2 VOLS.

## APPENDIX II

A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ON THE ELEGIAC SONNETS

There are some uncertainties and confusions in Turner and Hilbish regarding the publication of the Elegiac Sonnets which require correction.

The first four editions of the Elegiac Sonnets (two in 1784 and two in 1786) were published by Dodsley or Dodsley in conjunction with others. The fifth and subsequent editions were published by Thomas Cadell and, later, his successors, T Cadell Junior and William Davies. (1789, '92, '95, '97, 1800, 1806, 1811). All were published in London apart from the second edition, which was published in Chichester.<sup>1</sup>

On 3rd June 1787, Charlotte Smith wrote to Thomas Cadell telling him that many of her friends had expressed a wish that the 'Edition of Sonnets' she had 'some time meditated, may be publish'd with plates by subscription.'<sup>2</sup> In his discussion of this letter Turner states ambiguously that Charlotte Smith was referring to 'a second volume'<sup>3</sup> of sonnets when she proposed a 'pocket volume printed on fine paper with four or five plates and costing half a guinea.'<sup>4</sup> It seems likely that Charlotte Smith in fact was referring to a new edition of her first volume of sonnets at this time, for Volume Two of the Elegiac Sonnets did not appear until 1797. Charlotte Smith took advantage of the change of publisher to alter the format of the Sonnets in their first Cadell edition: the 1789 fifth edition.

1 Hilbish mistakenly gives the place of publication of the second edition as London: op. cit., 581.

2 Turner op. cit., 100.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid (Turner's summary.)

Dodsley's quarto edition was indeed reduced to 'pocket size' (small octavo), plates by Stothard were added, the volume was sold by subscription, and it duly cost 10s. 6d.

It was some years later that Charlotte Smith proposed a second volume of sonnets to complement the first. She consulted Cowper and Hayley, both staying at Cowper's house at Weston, in the autumn of 1793. Cowper wrote on 26th October:

Your two counsellors are of one mind. We both are of the opinion that you will do well to make your second volume a suitable companion to the first, by embellishing it in the same manner; and have no doubt, considering the well-deserved popularity of your verse, that the expense will be amply refunded by the public.<sup>1</sup>

Charlotte Smith accepted the advice of her two literary friends but was dilatory in preparing this second volume.

The British Library (Manuscript Division) possesses a letter of 16th November 1796 from Charlotte Smith to Cadell and Davies<sup>2</sup> relating to the first edition of Elegiac Sonnets, Volume Two, in which the following appears:

I shall be obliged to you to let me know what you are dispos'd to give for the copyright of the second volume of Poetry? - It will consist of nearly the same, possibly some pages more of Poetry than the last Edit<sup>n</sup> of the last - a portrait & four engravings.

The letter reveals that her publisher had still no precise idea of what the contents of the new volume would be, despite the fact that Charlotte Smith had been planning it since at least 1793:

I will if you wish send up a list of the pieces (I do not mean to include the Emigrants as I once talk'd of -) There will be fewer sonnets, & more of pieces in other measures and manners. Of course the numbers subscribed for & a certain number for myself must be allow'd.

On the reverse of this letter are calculations in another hand - presumably by the publishers to whom it was addressed, as they ruminated on the costs of publishing Volume Two.

1 Thomas Wright (ed.), Correspondence of Cowper IV, 461.

2 Add. 42577, fo. 169.

Elegiac Sonnets, Volume Two finally appeared in 1797 at six shillings. It was indeed similar to and 'a suitable companion to the first' in format, and was published by subscription.

The letter to Cadell and Davies is of help in resolving an error in Hilbish's account of the editions of the Elegiac Sonnets. She states that the Sonnets, Volume Two first appeared with a re-issue of Volume One, fifth edition in 1797.<sup>1</sup> In Hilbish's list of Charlotte Smith's works, the following entries appear:

Fifth edition, with additional sonnets and other poems. London, 1789. Reissued with a second volume and plates by Stothard under the title of Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems. London, 1797, 817 Subscribers.

Eighth edition. London, 1797. 2 vols. Vol. II is in its second edition.

Hilbish records the fact that her information on the eighth edition derives from the British Museum.<sup>2</sup>

I can find no evidence from my examination of copies of the Elegiac Sonnets that the first edition of Volume Two was published with a reissue of the fifth edition of Volume One. Nor does an examination of the British Library General Catalogue and the editions concerned bear out Hilbish's implication that Volume One, eighth edition and Volume Two second edition were 'paired' for publication in 1797. The relevant entries in the General Catalogue are as follows:

Fifth edition, with additional sonnets and other poems.  
2 vol. London, 1789-97.  
Vol. I only is of the fifth edition, with an engraved frontispiece and a portrait of the authoress, published in 1819, inserted.

Elegiac Sonnets and other poems ... The eighth edition.  
2 vol. T Cadell, Junior and W Davies: London, 1797.  
/Another Copy/ Elegiac Sonnets and other poems, etc.  
London, 1797, 1800.  
Vol. 2 is of the second edition and bears the date 1800.

The Catalogue is not too clear here, and I suspect that Hilbish has misunderstood it. It is true that Volume One, fifth edition is paired with Volume Two here, but this does not mean

1 Hilbish op. cit., 107.

2 Ibid., 581.

necessarily that the two were originally published together: more probably the British Library acquired them as a pair, albeit a heterogeneous one, at a later date. The fact that a frontispiece and portrait published in 1819 have been inserted is a warning that the copies are not in their original form and the two volumes may be 'artificially' paired. It would be odd to reissue Volume One, fifth edition, in 1797 bearing its original publication date of 1789, but there is further evidence that these two volumes were not published together. The sonnets in the fifth edition end at Sonnet XLVIII, and by the time the eighth edition was published in 1797 Charlotte Smith had added eleven new Sonnets (XLIX - LIX) and four poems of other kinds. Volume Two, first edition begins with Sonnet LX. It would seem obvious that Volume One, eighth edition and Volume Two, first edition were published as a pair in 1797, the first containing Sonnets I - LIX and the latter Sonnets LX - LXXXIV. Further evidence for this lies in the fact that the eighth edition of the first volume is headed 'Volume I', whilst previous editions, including the fifth, are not so headed. In addition, a publisher's notice at the back of the eighth edition advertises Volume Two; again not present in earlier editions of Volume One. (Similarly, Volume Two contains a publisher's advertisement for Volume One.) Finally, though the fifth edition cost 10s. 6d., the eighth edition of Volume One was priced at 6s. - the same price as the first edition of Volume Two. It would seem that Cadell and Davies hoped to sell the identically-priced eighth edition and Volume Two, first edition as a pair to those readers who possessed neither, or who wished for an up-to-date edition, though the advertisements at the back indicate that the volumes could be purchased separately.

Probably Hilbish was encouraged in her conjecture that Volume Two, first edition must have accompanied a reissued Volume One, fifth edition by the General Catalogue entries relating to Volume One, eighth edition. Had she noticed the first entry concerning the eighth edition, it would have been

fairly clear that this was paired with Volume Two (though the Catalogue's cryptic reference to '2 vol.' omits the information that the second is Volume Two, first edition). But Hilbish seems to have derived her information on the eighth edition from the second Catalogue entry ('Another Copy'), and missed that immediately preceding it. This second entry, taken in isolation, might be interpreted incorrectly as indicating that the eighth edition was published originally with the second edition of Volume Two. But the two dates - 1797 and 1800 - suggest another artificial or heterogeneous subsequent pairing of two volumes published separately at different times.

The British Library letter from Charlotte Smith to Cadell and Davies quoted above supports my contention that Volume 2, first edition did not first appear paired with a reissued Volume I, fifth edition. The 'last Edit<sup>n</sup> of the last' referred to by Charlotte Smith in that letter was the 1795 seventh edition of Volume I. Charlotte Smith gives no indication of any suggestion that the new volume would be published with the fifth edition of Volume I, and compares her projected Volume Two with the last published edition of Volume One, as one would expect. This surely suggests that the author expected either that Volume Two would be published by itself (though forming a suitable companion to Volume One, seventh edition); or, just possibly, that Volume Two would be published with a reissued Volume One, Seventh edition; or that a new eighth edition of Volume One would accompany Volume Two, and the two would be available separately or as a pair.

The rather complicated pattern of publication of the Elegiac Sonnets may be clarified by the following table, which ignores publications irrelevant to this note, such as foreign editions:-

- |      |   |                                       |
|------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1784 | <u>Elegiac Sonnets and Other Essays</u> , first edition.  | Dodsley                               |
| 1784 | <u>Elegiac Sonnets and Other Essays</u> , second edition. | Dodsley,<br>Gardner, Baldwin and Bew. |
| 1786 | <u>Elegiac Sonnets</u> , third edition.                   | Dodsley, Gardner and Bew.             |
| 1786 | <u>Elegiac Sonnets</u> , fourth edition.                  | Dodsley, Gardner and Bew.             |



- 1787 (June 3rd). Charlotte Smith writes to Thomas Cadell about the publication of a new (fifth) edition of Sonnets in a new format.
- 1789 Elegiac Sonnets, with additional sonnets and other poems, fifth edition, Thomas Cadell. (Sonnets I - XLVIII) (The British Library possesses a heterogeneous set of Volume I, fifth edition plus Volume 2, first edition.)
- 1792 Elegiac Sonnets etc., sixth edition. Cadell. (Sonnets I - LIX)
- 1793 (October 26th). Cowper writes to Charlotte Smith advising her to make her projected second volume a suitable companion to the first.
- 1795 Elegiac Sonnets etc., seventh edition. Cadell. (Sonnets I - LIX).
- 1796 (November 16th). Charlotte Smith writes to Cadell and Davies inviting an offer for the copyright of Volume 2, and indicating its probable contents.
- 1797 (Elegiac Sonnets etc., Volume I, eighth edition (Sonnets I - LIX)  
(Elegiac Sonnets etc., Volume II, first edition (Sonnets LX - LXXXIV)  
Both published by T Cadell, Junior and W Davies.  
(British Library possesses a heterogeneous set of Volume I, eighth edition plus Volume Two, second edition.)
- 1800 (Elegiac Sonnets etc., Vol I, ninth edition. C. & D.  
(Sonnets I - LIX)  
(Elegiac Sonnets etc., Vol 2, second edition. C. & D.  
(Sonnets LX - XCII.)
- 1806 Elegiac Sonnets etc., Vol 2, third edition. C. & D.  
(Sonnets LX - XCII.)
- 1811 (Elegiac Sonnets etc., Vol I, tenth edition. C. & D.  
(Sonnets I - LIX.)  
(Elegiac Sonnets etc., Vol 2, fourth edition. C. & D.  
(Sonnets LX - XCII.)

## APPENDIX III

THE PROVENANCE OF THE PLAY WHAT IS SHE?

There are grave doubts that the play What is She?<sup>1</sup> is Charlotte Smith's work. Hilbish thinks it is 'by no means certain' it is hers, pointing out that neither Egerton Brydges nor Catherine Dorset list the play as a Smith work.<sup>2</sup> Hilbish is confusing as to the first edition: in her text she writes that it was first published anonymously in Dublin in 1799,<sup>3</sup> but her bibliography implies that Longman and Rees first published the play in London the same year.<sup>4</sup> Whichever was first, it is true that there were London and Dublin editions in 1799.

I have seen four editions of the play: the first Dublin edition (1799) published by George Folingsby, which has no mark of authorship; another Folingsby edition of 1799 marked 'third edition' and 'By Charlotte Smith'; the Longman and Rees London third edition of 1800 (anonymous); and an 1811 London reprint (also anonymous) in Volume X of Elizabeth Inchbald's 'Modern Theatre' series.<sup>5</sup> Turner says that what is she? was '. . . unsigned; and where Mrs. Smith's name does appear, it is either written in or

1 What is She? A Comedy in Five Acts. As Performed at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden (London 1799).

2 Hilbish op.cit., 190-9.

3 Ibid., 199.

4 Ibid., 584.

5 Hilbish's remark that in the Inchbald edition of 1811 'the name of Mrs. Charlotte (Turner) Smith appears in brackets' (op.cit., 199) is puzzling. It does not appear in the London Library copy which I examined. See Hilbish on the uncertainty of various bibliographies about the authorship of the play (p. 199).

printed inside brackets'.<sup>6</sup> This is not true of the Dublin 'third edition' (1799): Charlotte Smith's name is neither in brackets nor written in, but is printed straightforwardly in the usual way. Turner joins Hilbish in questioning whether the play is Charlotte Smith's work, for she never mentions writing or planning to write a play in her letters, despite her going into considerable detail about her literary projects at this time.<sup>7</sup> It is true that reviewers occasionally suggested that Charlotte Smith might profitably try her hand at a play, but they thought tragedy likely to be her forte.<sup>8</sup> If the Longman London editions bore Charlotte Smith's name rather than a Dublin edition, one would more readily believe it to be her work; but bearing in mind Dublin's reputation for unauthorized republications of English works in this period, it is tempting to see the appendation of her name as a ploy to promote sales, or as based on mere rumour. It seems likely, too, that had Charlotte Smith written the play, her authorship might have been accepted by the literary world by the time Elizabeth Inchbald produced her reprint. Charlotte Smith was not normally coy about her work: the first edition of the Elegiac Sonnets, an amateur gentlewoman's first venture into print, bears her name, and she published no other works known to be by her anonymously. By 1799 she was a popular, long-established, professional writer with no discernible motive for modesty. Finally, it may be pointed out that Longman and Rees had published none of Charlotte Smith's works prior to What is She?, and the continuation of The Letters of a Solitary Wanderer

<sup>6</sup> Turner op.cit., 151.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> An exception was the English reviewer of Desmond, who thought Charlotte Smith's satirical skills would be suited to a comedy. (English Review XX (Sept. 1792), 176.)

(Volumes IV and V) published by them in 1802 had been purchased from Sampson Low's estate, without any approach by the author that we know of.

An examination of the text of the play unfortunately does not provide conclusive evidence as to authorship either: the most that can be said is that those scholars who have studied Charlotte Smith's works most thoroughly suspect that What is She? is by another hand, and my suspicions too are strong in this direction. The problem is that there is no dramatic work known to be by Charlotte Smith: What is She? can be compared only with works in other forms. Anything in the dialogue therefore that one is tempted to pick out as uncharacteristic of Charlotte Smith could conceivably be accounted for by the fact that the author was strongly influenced by the fashionable satirical comedies of the time - she does refer to Sheridan in other works - and adopted its conventions and mannerisms faithfully to the extent of transforming her customary modes of characterization, her style and even her choice of vocabulary.

Hilbish finds the work untypical of Charlotte Smith in many respects, and her arguments may be consulted, though they are not conclusive.<sup>10</sup> She suggests the 'C. Smith' who wrote the novel D'Arcy (definitely not by Charlotte Smith) as a candidate for the authorship of What is She? There existed a playwright by the name of Charles Smith, author of A Trip to Bengal, who could have written What is She?, though this would make nonsense of the allusions to a female author in the Epilogue to the play.

9 See above, p. 410.

10 See: Hilbish, op.cit., 199-203.

There must remain an uncertainty as to the authorship of What is She? not resolvable in the light of currently available evidence. I am reluctant to accept the play as canonical and have not discussed it in the body of this dissertation. The play proved ephemeral as far as performances were concerned: it probably was first performed on 27th April 1799, and closed within a week. There is no evidence of any revivals.

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Comprising works referred to in the text, other sources of information on Charlotte Smith, and further material found to be of particular help, arranged as follows:-

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