A Man to Preserve or Reform the Nation: Masculinity as Political Rhetoric in English Novels during the Revolution Controversy

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REVOLUTION CONTROVERSY

by

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Abstract

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The English literary responses to the French Revolution have been given thorough critical attention as has the Revolution’s impact on women writers and femininity. However, the Revolution’s impact on and engagement with standards of manliness have been left relatively unexplored. This dissertation examines how a critique of masculinity is positioned in the space of contemporary political considerations in the quarter-century following the French Revolution. Thus, this dissertation argues that there is a dialectical engagement between masculinity and political views in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century English novels such as Maria Edgeworth’s Belinda and Leonora, Charlotte Smith’s Emmeline and Desmond, Frances Burney’s Camilla, Elizabeth Jervis’ Agatha, and Jane Austen’s Emma. The way these novels construct and interrogate masculinity, aristocratic and otherwise, must be read in reference to not only eighteenth and nineteenth-century discourses on hegemonic masculinities, such as politeness, sensibility, gentlemanliness, and manliness, but also in reference to the discursive atmosphere of the revolutionary ideas and their conservative counterparts. It is my contention that novelists writing in the wake of the French Revolution made conscious use of tropes of and existing discourses on masculinity to
construct their political arguments, and, therefore, reading these novels with an eye towards depictions of masculinity can help us better understand the politics of novels written during the Revolution Controversy, 1789-1815.
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A Man to Preserve or Reform the Nation: Masculinity as Political Rhetoric in English Novels during the Revolution Controversy

“If it be asked – What is the French Revolution to us? - We answer . . . It is much. – Much to us as Men: Much to us as Englishmen” (Paine, The Political and Miscellaneous Works 58).

“Since at least the mid-sixteenth century, both radicals and conservatives of all stripes saw the inculcation of virtues, manners, and manliness as a central form of power” (David Kuchta, The Three Piece Suit 3).

Chapter 1:
Eighteenth-Century Discourses of Masculinity Meet Revolutionary Ideas

I

Gender and politics are inextricably intertwined. For instance, contemporary female politicians have to walk a tight-rope between being confident and decisive but not unfeminine often, therefore, focusing on projecting nurturing qualities such as compassion. Accordingly, assertive female politicians like Hillary Rodham Clinton and Britain’s “iron-lady” Margaret Thatcher have been vilified by political foes and rejected by some voters as a result of being seen as overly masculine and for failing to abide by traditional ideas of femininity. This is not a new problem for women in the sphere of politics, and we can see the obvious parallels to the “unsex’d” Mary Wollstonecraft in the 1790s. Wollstonecraft, in her turn, in A Vindication of the Rights of Men chided her political opponent, Burke, himself a master of gendered discourse, for abandoning rational language when describing the plight of Marie Antoinette. Thomas Paine, too, found, Burke’s florid descriptions of the French Queen to be excessive and therefore
effeminate, and he, as well as Wollstonecraft, uses gendered terms to undermine Burke’s political argument. Whereas Wollstonecraft ridicules Burke for his “romantic gallantry” (A Vindication of the Rights of Men 54), Paine derides Burke’s “frenzy of passion” (9) and compares his rhetoric, which he describes as “ineffectual, though gay with flowers,” with the “clear, concise, and soul-animating sentiments” and, in Paine’s opinion, clearly more manly style, of the Marquis de la Fayette (18). In this instance, Wollstonecraft, Paine and Burke were all situating themselves in a lively debate, not only about politics, but also about what it meant to be a man. All three build upon hegemonic categories of normative masculinity in order to make their political points, and, accordingly, masculinity becomes a prism through which larger cultural and political issues are seen.

The literary responses to the French Revolution have been thoroughly examined, most notably by Gary Kelly and M.O. Grenby, but whereas the Revolution’s impact on women writers and femininity has been explored by critics such as Marilyn Butler, Gary Kelly, Eleanor Ty and Audrey Bilger, the Revolution’s impact on and engagement with standards of manliness have been given less attention. Megan Woodworth argues that the reason for this is that male characters have generally been written off as the products of wishful dreams or mere didactic tools, but I agree with her assertion that “male figures – heroes villains and father-figures alike – are deliberate artistic and ideologically-charged productions with the aim to complicate the way the political and social philosophies and interventions … are regarded” (2). Woodworth, however, concentrates mainly on male characters as functions of female authors’ desires and reactions to patriarchy. This dissertation, therefore, aims to examine how notions of contemporary masculinity is positioned and used in the space of political considerations in the 25 years following the Revolution. To what degree are masculine ideals and anxieties understood in
terms of personal politics? I will explore ideas of male virtue and honor and the role of the ideal gentleman, a term with obvious class and political connotations, as well as the exceptions to accepted masculinity: the effeminate fop and the man of feeling, the blackguard, and the rakish seducer and libertine to show, in the context of radical politics and reactionary political forces, that in the wake of the French Revolution, novelists consciously appropriated eighteenth-century discourses on male identity and behavior, such as those on politeness and sensibility, in order to reuse them for their own political ends and construct their political arguments. Thus, this dissertation will explore the dialectical engagement between masculinity and politics by interrogating the way late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century novels like Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda*, Frances Burney’s *Camilla*, Charlotte Smith’s *Emmeline* and *Desmond*, Elizabeth Jervis’ *Agatha*, and Jane Austen’s *Emma* construct and interrogate masculinity, aristocratic and otherwise, within the discursive atmosphere of the revolutionary ideas and their conservative counterparts between 1789 and 1815.

So what was “proper masculinity” in the long eighteenth century? The answer to this question is partly that the eighteenth century is indeed a long time, so it depends on which part of the century one looks at. In a very broad sense we are talking about a change from the warrior ideal under feudalism, which in its early modern last gasp may underlie the Restoration male hero who, like Etherege's Dorimant (and Etherege's real life friend Lord Rochester) is manly because he wears a sword, accepts no insults, and seduces as many women as possible under the noses of their guardians or husbands. That changes under the light pressure of the increasing calm of the English world of mercantile capitalism after the Glorious Revolution, which needed warriors very seldom and where seducers and duelists were a nuisance or worse, so that a slow transition, assisted by both religion and philosophy, is made to the ideal of the English
Gentleman whose wit can be combined with deference to others, compassion to the unfortunate, and even a tender sensibility.

Furthermore, as Cohen and Hitchcock point out, different sources vary widely in their conclusions about norms for male behavior. Historians concerning themselves with emerging working class culture, such as Anna Clark, describe artisan masculinity as “boisterous and rough” and describe a “blackguard” culture of proletarians who engaged in disreputable practices such as blackmail, brothel keeping, pornography, and rape (McCalman 28). Those, like Philip Carter and Lawrence Klein, who are working mainly with elite sources, on the other hand,

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1 Gender historians differ in their explanations for the reasons behind the shifting standards of masculinity in the eighteenth century. Randolph Trumbach, for example, argues that there was a transition around 1710 from the Greco-Roman version of sexuality in the Renaissance toward "compulsory heterosexuality" where men were supposed to desire only women and vice versa, and further that this led to an increase in illegitimate children, early marriages and the use of prostitutes because of a need to show conformity to and establish a male heterosexual identity in the face of the threat “posed by the new sodomitical, effeminate minority” (Trumbach 843). Thomas Laqueur, on the other hand, advances the theory that advances in anatomical theory changed our ideas about sex roles. However, this new medical knowledge, as some critics point out, was not widely known until much later on (Hitchcock and Cohen 9), and, therefore, socio-economic factors were probably at least as important reasons for changing gender ideals. Woodworth, for instance links the “anxieties about proper masculinity” to wider social concerns such as politics, domestic and foreign, economy, and “the state of the military” (2), as does R.W. Connell, who argues in *Masculinities* that the creation of the “fiscal-military” state in Europe after the sixteenth century (189), created a male gender ideal that by the eighteenth century had come to rely on the honor code, “violent discipline,” and “license in sexual relationships” (190). However, the spread of industry led, according to Connell, to the gradual rise of the ethics of the “men of the bourgeoisie” during the late eighteenth century (192).
describe the period as one of refinement and gallantry and, as a result, of greater gender
harmony, a theory bolstered by Lawrence Stone’s description of the increased popularity of the
companionate marriage during this time period (392). The apparent solution to these
discrepancies, Hitchcock and Cohen argue, is that ideals for masculine behavior are to some
extent class based (13). Norms for male behavior were probably not the same in the village ale-
house, or the artisan workshop as they were in the salons of the aristocracy, or as Paul Langford
observes: “What was polite in Berkeley Square was not necessarily what was polite in Finsbury
or Hammersmith, let alone in Shadwell or Wapping” (313-314). To succeed socially as an
aristocratic rake required a very different set of characteristics than for a bourgeois man of
commerce or for a midshipman in the navy. Thus it is entirely plausible that Mr. Price in
Mansfield Park, who is seen by his refined daughter as “dirty and gross” (Austen 361) and who
thinks that Maria's father should have taken a "rope's end" to his married daughter when he reads
that she has eloped with her lover (408), is also presented as a well integrated and regarded
member of the sailor community of Portsmouth. Alexandra Shepard has further established that
different manifestations could also depend of life-cycle stages, so that the youthful excess which
was often tolerated in a young bachelor, would be seen as incompatible with the responsibilities
of a husband and father (253).

The idea that there were a variety of masculinities available to eighteenth-century men is
supported by Philip Carter, whose essay “James Boswell’s Masculinities” shows how Boswell’s
diary presents him as vacillating between three understandings of desirable manliness: the stoic,
the fashionable gallant, and the blackguard (114). Boswell’s experimentation with different
forms of manliness was closely tied up with his quest for social recognition and status. Acquiring
the proper form of masculinity would contribute to his acceptance in urban polite society (126).
Boswell’s careful construction of manliness not only serves to show us the class-specific understanding of masculinity, but also, as Judith Butler argues, that gender is mainly a question of performance (185). Thomas Laqueur, too, expresses the view that masculinity is a social construction very concisely: “Having a penis does not make the man” (25). To be able to show the right kind of male attributes, then, becomes a way to achieve social status. This view is supported by Connell whose concept “hegemonic masculinity” has influenced gender studies since the mid-nineteen eighties. Connell’s formulation embodies “the currently most honored way of being a man,” a normative concept which not only legitimates patriarchy but also creates a hierarchy of male practices that men have had to position themselves in relation to (Connell and Messerschmidt 832). Likewise, social historian John Tosh has argued that manliness should be seen not only as identity but as “a set of cultural attributes” which creates social status (“What Should Historians Do” 184). As a result, there was a clear tendency for aristocratic manners to travel downstream into lower classes who aspired to rise in status.

Masculinity became a frequently debated topic amongst eighteenth century writers of conduct literature, and authors of both religious and educational tracts wrestled with the issue as they sought to define the Christian gentleman as well as the ideal education for not only the upper class and the aristocracy, but increasingly for the men of the up-and-coming middle class. In the beginning of the century the latter also turned to the essays of Addison and Steele and later Johnson for advice for how to behave and appear in a manner that became men of means and learning. The members of Addison and Steele’s Spectator Club, the kindly country squire Sir Roger; the literature-loving attorney of the Inner Temple; the noble and generous merchant, Sir Andrew; the modest but gallant Captain Sentry; the saintly clergyman; as well as Mr. Spectator himself are presented as models of male sociability for the urban upper and middle-class reader
who “desires to form a right judgment” of the world (46). Johnson’s *The Rambler*, in its turn, instructed its readers on topics such as the importance of politeness (no. 98 & 194), the disagreeableness of flattery (no. 104), foppery (no. 109), the need for bravery and activity (no. 129), and the difficulties in educating noblemen (no. 194). Although Johnson commented that “They teach the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing master,” the letters written by Chesterfield to his illegitimate son, Philip Stanhope, also became a guide during the latter half of the century for what a young man moving in the spheres of the upper classes ought to know and how he should behave.

II

From all these publications, as different in tone and nature as they were, politeness emerges as the keyword for the ideal of genteel behavior in the eighteenth century. Helen Berry stresses the importance of politeness during the century:

Somewhere between Habermas's theory of the bourgeois public sphere, and Paul Langford's excellent account of the expansion of commercial culture in eighteenth-century England, a paradigm was born: that during the 1700s, English people became obsessed with manners and the cultivation of new and ritualised forms of behaviour, necessitated by their co-existence in an increasingly complex urban environment. The theme of these novel social codes, which encompassed all forms of human action in the public sphere, from conversation to body language (and here Norbert Elias has been highly influential) may be summarised in one word – politeness. (66)
To contemporaries the term came to stand for a propriety or decorum of conduct, giving no offence, display of generosity and accommodating oneself to one’s company. The anonymously published conduct book *Farrago* (1792) suggests that this was distinct from French politeness which favored more shallow display of fine manners and civility (P. Carter, *Men and the Emergence* 21). Resulting from the stress on refined sociability and polite behavior, Robert Shoemaker has shown, for instance, that between 1660 and 1760, men increasingly turned from resolving disputes with violence to talking (“Reforming Male Manners” 138). Elizabeth Foyster likewise points out that “true gentility” had become a question of avoiding the vices caused by the undisciplined passions of the traditional elite (“Boys Will be Boys?” 162). Elegance, complaisance and polish were commonly recognized aspects of English politeness, and in *Rambler No 98* Johnson describes it as follows: Politeness is that “by which the pleasure of conversation may be increased and the daily satisfactions of family life secured from interruption and disgust” (173). However, the term often took on a variety of meanings in different contexts, and because of this blurring of terms, Philip Carter makes use of Lawrence Klein’s application of politeness as a “master metaphor” (8) for “a range of social and cultural practices to which eighteenth century writers attached a variety of labels: civility, good breeding, manners, easiness, gentility and so on” (*The Emergence* 23).

To acquire these social polishes, a man had to receive a genteel education at home, but additionally he had to be exposed to foreign cultures. Michele Cohen describes the importance of the Grand Tour which was supposed not only to give a young man’s education its last polish by perfecting his knowledge of European history, government and languages, but which also served as a means to make him more manly by placing him in the company of a tutor and tearing him loose from the influence of his mother (*Fashioning Masculinity* 57). In *Man’s Estate: Landed*
Gentry Masculinities, 1660-1900 Henry French and Mark Rothery argue that upper-class parents “regarded travel both as a test of their sons’ resolve, character, and virtue and as an opportunity for them to learn from the best continental models of (public and private) manners, conversation, and ‘civility’” (143). For instance, in the late 1780s the young Edward (“Neddy”) Huddleston's tutors advocated travel as a means of “polishing” his manners and advised on suitable destinations:

Coblenz would not answer our purpose of hoping to polish his external rough behaviour; nor would he meet with much amusement there … But the Countess of Bornheim has been so Polite as to invite him & me to Rollencour, near St. Omers & Ftr Bowyer says that little Charles, who is his pupil, will be quite pleased to have Master Neddy with him … here Neddy will necessarily be as polite as he can; & it will serve to polish him. (French and Rothery 145)

Despite the consensus that travel was desirable for young upper-class men, both Chesterfield’s letters and the Grand Tour were always perceived with mixed feelings because of their association with French manners. Chesterfield was unapologetically a Francophile; to him the perfection of manners and good breeding was to be found in the French salons, whereas the Grand Tour of the English gentleman would in most cases take him to Paris, and a knowledge of French was long seen as a necessary accomplishment of any person, man or woman, who wanted to call him- or herself well bred and educated.

There was a general agreement in the eighteenth century that politeness and suavity of manners were cultivated to a higher degree in France. Samuel Johnson, for instance points out in The Rambler no. 104 that this was a direct consequence of the French political system: The art of pleasing “is cultivated in proportion to its usefulness, and will always flourish the most where it
is most rewarded; for this reason we find it practiced with great assiduity under absolute
governments, where honours and riches are in the hands of one man, whom all endeavour to
propitiate” (210). In The Conversation of Gentlemen John Constable agrees, praising the French
for their powers of conversation and manners: “But one may venture to say, it will be hard to
find any where more agreeable conversation than among the French. That easiness and civility of
behaviour, with that life and gayness, which is so common among them, is a great help to make
their company very pleasing” (89).

French honnêteté became the ideal of self-perfection and a sign of a man who had
perfected all the virtues of the heart and mind as well as social conduct (Cohen, Fashioning
Masculinity 15). However, the problem with this was that French manners and language skills
were first and foremost practiced in the salon, a semi-public space created and populated by
women. The advantages of female company were enumerated by several writers, and it was
frequently asserted that conversation without women present would be too caught up in pedantry
or be too aggressively assertive. Therefore, both sexes had to be present to create a social scene
that was both polite and substantial (MacLean 146). One father advising his son writes:
“Conversation with women would ‘polish a firm and noble mind,’ particularly when it was with
‘ladies much older than yourself’, who (perhaps euphemistically) would be ‘very charitably
inclined to put a young traveler on the right road” (French and Rothery 146-147). Addison in
Spectator No. 57 also sees the role of women as important, as ladies, with their softness and
piousness, would soften men and make them more polite: “Women were formed to temper
Mankind, and sooth them into Tenderness and Compassion” (259). Similarly, in The History of
Women from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time (1779). William Alexander describes
manners as woman's contribution to civilization:
We have already seen what a rude and barbarous people the Greeks were, during the heroic ages: when we trace them downward to those periods in which they become famous for their knowledge of the arts and sciences, we find this rudeness and barbarity softened only a few degrees; it is not therefore arts, sciences, and learning, but the company of the other sex, that forms the manners and that renders the man agreeable. … It is to the social intercourse with women, that the men are indebted for all the efforts they make to please and be agreeable; and it is to the ambition of pleasing they owe all their elegance of manners, and perhaps all their acquisitions of mind. (I; 440)

While there was a consensus that conversation with women would serve to round off the rough edges in a man and cultivate his manners, there was also a fear that this might at the same time feminize him: Philip Carter describes how conduct book authors were quite aware of the fact that the fashion for gaining a polite reputation in the eighteenth century was forcing many men to “over-expose themselves to refining influences and to adopt conduct incompatible with masculine responsibilities” (“Men about Town” 51). In a dedicatory letter accompanying his “The Moralists: A Philosophical Rhapsody” (later included in Characteristics) Shaftesbury, for instance, warns that female company has replaced male sense with “Gothic” horrors of triviality and gallantry (Rand 337).

Therefore, the acquisition of French manners was also a cause of anxiety. Matthew McCormack, for instance, states that the character traits of the English and the French were placed at “opposite poles of the binary symbolic order or contemporary political culture: freedom against slavery, manly straightforwardness against effeminate cultivation, truth against deceit –
and independence against dependence” (151). Illustrating such fears, James Fordyce writes in *Addresses to Young Men* that emulating foreign manners could be detrimental:

Sent abroad for the supposed purpose of improvement, without any foundation in principle or knowledge, do they not, after roaming a while through Europe, in trivial and ignominious pursuits, generally return more depraved and foolish than they went? By hearing the infidel and impious conversation so common in France and Italy, and by imitating the vicious customs established in those countries under the notion of a superior gallantry, are they not usually confirmed in their disaffection to all religion, and their scorn for everything sober, sedate, and manly. (152)

This problem, according to Fordyce, would, if not amended, end “sooner or later in weakness, disgrace, and ruin” (126). John Andrews, in *A Letter to a Young Gentleman* also argues that there is no need to leave England to learn politeness or engaging manners, and that “Many judicious foreigners prefer ours to the French, as more manly and becoming” (4). Another example of these fears are to be found in the poem “London” (1737) where Johnson laments the decline of the British character, characterized by “rustic Grandeur” in favor of a mimicry of French refinery. This, he complains, comes at the cost of “Sense, Freedom, Piety” since the heroic “Warrior” had “dwindled to a Beau” (P. Carter, “Men about Town” 52). John Brown’s diatribe *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* expresses a similar view of the results of the excessive refinement in men which were a result of foreign fashions: “The sexes have now little apparent Distinction, beyond that of Person and Dress: Their peculiar and characteristic

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2 This early poem of Johnson’s is an imitation of Juvenal, and he may well have been merely carrying forward into his own day Juvenal’s contempt for puppyish behavior among the *equites* of imperial Rome rather than writing from any personal knowledge of polite society at this point.
manners are confounded and lost. The one Sex having advanced in Boldness, as the other has sunk into Effeminacy” (51). Fordyce likewise warns against an effeminacy which, if not corrected, will lead to England’s downfall, just as it did for ancient Rome and Greece:

Many of you know that so long as Athens and Rome retained the masculine spirit of their games and sports, the frugality and simplicity of their manners … those celebrated states continued to shine with superlative glory; but when security, opulence and effeminate refinements, introduced and universal relaxation in these particulars, they visibly fell from whatever was elevated and magnanimous” (An Address to the Young Men 116).

Feminizing influences were not only to be met with on the Continent, however. Conduct book writers did also not hesitate in blaming women for the state of effeminacy that men had allegedly fallen into. John Brown, for instance, claims that effeminacy starts in the nursery by mistaken feminine tenderness and care (29). In The Rambler no. 109, “The Education of a Fop,” Johnson likewise attributes the fop’s personality to an excess of female influence, and Fordyce agrees. The spoiling of rich, young men starts in the nursery, he argues, and Fordyce therefore appeals to the mothers to change the way they raise their children and accuses them of laying the foundation of corruption and dishonor caused by effeminacy (132).

The completely effeminate man, the fop, is a well known literary figure whose lineage can be traced from Shakespeare’s Osric though Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter and Wycherley's Mr. Sparkish and to Wilde’s nineteenth-century dandy, Algernon Moncrieff. However, in the late eighteenth century these anxieties were shown in a new emphasis in the depiction of the fop, who now was portrayed not only as a figure of failed masculinity, but also as one who worships everything French. Klein argues that “Fops were assigned traits associated with French
sociability but blamed for abuses of form in the major zones of comportment, clothing, and conversation. Foppish manners were French distortions” (“The Figure of France” 39-40). An example illustrating the connection between foppishness and France is Sir Fopling Flutter in the popular play *A Man of Mode* whose manners are described in the play as “the pattern of modern foppery” and acquired “in imitation of the people of quality in France” (Etheredge 12). Such francophilia does not only denote a failed manliness, but, by the mid-eighteenth century also has political implications. While Etheredge satirizes Sir Fopling’s overdoing French manners and fashions in 1676, he still joined James II in his exile at Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1688/89. However, in 1722, the critic and dramatist John Dennis writes that it must please any “true Englishman” to see Sir Fopling ridiculed and punished because he “prefers another country to his own.” (167). In these forty-five years it appears that France has become pretty much every Englishman’s enemy whereas around the time of the Glorious Revolution, the issue turned on whether one was a Whig or a Tory, like Etherege. The criticism of Frenchified aristocrats in the mid-1790s, then, occurred in the context of wartime patriotism and served “straightforward to shift attention back to the French themselves … who were portrayed as monkeylike, effeminate and cringingly dependent” (McCormack 149). Accordingly, to be a fop was not only to fail as a man, but also to be unpatriotic and, as Michele Cohen describes it, to fail as an *Englishman*” (*Fashioning Masculinity* 39).

III

That these concerns spilled over into fiction, as an examination of eighteenth-century texts clearly shows is obvious and hardly surprising. The novels of Samuel Richardson, particularly *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*, became extremely important eighteenth-century gender
reference-points. In *Clarissa* we are left with mainly negative examples of male behavior, and we do not get anything like a male gender model. Belford at best is a reformed rake, Hickman is clearly too feminized to make a male reader want to imitate his behavior, and Clarissa’s long-awaited cousin, Colonel Morden, is an adherent of the old honor-based, aristocratic mode of manliness. And going back to *Pamela*, we have only a rake who reforms in Mr. B. To the extent that Richardson wanted to reform the manners of the age by presenting a positive alternative to the predatory aristocrat, he really had to write *Sir Charles Grandison*. In *Sir Charles* the reader meets with a protagonist who, according to the author, was to serve as the ideal for the Christian gentleman. Despite his bravery and many manly perfections, Sir Charles is, nonetheless, not afraid to show his emotions, and the reader sees him shed tears, often of compassion, on several occasions. Towards women, Sir Charles is ever attentive and protective, and he is a clear example of Barker-Benfield’s description of the heroes of sentimental fiction as characters who “identified with Christian piety and goodness” and “opposed gambling, oaths, cruelty to animals, and other elements of popular male culture” (247-248). The sentimental hero combined refined manners with delicacy (Jordan 77), and was therefore both the offspring of and the corrective to the aristocratic rake, who constituted the hegemonic version of masculinity after the Restoration. At the other end of the spectrum of manly virtue in Richardson’s novels, we find Lovelace, the cunning, base ravisher of Clarissa, who was modeled on Tirso de Molina’s *Don Juan* and the Restoration rake and became the archetype of the immoral rake and seducer of women. Richardson’s novels are considered among the first novels of sensibility, and, whether or not they influenced the behavior of real life gentlemen, his novels inspired imitation by many other novelists.
Michele Plaisant describes the development of the word sensibility from a scientific term, applying to Locke’s tenet of sense impressions as the inlet of knowledge into the mind, and becoming in the 1750s, “the capacity for refined emotion, the refinement to feel compassion for suffering and to be moved by the pathetic” (243). In *Sympathy, Sensibility and the Literature of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*, Ildiko Csengei accounts for the emergence of the cult of sensibility by calling it the result of “such historical and social factors as the development of new models of human subjectivity in science and medicine, philosophical ideas of innate benevolence and sympathy, political and sexual revolution, and the rise of the novel, together with the emergence of a largely female, middle-class readership” (1). Carter describes the shift in ideals for masculine behavior from an emphasis on outer refinement to emotion as a new “attachment to gentlemen’s displays of emotional sensitivity, free from what was now seen as the controls and corruptions of an earlier polite discourse” (*Men and the Emergence* 89). Accordingly, these developments paved the way for an emphasis of feelings as an ethical guide, but while in the 1740s and 50s sensibility still referred to a virtuous way of thinking and acting, in later use the term took on “derogatory connotations” (Plaisant 244). Raymond Williams agrees, noting that as it came to be associated with unregulated feelings, “sentimental” went from being “vulnerable” to “completely damaged” (*Keywords* 281-281).

The negative connotations of the term towards the end of the century were, as Chris Jones points out, largely owing to its associations with French ideas and principles (68). Conservative writers would participate in what Markman Ellis calls a “politics of sensibility” to convince their readers of the dangerous tendencies of sensibility (191). An orthodox preacher states in 1794 that sensibility represents a grave threat to justice, and was “perhaps more subversive than open

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3 Some historians trace the mid-century cult of sympathetic feeling to Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics* and Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* whereas others like R.S. Crane and Barker-Benfield point to still earlier Latitudinarian divines, such as Samuel Clarke and William Sherlock.
warfare against society” (Barker-Benfield 76). Similarly, in the cartoon “The New Morality,” (1798) published by the *Anti-Jacobin*, the creator James Gillray depicts sensibility as a hag hovering over a group of revolutionaries (Barker-Benfield 261). The illustration is accompanied by a satirical poem by George Canning and George Ellis, and it shows well-known English Jacobins presided over by the revolutionary muses Justice, Philanthropy and Sensibility (M. Ellis 192). In the picture (Appendix A), Sensibility is seen weeping over a dead bird, holding the works of Rousseau in one hand while resting her foot on the cut off head of Louis XVI. The lines of the poem proclaim:

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False by degrees and exquisitely wrong;
- For the crushed beetle *first*, - the widow’d dove
And all the warbled sorrows of the grove; -

*Next* for poor suffering *guilt*; and *last* of all,

For parents, Friends, a King and Country’s fall. (*The Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin* 298)
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As we can see, the British conservatives of the 1790s tended to equate sensibility with the philosophy of Rousseau, whose writings they abhorred. In a number of anti-Jacobin novels, therefore, the reading of Rousseau’s works, particularly his celebrated novel of sensibility, *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, is the stepping stone to moral and political decay. To declare continental novels and philosophy, those of Rousseau, Voltaire, Hume, and Kant in particular, the sources of radical contamination is a common anti-Jacobin strategy, for instance used by Jane Austen when she satirizes Catherine Morland’s reading habits in *Northanger Abbey*, as well as Elizabeth Hamilton whose anti-heroine, Bridgetina Botherim, in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* “had never read anything but novels and metaphysics” (I, 4). However, Rousseau’s *Julie* was the main
target of this propaganda: The Jacobin seducers of both Julia in Memoirs of Modern Philosophers and Geraldine in Jane West’s A Tale of the Times use the novel as part of their strategies, and agreeing with Nicola Watson's argument that “even the most passing allusion” to Julie operated “as a convenient shorthand for multiple anxieties surrounding females” (4), Claire Grogan suggests that its presence within other works of fiction carries an even more direct message about “female sexuality, national identity and politics” (463).

IV

Matthew McCormack’s statement that “politics and the family were inseparable in Georgian England” (13), is corroborated by Tim Fulford’s observation that the popularity of George III was based on his image as both the morally upright and dutiful father of his family as well as of the nation (4). However, the tenuous relationship between French ideals of politics and of civility and social behavior naturally came to a head in 1789 when the French Revolution broke out. As we know, the French revolution inspired fiction writers and pamphleteers alike to write both in defense of and against “the new philosophy.” Democratically minded writers and activists across the channel celebrated with the French people, and Paine and Wollstonecraft wrote their famous treatises describing a new man, free of many of the traditional class constraints; Godwin, both in Political Justice and in Caleb Williams, describes the need for political change in England. The establishment of a humane welfare state, as well as egalitarian political and inter-personal relations, were the defining ideals of these leading radicals (M. Butler, Burke, Paine, Godwin 5).

Jacobin was a label given to the radicals by counter-revolutionaries who wanted to brand their political adversaries with the stigma of the Terror (Wallace 15). As Grenby has shown,
there was no set definition for what constituted Jacobin beliefs; rather, the term came to apply to anything that smacked of progressive views, as Robert Bisset’s extremely comprehensive description shows: “ Whoever is the enemy of Christianity, and natural religion, of monarchy, of order, subordination, property, and justice, I call a Jacobin” (qtd. in Grenby 8). Very often, as well, Jacobinism was merely the label for what was seen as wrong in society, as the following attempt at a definition from The Spirit of Antijacobinism for 1802 highlights:

Jacobinism . . . is not merely a political, but an anti-social monster, which, in pursuit of its prey, alternately employs fraud and force. It first seduces by its arts, then subdues by its arms. For the accomplishment of its object it leaves no means unemployed which the deep malevolence of its native sagacity can devise. It pervades every department of literature and insinuates itself into every branch of science. Corruption is its food, profligacy its recreation, and demolition the motive of its actions, and the business of its life. (iv)

The conservative reaction to the Revolution, later termed the anti-Jacobins after their highly successful publication The-Anti-Jacobin, or, Weekly Examiner (1797-1798),⁴ therefore not only aimed at the French philosophical ideals of “freedom, brotherhood and equality” but also against what was seen as corrupting moral principles, which had the potential to destroy English families by their perceived attack on marriage and filial duty. Thus, many anti-Jacobins were convinced that eighteenth-century trends towards religious skepticism, marital infidelity and general immorality were actually the basis for Jacobin subversion (Gilmartin, “Counter Revolutionary Culture” 133). Robert Hole argues that by late 1793 the debate following in the wake of the

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⁴ These dates are for William Gifford's weekly publication, supported by Canning. There was also The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, or, Monthly Political and Literary Censor which ran monthly from 1798 into the 1820s. The two periodicals had no connection except the name. The editor of the latter was John Gifford.
French Revolution had “switched from predominantly political, constitutional, philosophical arguments to predominantly social ones of control and social cohesion, of morality, individual belief and restraint” (102). The parallel between the duty of the spouses to each other and the relationship between children and their parents and that of the subject to the crown was a commonly used one in both Jacobin and anti-Jacobin novels, particularly after Pitt’s repressive legislation and the suspension of habeas corpus in 1793 eliminated the ability to openly debate the revolutionary ideas. As such, the intimate sphere of the family became, as Gilmartin points out, a safe Habermasian training ground for the development of the political public sphere (Writing against Revolution 176). All these texts and their radical counterparts made up what Marilyn Butler calls the “war of ideas,” often pitting rational manliness against heroic chivalry and Frenchified “philosophes” against down-to-earth loyalists, and as such, they are also examples of what Megan Woodworth refers to as the French Revolution’s destabilizing influence on traditional English manliness (81).

Although all literary genres and mediums were used to respond to the political events, in addition to the pamphlet, the novel proved to be a particularly fertile field for both the more sober exchange of political views as well as plain mudslinging and nasty satire. In her groundbreaking study Jane Austen and the War of Ideas, Butler notes that the relatively new literary genre of the eighteenth century, the novel, served as a natural vehicle for radical ideas, due to the novel’s focus on and sympathy for the individual. What critics of the novel, like Samuel Johnson, saw as a form that conveyed “moral relativism,” was well suited to portray the struggle of the individual against corrupt society (30-31). Butler further adds that the fact that the majority of novels were set in contemporary society almost necessitated sensitivity to current controversies (120). In a closely related vein, Anne Mellor points out that the novel “is uniquely
qualified to consider political questions” because its dialogic nature can confront the complexities of lived experience in ways that partisan polemics cannot (120–121). It might seem more surprising that counter-revolutionaries would make use of a genre they distrusted, but Grenby explains this as pure pragmatism. Hannah More, for instance, argued that the Jacobins could best be encountered “with their own weapons” (Grenby 16). Thus the stage was set for the anti-Jacobin novel to flourish despite its authors’ skepticism towards the medium they were using.

By the late eighteenth century, the novel had become a somewhat acceptable genre for women writers, and, although some women like Hannah More published pamphlets, the novel became the most frequent medium used by women to contribute to the Revolution Controversy: “In the heat of controversies felt to shake the world, novels by women were acknowledged to express and mobilize political opinions every bit as effectively as Priestley’s Political Sermons or Godwin’s Political Justice” (C. Johnson, Jane Austen xiv-xv). Assumed to be unfit by nature and by education for the writing of political treatises or anything else that required analytical thinking or knowledge of philosophy, theology or the classics, the novel, which concerned itself with domestic subjects, had proved attractive and more socially acceptable for women writers from its inception. Frances Burney’s father, for example, encouraged her to write novels but did not allow her to publish her plays. However, women writers often made their fictional contributions to the political debates without expressing them polemically, and one of their strategies, as Woodworth convincingly argues, was to make conscious use of male characters for this purpose: “Because masculinity is inescapably political in the period, male characters provide a locus for women writers to explore their political philosophies. …Therefore, these male characters are crucial to re-evaluating the ways in which women writers engage with political
material through the courtship plot” (3). An analysis of the often overlooked male characters in the novels of female writers, then, will help us gain a more thorough understanding of women’s contributions to the political debates of the 1790s.

Early critics of Jacobin and anti-Jacobin novels tended to place writers squarely in either the radical or the conservative camp. Hence, Charlotte Smith was grouped with Godwin, Bage, and Holcroft as one of the main Jacobin novelists, whereas Elizabeth Hamilton was grouped with staunch anti-Jacobins such as Hannah More and George Walker. This tendency towards simplifying the political beliefs of writers has come under attack by writers like Claudia L. Johnson, who argues that most novels written in the decades after the French Revolution are more complicated and “less doctrinaire” than they have been recognized as by critics. For instance, Johnson argues that while ostensibly conservative writers like Hamilton and Opie denounce radical politics, their novels simultaneously contain sub-plots which question authority and advocate personal liberty and reliance on the individual conscience (*Jane Austen* xxi).

What Johnson points to here can be explained by turning to the theoretical work of Pierre Macherey. In *A Theory of Literary Production* Macherey explains that not only will a writer never reflect mechanically the ideology which he or she represents, but also contradictions within an ideology will spill out and prevent a fully coherent presentation of the ideology in question. Macherey states: “The writer always reveals or writes from a certain position (which is not simply a subjective viewpoint) in relation to this ideological climate; he constructs a certain image of ideology which is not exactly identical with ideology as it is given whether it betrays it, whether it puts in question, or whether it modifies it” (195). Furthermore, as Macherey’s analysis of the work of Jules Verne shows, ideologies themselves contain contradictions. In Verne’s case,
his plans for the novel *Mysterious Island* went awry because of rifts within the bourgeois capitalism he was showcasing. Macherey explains:

This is more or less what happens: Jules Verne wants to represent, to translate, an imperative which is profoundly ideological, that notion of labour and conquest which is at the centre of his work. In relation to the historical reality which it recuperates, this ideal is contradictory; real labour is alienated, perfect conquest is inevitably constrained by the conditions of former colonization. These are the real limits of bourgeois ideology; but this ideology is emphatically not internally contradictory; for that would presuppose that it gave a complete description of reality, that it ceased to be an ideology, whereas it is precisely its insufficiencies, its incompleteness, which guarantees its flawed coherence. The interest in Verne’s work lies in the fact that … it reveals the *limits*, and to some extent, the *conditions* of this ideological coherence, which is necessarily built upon a discord in the historical reality, and upon a discord between this reality and its *dominant* representation. (237-238)

Following Macherey’s argument, then, like the bourgeois capitalism that Verne was describing, the radicalism of the French Revolution contains contradictions that prevent any writer from being able to present a fully coherent picture of it. I therefore agree with the critics who seek to steer away from the somewhat simplistic depiction provided by some early critics of the novels of the 1790s, and I intend to rethink how several canonical and non-canonical novelists use masculinity as one of the central modalities for responding to the French Revolution. The chapters in this dissertation, then, seek to complicate readers’ previous understanding of the author or concept in question by showing that male characters that have
earlier been given little attention provide clues to a more nuanced understanding of the politics of novels both when they are explicitly political and when they are not. To this end I have chosen to direct my attention to two authors whose novels are avowedly political (Smith and Jervis) and three whose novels do not make this claim but ostensibly focus on purely domestic courtship plots (Austen, Edgeworth and Burney).

As mentioned above, Charlotte Smith has been identified by many critics, amongst them Gary Kelly, as one of the radical writers of the last decade of the 18th century. In Desmond she praises post-revolutionary France, and her depiction of domestic tyranny mirrors tyranny in the political realm. However, many critics, in their focus on the above, fail to notice that, although Smith has generally been considered to have become more conservative and disenchanted with the French Revolution in her later works, even Smith’s early novels show signs of conservative views. Both the male heroes I study in my second chapter, Desmond and Godolphin, belong to the country gentry, and Smith seems to be suggesting that only in this class can the new type of man, one that can renew both domestic relationships and the nation, be found. The aristocracy is too degenerate and too consumed with either vices or ambition, and the new middle class, consisting mainly of business men, is dismissed as social climbers without integrity who only copy the worst traits of the aristocracy in order to gain their approval and access to their money.

As opposed to Charlotte Smith, who depicts male heroes who possess just the right amount of sensibility, the more staunchly conservative writers in the 1790’s were often deeply suspicious and critical of sensibility. According to Grenby, sensibility was often viewed by the anti-Jacobin writers as a Jacobin trait because like the “new philosophy” it was an affectation that found misery where it did not exist (227). The anti-Jacobins also saw sensibility as a threat, since a reliance on feelings, it was thought, could easily seduce young minds into disobeying
figures of authority and neglecting their duty. The book I analyze in my third chapter, *Agatha, or a Narrative of Recent Events* by Elizabeth Jervis, however, contradicts this generalization because it reconciles an anti-Jacobin world view with a celebration of male sensibility. In this little known novel, both the protagonist, Agatha, and the main male character reflect the tenets of sensibility, but, as opposed to the fear of most conservatives, the two are able to reconcile their sentiments and passions with a strong sense of duty and deference to authority.

Whereas little attention has been given to the male characters of some of the other novelists in this dissertation, Frances Burney’s portraits of men have been described more extensively. Sarah Salih claims that in *Camilla* gender ambiguities, often in the shape of cross-dressing episodes and descriptions of characters that challenge “binary oppositions of gender” occur with “striking frequency” (41). What Salih and others have ignored, however, is the political implications of Burney’s male characters in *Camilla*. The male characters, I argue in my fourth chapter, imply anxiety about a society which allows social climbers to work themselves into positions of respectability either by trickery or money acquired in trade. Mr. Dubster, a working class man whose late wife’s money has enabled him to purchase an estate, and Mr. Bellamy, a true blackguard figure whose gentlemanly appearance provides him with a passport to social gatherings for the gentry, are presented as threats to the established hierarchies and expressions of a fear of social mobility in the novel that was not nearly as strong in Burney’s pre-Revolutionary novel *Evelina*.

Also written from a counterrevolutionary point-of-view, Maria Edgeworth’s *Belinda* creates a male character, Clarence Hervey, who although he is too intelligent to be a fop, is feminized by his idealization of French ideas and manners. Much has been written about the reclaiming and reeducation of Lady Delacour in this novel, but in my fifth chapter, it is my
argument that of equal importance is the reclaiming of Clarence Hervey from a feminized frequenter of female salons to acceptable male society and behavior. Hervey has to be reclaimed, as does Mr. L in *Leonora*, from his belief in French-inspired manners and philosophy.

Edgeworth, then, contributes to the rich tradition of anti-Jacobin literature when she portrays Clarence Hervey and Mr. L as characters who have absorbed or been contaminated by French ideals, making a conservative political statement which declares that by succumbing to French-inspired modes of masculine behavior, the male protagonists have also become politically compromised.

Although earlier critics tended to see Jane Austen, like Maria Edgeworth, as a counterrevolutionary writer, Claudia L. Johnson has questioned the view, promoted by Butler and others, of Austen as a conservative doctrinaire, a view that, as my final chapter will show, is supported by Austen’s questioning of authority and society in *Emma*, where repression and rigid social and economic structures from the past feminize several of the novel’s male characters. Just as the craze for French politeness and fashion had the power to effeminate Edgewood’s Clarence Hervey, a repressive society, like pre-Revolutionary France, or England as it reacted to the Revolution and the wars with France, could also result in unmanliness. The absence of political freedoms and fear of change, as well as a lack of meritocracy, has left England stagnant and claustrophobic. In *Emma* Frank Churchill, the dependent of his autocratic aunt, and Mr. Elton, a young man relegated to making a career in the church, where success most often depends on who you know or are related to, are both dependent on a feudal-like system of patronage, whereas Mr. Woodhouse is, from his fear of change, mentally stuck in the past. The result for all three of them is a lack of manliness. As opposed to this effete trio, we find Mr. Knightley and Robert
Martin, who emerge as the representatives of a new, nineteenth-century manliness based on sincerity, simplicity, and an emphasis on personal merit rather than social position.
Chapter 2: Charlotte Smith’s Soft Heroes of the Gentry

I

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Charlotte Smith is an author of impeccable radical credentials. In her own time Charlotte Smith was undoubtedly recognized as a radical. For instance, Smith was on friendly enough terms with Girondist leaders during the early phases of the French Revolution to be able to provide the young Wordsworth with a letter of introduction to Jacques-Pierre Brissot (Johnston 282). The English press and lay readers also recognized her as a radical. For instance, George Dyer, a Dissenting intellectual, included Smith in the ranks of famous pro-Revolutionary authors, alongside Mary Hays, Helen Maria Williams, and Mary Wollstonecraft, in his ode “On Liberty” (Kelly, Revolutionary Feminism 136), and Richard Polwhele included her in his infamous list of “unsex’d” females, accusing her of being infected with the “Gallic mania.” Additionally, the August 1799 issue of the Anti-Jacobin claims that her protagonists “despised the restraints of religion, law, and morality” (Vol. III, 422), and in a work praised by the Anti-Jacobin as “particularly pertinent and just” (Vol. II, 282), Thomas J. Mathias accuses Charlotte Smith and her fellow radical novelists of forgetting the delicacy of her sex, as she had taken up “the trumpet of democracy and let loose the spirit of gross licentiousness, moral and political” in contempt of law, religion, and duty to her country (51-52).

Even the more neutral Critical Review contends in its review of Desmond that Smith is too one-sided in her representation of the Revolution: “Connected with the reformers, and the revolutionists, she has borrowed her colouring from them, and represented their conduct in the
most favourable light” (100). A young girl reading Desmond in 1792 concurs, calling its author “a wild leveller” (Grenby, “Novels of Opinion” 160).

There is no doubt that Desmond in many ways deserves its radical reputation. The novel was thought to be so radical that Smith’s usual publisher, Cadell, did not dare to publish it, so it was instead published by Robinson (Fletcher, A Literary Biography 152). Fletcher, therefore, calls Desmond Smith’s most radical novel, asserting that the four letter writers in the novel are all more or less radical (144), and Chris Jones declares that Smith uses the novel to “voice the most unequivocal approval of the Revolution” (75). Smith’s own “Preface” claims that although she has tried to voice both sides of the Revolutionary argument, the complete victory on the side of the radical argument is owing, not to her one-sided representation, but to the “power of truth and reason” (D 45). Several other radical features are obvious in the novel such as Desmond’s enthusiastic descriptions of post-Revolutionary France, his refutations of Burke’s arguments in Reflections on the Revolution in France, and the subversive depiction of the patience with which Geraldine endures the outrageous demands of her husband and mother, which, as Diana Bowstead points out, parallels the political oppression in pre-revolutionary France (259). Eleanor Ty in her place points out that Desmond makes Smith’s earlier implicit criticism of patriarchy explicit (130) and states that the novel’s argument is that in society, just as for Geraldine, meekness leads only to “further exploitation” (139).

Accordingly, Charlotte Smith has been identified by many modern critics as one of the undisputed radical writers of the 1790s. Fletcher, Smith’s biographer, starts off by stating that Charlotte Smith belongs with the group of writers referred to by their detractors as “Jacobins” (1), and to illustrate her point, she later relates that Smith went as far in her radicalism as to say that the Swiss guards who were massacred in France in August of 1791 deserved their fate (159).
Marilyn Butler refers to Smith as a “liberal sympathizer” who often echoed the opinions of Godwin, Bage and Holcroft (Jane Austen 92), and Ty declares Smith “in favor of the French republicanism” (130). William Stafford states that Charlotte Smith’s support of the early phases of the French Revolution never wavered, and that her radicalism expressed itself subversively about England, as well (English Feminists 22). Carol L. Fry seconds this idea, stating: “Her republican principles remained intact throughout her life” (64) while Eleanor Wikborg contends that Smith’s novels consistently portray the “mechanism of oppression” (522).

For such a celebrated radical, it is noticeable that Smith’s radicalism was quite short-lived. In November 1791 Smith gave shelter to a group of émigrés, and she apparently came to the conclusion that many of the Revolution’s victims were innocent, and after this point she became increasingly skeptical of the French Revolution (Fletcher, A Literary Biography 191-192). However, many critics, in their focus on Desmond, fail to notice that, although Smith has generally been considered to have become more conservative and disenchanted with the French Revolution in her later works, even Smith’s early novels, written only a couple of years before Desmond, show signs of conservative views. Although Ty argues that Smith’s first novel, Emmeline, may be considered a pre-Revolutionary novel because of its affinity with the feminist critique of authority figures and patriarchy in the works of Hays, Wollstonecraft, and Inchbald (115-116), Fletcher comments that: “It is impossible to make much of a case for radicalism in Charlotte’s first novel, Emmeline.” Fletcher further points out that Emmeline herself can be as snobbish as any of her aristocratic relations (A Literary Biography 96). This is, for example, shown in Emmeline’s reaction to the steward Maloney’s proposal when she claims that any situation, even one where she has to work for a living, is infinitely superior to any advantages “such a man as Maloney” can offer (E 66). She then advises Lord Montreville to respond by
saying that he is “astonished at his insolence in daring to lift his eyes to a person bearing the name of Mowbray” (E 67). The novel is also clear in its defense of authority, as is clear in the criticism of Lord Delamere who is “ready to throw off the restraint of parental authority” (E 73-74) and disregards “the respect he owed his father” (E 76). Emmeline, on the other hand, is held up as a model of deference to authority even when that authority, as represented by her uncle, treats her with suspicion and unkindness (76). Jennifer Golightly therefore agrees with Fletcher as she points out that Emmeline is conservative enough to make Smith’s reputation as a radical writer “questionable” (17), and Diane Long Hoeveler states that Emmeline reinforces the hegemony of land-based wealth against all nouveau upstarts (41).

So, does this mean, as Fletcher indicates, that Smith’s political radicalism was an intense, but short fling that came to fruition in Desmond but was abandoned shortly thereafter as Smith became disgusted with the increasing extremism of the French Jacobin party and retracted into her former position as a more conservative member of the gentry? Or does it mean, as has often been argued, that Smith was a staunch radical throughout her literary career and that any evidence to the contrary can be disregarded as a necessary compromise by an author dependent on public favor to make a living (Flanders 146)? These two opposing views share one major flaw which is that they are both predicated upon the assumption that the politics of the novels of the 1790s that have been classified as Jacobin or anti-Jacobin are necessarily unified and fully coherent. This is a view that both Megan Woodworth (78-79) and Claudia L. Johnson, who states that most of the novels written in “the war of ideas are more complicated than they have been made out to be by modern commentators (xxi), challenge.

This discrepancy can be explained by referring back to Macherey’s theory of the literary work’s “latent meaning” which argues that a writer rarely reflects in a straight-forward manner
the ideology he or she represents. In Charlotte Smith’s case, for instance, her response to and depiction of radical ideology is complicated by her social background and personal experiences. It is, therefore, my opinion, agreeing with Fuson Wang, that Smith’s message even in her most radical novel, *Desmond*, is undercut by more conservative undercurrents that can be traced back to her earliest work. Whereas Wang points to Bethel’s “Burkean counter narrative” as the hair in the radical soup (38), I contend that this slippage is mainly shown in her depictions of masculinity, which are, as I will show, nearly identical in *Desmond* and *Emmeline*.

Woodworth adroitly points out that Desmond’s chivalrous actions and language often echo Burke (90), and although I do not dispute her view, I credit Smith with more originality in the creation of Desmond’s character than Woodworth does. It is my view that Smith has created a male hero, both in *Desmond* and *Emmeline*, which exemplifies a truly masculine, yet emotional man who, although he has inherited many of the traits of man of sensibility, is in addition endowed with equally strong powers of reasoning and courage, making him a unique blend of sentimental feeling, rationality, and action. Smith’s ideal man sees women as equals and companions rather than sensual creatures or pawns to be traded by men for their benefit. It is, however, striking that both the heroes, Desmond and Godolphin, belong to the country gentry, and Smith shows us that only in this class can this new type of man, one that can restore both domestic relationships and the nation, be found. The aristocracy is too degenerate and too consumed with either vices or ambition. Accordingly, all the titled aristocrats in the two novels have immersed themselves in the frivolous dissipation of the city as well as the ruthless competition for political and social status. Thus, Lord Montreville is busy courting the holders of power in Parliament and at court while Lady Montreville and her oldest daughter spend their time consolidating their positions as the leaders of the *bon ton*. The new middle class, consisting
of business men like Smith’s husband, who are also based in the city and immersed in its capitalist and imperialist economy, is written off as social climbers without integrity, who only mimic the worst traits of the aristocracy in order to gain their approval and access to their money.

It is hardly surprising that Charlotte Smith’s class background and her sentimental outlook made her critical of the city dwellers. Smith’s biographer, Fletcher, claims that “At great City dinners of turtle, among great city wives with the loot of Empire on their back, she felt herself a different species” (A Literary Biography 29). Furthermore, in Sensibility: An Introduction Janet Todd argues that sensibility was always at odds with the city. “With its emphasis on community, it found distressing the anonymity and possible viciousness of the large city.” London, therefore, according to Todd, came to stand for frivolous pleasure, social malice, and economic greed (14). Raymond Williams concurs, stating that particularly from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on, rural became equal to virtue and urban became a synonym for greed (The Country and the City 48). Looking at Smith’s novels, though, it is obvious that the country gentry and the flawed, but reformable aristocracy are much more closely aligned than the gentry and the ruthless middle class. These middle-class villains, from the class whose dominance in the Assemblée Nationale of 1790 so horrified Edmund Burke, are mainly represented in Emmeline by the Crofts and in Desmond by Sir Robert Stamford. Smith’s dislike of the middle class and her glorification of the gentry, then, serve to, at least partially, deconstruct her temporary enthusiasm for the French Revolution and radical social change.

II

Smith’s descriptions of aristocrats in Emmeline and Desmond are fairly typical of her time and are quite similar to the depictions in other novels of the period such as Burney’s
*Evelina* and *Cecilia* and Austen’s *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* as well as the work of conduct writers like John Brown. Alison Conway states that Smith joins Wollstonecraft in depicting aristocrats as a “collective of bodies governed by various appetites satiated at the expense of the masses” (400), and Smith’s aristocrats in the two novels are either snobbish or consumed with their status like Lord Montreville and Count d’Hauteville; impetuous and unable to follow the dictates of reason like Delamere and Waverly; abandoned libertines like Fitz-Edward, de Bellozane, Colonel Scarsdale and Duke de Romagnecourt; or irresponsible spendthrifts and unfaithful husbands like Stafford, Trelawny, and Verney. The aristocrats’ inability to govern England is also shown by the fact that none of them are good fathers. The older Lord Westhaven, like Smith’s own father, marries off his daughter to an unsuitable husband to please his new, rich wife; Lord Montreville’s boundless indulgence spoils his son’s good nature; Henry Charles Mowbray’s dissipated lifestyle kills him and deprives Emmeline of a protector; and Verney gambles away his children’s inheritance and curses at them the few times he notices them.

However, unlike the French people, whose Revolution was centered upon the members of the bourgeoisie, Charlotte Smith does not turn to the middle class for answers. Much as we will see in the chapter on Burney’s *Camilla*, the aristocrats in the two novels, with the exception of the new peers like Trelawny and Newminster, are all somewhat redeemed in the end. In *Emmeline* Delamere is mourned because of his good nature, and Lord Montreville learns to regret his infatuation with money and status. Fitz-Edward is reformed and part of the family circle after he has renounced his former libertinism as a result of temporarily losing Lady Adelina, and de Bellozane is tormented with remorse and returns to the healing beauty of nature in Switzerland. In *Desmond* Mr. Verney repents and asks for his wife’s forgiveness for his transgressions and gives Desmond his blessing to marry Geraldine and raise his children before
he dies. Unlike other radical writers, then, Smith, like Burney and Edgeworth, seems to be more interested in reforming the aristocracy than getting rid of it. After all, by the end of *Emmeline* the heroine and her husband are, although they are untitled, as the newly instated owners of Mowbray Castle, a part of the aristocracy.

Unlike the aristocrats who show potential for reform, the members of the middle-class are depicted without a trace of redeemable qualities by Smith. In *Emmeline* Mrs. Stafford sums up their lack of feeling and humanity:

> I have endured the most brutal unkindness of hardened avarice, the dirty chicane of the law, exercised by the most contemptible of beings; and have been forced to attempt softening the tradesman and the mechanic, and to suffer every degree of humiliation which the insolence of sudden prosperity or the insensible coolness of the determined money dealer, could inflict. (419-420)

Fletcher claims that Smith always felt more at home among families of the gentry, and that she detested having to live in Cheapside and mix with her in-laws’ business acquaintances as a newlywed (*A Literary Biography* 42). Fletcher goes on to say that she had little respect for lawyers or clergymen, seeing them as parasites, and her heroes and heroines have a hard time in the kind of competitive economy and society she describes in her novels. To her, sensitive feelings are often incompatible with monetary success, and sense and reason belongs to the characters who are guided by self-interest, materialistic success. These characters, although often cunning, also show a noticeable lack of imagination (*A Literary Biography* 92). Furthermore, unlike the members of the third estate in France, Smith’s middle-class men are noticeably anti-revolutionary, arguing for the right and need of the government to “enforce obedience” and stop the “spread of pernicious doctrines” (*D* 211). Instead, their goal is to parasitically attach
themselves to the novels’ aristocrats and support the political status quo in order to exploit whatever opening is presented to them. Accordingly, the middle class is as unable to govern England as the members of the upper aristocracy, and this criticism of the bourgeoisie is sharply at odds with Smith’s reputation as a radical and a proponent of the French Revolution.

The main representatives for middle-class values and failed masculinity in Smith’s novels are the members of the legal profession. According to Stafford, “The concentrated essence of her venom is reserved for attorneys,” who are at times “gothically wicked” (English Feminists 21). In Desmond the stereotypical attorney is characterized as “supercilious” and dogmatical,” and further, “His words are as violent as his nature is stubborn, and although he is deemed both a poor orator and lacking in judgment by the world, he has an excellent opinion of himself thinking that he knows everything worth knowing and is, therefore, entitled to dictate everybody else’s opinion (D 204). Desmond then quotes Milton in saying that lawyers are trained for mercenary motives to “Make the worser seem the better reason” (D 250).

In Emmeline the most despicable villains are Sir Richard Crofts and his two sons, all educated at the bar. Sir Richard, who has risen by the use of flattery from an obscure Scottish attorney’s clerk to Lord Montreville’s business agent and advisor, has through Lord Montreville’s patronage become a Member of Parliament and a baronet (E 117). Lynn Hunt notes that in revolutionary France “Male virtue meant participation in the public world of politics” (125), but to Smith the word politician carries nothing but negative connotation, and Sir Richard is shown to be a toady with no morals or scruples:

He had less understanding than cunning; less honesty than industry; and tho’ he knew how to talk warmly and plausibly of honour, justice and integrity, he was generally contented just to talk of them, seldom so imprudent as to practice them
when he could get place of profit by their sacrifice … To his superiors, the cringing parasite; to those whom he thought his inferiors, proud, supercilious, and insulting; and his heart hardening as his property increased. (E 116)

Sir Richard encourages Lord Montreville’s opposition to his son’s marriage, and he is the one to hatch the plan to send Delamere abroad to cure him of his passion for Emmeline. This has the added benefit of getting him out of the way while Sir Richard helps his oldest son court Lord Montreville’s oldest daughter (E 117, 204). In doing so, he not only fails to feel sympathy for the precariously situated Emmeline, but he also, having no fatherly feelings himself, creates strife between father and son: “Sir Richard, himself wholly insensible to the feelings of a father, discouraged in Lord Montreville every tendency to forgive or indulge this indiscreet passion. And equally incapable of the generous sentiments of a gentleman towards a woman, young, helpless, dependant, and unfortunate, he tried to harden the heart of Lord Montreville against his orphan niece” (E 132). Sir Richard, therefore, uses his influence to lessen any generosity or affection that his lordship shows signs of showing towards Emmeline (E 283).

To emphasize Sir Richard’s wickedness, Smith does not stop short of comparing Sir Richard to the Devil, tempting humans to act on evil impulses, thereby selling their soul for earthly riches. Lord Montreville is only kept from acting generously and fairly by Sir Richard’s insidious advice and “tempted by the visions of splendour and accumulated riches which Sir Richard perpetually presented to his imagination” (E 132-133). The Biblical allusion is supported by Emmeline’s answer to Sir Richard’s proposal stating that even if she is offered “the world,” she would refuse the command (E 135).^5^ One becomes aware of how successfully Smith has been in creating an utterly negative portrait of Sir Richard, as Emmeline’s proud defiance in this episode is one of the most satisfying moments in the novel.

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^5^ See Matthew 4:4-11 and 16:26 in the *New Testament:*
Sir Richard uses dishonorable methods such as threats and fraud to get his way. Again referred to as an “unfeeling politician” (*E* 134), he threatens Emmeline, in her uncle’s name, saying that if she refuses to marry Mr. Rochely to “Never expect from my Lord Montreville, or the Mowbray-Delamere family, either countenance, or support, or protection” (*E* 135). He also encourages his younger son to not relent in his demands against the Staffords (*E* 290), so that Emmeline might be forced to follow them into exile abroad, and, despite putting on a false front of sympathy towards Mrs. Stafford, dismisses her with the hauteur of a king (*E* 292). By exiling Emmeline from the safe “Eden” of the family, Sir Richard takes on the characteristic of not only Satan but also a Gothic villain (K. Ellis 51). Towards the end of the novel, the reader is, moreover, informed that it is Sir Richard who knowingly suppressed the evidence that Emmeline was a legitimate child and, as a result, the heiress to Mowbray Castle, in order to curry favor with Lord Montreville (*E* 398), and it is because of this deception that he hates and fears Emmeline and attempts to sow ill will between her and her uncle: “As the aggressor never forgives, Sir Richard had conceived against Emmeline the most unmanly and extravagant hatred” (*E* 398). His destruction of Emmeline’s parents’ marriage certificate is not the only mail he destroys, however. Sir Richard also burns letters from Lord Westhaven to Emmeline in order to prevent Emmeline from claiming her rightful inheritance while convincing Lord Montreville, whose conscience tempts him to do justice by his niece, to remain inflexible (*E* 431-432).

Sir Richard is in addition shown to have no feelings of honor or gratitude. Although he pretends to help Lord Montreville, he encourages his son to marry the oldest Miss Montreville, and his revelation of the marriage to Lord Montreville is a lesson in hypocrisy and false humility where he pretends to be furious with his son (*E* 310-311). After Lord Montreville resigns his political appointments, the Crofts, led by Sir Richard, have no more use for him, and, devoid of
gratitude for all the favors they have received, they don’t even show up to give their condolences after Delamere’s death. Instead, having changed their political allegiance, they are busy courting Lord Montreville’s successor (E 473).

Sir Richard’s two sons are cast in the same mold as their father; the oldest one in particular resembles his father: “The young man inherited all the cunning of his father, together with a coolness of temper which supplied the place of solid understanding and quick parts; since it always gave him time to see where his interest lay, and steadiness to pursue it” (E 194). Conspiring to marry Miss Montreville for her fortune and social status, Crofts junior had “For two years incessantly applied himself to conciliate the good opinion of the whole family, with so much art that nobody suspected their design.” Although he finds the younger sister, more attractive, he has found that he can use the pride of the eldest sister against her, and by pretending to be in love with her with “distant hints and sighs, affected concealment; and artful speeches” (E 194), he manipulates her into a private marriage (E 261). In doing so, he has to overlook the contempt of Delamere with “the calm magnanimity of an elder statesman,” and because of his calculating nature, he is considered a very promising young man “by the grave politicians with whom he associated” (E 194). After he has succeeded in marrying Miss Montreville, he is, because of his cowardice, unable to control his wife (E 321), and although he knows of her affair with de Bellozane, he looks the other way in order to avoid a quarrel with his wife or an altercation with the French soldier, to whom he behaves with “cringing and servile complaisance” (E 433), so that he will not have to pay back the twelve thousand pounds he received from her father upon their marriage (E 463). He is also so “pusillanimous and mean spirited” as to prefer public shame to a duel with de Bellozane (E 463), and after his cowardice results in his brother-in-law’s death, Mr. Crofts’ main concern is whether the death of the
Montreville heir will increase his wife’s inheritance (E 473). Clearly, this is not a type of man with whom the governance of a nation can be trusted.

His younger brother, James, whom Fletcher in her introduction to the novel suggests is modeled upon Smith’s own “detestable cream-coloured” brother-in-law, Thomas Dyer, who was one of the executors of her father-in-law’s will (E 33), is a copy of his father and brother: His unattractive looks are notable despite “a vain attempt to look like a gentleman” (E 233-234), and his inner qualities match his exterior: “His heart was selfish, narrow, unfeeling, and at once mean and proud,” and his conversation is dull, the result of an understanding “beneath mediocrity” (E 234). Like his father and brother, however, he has plenty of cunning and hypocrisy to make up for his intellectual deficiencies. Directed by his father to make his fortune by marrying a rich wife (E 233), he courts the shallow Mrs. Ashwood by false protestations that his brother’s ill-health will soon make him an only son and the heir to his father’s fortune and title (E 240).

James Crofts joins his father and brother in persecuting Emmeline in order to gain favor with the Montrevilles, and he is the spy whose anonymous letter (E 254) and insinuations make Delamere believe that Emmeline has betrayed him and entered into a relationship with Fitz-Edward (E 256). When confronted by Fitz-Edward, James Crofts is, like his brother, ridiculed for his cowardice: “James Crofts, more at home in the cabinet than the field” departs to avoid a fight (E 247). Immediately afterwards, he again shows his despicable nature when he attempts to blackmail Emmeline into accepting his sexual advances (E 248). Her rejection and what he sees as her preference for Fitz-Edward infuriates him, and he determines to use any means “to ruin them both” (E 249), adding vindictiveness to the list of his other despicable qualities. His resentment, joined to the greed of his father and older brother means that “Every engine therefore that ambition, avarice, malice and cunning could employ, was now put in motion against the
character and the peace of the unprotected and unsuspicious Emmeline” \((E\ 284)\). The trio also does not hesitate to ruin Emmeline’s friends in their attempt to hurt her. As a part of their plan to get Emmeline out of Delamere’s reach, James Crofts forces the Staffords into bankruptcy, despite Mrs. Stafford’s pleas for mercy. Afterwards she concludes that to be in the power of Crofts was to “trust to avarice, meanness and malignity” \((E\ 289)\), a view that Smith herself, after years of litigation over her father-in-law’s will, undoubtedly shares.

Smith’s depictions of attorneys in \textit{Desmond} are no more sympathetic than those in her earlier novel. Like Sir Richard, Bethel’s former solicitor, Mr. Stamford, starts his career as a humble country attorney. Being what Margaret Doody describes as one of the novel’s “lecherous power-seekers” \((D\ 180)\) and seeing that he can use the young Bethel to further his career, he and his family are “vying to make their house appealing to Bethel \((D\ 61)\) in order for him to fall in love with one of the daughters or nieces there. When Stamford manages to get Bethel married to his niece, he also, in accordance with his plan, convinces Bethel to give him the management of his whole fortune. In order to gain political influence he convinces Bethel to go into Parliament. Once within the circles of power, Sir Robert, who is “artful, active, and indefatigable” and whose conscience is “very pliable,” puts his political views for up for sale as he strives to become intimate with ministers and peers \((D\ 64)\). His corruption also includes paying for votes and using the knowledge he has access to as a government insider to enrich himself \((D\ 121)\). After his wife has eloped, Bethel discovers that Stamford’s political convictions were not the only thing for sale; he had also received money from his niece’s seducer in order to facilitate the affair and her elopement \((D\ 65)\).

Like Sir Richard in \textit{Emmeline}, who attempts to impress his surroundings with his lavish lifestyle and therefore expends immense sums on “the luxuries of the table, his house, his
gardens” (D 320-321), Stamford, now also a baronet, shows the same lack of taste and lives in vulgar splendor, showing off his gourmandise to the neighborhood (D 121). In this passage and later on page 344, Smith uses the word “Epicurean” in its vulgar sense to refer to Stamford’s voluptuousness, whereas Desmond, who calls Montfleuri “an Epicurean” (D 114), a term later repeated by Montfleuri himself (D 372), uses the word to refer to the philosophical idea that happiness is the highest good. Stamford is an apt example of Bowstead’s observation that those of Smith’s characters who are concerned with eating well are often indulging their appetites at the cost of social justice (242). When Stamford takes over the Verney estate, the first thing he does is to cut down the beautiful forest to make room for the cultivation of exotic fruits for his table, and the water, instead of adorning the grounds, is rerouted to supply water for the fruits and dammed up to hold fish for the baronet’s table; Bethel concludes: “Everything is sacrificed to the luxuries of the table” (D 94). In referring to this, Desmond, alluding to Burke, dismisses him as an upstart without respectability who wastes “in swinish excess” the money he has earned dishonestly and serves as an example of a “placeman filling useless places” (D 202-203). Bethel then sarcastically describes how Stamford shows off his “Epicurean living” to an admiring crowd consisting of Desmond’s imbecile uncle, Major Danby, another middle-class man of low character and understanding, who by the acquisition of sudden affluence has become a coffee-house politician and gossip and a gourmand (D 358-359). Major Danby is joined by a curate, an attorney, an attorney’s clerk, a riding surveyor, and a master of an academy of genteel education for the sons of the upper class (D 345). Here Bethel is suggesting by his catalogue of admirers that no person of real taste would find Stamford’s company attractive. It is noticeable that in Smith’s novels, just as in Burney’s Camilla, the kind of taste and feeling Bethel is denying Stamford and his followers is usually confined to those born into the genteel orders, a view not
uncommon in the eighteenth-century but clearly at odds with the ideas of the radical reformers
Smith has been assumed to belong to. Hannah More’s poem “Sentimentality,” for instance,
“denied sentimental pensiveness” to the vulgar, and Bishop Hurd argued that the ability to react
sentimentally” was only to be found in people of “birth and culture” (Todd, Sensibility 13).

However, it is not only attorneys that are singled out from the middle class by Smith as
sordid, vulgar, and mean. The first member of the middle class we meet in the Emmeline is the
vulgar and presumptuous steward at Mowbray Castle, Mr. Maloney. Although he is insensible of
“the charms of the elegant and self-cultivated mind of Emmeline,” he admires her beauty, but
this is not her main attraction. An ambitious upstart, he has come to the conclusion that marrying
the niece of the owner would be advantageous (E 54-55); he pursues Emmeline who is disgusted
with his “officious freedoms” and “impertinent familiarity” (E 52). Despite his admiration for
Emmeline, and as a confirmation of his lack of taste and moral qualities, Mr. Maloney finds it
worth his while to flirt with the castle’s vulgar new house-keeper, Mrs. Garnet, whom the
narrator describes as “dirty, tawdry and disgusting” (E 53). Mr. Maloney, however, does not see
her this way, and his reaction betrays his own vulgarity and obsession with material things: He
exclaims to Emmeline: “Pray, how d’ye like our new housekeeper? A smartish piece of goods
upon my word for Pembrokeshire; quite a London lady, eh, Miss” (E 54). Maloney is also shown
to be scheming and dishonest when he words his proposal to Lord Montreville so that his
lordship believes that Emmeline has encouraged Mr. Maloney’s suit (E 62).

Emmeline’s next middle-class admirer is equally unappealing. Mr. Rochely, a rich
banker, is nearer fifty than forty. His person is heavy, badly proportioned, and matches his face,
which is “dull and ill-formed.” His voice is monotonous and guttural and “fatiguing to the ear,”
and his uncouth manners, as well as his odd figure, often “excited a degree of ridicule, which the
respect his riches demanded could not always stifle” (E 110). Despite his unattractive looks, Mr. Rochely is eager to be a favorite with the ladies, and he is so fastidious that he has never been able to find a wife who is good enough for him. He is also said to be a frequenter of prostitutes (E 110). Another reason Mr. Rochely has never taken a wife is his stinginess; the narrator notes that the Roman god of money, Plutus, “had, with very little interruption, reigned despotically over all his thoughts and actions for many years” (E 128). After love wins the battle with avarice, and he decides to propose to Emmeline, his letter is indicative of his obsession with money. After briefly stating that he likes Emmeline “well enough to marry her,” the rest of the letter is devoted to a description of his own wealth and thoughts on marriage settlements (E 128). Later, Mr. Rochely proves his avarice when he denies Emmeline’s friend Mrs. Stafford a loan that would enable her family to return to England (E 419), and the dangerous tendencies of his greed are shown when Rochely is not ashamed, in his “sordid meanness of spirit,” to solicit Emmeline’s business once he has found out that she is an heiress. By doing so, he inadvertently becomes the reason Emmeline is not able to stop Delamere from engaging in a fist fight that results in the deadly duel with de Bellozane (E 466).

Even more ridiculous than Mr. Rochely is Mr. Elkerton. A wealthy merchant, he is affected in the extreme, and his speech betrays both his silliness and his desire to appear well connected and traveled. He rattles on about his riches and his travels to the Continent, sprinkles foreign words into his speeches, and tries to convince everyone he meets that he is acquainted with anyone who is important:

Elkerton, still full of himself, engrossed almost all the conversation; gave detail of the purchases he had made abroad, and the trouble he had to land them; interspersed with bon mots of French Marquises and German Barons, and witty
Elkerton’s appearance is so silly that Delamere when he sees his “very odd figure and baboonish face” takes him for “a dancing master or a quack doctor” (E 118). When Elkerton learns that Emmeline is related to the Montrevilles, he claims in ridiculously affected language to be their intimate acquaintance: “I was domesticated, absolutely domesticated, among them” (E 115). The truth is that he was barely known to them and “slightly noticed as an Englishman of fortune; smiled at for his affectation of company and manners, which seemed so foreign to his original line of life; and then forgotten” (E 118). Despite the cold treatment he meets with from Delamere, he uses the meeting as an opportunity to later brag about his visit, claiming that the two had spent time reminiscing about their time together in Italy and that Delamere had invited him as a personal friend to visit his father’s estate (E 122).

When Elkerton first meets Emmeline, she gets to feel his bad manners, as he rudely inspects her from top to toe and is so impertinent in his admiration that he brings her to tears (E 113). His ridiculous appearance and actions makes the narrator compare him to Molière’s “Bourgeois Gentilhomme” (E 198), and the narrator points out that as such he is the laughing stock of those who pretend to be his friends (E 198). Real friends he does not appear to have. Like Mr. Rochely, who also at first appears to be merely ridiculous and pathetic, Mr. Elkerton turns out be potentially harmful. Piqued by Delamere’s coldness and Emmeline’s disdain, as well as being an eager gossip, Mr. Elkerton’s becomes a threat to Emmeline’s reputation as he more or less stalks and accosts Delamere to find out whom he is traveling with on his way to Scotland (E 190-191). Furthermore, his exaggerated newspaper account of his duel with Delamere is the...
direct reason Delamere has to leave Emmeline for the Continent, as the report of his death almost
kills Lady Montreville, and the scare makes Delamere give in to his parents’ emotional
blackmail, and he consents to leave the country for a year (E 207). Thus, Elkerton joins the cast
of middle-class men in Emmeline whose greed for money and social recognition become an
annoyance to Emmeline, and by extension, to polite and respectable society at large.

In Desmond as in Emmeline it is not only attorneys that are singled out as deeply flawed
among the middle class. Desmond scathingly describes the reprehensible behavior and lack of
compassion, sense and manners of the retired tavern owner and divine whom he meets in
Margate. The Doctor of Divinity cuts a ridiculous figure with his enormous wig over a peony-
colored face, his consequential manner, as well as his inability to argue for his political views. It
is clear that, like the abbot Desmond later meets in France, the Doctor’s only concern about the
Revolution is for the loss of the riches and privileges of the clergy. His companion, the tavern
owner aptly named Mr. Sidebottom, is equally fat and bloated and distinguishes himself by
loudly calling out his wish that the French revolutionaries may cut each others’ throats, since he
detest the French. The two agree that the Revolution in France is an atrocity, but, as Desmond
mockingly describes to Bethel, it is only when conversing upon the pleasures of the table that the
two truly bond. Their conversation on the pleasures of turtle soup and venison is harshly
juxtaposed with their cruel treatment of a poor woman who asks for money to take her children
home to France. The slave-owning former publican ignores her completely while the minister
throws her a measly six-pence and a humbling lecture, concluding that she has no right to disturb
and disgust the rich people who come to Margate with the sight of her misfortunes (D 83). The
two perfectly illustrate Smith’s message that the middle-class ethos based upon the acquisition of
money and social status has produced a “swinish” multitude of men devoid of compassion and
taste and filled with greed, hypocrisy, and egotism.

III

To find a male figure that is not consumed by marring vices, Smith, like Burney,
displaying an attitude that can hardly be called radical, turns to the class of her own family, the
land-owning gentry. In doing so, she utilizes many of the conventions of sensibility. Whereas
A.A. Markley states that most radicals, like Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams,
targeted the sentimentalist’s potential for irresponsible and antisocial behavior, in her biography
Lorraine Fletcher calls sensibility Smith’s “only enduring value” (A Literary Biography 122),
and, in accordance with the tenets of sensibility, the male heroes in both Desmond and Emmeline
are men of feeling and poetic tastes who find solace in nature. Moreover, in the case of both,
Rousseau’s sentimental protagonist in Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse, St. Preux, is alluded to in
laudatory terms. Godolphin is connected with St. Preux when Emmeline walks on the shore of
Lake Geneva thinking lovingly about him, and, according to Fletcher, the moment he appears in
person, stepping out of a boat, marks the beginning of the plot’s resolution (“Introduction” 27).
Desmond, on the other hand, quotes St. Preux’s words that the world can be divided into only
two parts: where Julie is and where she isn’t. He also calls Rousseau’s great work of sensibility
the “inchanting [sic] letters” (D 252), and both Nicola J. Watson (35) and A.A. Markley (26)
point out that the plot of Desmond as a whole is a reworking of Julie.

In Nancy Armstrong’s model of the domestic novel, the woman relinquishes economic
and worldly power in exchange for moral and emotional authority (38, 42). This is also the case
with Smith’s male protagonists, who, aligning themselves with traditionally feminine values,
eschew the political power and wealth pursued by the middle-class characters. Instead, as a by-product of their sensibility, they are possessed of superior moral qualities. This “feminized sensibility” (Miller 342) and “androgyny” (Rosenblum 50) positions them as belonging to the tradition of the novel of sensibility. Gerald Barker-Benfield points out in The Culture of Sensibility, “Men admired in sentimental fiction were those who chose the kind of space women inhabited” (222). Here Smith also draws on the prevailing moral philosophy, the sentimental ethics basing morality on emotional responses rather than rational decisions that is advocated most clearly in Adam Smith’s The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759). However, unlike many sentimental heroes, like Mackenzie’s Harley, Goethe’s Werther, and, as we will see in the next chapter, Jervis’s Hammond, Charlotte Smith’s male protagonists are very much at home in the world. Unlike the man of pure feeling who was often deemed effeminate (Stafford, “Gentlemanly Masculinities” 57) and, according to Adam Smith, “unfit for the world” (40), Charlotte Smith’s heroes show with their valor and sound judgment that they are indeed manly. Unlike many of the protagonists in the sentimental novels who are, because of their sensibility, oppressed and victimized (C. Jones 72, Markley 26), Charlotte Smith’s male representatives of the gentry are, like Camilla’s Edgar, able to successfully improve their world through acts of courage, sense, and active benevolence.

Although as the son of a nobleman, Emmeline’s Godolphin technically belongs to the aristocracy, he was not brought up in the usual splendor of the upper classes because his father, having married a destitute Swiss lady of rank against his father’s will, was disinherited of everything but what had been entailed upon him (E 216). Instead of being coddled like the young lord-to-be Delamere, then, Godolphin and his siblings were brought up away from London and with the expectation of having to make their own way in the army or the navy (E 216-217).
Godolphin chose the navy as his profession and has, as a result, passed most of his adolescent and adult life at sea. He is continually praised for his “excellent heart and noble spirit” (E 269) and the narrator states that “his whole figure was such as brought to the mind the ideas of the race of the heroes from which he had descended” (E 269).

Godolphin’s most striking features are his softness and his affectionate heart. In a sailor such sensibility might seem a paradox, but Smith declares that the two are not mutually exclusive, saying that Godolphin “possessed all that tenderness that distinguishes the truly brave” (E 277). He loves his sister “with more than a brother’s fondness” (E 271), and he has obtained a leave from his profession to search for her until he finds her. The sight of her makes him sob, showing us that he dares to openly show his feelings and appear vulnerable, and he instantly promises to forgo seeking revenge against Fitz-Erward (E 276), making Diane Long Hoeveler comment that

Godolphin becomes worthy to be the hero of this text when he eschews "masculine" codes of conduct--epitomized in that very deadly masculine pastime of dueling--and empathizes instead with the "feminine" fates of his sister and Emmeline. Godolphin becomes a hero when he too feels his sister's disgrace so intensely that he sheds tears over her sexual downfall, and thereby proves that he is as "civilized" as the women who surround him. (42)

Godolphin’s tenderness is shown again when he is reunited with his brother after four years (E 358) and when he sees Lord Montreville with his dead son (E 472). On these occasions, he is not afraid to shed tears in front of others. Moreover, it is Godolphin’s “soothing pity” that restores Lady Adelina’s health (E 277), and the narrator informs us that Godolphin possesses “a softness of heart, which the helpless innocence of the infant and the repentant sorrow of the mother,
melted into more than feminine tenderness” (*E* 299). It is his “softness of manners,” “generosity of heart,” and kindness to his sister that win Emmeline’s esteem (*E* 282). Godolphin is also as anxious to not hurt anyone’s feelings as he is to soothe those of his sister or anyone else who is suffering, so when he accidentally makes Emmeline cry by mentioning Delamere, he is highly distressed (*E* 308).

In accordance with the depiction of Godolphin as a man of sensibility, Godolphin, like Rousseau in his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (Todd, *Sensibility* 15), seeks nature for purity and mental harmony. According to Stuart Curran, Smith’s construction of nature as an antidote to the alienating forces of “repressive social codes” marks her as a Romantic (77), and her gentry heroes show their sensitivity in their appreciation for nature. Godolphin is, moreover, the only one in the novel who shares Emmeline’s delight in natural beauty, and Emmeline reflects while in Switzerland that she knows no one except Godolphin who “taste and enthusiasm enough” to enjoy it as she does (*E* 330). Accordingly, after his marriage, he and Emmeline do not go on a wedding tour to fashionable watering places of the Continent but enjoy the natural beauty of their modest home on the Isle of Wight before moving on to remote Mowbray Castle in Wales (*E* 476). Godolphin is, moreover, like Smith, a poet, and he writes sonnets about Emmeline when he thinks his love for her is hopeless (*E* 314-315, 385). Notably, it is not her beauty or fine words that attract him, but her inner qualities: her “dignity of soul,” generosity, understanding, temper that is both soft and vivacious, pure morals, and graceful, yet simple manners (*E* 300).

As in a number of eighteenth and nineteenth-century novels from Grandison Hall in Richardson’s *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* to Pemberley and Donwell Abbey in Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, the hero’s house mirrors his personality: It is situated
in a rough spot right by the cliffs and the rough waters, but is surrounded by woods that prevent it from seeming bleak. Emmeline is charmed with the greenery, and, like Godolphin himself, the garden is both useful and pleasant. The landscape is like that of Wales where Emmeline grew up, and the similarity not only shows that Godolphin and Emmeline are destined for each other, but that he is, like her, closely aligned with nature, as is shown in their shared frankness and love of simple pleasures rather than the dissipation of society. Inspecting Godolphin’s home, the first thing Emmeline sees of the interior is a warming fire (E 295). The house itself is unpretentious but cozy, and Emmeline notes that in its cheerfulness and elegance it “bore testimony of the taste and temper of its owner” (E 302).

Like Godolphin, Desmond is untitled “with hardly a remote alliance to nobility” (D 68); his ancestors are “plain country gentlemen” (D 136), but unlike Godolphin Desmond is in possession of a solid inheritance. He has, however, been raised in the country by Bethel who detests fashionable circles and dissipation, and has, therefore, not been tainted by the usual vices of young, rich men. As opposed to ostentatious upstarts like Stamford and Sir Richard, Desmond prefers one of his smaller estates for its natural beauty and the happy memories he cherishes from there (D 294) to the more splendid one that most rich men would choose as their main residence. Additionally, Desmond is, like Godolphin, strikingly emotional and not afraid to show it. Bethel describes him as having an “ardent imagination” (D 54), and Desmond’s first letter opens on an emotional note as he describes “the anguish” he feels in thinking about Geraldine (D 48). When Geraldine bids him adieu and gives him her hand, he is so overcome with emotion that he trembles, unable to kiss it or speak (D 51), and he regards his love for her as so holy that it would be “profaned” by speaking about it (D 134). While he is tormented by the thought of Geraldine and deplores his hopeless passion for her, he also cherishes it, saying that this
affection makes him a better person and his life richer (D 109), and that even though his love might be hopeless, living for a beloved object is still a source of delight far superior to what any worldly pursuit could provide (D 362-363). Desmond is, furthermore, again like Godolphin, not afraid to show his feelings. When he hears Josephine tell her sad story and is reminded of Geraldine ‘his tears flow with hers” (D 153). Geraldine praises his “manly tenderness” and “generous sensibility” (D 160), and it is his sympathy for Josephine’s distress and sorrow that makes him vulnerable to her advances (D 153).

Desmond’s emotional nature makes him noticeably different from other affluent young men in his circle, and he defends the right to live by the dictates of the heart even if doing so incurs the censure of the world (D 374). He concedes that he is a dreamer, much like a man said to have died of love for a picture, and that he is unlike most men who would, if disappointed in love, find contentment in other plans and pursuits, by saying that to him the loss of his “fair idea” makes everything else a blank (D 362-363). Bethel calls him strange and eccentric, unlike any other (D 249), and accuses him of playing the role of “an English Werter” (D 299). When Desmond receives a letter from Geraldine, he trembles with happiness, his heart palpitating, and reading the letter over and over again, he kisses her handwriting, and reveres the letter like a treasure (D 86), admitting that Bethel will probably call his behavior “boyish and romantic folly” (D 86). He makes the same concession when he lingers in Geraldine’s neighborhood in Wales, unable to tear himself away, but completely content to stare at Geraldine’s cottage from afar, feeling immense pleasure from knowing that she is within sight (D 253). Even after Verney’s death, Desmond is content as long as he can be silently in the same room as Geraldine (D 410), making Montfleuri call Desmond’s love “sublime” even compared to his own love for Fanny (D 410). However, Desmond’s feelings are also strong enough to startle Geraldine with his
“vehement and restless temper” after she has become a widow (D 413). Desmond himself is ecstatic now that his hope of “living in that tender confidence of mutual affection” with his beloved and his friends is about to be realized and calls on his friend to soothe “his agitated heart” as he patiently waits for Geraldine to become his (D 414).

Desmond’s sensibility is considerable enough to sometimes take a toll on his mental and physical well-being. For instance, when he receives worrisome news about Geraldine, he is so visibly upset that his friend Montfleuri takes notice of his “extreme dejection,” and he is so “restless and wretched” that he suffers a fever (D 152). Similarly, after he hears about the execution in the Verneys’ house, his health, already injured by the duel, becomes worse (D 167). His depressed state of mind after his affair with Josephine and fears for Geraldine makes him look pale and emaciated and without his former look of “health and vivacity” (D 246). After he has had his affair with Josephine, Desmond is racked by remorse, writing to Bethel that he “was never quite so wretched as I am at this moment” (D 181) and that it gives him “inexpressible pain” that he deserves fully (D 201). Geraldine notices with concern his change “in appearance and in spirits” (D 248) and later describes his appearance as “restlessly wretched” (D 336). He looks ill enough that he can easily make the people at the inn near Geraldine’s abode in Herefordshire believe that he has sought the area to recuperate from illness (D 251).

Desmond’s softness of heart is further shown in his love for children. He is always enquiring about Bethel’s children and dotes on Geraldine’s three children, as well. When one of Geraldine’s children hugs him, he exclaims: “What delight! To press to my heart this lovely fellow” continuing that he was so charmed to see the children that he forgot his precautions and to pretend to the children’s nurse that he was a stranger (D 254). Montfleuri, too, remarks on Desmond’s love for the children and how he affectionately embraces them (410). The children,
too, sense his genuine affection for them, and are, according to their mother, “astonishingly fond of him.” She also describes how he plays with the children and puts them on his knee, and they laugh with delight (D 257). Desmond’s heart-felt delight in the children is clearly contrasted with Verney’s utter lack of affection; he calls them “brats” (D 172) and wishes Geraldine to dispose of them, as they would be an encumbrance, when she is to join him in France (D 259).

Another noteworthy sign of his sensibility is the love for nature and poetry Desmond shares with Godolphin. Although the verse-making in this novel is left to Geraldine, Desmond quotes poetry on several occasions, and he seems to have a preference for sentimental poets like Goldsmith (D 100), Hammond (D 110), Gray (D 132), Petrarch and Thomson (D 207, 211), but he also quotes Shakespeare (D 202, 207, 363). Like Godolphin, Desmond loves beauty in nature: Geraldine admires his “taste and genuine enthusiasm” when encountering beauty in nature (D 243). For Desmond admiring nature provides occasion for philosophical reflections: While watching an approaching storm in Normandy, Desmond reflects upon the insignificance of human worries and cares and the need to cherish the real values in life (D 129-130). He also enjoys solitary rambles where he can indulge his “mournful contemplations (D 212), since he finds that attempting to conceal his romantic nature and mournful thoughts is painful and that he would, therefore, rather be alone (D 212). He describes the natural beauty of the Montfleuri estate with enthusiasm (D 113), and he asks Montfleuri to not tear down a convent he has bought in order to preserve its “picturesque” beauty. He also regrets that Montfleuri has cut down the beautiful old trees on his estate in order to make it more practical (D 113). This makes Fletcher note that Desmond prioritizes the sentimentalist’s liking for the picturesque as opposed to the brave, forward-looking style of the true revolutionary (A Literary Biography 150).
Although Desmond admires beauty in nature, his sensitive nature ensures that it is much more than beauty that attracts him to Geraldine. Being what Bethel calls “too fastidious for reasonable happiness” (D 120), Desmond admires Geraldine not merely for her beauty which he says “made no immediate or deep impression” (D 295) but for her qualities of mind: her “mild grace,” and the “tenderness of her manner” as well as the “strength and clearness of her understanding” (D 48), pure mind (D 295), love for her children (D 377), and fortitude in suffering (D 379). The fact that she shares his taste for the domestic life, art, scenery, and reading convinces him that she is the ideal woman (D 296), and his love for her is of a spiritual character that makes him abhor the idea of attempting to seduce her (D 378). His reverence also makes him relatively content when he can observe her from afar and knowing that she is safe and healthy, and he quotes the French moralist La Bruyère in saying that as long as he can be near the person he loves, nothing else matters (D 381). After Verney’s death Geraldine’s generous behavior towards her mother and Miss Elford and the tenderness she bestows equally on her own children and Desmond’s baby girl endears her even more strongly to Desmond (D 413).

The generosity that Desmond admires in Geraldine is easily matched by Desmond’s own strong feelings of benevolence and care for others. Curran sees Desmond’s relationship with Josephine as an example of sexual exploitation (70), a charge I think is easily dismissed not only by the stress Smith puts on Desmond’s generosity and willingness to sacrifice his own property and convenience for the well-being of others, but also by the fact that Smith named him after her son, Lionel. Guided by what Bethel called “quixotism” (D 120), and Woodworth identifies as chivalry (90), but which can just as easily be identified as the adherence to the ideas of sympathy and benevolence posited by sentimental philosophers like Shaftesbury, Hume, and Adam Smith (Todd, Sensibility 26-27), Desmond’s main goal in life, as long as he thinks Geraldine lost to
him, is to make her lot easier. Desmond does this, however, while attempting to avoid burdening Geraldine with his feelings for her. Unlike Colonel Scarsdale who openly attempts to seduce her and showers her with extravagant compliments, Desmond wishes to disguise his love from Geraldine as to not distress her, and he states: “I would not obtain all the happiness imagination can conceive, at the expense of giving her heart one reproachful pang” (D 294). Although he feels nothing but disgust for Verney, he would not try to prejudice Geraldine against her husband, as this would be dishonorable (D 295). Desmond is also careful to not show his love to others, as he would not want to risk Geraldine’s reputation (D 296). As a result, he is wretched when he learns that his visit to Geraldine’s neighborhood in Wales has been noticed and caused gossip (D 293).

Desmond spares no effort or expense in attempting to secure Geraldine’s and her children’s mental and physical well-being, and it is clear that doing so is not a rational decision, but an obedience to the dictates of his heart. In this, Desmond again adheres to Adam Smith’s description of sympathy as feelings that are outside of our control, but rather a response that comes powerfully upon us, a sort of instinctual reaction (3). Accordingly, shortly after he has almost lost his life in a duel on behalf of her brother, Desmond secretly pays five thousand pounds to Verney’s creditors in order to spare Geraldine the pain of being evicted from her home (D 167). When he hears about Geraldine’s distress after her husband’s economic collapse, he immediately, despite saying that he would rather at the time have gone to “Nova Scotia or even to Nova Zembla, than to England,” sets out for Herefordshire in order to keep watch over her and her children (D 250), an act which makes Geraldine exclaim to her sister that his friendship, kindness, and “consolations of reason and good sense” is a treasure to her (D 258). Unable, since he is not related to her, to assist her in resisting the Duke de Romagnecourt, Desmond secretly
discharges her debts and discreetly accompanies her towards Bath (D 282). Later when Geraldine is forced to go to France, he follows her there disguised as a monk to watch over her (D 378). Like Godolphin, Desmond also behaves generously to his rival. Although he strongly resents Verney for his behavior to his wife, he secures him medical assistance and watches over him day and night after he is injured (D 404-405). After Verney’s death Desmond also makes sure that Verney’s affairs are settled by negotiating with Verney’s main creditor, Colonel Scarsdale, so that the economic future of Geraldine’s children is secure. The tenderness he treats Geraldine with after she has become a widow is in strong contrast to Verney’s rude behavior towards his wife. Whereas Verney treated her with contempt and neglected her, Desmond is patient and tranquil, and when Geraldine seems tired or pale he anxiously fusses around her (D 413).

As a way to lessen Geraldine’s worries, despite admitting to Bethel that doing so would be a chore rather than a pleasure (D 51), Desmond takes her mindless brother, Waverly, under his wings by offering to let him accompany him in France (D 49). Desmond suffers several inconveniences from his promise. First his journey is delayed by a week while waiting for Waverly to make up his mind about going (D 68), and later Desmond almost loses his life having to fight a duel to extricate Waverly from a marriage to a fraudster (D 165). When Waverly sends his servant to tell him that he will not go to France, Desmond, despite his irritation at being stood up, sees to it that the servant gets food and lodgings at his expense (D 77). He also, despite having waited in vain for Waverly for a week, treats him with kindness and consideration when he finally shows up (D 85-86).

Despite his romantic nature, and in contrast to many other protagonists of the novel of sensibility who, because of their lack of savvy are marked for victimization (C. Jones 72),
Desmond is shown to be in possession of both good sense and courage, providing him with what Joshua Essaka calls a dual identity of feeling and reason (288). He repeatedly shows himself as the superior in discussions with political adversaries. Both the able Count d’Hauteville and the less intelligent Lord Newminster, Lord Fordingbridge, and Mr. Cranbourne are soundly defeated by Desmond’s skillful use of history, science, logic and philosophy. Desmond adroitly quotes philosophers like Voltaire (D 139), Bacon, and Locke (D 361) when discussing politics, and his rhetorical defeat of a slave-owning MP who claims that his slaves do not at all mind a flogging is brilliant (D 342). Desmond is, furthermore, a man of action; not only is he able to catch Geraldine once when she falls as she is descending a mountain and once as her carriage crashes into the moat of Chateau d’Hauteville (D 392), but he has the courage to fight a duel to defend her brother, and when Geraldine is summoned to her wounded husband, he immediately follows her in order to help keep her safe (D 370). However, Desmond does not plunge heedlessly into these adventures, so when Geraldine sets out, Desmond, realizing the dangers ahead, is smart enough to secure the company of four armed servants as he sets out in pursuit of her (D 383). The men and the weapons come in handy as Desmond and his troupe fearlessly come to the rescue of Geraldine as she is more or less held hostage by robbers at an inn (D 387-388) before confronting and vanquishing the rest of the bandits who have occupied Chateau d’Hauteville (D 399).

Godolphin is Desmond’s equal in generosity, honor, and courage. After her delivery, he takes Lady Adelina under his wings as he moves her into his house and, in order to protect her reputation, claims that her son is his own illegitimate child (E 278). His generosity restores her health and sanity:
His goodness made all her consolation and his conversation all her pleasure; where he dedicated to her all his time, and thought of procuring for her every alleviation to her retirement which books and domestic amusements afforded. While he taught her still to respect herself; and by his unwearied friendship convincing her that he had still much to lose, made her life receive in her own eyes a value it would otherwise have lost. (E 275-276)

Lady Adelina confirms this by saying that he has never let an unkind word escape him in reference to her misconduct, and that he is always ready to focus on her good despite his own melancholy over Emmeline (E 297).

Just as Desmond attempts to conceal his love for Geraldine, Godolphin also, while he thinks Emmeline attached to Delamere, decides to never disturb her peace, as he considers it “a weakness, if not a crime” (E 379) to do so by confessing his own love for her: “He determined to never disturb the peace of its object. But rather to suffer in silence, than to give pain to a heart so generous and sensible as hers, merely for the melancholy pleasure of knowing that she pitied him” (E 281). This self-control, as opposed to Delamere’s romantic ravings and lack of restraint as he attempts to bully Emmeline into becoming his wife, is what makes Godolphin an ideal mate for the heroine of the novel. Instead of persecuting her as Delamere does, Godolphin decides to avoid her, so that she will not have to be burdened with the knowledge that he loves her (E 295). For this reason he denies himself the pleasure of joining her when she walks around the cliffs surrounding his house although he knows that he might not see her again for a very long time (E 302). Even when surprised by Emmeline’s indication that she cares for him, he is able to control his emotions and leaves the room rather than burden her with his feelings for her (E 303), as he considers any attempt to win her from Delamere to be dishonorable (E 306).
Nonetheless, he offers to escort Emmeline safely from France to England although he is at the
time convinced of her attachment to Delamere, and, as a result, knows that her company will
cause him mostly pain (E 378).

Unlike Delamere, who is intensely jealous and seeks to kill his imagined rival, Fitz-
Edward, Godolphin envies his rival without hating him (E 306), so he accepts Delamere’s
friendship when they meet in Ireland (E 316) and even goes as far as to travel from Ireland to
England in the hope of stopping Delamere from dueling with Fitz-Edward by telling Delamere
the truth about Emmeline (E 364). He then superintends the care of the sick Delamere in France,
watching over him all night when necessary, and travels on his behalf to Switzerland to alert
Delamere’s sister and Emmeline (E 366). Unconscious that he is doing anything unusual, he
claims that it is something he would have done for any human in need (E 387). Later,
Godolphin’s generosity of spirit makes him search all night for Delamere after his fight with de
Bellozane, and although he arrives too late to stop the duel, he makes sure Delamere is taken
care of by skilled physicians and comforts Delamere as he dies from his wound (E 470). His
compassion also induces him to forgive Fitz-Edward for seducing his sister when he sees Fitz-
Edward’s repentance and sorrow (E 446).

Godolphin’s kindness not only makes him a support for his sister and for Emmeline, but
in addition he attempts to help Mrs. Stafford by helping her arrange her crossing over the
Channel and accompanies her, Emmeline, and the children to France to see them safely on shore
in France (E 304). When they are landed in France, he also makes every effort to make their
journey on land safe (E 307), and Godolphin is the one who in the end manages to restore Mrs.
Stafford to her home, Westfield (E 476). Moreover, his generosity impels him to help the
destitute wife of one of his sailors, whom he has already gotten out of debtors’ prison travel from
France to England where she can be reunited with her husband (E 393-394), and after the two are back together in London, Godolphin supports them until he can find the man a job (E 395). This kind act to a stranger and a foreigner is later repeated by Desmond. When he meets a destitute French widow, Desmond immediately, after kindly enquiring about her story, pays for her and her children’s passage to France, so that she can get home to her country and family (D 85), and makes sure she is settled and provided for before he travels on (D 91).

Not only is Godolphin both sensitive and generous, Mrs. Stafford also notes that his “morals, manners, and temper” were “equally unexceptionable” (E 306). He is said to have “one of the best tempers in the word” and is usually not annoyed by trifles and accidents that would annoy others. Furthermore, he is in possession of the highest courage and sense of honor which makes the narrator compare him to the French hero Bayard (E 271). His sense of honor is strict, so when Lady Adelina’s estranged husband dies, he is at once determined that Lady Adelina relinquish any claims to the Trelawny estate (E 282), and when he finds out that Emmeline’s reputation has been injured by assisting in concealing his sister’s pregnancy, he decides that “whatever it cost him,” he has to tell Delamere the truth even though he is convinced that this will also lead to a reconciliation between Emmeline and Delamere (E 318). However, as eager as he is to clear Emmeline’s name, he is careful to do it in a manner that will allow the truth about his sister to still be concealed from the rest of the family (E 319). Despite his general kindness and generosity, Godolphin does not hesitate to speak his mind if he sees someone acting wrongly, so when he learns that one of his sailors has engaged in smuggling and wasted all his prize money in France, he reproves him “severely” before offering him money to get back to England (E 391), and he waxes indignant when he thinks about rich Englishmen trifling away
money while refusing to help a sailor, imprisoned for a small debt, who has dared his life for their country (E 392).

Godolphin is not only a man of integrity but also of bravery. He faces the dangers of his profession without fear (E 303). His sense of honor also makes him proud to give his life for his country should it be necessary (E 303), and the fact that he chooses to pursue his career in the navy although he has enough money to retire upon is further confirmation of his moral worth. He says that leaving his work would be to “waste in torpid idleness, or trifling dissipation time that may be usefully employed” (E 303). Since money is not an object for him, when Godolphin finds out that Emmeline is the rightful heir to Mowbray Castle, he is only pleased, as he reflects that the status and money might provide Emmeline with independence, and the narrator points out that Godolphin himself would have married her “from the obscurest indigence” (E 367). The last sentence of the novel ends with Godolphin’s praise as it describes him as “the tenderest of husbands, the best, the most generous, and most amiable of men” (E 476).

As we can see, Smith’s heroes of the gentry, Desmond and Godolphin, combine what Joseph Rosenblum describes as a proper measure of both sentiment and reason (46), and this idealization of a part of the English upper-class is at odds with Desmond’s radical political statements which have been the basis of much of Smith’s reputation as a radical. Whereas there is no doubt that Smith, at least temporarily, was an enthusiastic proponent of the fundamental beliefs of the early French Revolution, my analysis of the male protagonists in Smith’s earlier work Emmeline as well as in Desmond show that her radicalism is always tempered by a more conservative ideology that, like Burney’s, privileges the English gentry as the bearers of her ethos of a morality based on emotion and generosity. This benevolent sensibility is contrasted with the snobbery and lack of restraint shown by the titled aristocracy and the egotism and
shallow materialism of her middle-class characters, which make them as unsuitable as partners for the heroines of the two novels as it makes them unfit to rule England. The suggestion, then, is that for England to support either the doctrines of the *ancien régime* of France or try to imitate its middle-class rule after the Revolution would be equally improper. Whereas in *Emmeline* this train of thought is in line with the rest of the novel’s politics, in *Desmond* it becomes evident that these ideas construct what Pierre Macherey in *A Theory of Literary Production* calls the work’s “latent” meaning (87), since they contradict both her protagonist’s avowed political views, as well as those proclaimed by the author in her Preface and by most of Smith’s critics both in her own lifetime and today.
Chapter 3:

Agatha: An Unusual Anti-Jacobin Celebration of Sensibility and “The Man of Feeling”

I

By the time Smith wrote her novels, the concept of sensibility had developed from a neutral neurological term to a hotly contested idea, defended and repudiated on political grounds. As opposed to Charlotte Smith, who depicts male heroes who possess just the right amount of sensibility, the counterrevolutionary writers of the mid-1790’s were often deeply suspicious and critical of sensibility. According to M.O. Grenby’s groundbreaking study The Anti-Jacobin Novel, sensibility was often viewed by the anti-Jacobin writers as a Jacobin trait because like the “new philosophy” of liberty, equality and brotherhood, it was seen as an affectation that found misery where it did not exist (227). The anti-Jacobins also saw sensibility as a threat, since a reliance on feelings, it was thought, could easily seduce young minds into disobeying figures of authority and neglecting their duty.

In A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly, for instance, Burke accuses Rousseau and his devotees of deliberately using the tenets of sensibility to destroy social and family relationships and thereby paving the way for the French Revolutionaries (42-43). Burke, paradoxically, creates a Gothic romance steeped in sensibility, however, as he describes what happened at Versailles in October of 1789 in Reflections on the Revolution in France. Burke’s emotional descriptions of the French Queen, startled from her “melancholy repose” (103) and nakedly flying her murderous persecutors, his dismay over the fact that “ten thousand swords” were not unsheathed to defend the queen (110), and his dolorous ejaculation, “The age of chivalry is gone!” (111) use all the tropes of sensibility. As noted in chapter one, Burke’s
excessive emotion provoked the ridicule of Mary Wollstonecraft. The latter could be
tremendously into the cult of sensibility in texts like Maria, but in A Vindication of the Rights of
Man she criticizes and almost satirizes as unmanly Burke’s lapsing into the language of
sensibility (54). So, as we can see, in 1790 the attitudes towards sensibility were less clear-cut
than later on in the decade.

As I argued in my introduction as well as the previous chapter, sensibility was not only
frequently seen as a threat to the monarchy but also to masculinity. Chris Jones states that
sensibility came to be seen as unmanly because although the followers of sensibility were
generously shedding tears over dead birds and mistreated donkeys, they tended to neglect their
social obligations. Jones quotes Adam Smith who warns that the man of sensibility is inevitably
marked for victimization (72), and A.A. Markley describes the sentimental heroes of Sterne and
Mackenzie as weak and “emotionally crippled” by their inability to handle the force of their
feelings. This overdeveloped sensibility lead to “irresponsible and antisocial behavior” (26).
However, the novel I will discuss in this chapter, Agatha, or a Narrative of Recent Events, by
Elizabeth Jervis, is remarkable because it reconciles an anti-Jacobin, anti-Revolutionary political
world view with a celebration of sensibility. For instance, the novel’s very first page claims that
sensibility is a gift from heaven that allows us to “be alive to religion, pity, charity, and
friendship,” and when “directed by reason into its proper channel, [sensibility] is our richest
ornament … and makes us happy” (I, 1). In this little known novel, both the protagonist, Agatha,
and the main male character, Hammond, think and act according to the values of sensibility, but,
as opposed to the fear of most conservatives, the two are able to reconcile their sentiments and
passions with a strong sense of duty and deference to authority. Although Hammond has much in
common with iconic sentimental heroes such as Yorick and Harley, he is, nonetheless, able to
follow the saintly Agatha’s example and harness his strong emotions to fulfill his religious and social obligations. To further idealize Hammond, the novel also presents several models of failed masculinity, ranging from the overly emotional and, as a result, utterly irrational Mr. Ormistace to the “booby squire” Sir John, who is completely devoid of any feeling.

Agatha was for a long time listed with an unknown author until the British graduate student John Goss, doing archival research for his thesis on Robert Bage, found that the novel’s author was Elizabeth Jervis, later known under her married name, Elizabeth Pipe-Wolferstan (Goss iii). Jervis published the novel in 1796, the same year she married Samuel Pipe-Wolferstan, a Leicestershire lawyer and anti-slavery campaigner (Goss v), but the novel received mostly negative reviews in the press. The novel, although called “very entertaining and instructive” (185) by The European Magazine and The London Review, was either ignored by most critics or condemned. The English Review calls the plot “highly improbable and forced” (483), and The Analytical Review describes the principles avowed as “weak and criminal” (602) and its political observations “trite and superficial” (603). Although Jervis’s father was a proud supporter of her writing, her soon-to-be husband did not like the novel. As a result, and perhaps because she married and became the stepmother of two children, Jervis never published another novel (Goss vi). She did, however, continue to write poetry as well as a text on the education of young children, and University of California at Davis’s collection of women poets contain several poems published after her husband’s death in 1820.

The plot of Jervis’s one and only novel centers on Agatha Belmont, who, like Burney’s Evelina, whose last name she shares, is a young, beautiful, but very sheltered heiress. In her parents’ absence Agatha is introduced to society and to the perfect mate, a young, eligible man by the name of Hammond. The two fall in love, but upon Agatha’s parents’ return, they are
separated, and Agatha learns that because of a vow given by Agatha’s Roman-Catholic mother at her own mother’s death bed, Agatha is destined to become a nun. After a hard struggle with her emotions, Agatha takes the veil in a French convent and experiences two years of relative happiness and contentment in the nunnery. The French Revolution’s abolition of convents and monasteries in February 1790 (Doyle 137), however, forces her to fly for England, and in one of the novel’s several unlikely coincidences, Agatha runs into Hammond who has come to search for her and bring her safely back to England. After several adventures, mostly caused by encounters with cruel Revolutionaries and a renewal of her and Hammond’s love, Agatha, now back in England, decides to abide by her religious vows and the wishes of her parents, who have been killed in France, again putting duty over her love for Hammond. Hammond, who marries at Agatha’s behest, and his wife both die right after parenting twins, and Agatha adopts the twins and raises them with two of her sister nuns who have also made it to England. The novel ends with a praise of her choice to prioritize duty over feelings.

*Agatha* is clearly a work that supports Gary Kelly’s first sentence in *The Jacobin Novel*: “There were no great novels published in England during the 1790s, but there were many interesting ones” (1). Modern readers can easily concur with the contemporary critics of Jervis’s novel, who condemned it for its poorly presented plot developments, such as Hammond’s coming out of nowhere to rescue Agatha after her flight from the convent, and coincidences, such as Agatha’s running into the dying wife of Sister Agnes’s ex-fiancé on her way back to England. Other episodes, like Hammond’s captivity in North Africa, are undeveloped and remain detached from the main plot and purpose of the novel. Character development is, furthermore, often sacrificed in favor of political propaganda, and this is the case with Agatha herself, who as the novel progresses becomes a mere mouthpiece for conservative slogans, such as deference to
authority, filial obedience, and Christian resignation. Other characters, like Sir John and Mr. Craggs, remain flat stereotypes. Jervis is clearly no undiscovered Jane Austen, nor does her novel deserve a place in the literary canon. Despite its dubious literary qualities, however, Agatha is an interesting text in the context of the “war of ideas,” as it engages with the Revolution controversy in an unconventional manner by uniting sensibility and anti-Jacobin politics.

II

Despite its allegiance to and idealization of sensibility, the novel is clear in its anti-Revolutionary standpoint and often relies heavily upon Burke’s arguments in Reflections upon the Revolution where he praises the French nobility for their culture and benevolence and the king as a benevolent father figure and warns against attempts at reforming England. Accordingly, in Agatha both the French and the English nobility are praised as the benefactors of the poor. For instance, Sir Charles and Lady Belmont’s greatest pleasure, as well as Agatha and Hammond’s, is dispensing comfort to those in need, and in doing so they follow the dictates of Hannah More discussed in chapter three: “Their hospitable table was open to every one whose merit as well as rank entitled them to regard; while the crumbs which fell from it were a daily supply to numbers of their poor neighbours, whose prayers and blessings followed them wherever they went” (I, 2). After she has taken the veil, Agatha becomes known as the Angel of Auvergne for all the charity she bestows on the poor. Additionally, like Burke, Agatha’s friend Mrs. Herbert commends the king of France for his reforms, and the Abbess, Mme. St. Clermont, praises the French nobility as “liberal-minded, benevolent, and humane” and claims that they make “the most temperate use” of their power (II, 2). The novel is also clear in its Burkean
defense of the deposed French king. Mrs. Herbert commends king Louis XVI for his reforms and plans on visiting Paris to witness the “sublime spectacle of a King giving liberty to his Subjects--a King whose humanity and desire to make them happy entitled him to the adoration of his people” (II, 150). The Abbess, Mme. St. Clermont agrees and at the same time tells her listeners how after a disastrous storm the local nobles supported their tenants and remitted their rent whereas the king forgave the peasants’ taxes and sent more than a million livres to help (II, 153).

As opposed to the feudal idylls of pre-Revolutionary France, when the Revolution breaks out it is said to bring “rapine, massacre, and bloodshed,” and the tolerance which allegedly existed under the king is replaced with fear and terror. However, the interest in liberty is spurred mainly by the interest in the riches possessed by the nobles and the convents (II, 156-157) as the revolutionaries fabricate false accusations in order to seize the properties of the rich (II, 162). This impression is confirmed by the farmer St. Valorie who claims to not fear retaliation from the revolutionaries for his help to Agatha and Hammond, as he has “no property to make it worth their while” (III, 5), and it is the St. Valories’ “mean appearance which did not bespeak them fit objects of plunder” that allows them to escape France after they have excited the ire of the revolutionaries by harboring Agatha, a former nun (III, 40). When Agatha’s convent is attacked by revolutionaries, Mme. St. Clermont’s polite dignity as she greets the attackers as “friends and countrymen” and her congratulations upon their newfound freedom is juxtaposed with the revolutionaries’ behavior which she compares to that of wolves and tigers (II, 174-175) as they “with ferocious pleasure” vandalize the convent (II, 178). Her reminder that the nuns have provided relief from poverty and illness and that their only wish is to continue their simple lives (II, 175) is also a reminder of the novel’s anti-Revolutionary stance.
Not surprisingly, all the revolutionaries in the novel are cold and inhumane. The first one Agatha meets after fleeing the convent is a woman who is not only masculine in her looks but also utterly lacking pity, as she harshly responds to Agatha’s request for temporary shelter by saying that she will give no help to a nun (II, 186). Her response to Agatha’s next request for a morsel of bread and a drink of water is that she will not help sustain “a pack of fat, idle monks and nuns in idleness” (II, 187). Agatha is denied food and shelter with similar words by all the other villagers (II, 189). In addition, she is accosted by two men who clearly intended to rape her had Hammond not come to the rescue (II, 199). The kindly priest Father Albert exclaims that the Revolutionaries’ treatment of members of the church and the nobility show that Revolutionaries would have had no mercy on him either, had he not been able to escape them (III, 172), and he also confesses that the horrors he witnessed while imprisoned after being betrayed by a couple pretending to help him “exceeded belief” as he watched prisoners massacred without trial (III, 173-174). The trial of Sir Charles and Lady Belmont is another mockery of justice, consisting of trumped up charges and a death sentence imposed without any evidence of wrongdoing. Their only fault is being aristocrats (III, 206-207). After his wife’s death, Sir Charles faces a repetition of this farcical justice, and, as a result, is sentenced to death and guillotined (III, 215-217).

The hatred towards the symbols of the old system is so strong that the few people willing to help those endangered by the Revolution have to do it covertly in order to not be attacked themselves, and this makes Agatha reflect: “Unhappy country! Where cruelty, under thousand hideous shapes dares shew herself, and glory in her deformity; while charity, if she would escape danger, must skulk under the same hateful forms. Wretched people! Who, if ye would, dare not be virtuous” (II, 194). France after the Revolution is described by the narrator as “a country where the innocent are persecuted, and the barbarous and guilty roam at large” (II, 237). It has
become a place of paranoia and fear where citizens abide by and proclaim the revolutionary ideals or perish. Overhearing her brother exclaim against the cruelties of the revolutionaries, young Margaret St. Valorie begs her father to not tell his son “stories that may ruin us all” (III, 2), and her father tells Agatha and Hammond that “the neighbour and the friend are become the spy and informer” (III, 7).

The revolutionaries also treat their enemies as harshly as the king and nobles were reported to have done before the Revolution. In jail Agatha finds “horrors” as she inspects the musty jail cell where chains and collars on the floor reveal the dead body of an infant left by the revolutionaries to starve to death (III, 28-29), and when a fire breaks out, the prisoners are left to perish in the flames rather than suffered to escape (III, 32-33). Sir Charles’ letter tells a tale of jailers who delight in humiliating and starving their prisoners, and he recalls that as Lady Belmont is torn from his arms, the gaoler “exulted in and ridiculed my anguish” (III, 208-209). His later request for her to receive a Christian burial is “scoffed at” (III, 215).

Hammond describes the Revolution as scenes of “misery and horror” (II, 211) before continuing by stating that “the ferocity of the Moors is humanity, is gentleness compared to the spirit of murderous liberty that reigns here” (II, 211). Later he tells the story of witnessing a nobleman who had all his life shared his wealth with his dependents being murdered while his house was ravaged and of infants murdered by other children for being aristocrats (II, 211). Underscoring the lack of decency possessed by the revolutionaries, he also describes a cowardly attempt at stabbing him in the back because of the suspicion that he is sympathetic to the nobles (II, 212). Telling Agatha that she is hated by the revolutionaries even while they acknowledge her charity toward the villagers, Hammond concludes “that the hearts of the wretches around me, scared by rapacious cruelty, were incapable of a single sentiment of virtue or humanity” (II,
214), and he concludes that the Inquisition at its worst was merciful compared to the Revolution (II, 215). Agatha agrees as she describes the French as “a mad populace” (II, 251), her father describes post-Revolutionary France as “a barbarous country” (III, 192), and the narrator describes how the drunken “sons of LIBERTY” celebrate the murder of the benevolent Father Albert (II, 258). The revolutionaries are further described as cowardly gangs that only dare to attack and oppress when they have the upper hand (II, 16), and their taunting and cruelty when they arrest Hammond and Agatha is in stark contrast to the heroic and generous behavior of St. Valorie, Agatha, and Hammond who all try to take any blame and consequences upon themselves in order to spare the other two.

As opposed to the cruel revolutionaries, all the anti-revolutionaries in the novel are presented with sympathy. Father Albert, who is hiding in an underground cavern, has a face in which “every furrow bore the print of benevolence” (II, 237), and he gladly shares his shelter and provisions with Hammond and Agatha and treats them respectfully and tenderly (II, 238). Another example is the Marquis de Vilorme who, reminiscent of Burke’s descriptions of the nobility, had inherited his title “from a long line of ancestors not less illustrious than their rank,” and his wife, who is raped by revolutionaries before she is forced to witness the murder of her husband (II, 263-265), is said to be, “one of the loveliest and most accomplished women of the age” (II, 262). The Marquis is further described by his still loyal servant as a man whose only thought was to give assistance to the poor and make everyone around him happy (II, 270), and the servant grieves as he compares his past happiness while serving his noble patrons to his post-Revolutionary existence where he is reduced to subsist on charity while mourning his master (II, 271). Later, when Agatha and Hammond contemplate the portrait of the Marquis and his wife, they notice the couple’s evident love for their child (II, 269), not only showing the noble couple
as good parents, but also, echoing Burke’s description of the King as a loving father figure, as ideal leaders of their country. Another nobleman that confirms the idealization of the French nobility in the novel is the Baron who hides Sir Charles and Lady Belmont, and who has, by his hospitality and cleverness, rescued many nobles fleeing the popular fury (III, 195).

The loyal St. Valories also immediately show themselves as a warm-hearted family who is happy to give relief to strangers whoever they may be and, as, the word valor in their name suggests, regardless of the consequences to themselves. The father says about his son: “He must learn the difference between virtue and vice; he must hate the persecutors, pity the persecuted, and, if necessary sacrifice his own life in their defence” (III, 3). When Hammond and Agatha enter their cottage, St. Valorie, despite seeing that Agatha is a nun, courteously declares his willingness to share their humble meal with strangers in need: “‘O! never,’ added he with warmth, ‘shall the hope of reward, or fear of punishment, induce me to close my doors on the stranger, and to deny myself this first of blessings’” (III, 3-4), and when Agatha presses him to accept some of her jewelry as payment, he refuses, saying that the only payment he desires is to serve those in need of his assistance (II, 12).

As opposed to post-Revolutionary France, and as is customary in anti-Jacobin novels, England is described as a haven of safety and contentment:

The appearance of every one they met formed a striking contrast to that of the inhabitants of the distracted country they had quitted; plodding business might be traced in the faces of some, the spirit of hardy enterprize in those of others; sedate cheerfulness was discernible in many, levity or vivacity in few; but in none that ferocious spirit which glories in trampling on every law human and divine stamped on the countenances on one half of those they had left, nor that fear
which shrinks from the scrutiny of every beholder, dreading in every one an
enemy. … All here seemed to move in their own sphere; no virtuous exertion
cramped by those laws which are the protection of their lives and property, the
bulwarks of their liberty. (III, 41-42)

Mme. St. Clermont agrees, saying that the English system is better than the French in principle
(II, 151), and learning about the laws of England, St. Valorie exclaims: Happy, happy country”
and, paraphrasing Burke, warns the English against attempting “to repair your own house” when
the repairs needed are but “trifling” (III, 42-43). Coming from the mouth of a Frenchman who
has experienced the Revolution first-hand, the endorsement is even stronger than when appearing
in the writings of an English politician, observing from a comfortable distance.

III

It is surprising, then, that despite the novel’s anti-Revolutionary politics, it does, unlike
almost all other anti-Jacobin novels, promote and endorse sensibility. Eighteenth-century ideas
of sensibility derived from the sensational psychology of Newton and Locke which taught that
the external world is processed through feelings, specifically, according to Newton through
vibrations in the nervous system (Barker-Benfield 6), and, as a result, words like “vibrate,”
“thrill,” and “strings” were frequently used (Barker-Benfield 25). For example, Mary
Wollstonecraft describes sensibility as “the result of acute senses, finely-fashioned nerves, which
vibrate at the slightest touch, and convey such clear intelligence to the brain, that it does not
require to be arranged by the judgment” (Posthumous Works 135), and these theories are
reflected in Agatha through metaphors of vibration and agitation of spirits. Agatha declares to
Hammond that after she has become a nun, her heart “will vibrate with sympathetic pleasure”
when he is happy (II, 25), and Lady Belmont’s heart “vibrated at once with pity, maternal
tenderness, and remorse” as she reflects that “a heart like Agatha’s” was made for the blessings
of a tender attachment (I, 299). After her friend’s death, Agatha seems to hear the voice of Miss
Hammond “vibrate in her ear” (II, 37). When she greets Emma Herbert as Hammond’s wife, she
asks to “console her agitated spirits” (III, 167), and while waiting to hear about her parents’
destiny, Agatha’s “agitation of spirits” is extreme (III, 44). Sensibility was also based upon the
philosophies of Shaftesbury and Adam Smith, and the latter’s insistence on sympathy as the
basis of human understanding and positive social relations is mentioned in the novel, as well, as
Mrs. Herbert, Agatha and Hammond all agree that sympathy is the true basis of sensibility (I,
202) and that sympathy has the power to soften the blows of an often cruel world: “Like the
sympathizing voice of a congenial friend, by gently soothing dispels our sorrows, or if they
remain, softens them into a melancholy rather sweet than painful (III, 1).

Like Agatha, the novel’s male protagonist, Hammond, is described as a person of
exquisite sensibility. Possibly alluding to the character Hammond in Sarah Scott’s 1766 utopian
novel The Man of Real Sensibility, Or The History of Sir George Ellison in which the character
Hammond, who has suffered setbacks in business because of his sentimentalist ideals, refuses the
offer of the protagonist, Sir George (clearly based upon Sir Charles Grandison), to become his
plantation steward, citing as his reason his inability to enforce, and even behold the disciplining
of slaves (M. Ellis 108). Another possibility is Henry Hammond in Emma Corbett (1780) whose
excessive sensibility debilitates him throughout the novel (Flynn 25-26). Like these two, Jervis’s
Hammond is described by his sister as a man of sensibility as she relates that he is a young man
“With feelings alive to sensibility, with a heart glowing with generosity and honour, with
passions strong, though, I trust, controllable, and a temper warm and ardent though not
irascible” (I, 153). She continues to say that his heart is open to the “sacred influence” of friendship and the “natural susceptibility” of his heart will make him seek love (I, 156), agreeing with Barker-Benfield’s description of the “man of feeling” as one who places a high value on domesticity and a harmonious marriage (248). Corroborating the impression, Agatha later argues to Mrs. Herbert that Hammond’s generous and “susceptible heart” will make him an ideal husband if he can only overcome his impossible love for her (III, 129).

According to Janet Todd’s *Sensibility: An Introduction*, from the mid-eighteenth century on the term sensibility came to denote “delicate emotional and physical susceptibility” and “the faculty of feeling, the capacity for extremely refined emotion and a quickness to display compassion for suffering” (7). For example, James Fordyce writes in *Addresses to Young Men* that “The starting tear, the rising sigh, the tender look of fellow feeling, are, even without a word spoken, like precious balm to the wounded breast” (92). Claudia L. Johnson points out that the ability to shed tears in eighteenth-century fiction was often seen as a sign of “superior humanity” and sentimental novels would present “sensitive men who shed tears (gushes, wellings, droplets) over ‘interesting’ objects” (5). In “On the Unmanliness of Shedding Tears” the eighteenth-century essayist Vicesimus Knox defends crying by pointing out that both Homer’s Odysseus and Jesus wept, concluding that the ability to shed tears on sorrowful occasions is “the noblest distinction of human nature” (274). Consequently, sensibility would often reveal itself in spontaneous crying, swooning, or kneeling, actions found in abundance in *Agatha*. Lady Belmont in contemplating her infant daughter’s fate was “bursting into a flood of tears” (I, 3). Watching Miss Hammond’s funeral procession, Agatha “was indulging those tears from which alone she hoped for or obtained relief” (I, 18), and when talking to Hammond about his sister, she “again burst into a flood of tears” (I, 21) as does she when she hears the story of the peasant
girl Jemima’s lost love, (I, 119). Later, when she witnesses Jemima’s reunion with Harry, her eyes are “swimming in tears, and her steps tottering from the emotions by which she had been agitated” (I, 137), and upon being unexpectedly reunited with Sister Agnes and Mme. St. Clermont, all three shed copious tears (III, 92).

These emotional outbursts and shedding of tears is repeated every time something sad or moving happens, and they affect Hammond as much as Agatha. As Agatha first casts her eyes on him at his sister’s funeral, his countenance “depicted the strongest marks of agony,” and he is so absorbed in his misery that he “appeared insensible to every thing” (I, 18-19). Additionally, he claims that the sight of his dead sister threatened to deprive him of his reason (I, 22). When Hammond explains how his sister nursed him when he was ill, he is too overcome with emotion to speak (I, 178). Using the language of sensibility, he claims that only the “seraphic sweetness of the kindest of friends” calms the agony he feels when he remembers his sister (I, 200). Later when he is told that Agatha is destined to become a nun, Hammond “sunk upon a sofa, and putting his hands before his face, hid the tears which flowed down his manly cheeks” (II, 21). Hammond also sheds tears on several other occasions; for instance, he weeps as he tells Agatha the story of the murdered Marquis de Vilorme (II, 265). His emotions are also visible in other ways, so when Agatha proposes to leave his house and reside with Mrs. Herbert, he is so affected by emotion that Agatha feels compelled to delay her departure (III, 54), and when he first meets Agatha again after he has come to love Mrs. Herbert, Agatha is struck with the changes in his appearance. As opposed to his earlier tranquility, he now appears dejected, and his smiles appear forced (III, 131).

Philip Carter argues that a man’s sensibility was directly related to bodily weakness (Men and the Emergence 91), and cites Cowper who writes to a friend that since “a very robust athletic
habit seems inconsistent with much sensibility … our feelings have been render’d more exquisite
as our habit of body have become more delicate” (180). In *Agatha*, therefore, characters also, as
is common in the novel of sensibility, show their emotions with signs of bodily weakness, such
as fainting, seizures, and fevers. After Miss Hammond’s death, Agatha is seized with fits strong
enough to threaten her life and reason (I, 17). After realizing that she loves Hammond, she feels
too weak to walk without support (I, 164), and when teased by her friends about him, she nearly
faints from emotion (I, 166). It is not until her parents’ return, though, that she faints for real as
they behold her leaning on Hammond’s arm and react with astonishment and terror (I, 215).

After realizing that she has to become a nun to help her mother fulfill her promise, she is seized
with a violent fever (I, 266). When they finally meet to take farewell, Hammond, too, as seen
above, is overcome with emotions. When roused by Agatha, he offers to follow her wherever she
goes and “live upon thy smiles” (II, 23), but when she is led away from him and conveyed
almost lifeless to her mother, his agony is but “little short of distraction” (II, 29). Like Agatha,
Hammond also falls dangerously ill after her departure for France (II, 74), and after he learns that
Agatha has become a nun, he almost loses his sanity: “I believed that my reason would have
sunk under the burthen of my sorrows. I haunted as a ghost every spot that had been endeared by
our presence. O! my Agatha! Lost in the luxury of woe, I was indeed dead to the world. My
friends spoke to me – I heard them not; the sought to comfort me – and I shrunk from their
endeavours to divert your image from my soul” (II, 202-203). In the end, as in other works of
sensibility, Hammond’s weak bodily frame overcomes his desire to live, and he dies in a scene of
sentimental hyperbole (III, 180). The sentimental connotations in the scene are further reinforced
by naming Hammond’s doctor, Harley, after Mackenzie’s Man of Feeling.
Another typical trait of sensibility, as mentioned earlier, is the ability to feel acutely for others and be compassionate. For example, Rousseau viewed tears of pity as a virtue and a source of human connection (Vingerhoets 248), and Samuel Richardson writes: “The man is to be honor’d who can weep for the distress of others,” (204-205). The entry for "Sensibilité (morale)" from Diderot's Encyclopédie (1755) illustrates what was denoted by this new ideal:

Tender and delicate disposition of the soul which renders it easy to be moved and touched. Sensibility of soul, which is rightly described as the source of morality, gives one a kind of wisdom concerning matters of virtue and is far more penetrating than the intellect alone. . . . Men of sensibility live more fully than others. . . . Reflection can produce a man of probity: but sensibility is the mother of humanity, of generosity; it is at the service of merit, lends its support to the intellect, and is the moving spirit which animates belief. (qtd. in Brissenden 115)

In Richardson, the word “others,” for whom one would weep, would usually include any creature seen as weak or in distress, including animals, and this is another facet of sensibility celebrated in Agatha. Agatha, already as a child shows her sensibility in possessing a “warm and benevolent heart” and “a soul exquisitely susceptible,” and, as evidence of this, the narrator tells how she at the age of three in meeting a little beggar girl was overcome with compassion: “Scarcely able to speak for the feelings which agitated her infant breast, she said ‘Poor girl cry, Mama, Agatha heart break!’” (I, 4). She also shows kindness to animals. After her flight from the convent, as she sustains herself by eating berries in the forest, Agatha apologizes with tears to the birds for taking their food (II, 185).

Similarly, Hammond’s sensibility manifests itself as a concern with the well-being of others and distress and unease when he has inadvertently hurt anyone. When he makes Agatha
cry, he is distressed: “Forgive me, Oh forgive me … that I cruelly recalled the remembrance of your griefs. Oh let me not be such a wretch as to add to your sorrows who have so kindly poured balm to mine!” (I, 21), and when he accidentally makes Agatha believe that he does not welcome her friendship, he frantically begs her forgiveness for having offended her (I, 139-140). On another occasion, he declares: “For worlds would I not distress you, nor urge what would give a moment’s pain” (I, 164). Furthermore, it is his concern for her reputation that makes him advise her to move to the Milsons until her parents return rather than stay in Miss Hammond’s house alone with him (I, 25). Hammond also displays the compassion for the suffering of others that Richardson and Rousseau call for. He tells the story of how he as a young student befriended an orphaned Jewish boy at his boarding school although it made him the laughing stock of his companions, saying: “I was insensible to their ridicule, and performing a part dictated by duty and humanity, persisted in defending him when unjustly attacked” (I, 188). Later on in the novel, he, out of pity and concern, risks his own safety to dress the wound of Agatha’s attacker (II, 201). Ever sensitive to Agatha’s feelings, he provides for her after their return to England under the guise of sending a supposed debtor of her father’s to her to pay off his debts. Only after Hammond’s death does Agatha find out that it was his money and “delicate generosity” that made her independent and comfortable (III, 218).

Sensibility further manifests itself in the novel as a disregard for material riches and customs in favor of spiritual and artistic beauty, and such a freedom from the desires of the traditional masculine world was often seen by those who favored sensibility as a sign of moral purity and sincerity (Warren 34). Like Agatha, who refers to herself as “a stranger in the world” (I, 21; I, 24) and “ignorant of the customs of the world” (I, 23), and who instead claims that she has learned “from nature all that the factitious ceremonies of politeness enjoin” (I, 99),
Hammond displays a distinctly unworldly disposition. Accordingly, he does not care whether he will be the heir to a distant cousin’s title and fortune (I, 100). Instead the novel’s two main characters bond through their common enjoyment of music and literature, and their shared interest and enjoyment prove them to be kindred, sensitive souls. When reading Shakespeare, Agatha “felt every sentiment as it was uttered” (I, 104), and she identifies her favorite passage as one that “speaks the purity and sincerity of his heart” (I, 106). Similarly, when Hammond reads *The Tempest* aloud, Mrs. Herbert says that he does the beauty of the play ample justice and that his reading has made her discover beauties she had earlier overlooked (I, 105). When he hears Agatha play the piano and sing, Hammond is deeply moved and responds incoherently “I am sure I think – I am sure I think – I am sure I never heard - ” (146), and Agatha’s simple act of leaning her head on his shoulders makes him tremble (164). Hammond also shows his sensibility in his appreciation of nature. Like Smith’s Desmond, he hides in the neighborhood of his beloved to keep watch over her, and like Desmond he picks his hiding spot in a hollow which charmed him “with its romantic beauties” (II, 201).

Not only do both the main characters in *Agatha* conform completely to the ideal of the sentimental heroine and the “man of feeling,” the novel shows its affinity with the cult of sensibility through its priority of emotions over rationalism which is shown in the near constant repetitions of the vocabulary of “language of the heart,” particularly the words “tender” and “heart.” Agatha’s “tenderness” endears her to her mother (I, 248), and after meeting Mrs. Herbert, Agatha feels happier in the expectation that she might form with her new acquaintance “the tenderest” friendship (80) than she had imagined she could feel after the loss of Miss Hammond, and after Agatha has become a nun the two meet again “with every expression of the tenderest affection” (II, 136), weeping from emotion as they embrace each other. After Agatha
has resolved to become a nun, her mother agonizes over the fact that her tenderness cannot mitigate the pain Agatha feels (II, 30), and when introduced to the Mother Superior of the nunnery, she is soothed “in the tenderest manner” by the nun (II, 51), who also promises Agatha that “the tender cares of friendship” from her sister nuns will heal her wounded heart (II, 63). On her first night in the monastery, Mme. St. Clermont consoles Agatha “with the utmost tenderness” (II, 67).

Hammond, too, is frequently described with this term to tie him to Agatha and their joint sensibility. For example, with “the tenderest expressions of pity and anxiety” (I, 120), Hammond comforts Agatha, and he “besought her in the tenderest manner to support her spirits” (I, 121). In a posthumous letter Miss Hammond predicts her brother’s gaze upon his future bride as one of “unutterable tenderness” and foresees him holding his future child “with tears of agonizing tenderness” (I, 161). After reading the letter, Hammond kisses Agatha’s tear-streaked cheek with “impassioned tenderness” and declares himself carried away by her involuntary display of “the tenderest friendship” (I, 164). Later, when Agatha feels unwell, Hammond gazes at her “with looks of the tenderest anxiety (I, 167-168), and he also praises the tenderness of his sister (I, 177). Agatha, in her turn, is convinced that Hammond loves her “with all the tenderness and sincerity possible” (I, 207). After they have confessed their love for each other, Hammond presses Agatha’s hand “tenderly,” and when she faints, he is “conjuring her in the tenderest of manners to look up” (I, 215). After taking the veil, Agatha writes to Mrs. Herbert, asking her to console Hammond, saying that to a man of sensibility like him, female “tenderness” is the best aid in soothing sorrows (II, 72), and Mrs. Herbert responds that she will break the news that Agatha has become a nun to him “in the tenderest manner possible” (II, 74). After her forced flight from the convent, Agatha is prevented from yielding to despair and fatigue only by
Hammond’s “tenderness [which] by soothing her spirits, seemed to give her new strength” (II, 221).

In addition to the repetition of the words “tender” and “tenderness,” the novel also privileges sensitivity and thinking and actions based on feeling rather than reason, as shown through the repeated use of the word “heart” by the narrator, Agatha, and Hammond to denote a character’s nature and preferences. Agatha shows already as a child “every sign of a warm and benevolent heart” (I, 4), and when she first meets Hammond “her gentle heart” and “all her heart” (25) almost forgot its own sufferings in beholding his (19). To Miss Hammond, “the friend of her heart” (I, 16), she “lays open every thought of her innocent heart” (I, 9), and after her death Agatha declares that her “heart is no longer turned to gaiety” (I, 30) and that reminiscing with Hammond is what “brings pleasure to my heart” (I, 31). Hammond declares to Agatha that “the purity of your heart” makes it impossible for Agatha to act from immoral motives (I, 32) and that “the benevolence of an heart unpracticed in the world” has saved him from despair (I, 34). Agatha in her turn finds that Hammond’s conversation is “more congenital to her heart” than any other’s (66). She also, while grieving for Miss Hammond, finds poetry particularly “soothing to the heart” (67), and when confronted by her mother’s sacred vow, she declares that if her mother thinks she will chose love over duty, she doesn’t “know my heart” (I, 79).

Like Agatha, Hammond and the other estimable male characters in the novel also, again showing their affinity with the cult of sensibility, constantly use the word “heart” to refer to their thoughts and emotions. For instance, when Hammond realizes that Agatha cares for him, he is encouraged by her to confess “every feeling of my heart” (I, 209), and gathering some of her native soil in a small container before she leaves for France, Agatha imagines that Hammond
might “with a bleeding heart” have stepped on it (II, 37). When telling the story of his North African enslavement, Hammond claims that the letter he receives from his Jewish friend Aaron is “engraved on my heart” (I, 187), and Aaron in his turn declares himself indebted to Hammond’s “kind heart” (I, 188). When Hammond, thanks to Aaron, can leave Algiers, his “heart is overflowing with gratitude” (I, 192), and it is from knowledge of Hammond’s “heart” that Aaron conceals that he has taken his place as a Moorish slave in order to obtain Hammond’s freedom (I, 198). Upon hearing Hammond’s story, Mr. Crawford interjects because his “heart is full” (I, 199), and he reflects that the acts of friendship and generosity the audience has learned about will “be for ever recorded in our hearts” and inspire the listeners to emulate them (I, 204). Mr. Ormistace answers Agatha’s farewells before she sets out for France with a declaration that his “heart is almost too full” to argue with her (I, 285).

Agatha and Hammond connect through shared sensibility: “In him she had found one to whom she could unbosom them [her sorrows],” and they spent their first evening together “in mutual tears; but sensible of comfort from each other’s society, they parted at a late hour” (I, 23). Agatha declares to Hammond that with him alone is she comfortable, since he shares her sensibility: “To wander alone with you, mingle my tears with yours – to dwell on the loved idea of one dear, Oh how dear! To us both, affords me more real comfort, nay pleasure to my heart than any society can bestow” (I, 30-31). Agatha later entreats Hammond to “tell me all you feel” (I, 151), and Agatha realizes her romantic feelings for him after they have read and cried over his deceased sister’s letter together (I, 162). Hammond, in his turn, declares that it was Agatha’s “artless endeavours to speak comfort to my distracted heart” that cemented his love for her (I, 211).
In order to further highlight Hammond as an ideal of male sensibility, Agatha not only emphasizes his compatibility with the idealized heroine, the novel also offers the reader several competing models of inferior masculinity. These are men who are respectable in the eyes of the world but who fall short in the eyes of the author when it comes to sincerity, compassion, or proper behavior according to the tenets of sensibility. Of all the deficient men in the novel, the most highly condemned one is Sir John Milson. Clearly based upon the traditional “booby squire,” Sir John is presented as a gross, tasteless man whose main delights are to trick his business partners, flirt with his daughter’s friends, and make jokes at the expense of his family. Sir John Milson was raised and educated to be a hosier, but through several improbable events he was raised to the title of baronet. He is, furthermore, an epicure with little taste, but lots of cunning, whose other diversion is, like Charlotte Smith’s upstart Sir Robert Stamford, to show off his luxurious table to admiring guests (I, 37). Upon being introduced to Agatha, Sir John immediately excites her disgust as he reveals his lack of sense, feelings, and manners: “Egad, I don’t know if my old Lady would but tip off, what I might say to you myself! – Hay? – you are as pretty as lass as I have seen these forty years” (I, 42). Sir John’s personality is also mirrored in the alterations he has made to the old mansion he inhabits. Ruining what used to be a beautiful Gothic house, Sir John has added a wing in modern brick and cut down the elms that created a beautiful avenue in favor of “a superb coach house and stables” (I, 35-36). His oldest son Valentine is like him, only lacking in discrimination in his rudeness. Unlike his father, who courts position and fortune, young Milson does not care whom he offends with what he calls his “plain English politeness” (I, 61). His curt behavior is in reality nothing but rudeness and ungracious behavior, and commenting on his marriage, the narrator observes: “But though possessing much goodness of heart and disposition, he was a proof that mere good-nature,
unattended by some share of sensibility, and wanting absolutely the polish of a gentleman, is incapable of making a woman of feeling and discernment happy” (I, 39).

The younger members of the Milson family, although unlike their older brother and father, also serve as examples of undesirable ideals and behavior. Both Miss Milson and her brother William are self-declared devotees of sensibility, but the reader soon discovers that theirs is a false sensibility that extends only to fine declamations, but not to sincere and truly refined emotions like those of Agatha and Hammo nd. The novel thus makes an adept move by giving a nod to the anti-Jacobin critics of sensibility, but also reassuring the novel’s readers and admirers of “true” sensibility that their ideals are still morally and emotionally sound. Miss Milson, who has read lots of novels which she quotes at length, possesses an artificial sensibility of which she makes a show by rescuing flies stuck in a ditch before returning to the occupations she takes the most pride in: ornamenting purses, cultivating flowers and painting (I, 12-13). Unaware that she is causing Agatha pain by referring to her deceased friend she rhapsodizes: “Sweet Sensibility! … How these feelings elevate you in my esteem! Ah! Let others boast their apathy and delight in the want of all that is endearing or lovely; I would not forego the painful luxury of sensibility for the wealth of worlds. My heart bleeds for the suffering of an animal, an insect: and it is my glory that it does” (I, 27). As an example of false sensibility Miss Milson is joined by her brother, William, who spends his time hankering after and writing sonnets and pastorals to a young widow in their neighborhood (I, 40). William Milson also writes poetry and languishes for love for Mrs. Herbert; yet, as soon as he sees Agatha, he falls equally violently in love with her (I, 279). He is finally rescued from his excessive sentimentality when he falls for and enters into a rational and companionate marriage with Mr. Crawford’s daughter (III, 60-61), and he and his
wife eventually become Agatha, Mrs. Herbert and Hammond’s intimate friends (III, 81), a tell-tale sign that they have embraced the right values and feelings.

The novel also warns the reader that reliance upon emotions without the check of reason, piety and a strong sense of duty, will result, not in sensibility and refinement, but, as is the case with Mr. Ormistace, in unreasonableness, impulsivity and fickleness, qualities critics of sensibility frequently warned against (Csengei 3). Mr. Ormistace is kind and generous enough to never consider money when meeting with an object of distress, but he still makes everyone around him unhappy because he is ruled solely by his passions which are not checked by any sense and prudence (I, 48). For instance, he discards the friendship of his old friend upon hearing that his friend had not given money to a beggar woman although she was later shown to be a fraud (I, 52-55). His caprices also make life miserable for his niece, the amiable Mrs. Herbert, who is dependent upon him, (I, 56); at one time he is furious with her for disbelieving the woeful tale of a ballad singer who later steals his furniture (III, 53). He again shows his wrongful reliance on unreasonable emotions when he declares that Agatha has no duty to obey a demand from her parents that will make her unhappy and that her love for Hammond takes precedence over her parents’ authority, and he therefore offers to help her elope from her parents’ house (I, 286-287). This is a suggestion that the shocked Agatha immediately refuses.

Despite his faults, Mr. Ormistace is shown to be superior to the false and shallow Milsons. He shows his generosity and tenderness when he spares no effort or expense in finding and returning Harry Arnold to his Jemima and then receives the couple’s thanks with “I have done nothing – or if I had, your happiness – this sweet moment, would repay me hundredfold” (I, 134). He again shows his kindness when he nurses the distraught Hammond after Agatha’s departure for France (I, 73), and his niece praises him by saying that “Yet with this single foible
my uncle has a heart that does honor to humanity. Indeed his very faults are the offspring of benevolence” (III, 53). Furthermore, he is delighted to share his home with Agatha after she returns destitute from France, claiming that he will consider her as his own second niece, and makes every effort to make her feel at home and happy (III, 59). Towards the end of the novel, Mr. Ormistace, following Agatha, Mrs. Herbert and Hammond’s example, becomes less capricious, and, as a result and as a sign of approval, he, along with the Crawfords, William Milson and his wife, Sister Agnes, and the St. Valories, is included in the circle of intimates that enjoy happiness together in the months after Hammond and Mrs. Herbert’s marriage, as well as in the group of friends that constitute Agatha’s happiness at the end of the novel (III, 220). The moral order of Jervis’s universe, then, requires "sense" as well as "sensibility"; a sensibility unmoored by sense is dangerous, but it's still better than reason uninflected by tender feelings about others.

Hypocrisy, caprice and fickleness are not the only possible pitfalls of false sensibility that the novel warns its readers against. In the eighteenth century hypochondriac was a non-pejorative term used to describe a defined illness and often seen as a sign of refinement and sensibility (Mullan 207). For example, David Hume was, according to Carter, a self-declared hypochondriac (Men and the Emergence 91). Nevertheless, there was also a concern that an excessive reliance on emotion and subjectivity could lead to weakness and sickliness, especially for men. Medical writers in the eighteenth century warned against the “pathological side of sensibility,” claiming that an excess of sentimental delicacy caused illness that could “turn a culture of sociability into one of solipsism and isolation” (Csengei 3-4). However, as opposed to the generally respected Hume, the hypochondriac in Agatha is wholly unsympathetic and, therefore, serves as a warning to the reader that if misguided, sensibility can become
problematic. Mr. Craggs, Sir John’s friend, is a valetudinarian who has wasted his fortune and constitution by “fantastic endeavours to preserve it” (I, 44). An avid student of medicine and philosophy, he has after numerous failed experiments found that one side of his body is heavier than the other and, therefore, never moves without carrying a bucket of water to weigh down the lighter side of his body. He also avoids bowing in order to not injure his spine (I, 45-49). Later on, he demands every place he visits to be as hot as possible in order to prepare himself for a removal to Venus after his death (III, 78). It is not unlikely that Mr. Craggs is meant to be a parody of Shaftesbury, who, attributing his poor health to bad air, timed his movements to the direction of the wind and avoided courting the woman he wished to marry in fear of going to London with its smog (Barker-Benfield 112). However, Mr. Craggs is not only ridiculous, his lack of true feeling is apparent when he, as the only one present not in tears over Harry and Jemima’s reunion, admonishes her for shedding the tears that relieve her feelings, saying that crying is “injurious to the constitution” (135).

As antidotes to these flawed models of masculinity in the novel, we find not only Hammond, but also Hammond and Agatha’s close friend, “the worthy and excellent” Mr. Crawford (I, 57). Immensely admired by both, Mr. Crawford has enough sensibility to make him kind and indulgent to his family and charitable in a prudent manner to those in need, but his actions are based on Christian piety and tempered by reason: “He sought out the afflicted, he pitied, and, as far as prudence would permit, relieved them” (I, 57). His passions are serene, and, like the ideal man of sensibility, he is domestically oriented, stating that his wife and children have “the first and chiefest claim on his charity” (57). Reassuring readers skeptical of sensibility, the narrator states that it is Mr. Crawford’s sensibility that makes him so kind and indulgent and that the mild and benignant smile that is always found on his face seems “an earnest of that peace
which awaited him hereafter” (I, 58). Furthermore, Mr. Crawford himself maintains that only ideas founded in “justice and propriety” are worth holding onto (I, 203). He then argues that only Christian devotion and attention to duty will secure everlasting happiness which should be any good person’s goal to strive for: “And for happiness equally exquisite and durable we must look beyond an existence which hangs but by a thread, and all those gayest colours, like the vivid hues that paint the air-blown bubble, may vanish in a moment, destroyed by the very breath which created them” (I, 221-222). His son Harold is like him although he conceals some of his sensibility from fear of being seen as effeminate (II, 147). His sensibility shows, however, in his poorly concealed tears as he witnesses Agatha tend to a flock of poor villagers (II, 148). Uniting a strong sense of sensibility and sense of duty, the two Crawfords, as well as Hammond, reassure the reader that sensibility is compatible with a man’s social duties, as well as a counterrevolutionary, pious world view.

IV

One of the main objections of anti-Jacobin thinkers and writers against sensibility was, as mentioned above, that the subjectivity endorsed by a reliance on emotion would lead to disdain for and revolt against authority. Most anti-Jacobin novels, particularly after 1793, were clear in their attacks on sensibility. Agatha, therefore, is unique in its attempt at reconciling a sentimental viewpoint with a conservative political position by portraying estimable characters who, despite being guided by sensibility, are always able to govern their passions and act in accordance with the dictates of duty. The novel’s concern with the relationship between sensibility and duty is clear from the first sentence: “The following narrative affords an instance of one, who, endued by nature with the tenderest and most susceptible of hearts, was nevertheless mistress enough of
herself – of her reason – and triumphed over every propensity not warranted by the strictest, and, in her case, by the cruellest duty” (I, 1). The narrator then goes on to say that the writer’s intention is to teach those in possession of “ingenuous hearts” and “the warm feelings of youth” to learn to triumph over their feelings, as well. In support of this, the meritorious Miss Hammond states:

Heaven endued us with sensibility that we might be alive to Religion, pity, charity, and friendship. And while that sensibility is directed by our reason to its proper channel, it is our richest ornament! But when our feelings, our passions, get the better of ourselves; when because we have such and such wishes, such and such propensities, we feebly yield to them, we are no longer free agents: we are under the dominion of those passions which while they are suffered to govern us will infallibly render us wretched; but which if, on the other hand, we governed them, would only serve to make us happy, and give a zest to our enjoyments.” (I, 10)

Her brother echoes the sentiment when he says that “Friendship, love, and every generous affection of the human soul … were implanted by Heaven” (I, 106), but he also agrees that emotion needs to be controlled, and describing his deceased sister, he states that it is her command over her feelings which “renders her truly estimable, and her character perfect” (10). Hammond attributes any virtue or merit he might possess to his sister who “never lost an opportunity of inculcating the duties enforced by her own example” (I, 172), and in the depth of his despair over Agatha, it is a letter from his sister that rouses him and reminds him of “the duties I owed to society” (II, 205).
Like Hammond, Agatha, too, despite her exquisite sensibility, is always clear in her insistence on subordinating her feelings to her duty: “In every circumstance, in every trial of my life, nothing shall tempt me to a breach of duty…and I am firmly resolved that no consideration of self-felicity shall ever prompt me to forsake it for a moment” (I, 79). She calls the temptation to follow the dictates of her heart a “sweet illusion” and concludes that by escaping guilt as a result of obeying “the monitoress within me,” she is also happy (III, 164). Immediately after she has resolved to obey her parents, she reflects that no matter how much her heart might suffer, the resolution is founded on “justice and duty” (II, 3) and therefore the right one, and when her parents fear that her meeting to bid Hammond farewell will shake her resolution, she responds that a resolution built upon the foundation of deliberate reason cannot be shaken by any blast (II, 11). Correspondingly, she later confides to Mrs. Herbert that the knowledge of having performed her duty not just healed her wounds, but brought her actual happiness (II, 137).

Like most anti-Jacobin novels, Agatha is absolute in its insistence on deference to authority, especially that of one’s parents. As seen in my introduction, following the example of Burke, most conservative writers in the 1790s saw the family as a microcosm of the nation and obeisance towards parents as a sign of loyalty to the monarch, as well. Therefore, anti-Jacobin novels, including Agatha, always instill the necessity of absolute, unquestioning reverence for parental figures. Father Albert asserts that “Duty and reason should be our only directors” (II, 252), and accordingly, the novel’s narrator praises Agatha for her willingness to set aside her own wishes in favor of her parents’: “Alive to every feeling of nature and virtue, she had always loved her parents with the tenderest affection, had made their wishes the law of her life, and had never intentionally displeased or offended them” (I, 232). Consequently, her clear answer to herself when she asks herself whether she should love Hammond in opposition to her parents’
wishes is “heaven forbid!” (I, 237), and when her mother tells her about her promise to make her a nun, she, despite her misery, even while begging to be allowed to remain with her parents, says that she would “rather die than disobey her parents” commands (I, 251). She continues by saying that if, upon reflection, she is convinced that becoming a nun is her duty, her “heart shall break if it refuses to fulfill it” (I, 263). While reflecting upon the promise that her mother had given, Agatha decides that all the guilt of the broken promise would fall upon her if she “dared to prefer her wishes to her duty” (I, 272), and she ceases wavering when she realizes that only “a self-approving heart” can make her happy, and that “a life of sorrow with the consciousness of internal rectitude” is vastly preferable to a life of pleasure which would unavoidably “be sullied by repentance” over having disobeyed her parents (I, 273-274). Accordingly, her response to Mr. Ormistace’s offer to help her elope with Hammond is: “Beyond my life, and every comfort of my life, I prize what I believe my duty” (I, 287).

Despite feeling the most acute anguish over having to give up Hammond, Agatha perseveres in the belief that the “sweet consciousness of performing our duty, repays us in the end for every sacrifice it enjoins” (I, 289). Later, she says to Hammond that although he is dearer to her than her own life, “Not even you shall tempt me to violate my duty” (II, 250), and she convinces him that a violation of her vow and duty would “embitter every promised blessing” (II, 251). So, when her maid encourages her to disobey her parents, she firmly states that she shall never repent doing her duty and that “no persuasions shall induce me to disobey my parents” (I, 293), and she later reflects that the greater the sacrifice, the greater the merit of enduring if it happens in the cause of virtue (I, 300). Despite the agony she feels in sacrificing her love for Hammond, she is supported by the reward she will receive in heaven for having abided by her duty to her parents (II, 24), and following the taking of her vows, Agatha assures
her mother that the vestments of the nun are already dear to her, as they remind her that she has
done her duty to her parents (II, 82). After the Revolution breaks out and her parents are missing,
Agatha’s fondest memory is their “approving smiles” (II, 173), and as she fears for her life after
the convent has been attacked, she gains courage by remembering that she has never willfully
offended Heaven, and that any sufferings will be short compared to the everlasting bliss she
hopes for in heaven (II, 183).

As a result of the novel’s emphasis on deference to parental authority, it is unsurprising
that the novel also gives clear examples of the miseries that result from the failure to obey one’s
parents or act according to duty. Agatha’s need to become a nun is the direct result of her
mother’s failure to carry out her own mother’s promise to devote her daughter to the Church.
Lady Belmont later reflects upon the misery this breach of duty has caused her: “All the comforts
annexed to wealth, society, and liberty, were inadequate to atone for the remorse that filled my
guilty breast. I had disobeyed my Heavenly and earthly Parent” (I, 252-253). To expiate for her
disobedience to her mother and to give her peace on her deathbed, she promises to devote any
future child of her own to the church (I, 256). She urges Agatha to take the veil by emphasizing
that a life of privation on earth, which is “less than a thousandth part of a drop compared to the
ocean” will ensure her everlasting bliss (I, 262), but it is clear that Hammond and Agatha’s
suffering is the result of her mother’s disobedience, as, acting upon her infatuation with Sir
Belmont, she eloped rather that fulfill her mother’s vow.

Accordingly, although the novel endorses sensibility and the power of emotion, it equally
condemns being ruled by one’s passions. Lady Belmont’s mother was a slave to her passions,
and, as a result, attempted to have her husband murdered as revenge for his infidelity (I, 254),
and hearing Marianne St. Valorie’s story of how she conquered her sorrow over being jilted,
Agatha reflects on the valuable lesson that can be learned by those who “feebly yield to their feelings instead of endeavouring like her to conquer them” (III, 11). Another tragic example is Dorville, Sister Agnes’ fiancé, who falls for another woman and abandons Sister Agnes in favor of indulging his infatuation. Both he and his wife suffer sad fates and terrible remorse which in the end convinces them of their misguided behavior, and as she dies, tortured with guilt, Mme. Dorville confesses: “I have fallen a victim of violent and ungoverned passions – passions which from my youth I have fought to gratify, when it was my duty to have conquered them” (II, 230-231).

As opposed to those who have chosen passion over duty, the novel’s sensitive, yet virtuous and dutiful characters are rewarded with happiness and peace of mind. Jemima, who is willing to give up the love of her life in order to take care of her grandmother, is rewarded with a kind and caring husband and three children “who already promised by their sweet dispositions and attentive obedience to her wishes to pay her back with interest her own excellent behavior to her aged parent” (III, 65). Unlike the penitent Dorville, who on his deathbed is consumed with remorse, Hammond can, as a result of his virtuous behavior, die in peace, showing the novel’s readers that being a “man of feeling,” as long as one also follows the dictates of duty, is admirable and worthy of imitation. As he is dying, Hammond says that the fact that he has a number of friends that can take care of his children, should they become orphans, is the reward for having done his duty (III, 180), and he blesses Agatha for having resisted his request that she renounce her vows after she had to flee the convent: “I have no crime, no vows violated for me to answer for” (III, 181). Like Wolmar and Julie in Rousseau’s Julie, he has been tempted, but did not fall. Echoing Hammond’s sentiment, Agatha’s last words to the narrator of the novel are that she hopes the novel will teach the young the value of “conquest over ourselves” (III, 220).
And, as unusual as it might be in an anti-Jacobin novel, this conquest is reconcilable with a belief in sensibility and feelings as a moral guide, making *Agatha* a unique contribution to what Marilyn Butler has termed “the war of ideas” of the 1790s.
Chapter 4:
Blackguards and Buffoons: The Threat of Lower Class Men and Social Mobility in
Burney’s *Camilla*

I

As opposed to the politically explicit Charlotte Smith and Elizabeth Jervis, Frances Burney always maintained that her novels were not political. In the preface to her last novel, *The Wanderer*, for example, Burney assures the reader of her lack of interest in writing about politics, and while working as the queen’s Second Keeper of the Robes, Burney likewise assured the queen and her daughters that she never discussed politics in her novels as they were not “a feminine subject for discussion.” (*J & L* III, 185-186). Burney’s claim has been disputed by several modern critics who have found strong elements of social critique within the domestic plots of Burney’s novels. Margaret Doody argues that although Burney’s fiction is largely void of overt political discourse, it is, nonetheless, “at its heart political.” because all of Burney’s novels place the social world at the center and ask “questions of the relation of the individual to community and to society in general” (“Burney and Politics” 96). Doody goes on to note that unlike writers like Godwin, Wollstonecraft, Edgeworth, and More, though, Burney offers no solutions to the questions she poses, but she concludes that Burney’s refusal to take distinctions of privilege, rank and gender for granted is a radical trait (“Burney and Politics” 97-98). Julian Fung similarly declares that Burney’s use of satire makes “important social critiques” (937).

Claudia L. Johnson agrees with Doody and Fung’s assessment, and she asserts that like Jane Austen, Frances Burney, from underneath “the conventional surfaces” of her novels is able to question Burkean notions of moral and social stability in a manner that, although not as daring or
broad, is still “as disturbing as any of the indictments by radical novelists” (*Jane Austen* 26). Sarah Salih concurs but concludes that Burney’s novels are ambiguous, leaving “the reader to make sense of the apparent conflict between the novels’ manifest conservatism and their potentially radical representations of identity” (40).

Other critics, however, take issue with the tendency to see Burney as “a repressed radical” (Ross 114). Kraft, for instance, states that *Camilla* supports late eighteenth-century conservative belief arguing that “the preservation of landed family wealth is important to the maintenance of Britain’s national stability in the face of encroaching foreign forces and by internal discord generated both by republican ideals and by a leisure culture addicted to luxury and speculation” (47). However, unlike Kraft, who concludes that Burney places the responsibility for such preservation mainly on the shoulders of the female characters (51), I believe the male characters to be, if anything, more important indicators of Burney’s political views, and this is a dimension of her male characters that has been previously overlooked.

Despite the lack of interest in her male characters as political signifiers, Burney’s portraits of men, particularly in *Evelina*, have been discussed extensively, and most critics agree that apart from Lord Orville, most of Burney’s male characters are, to various degrees, flawed. In *Camilla*, the two characters who stand out for their clear-sightedness, Mrs. Arlbery and Mrs.

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6 A similar stance is expressed by Katharine Rogers, who labels Burney a “thoughtful conservative,” who, although not consistent or clear-cut, endorses the status quo (165). Claudia Johnson additionally observes: “The recent renaissance in Burney studies has tended sometimes to overstate Burney’s confidence as a social critic, as if she were Wollstonecraft’s ideological sister, whereas it seems to me that Burney is distinctive precisely for her retreat from the explicitly oppositional” (*Equivocal Beings* 144). Salih again subscribes to Johnson’s opinion, pointing to the “conventional, conservative conclusions” to Burney’s novels (40).

7 Doody calls Burney’s “heroes” very weak (“Burney and Politics” 107), and Brian McCrea agrees with Doody as he notes that Burney’s upper-class male characters are generally “a passive, even inert lot” (“Frances Burney and Professional Men” 198) because they have inherited their status, rather than having had to work for it (199). Juliet McMaster sums up the typical Burney male character as oppressive and threatening, both financially and sexually (“The Silent Angel” 236), and Lorna J. Clark likewise characterizes them as predatory (49) whereas Kristina Straub argues that Burney places her female characters “at the mercy of incompetent and inconsistent male authority figures” (184). John Wiltshire similarly notes that in *Cecilia* the heroine’s misfortunes are all brought upon her by “males, presumptuous, predatory, or patriarchal, or all three at once” (219).
Tyrold, both denounce the behavior and attitudes of the men they are surrounded by. Mrs. Tyrold
criticizes the lack of morals and steadiness the young men show: “What a prospect for her
[Camilla], then, with our present race of young men! their frivolous fickleness nauseates
whatever they can reach; they have a weak shame in asserting, or even listening to what is right,
and a shallow pride in professing what is wrong” (C 222). The witty Mrs. Arlbery agrees with
Mrs. Tyrold’s criticism, describing the men of the present times as “completely lethargic,” and
concluding: “Upon the whole, ‘tis really a paltry race, the men of the present times” (C 256). The
well-educated Eugenia, who has suffered more than anyone else because of the shallowness and
egotism of men, agrees with the two older women in their censure: The duplicity, the value set by
men “upon external attractions” and their indifference towards everything else has taught her to
repine at her lack of beauty and made her unhappy (C 905).

Of course, these three wise ladies judge the men they are surrounded by quite accurately.
There is no denying that most of the upper-class men in the novel tend to be superficial, are often
egotistical, and frequently show glaringly poor judgment. Lionel and Clermont, for instance, are
dissipated spendthrifts who derive most of their pleasure from laughing at and humiliating
others, and they show no respect for their elders or any other figures of authority. Edgar,
although far more serious-minded and virtuous, also tends to judge persons and events based on
their appearances, and this, along with his jealousy and desire to be obeyed, creates numerous
obstacles between him and Camilla. Camilla’s other suitors, Sir Sedley and Major Cerwood, are
equally superficial; the baronet, out of boredom and a desire to be considered interesting, plays
the fop, and the major is nothing but a mercenary fortune hunter. Indiana’s two suitors are little
better, as both Melmond and Macdersey are so mesmerized by Indiana’s beautiful looks that they
completely fail to see her intellectual deficiencies, and they are both impetuous and immature.
The men of the older generation, on the other hand, are well-meaning but frequently show extremely faulty judgment, leading Helen Cooper to point out the sinister effects of the mentors’ faulty advice in Burney’s novels, an opinion supported by Vivien Jones, who argues that the flawed judgments of male mentors in *Camilla* are not to be relied upon (125). Lorna Clark similarly points out that Burney’s novels often contain an elderly paternal figure who is saintly but remarkable for his ineffectiveness, as he is unable to offer any real or practical assistance (44). Sir Hugh, gullible and with the mindset of a child, lets his nieces and nephews rule him, often with terrible consequences, whereas Mr. Tyrold is far too trusting, and because of his adherence to stale conduct-book advice, gives Camilla disastrous advice on how to relate to Edgar. Therefore, Julia Epstein reads Mr. Tyrold's sermon not as authorially-sanctioned advice for young women (as it was most often read in the past) but as an example of “the language of the patriarch that Camilla must learn to translate, to speak herself, and, finally, to erase” (129). Edgar’s confidante, Dr. Marchmont, although an excellent scholar and an exemplar of virtue, sees all relationships with women through the lens of his own failed marriages, and therefore gives Edgar equally awful advice.

Criticism of the upper classes is nothing new either in the eighteenth-century novel or, as we have seen in the remarks about her male character above, in Burney’s works. Erin Mackie, for example, points to the preoccupation “with the abuses and reform of elite patriarchal privilege,” in *Evelina* as a sign that Burney’s first novel “participates in the critique of aristocracy underway since the seventeenth century” (151). Jason D. Solinger, in his turn, claims that it is hard to identify a single novel written during the long eighteenth century in which critique of wellborn characters does not take place (93), and *Evelina*’s libertin Sir Clement Willoughby, Sir John Belmont, and Lord Merton, the foppish Mr. Lovel, and the brutal Captain
Mirvan are at least as flawed as any of the upper-class men in *Camilla*. There is one important distinction between the two works, however. Whereas the male characters in Burney’s first novel remain as deeply flawed as they started out, most of the upper-class men in *Camilla* do in fact show redeemable qualities and the ability to learn from their mistakes and correct their behavior. In *Camilla* the upper-class men are reformable, whereas in *Evelina* they are not. Sir John Belmont shows some regret and recognizes Evelina, but there is no expectation that he will become a doting father, that Captain Mirvan will become a polished gentleman who who will abstain from practical jokes, that Mr. Lovel will shed his foppishness and become a man of sense, that Lord Merton will improve his morals, or that Sir Clement will become a reformed rake. As opposed to *Evelina*, however, where we were left with two lone decent men in Mr. Villars and Lord Orville, almost all the upper-class men in *Camilla*, as we will see, show charitableness and integrity, or, in the case of most of the more seriously flawed characters, the ability to improve and learn from their mistakes.

It is rather the social upstarts who constitute the real threat in Camilla, men who by money acquired in trade or by pure trickery attempt to work themselves into positions of social and economic power.⁸ Mr. Dubster, a working class man whose late wife’s money has enabled him to purchase an estate, and Mr. Bellamy, a true blackguard figure, whose gentlemanly appearance provides him with a passport to social gatherings for the gentry, are presented as threats to the established hierarchies and are an expression of a fear of social mobility in the novel that was not nearly as strong in Burney’s pre-Revolutionary novel *Evelina*. Whereas the aspiring City “gentleman,” Mr. Smith and her gauche cousins, the Branghtons, cause Evelina little more than temporary, mild embarrassment and irritation, Bellamy is a potent threat both to

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⁸ In *Desire and Domestic Fiction* Nancy Armstrong argues that eighteenth-century economic fluctuations had made the gentry “an extremely heterogeneous group” and therefore had made social identity increasingly difficult to figure out (138-139).
Eugenia’s safety and honor, as well as her family’s financial stability. Dubster, on the other hand, being even less intelligent than any of the Branghtons, is mostly a figure of ridicule, but even he has the ability to cause serious discomfort to Camilla and Eugenia. Burney here relies on the two of the least prestigious conceptions of eighteenth-century masculinity, the dolt and the blackguard, to convey her distrust of the lower social classes.

Thus, we can see from an examination of her male characters, that between 1776 and 1796, Burney appears to have revised her political views. As opposed to her earliest work of fiction, Burney’s post-Revolutionary novel, Camilla, presents upper-class men as flawed, but redeemable, whereas the lower-class men are presented as buffoons or sinister criminals whose inclusion into polite society causes disruption and danger. In Letters on a Regicide Peace Burke argues that after the Revolution France has become a country of no deference to authority and no respect for property laws (64-70). In a similar conservative vein, Camilla, although not overtly political, brings the ascent of the working class into the domestic realm, and the pain and embarrassment caused by Bellamy and Dubster are examples of what happens when members of Burke’s “swinish multitude” are allowed access to genteel families and society. An examination of the male characters in Camilla therefore shows the novel to be a clear-cut conservative statement, and, as opposed to The Wanderer, which was written nearly 25 years after the French Revolution, gives us an indication of what Burney’s political views were in the 1790s.

II

In Burney’s third novel, increased social mobility and the superficiality of upper-class society leave the community vulnerable to ruthless social climbers who take advantage of the shallowness of society in order to take over the wealth and social prestige of the elite, and
Camilla shows the fear of these social climbers who attempt to work themselves into positions of respectability. Brian McCrea, for instance, explains that “In their belief that status is fungible, Mittin and Dubster redact and intensify the threat to subordination that Burney (much to Samuel Johnson’s delight) pilloried in the Branghtons and Mr. Smith” (Frances Burney and Narrative 130). Like Mrs. Mittin, both Dubster and Bellamy take advantage of the frivolity of the genteel society they aspire to be a part of, and Sara K. Austin suggests that Dubster, along with Mrs. Mittin, both former merchants who have become gentlefolk, “represent the entrance of the mercantile middle-class into the world of the upper class, since both were originally “producers of luxury fashion items for the gentry” (280). In doing so Burney builds upon what Solinger refers to as the stereotype of the man of commerce as the “antithesis of the gentleman – and as a source of cultural contamination” (10). Bellamy, on his part, gains access to balls and social gatherings merely because of his good looks and wardrobe. However, because of the difference in intelligence, cunning, and depravity between the two, Bellamy is a real threat whereas Dubster is merely a ridiculous figure. Nonetheless, they are both, though to different degrees, able to inflict real pain and suffering because of their callousness. For instance, it is worth noting that both men hurt Eugenia’s feelings. Bellamy takes cruel advantage of her innocence and abuses her emotionally and physically, and Dubster is involved in and contributes to both scenes where Eugenia is publicly humiliated. By comparison, Mr. Smith’s assurance in offering himself as a dancing partner for Evelina and the Branghtons’ forwardness in making use of her name when asking for Lord Orville’s carriage in Evelina seem like minor trespasses indeed.

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9 Focusing on these economic changes, D. Grant Campbell describes the economic world in Burney’s Cecilia as one of “lavish expenditure” as shown by “an explosion in consumer spending … marked by unstable credit and frequent shifts of prosperity and confidence” (133).
Dubster is one of several Burney characters who believe that gentility can be purchased rather than earned (Wiltshire, “The Inimitable Miss Larolles” 221). As a result of his two advantageous marriages and success in trade, Dubster now considers himself “quite a gentleman” (C 69). He defends his claim to the title by referring to his “leaving off business” (C 431). He does not, however, know how to behave like a gentleman. When he first sees Camilla, Dubster comes up to her “with an air conspicuously awkward” and says, “So you want to dance, ma’am?” (C 69). He does not understand the rules of the ball, so when Camilla objects to dancing with a man to whom she has not been formally introduced, Dubster responds that he does not see the point of such rules (C 70). Whereas we easily forgive the ingénue Evelina for not understanding the rules of a public ball, Dubster’s conscious decision to trespass against the accepted rules, shows his disruptive tendencies, and is, therefore, entirely condemnable. Such disdain for societal rules explicitly places Dubster in the tradition of artisan radical politics of the decade and links him firmly to the tradesmen who founded the London Corresponding Society in 1792, thus making him a political threat as well as a source of social disruption.

The next day at breakfast, Dubster again engrosses Camilla’s attention without regard to the liberty he is taking (C 85). Dubster’s social awkwardness makes Sir Sedley describe him as “a vastly droll figure” in his too tight, new clothes (C 70), and Camilla notes Dubster’s inability to dress right for various social occasions, therefore appearing at breakfast decked out “in the extreme of full dress” (C 84). As a result of his uncouth manners and behavior, Dubster’s only friend is Tom Hicks, a waiter (C 71) which shows that for all his social aspirations and sense of entitlement, Dubster is still considered nothing but a plebeian by the neighboring gentry. Furthermore, as Dubster himself is lavishly decorated, ridiculous and tasteless, so is his house (C

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It is filled with ostentatious ornaments such as grottos, labyrinths, ponds and islands, and in her insightful analysis of Dubster’s home, Doody notes that these embellishments reflect his affinity for the artificial and his lack of logic (Frances Burney 261-262).

Dubster is not only inelegant, he is also quite unintelligent. As a result, Dubster does not understand that he is the butt of Lionel’s jokes, so when Lionel brings his sisters to his house, Dubster, although he is dressed shabbily in old, dirty clothes, believes Lionel when he assures Dubster that the ladies find him more attractive looking like that. “Encouraged, he came boldly forward,” not comprehending Camilla and Eugenia’s negative reactions (C 276). He also does not understand that he hurts Eugenia’s feelings when he compares her to a dwarf at a freak show and comments on her small-pox scars (C 280). Another sign of Dubster’s lack of cleverness is that he always takes things literally, so when Macdersy calls him “a little, dirty fellow,” he responds that he is “as clean as hands can make him” (C 431) and that he put on clean linen the day before (C 470).

Dubster’s lack of gentility and intelligence is, moreover, reflected in his language, and compared to Dubster, even the bumbling young Branghton in Evelina comes across as a model of eloquence. Dubster refers to dancing as “take a skip” (C 70), and “jig it” (C 72). His usual expression when surprised is “lauk a day,” an uneducated pronunciation of the already not very genteel expression "Lack a day" (C 276, 278), and when he is surprised by Lionel and his sisters’ visit to his house, he exclaims: “I only hope, young ladies, you won’t take umbrage at my receiving you in this pickle; but you’ve popt upon me unawares, as one may say” (C 277). On another occasion Dubster apologizes to Major Cerwood for “giving you such a jog” (C 90). In addition, Dubster’s knowledge of grammar is exceedingly poor; he says “you was” (C 85), he was “over-persuaded” and feeling “stiffish” (C 88), and complains that he “has been took in” (C 274).
91). Being left on top of his unfinished house by Lionel, he calls “mortal unconvenenent” (C 283).

As unimpressive as his looks, manners and language are, Dubster’s worst traits by far are greed and stinginess. He repeatedly upbraids Camilla with the wasted gloves he purchased to dance with her (C 85, 91, 277), and when Camilla and Eugenia come to his house, he is pleased that his workers have just gone to dinner, so that “He should be no loser by leaving the men to themselves, in order to oblige the young ladies with his company” (C 277). Dubster also does not want any live animals, since “there is no end feeding them things if one has ‘em alive” (C 278), and he complains of all the money his first wife cost him in medications before she died (C 279). Dubster is, furthermore, delighted with the thought of saving money by growing his own rhubarb (C 281), and stranded on top of his unfinished house with Eugenia and Camilla, he frets that if a poor person comes to rescue them, he cannot escape paying for the help (C 284). Accordingly, when a group of market women come by, Dubster alienates them with his stingy offer of a pot of beer split four ways as a reward, leaving Eugenia to come forward and receive the women’s ridicule (C 286). Dubster also does not mind being assaulted by Macdersey, as he can then sue his attacker and be awarded damages (C 433).

Dubster’s motto is that a man that “does not take a little care of his money … is a fool for his pains” (C 278), so when he finds out that Camilla, to whom he has offered himself, is not Sir Hugh’s heiress, he withdraws, reflecting that matrimony is a good thing to help a man rise in the world, but that he would be a fool to do it for nothing (C 603). Dubster’s avarice goes hand in hand with his general lack of consideration for others, showing him to be a representative of the dangerous individualism derided by the anti-Jacobins (M. Butler, Jane Austen 122). For instance, he acquires his house when a friend is evicted for lack of payment. Instead of helping his friend,
Mr. Dubster is delighted to have made such a bargain (C 277). This lack of interest in assisting an acknowledged friend, makes the Branghtons, whose lack of sympathy with their down-and-out lodger, Mr. McCartney, so disgusts Evelina, seem downright charitable. In another display of his self-centeredness, Dubster lets Camilla get drenched though by rain, himself occupying the dry spot under a tree, exclaiming that it is unfair to expect anyone to “being wet through, for mere complaisance” (C 435).

Additionally, Dubster has a low opinion of women. He claims that it does not matter to ladies if they are delayed since “you can have no great matters to do with your time” (C 284) and reflects that is no hindrance to a woman to be disabled “because ladies can’t do much at the best,” anyway (C 289). In fact, Dubster’s views of women make him see them merely as objects. He states that he has “had two wives to my share” and that Indiana is a “fine a piece of red and white” (C 91), and he calls Eugenia “that ugly little body,” “the little lame thing” (C 77), “that limping little body,” and “the great fortune of these here parts” (C 85). His choice of words make it clear that to him women are on par with the useless, decorative items he has furnished his property with, only worth his while as long as they can give him pleasure or advantages. This misogynist ethos was, as Anna Clark’s study of assaults on women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century shows, a staple of artisan culture (57) and is clearly at odds with the far more reverential views on women endorsed by Burney and expressed by the novel’s virtuous upper-class characters, Edgar, Mr. Tyrold, and Lord O’Lerney.11

To confirm Burney’s impression of the mercantile class, other men who make their money in trade are also represented completely negatively in Camilla, and whereas the middling

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11 As part of their erroneousness Dr. Marchmont, Lionel and Clermont also share Dubster’s contemptuous views of women, but whereas Lionel and Dr. Marchmont learn to repudiate their earlier views, the less likable and redemptive Clermont is shipped out of the family circle and into the army where he is left to admire himself in his new uniform (C 910).
class is represented in *Evelina* solely by the Branghtons and Mr. Smith, there is a whole parade of such characters in *Camilla*. In Southampton the shopkeepers treat Mrs. Mittin and Camilla as commodities or animals that they can make bets on (C 608) whereas Mr. Marl, the inn-keeper at the half-way house where Camilla falls ill, is greedy and takes advantage of her desperate situation; despite his wife’s protests, he takes both Camilla’s watch and her locket to make up for the half crown she owes him (C 865); Mr. Dennel, who has also acquired his fortune in trade, is “as unfavoured by nature as he was uncultivated by art,” and he has raised his daughter to be a mindless, uneducated, superstitious girl (C 390-391). When everybody else subscribes to a new book, Mr. Dennel refuses (C 406), and when Mrs. Arlbery chides him for not getting tickets to the master of ceremonies’ ball, arguing that it is the proper, as well as the “handsome and gallant” thing to do, he answers that he has no understanding of such things: “It’s out of my way” (C 414). Mrs. Arlbery states that Mr. Dennel “thinks cash and existence one” (C 451) and that he “trembles at parting with half-a-crown for half an hour” (C 462). In the end, Mr. Dennel proves his lack of sense and taste by marrying the sycophantic parasite Mrs. Mittins out of hope that she will help him save money (C 910). Other disagreeable lower-class men in the novel are Mr. Clykes, the ruthless money lender who illegally lends money to minors at high interest, leaving “no stone unturned to get his money” (C 823); Mr. Ulst, the butler who marries Mrs. Berlinton’s aunt, becomes a “rapacious tyrant,” and encourages his new step-nephew, Melmond, to marry Eugenia for money (C 673); and Mr. Girt, a perfumer, who thinks it a fine idea to detain and harass Camilla in the bathhouse in Southampton (C 613).

In depicting Dubster and other members of the merchant class as unintelligent and greedy, Burney relies on the tradition of Restoration comedy, which, with few exceptions such as the Whiggist comedies of Shadwell and Steele, was socially conservative and above all depicted
merchants as vulgar and avaricious (Schneider 48-49). Accordingly, John Loftis argues that “The Comedies of Congreve could be written only by one who accepted without major reservation the social and political assumptions of the aristocratic society based on land” (2), and as an illustration Loftis quotes an anonymous contributor to the *Universal Journal* who complains that he does not remember seeing “in any of our Comedies a single polite Citizen” (35). Solinger argues that most eighteenth-century novels follow in the footsteps of Restoration Comedy in showing that a tradesman cannot successfully act the part of a gentleman because the demands upon his time by his business inevitably deprive him of the opportunity to improve his mind through reading, travel and “knowledge of the world” (96-97). Their social ascent and cultural illiteracy became “a threat to the social order” (99) and a source of cultural pollution (100), which is exactly what Burney shows us happening when parvenus like Dubster, who is simultaneously depicted as a dolt and a greedy individualist, manage to rise above their traditional spheres in *Camilla*.

That a man of a lower class, like Mr. Ulst, can make his fortune by marrying into the gentry or aristocracy is seen as a potent threat in *Camilla*, and the disastrous consequences of such a pursuit is more painstakingly depicted in the marriage of Eugenia to Alphonso Bellamy, who is perhaps the most despicable of any of Burney’s characters, and to whom no parallel exists in Burney’s earlier works. Describing his loathsomeness, Doody even points out that his real first name, Nicholas, is a reference to the Devil, known colloquially as Old Nick (*Frances Burney* 270). By having him assume a French last name, Burney also, of course, bolsters Bellamy’s subversive credentials much in the same way Elizabeth Hamilton does with her more openly Jacobin but equally libertine charlatan, Vallaton, in *Memoirs of Modern Philosopers* (1800).

There are, moreover, several other similarities between Bellamy’s background and that of other
anti-Jacobin villains. Like Jean Le Noir in Pye’s *The Democrat* (1795), as well as Vallaton, Bellamy’s background is plebeian, and he shows an early propensity for crime and an aversion for honest work. Whereas Le Noir is the son of honest French peasants, however, Bellamy’s background is more easily associated with radical politics. His father is a London publican, and, as Iain McCalman has shown, taverns had by the 1790s become emblems of both radical politics and disreputable masculinity (294), much like London itself, particularly after the Gordon Riots in 1780, had become identified with the mob (Barrell 102). Unlike other opportunistic characters in conservative novels, however, Bellamy does not preach radical politics in order to reach his goals. Although lazy and craven, like most other anti-Jacobin villains, Bellamy has no lack of cunning and knows how to use the general superficiality of the fashionable world to his advantage. He realizes that the appearance of being a gentleman is enough to gain him access to genteel society and to realizing his goal, which is to make an advantageous marriage: Said to be “eminently distinguished by personal beauty” (*C* 67), and by being always well dressed, and keeping a “shewy” footman, “He had contrived to make acquaintance almost universally in the neighbourhood,” and although no one knows his background, all seem convinced, based on mere appearances as well as Bellamy’s acting skills that his credentials are impeccable (*C* 74).

Bellamy also relies upon obsequiousness to attain his goals. He flatters Miss Margland in order to get access to Eugenia (*C* 67), and knowing that Miss Margland will be impressed by being petitioned on his behalf, he writes her a fawning letter, requesting permission to court Eugenia, praising “the marked politeness which shines forth in your deportment” and claiming that he will esteem Miss Margland’s influence as an honor (*C* 112). Meeting the family at

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12 Gilmartin makes a similar point when he describes the anti-Jacobin view that the French ideology of Tom Paine’s *Rights of Man* had “intruded upon this world, via the intoxicated political sociability of the Rose and Crown tavern” (*Writing Against Revolution* 90).
church, he respectfully escorts Miss Margland down the steps, and when Sir Hugh drops his walking stick, Bellamy darts forward to pick it up. After the family is scared by the angry bull, Bellamy calms Miss Margland with his “potent charm of adulation” (C 141). However, to warn the reader, Bellamy’s forward behavior is contrasted with that of Melmond, who keeps a respectful distance (C 126).

Furthermore, like the villains of other conservative novels, such as Hamilton’s Vallaton and Jane West’s Fitzosborne, Bellamy finds it convenient to rely upon a pretended sensibility in his manipulations of others. He writes emotional letters, claiming to be overwhelmed with grief, which make Mrs. Berlinton think him “the most refined – perhaps – of human beings” (C 392), and she claims that he taught her “the soothing charms of friendship” (C 796). In another false gesture of sensibility, Bellamy pretends to have tears in his eyes as he delivers clandestine letters to Eugenia’s maid (C 314). As a result of his fine acting, the romantic Mrs. Berlinton believes that Eugenia, despite being abducted against her will, is “the happiest of women” to be married to Bellamy (C 801), and he seduces Mrs. Berlinton with fine words about shared sympathies, intermixed with flattery and lamentations over their separation (C 809). When they meet again after his abduction of Eugenia, he defuses Mrs. Berlinton’s resentment by saying that only “cruel necessity” forced him to “tarnish our celestial friendship” (C 815) and begs her to “solace his sadness” with her confidence (C 815). Thus, he uses his influence first to enter into a secret correspondence with Mrs. Berlinton (C 796), and later to use “his powerful eloquence” to attempt to persuade her to meet him in secret (C 835).

Although Miss Margland and Mrs. Berlinton fall for Bellamy’s ingratiation, it is easy to see that Bellamy’s gallantry is merely a thin cover for his predatory nature. When he finds Eugenia alone in church, Bellamy immediately grabs her hand as he kneels and kisses it (C 127),
and after the angry bull has separated Eugenia from her party, he detains her, taking advantage of her disability and fear, in a deserted barn where he pleads his cause while sending for a carriage to abduct her in (C 137). The next day, outside Mrs. Arlbery’s house, he again physically restrains Eugenia and blocks her way as she is trying to avoid him (C 192). Bellamy also makes use of emotional blackmail to manipulate his victims, so that when Eugenia tries to reject his advances, he uses exaggerations such as “Do not kill me with this disdain!” (C 192), and when Eugenia writes him another denial, he calls it his “final doom” and claims he will wait to hear it from her own mouth even if he has to starve to death by her gate (C 317). In London, Bellamy pretends to be preoccupied with Mrs. Berlinton (C 798), since although she can not make him rich, he has a “scheme yet more flagitious,” to seduce her for his pleasure (C 893). Like Richardson’s Lovelace, Bellamy lures his victim out of her garden and by begging her to cast one glance upon the carriage that will take him away from her forever, Bellamy abducts Eugenia by force (C 337). He then uses threats of suicide to compel her to marry him (C 806).

Noticeably, two of the most dramatic scenes in the novel involving Bellamy take place in carriages on the road. The first scene is when Bellamy blackmails Eugenia into marrying him, and the second even more haunting scene takes place when Bellamy accidentally shoots himself while threatening his wife to demand more money from her uncle. These key moments not only make us associate Bellamy with the rakish Lovelace but additionally with the highway robber. As such, Bellamy combines what Mackie has identified as two of the main forms of “illicit eighteenth-century masculinity” (5). However, as much as the highway robber was romanticized in some fictions like The Beggar’s Opera, he was also a source of real fear and inconvenience in everyday life, and as we can see in Evelina, the treatment of Captain Mirvan and Sir Clement’s cruelty towards Madame Duval when they pose as highwaymen, as well as the condemnation of
Mr. McCartney’s thoughts of turning to such robbery when destitute, show that Burney does not participate in the glorification of the gallant highway robber, but rather condemns him. Therefore, the fact that the role of the highwayman, which is given to genteel characters in *Evelina*, is passed on to the plebian Bellamy in *Camilla* is another sign of Burney’s increased conservatism in the mid-1790s.

As soon as he is married, the true extent of Bellamy’s villainy begins to show. After the forced wedding, Melmond finds Bellamy looking around him with an “easy air,” evidently pleased with his proceedings and their result, and he refuses to allow his wife’s family and friends to talk to Eugenia privately (C 802), crudely asserting his right as her husband to control her (C 802-803). Although he keeps up the sham of caring for her, claiming “ardent love and constancy” for a little while out of fear of being taken to court by her family (C 804), he does it so carelessly that everyone but Eugenia sees through his act (C 807). As soon as he has secured an annuity from Sir Hugh, Bellamy starts neglecting his wife and treating her with unkindness and contempt, just as Frances Burney’s sister, Susan, was treated by her cruel husband, Molesworth Phillips who provided her a married life filled with “fear and danger” (Jordan 78). Bellamy confiscates Eugenia’s jewelry for “safekeeping” despite her protestations that she has promised them to someone else (C 811), and later claims to have misplaced the keys. He demands that she beg more money from her uncle, and when she refuses, he is so rude and violent in his abuse of her that Eugenia is scared into fits (C 814).

Not only does Bellamy treat his wife with harsh words and threatens to lock her up for the rest of her life (C 858), in addition, he mocks her naiveté in believing him sincere in his love for her, openly avowing that his only motive was her uncle’s money (C 856). After a few weeks of marriage, Bellamy has cowed Eugenia so much that she does not even dare to invite her sister
to stay for the night (C 844), she pales when his footsteps are heard, and has to summon “her utmost fortitude” to stay in the same room as him (C 844). When he turns Camilla out of the house without a fixed destination, Eugenia dares not protest (C 848). Bellamy’s boorish behavior makes Camilla conclude that his understanding, morals and manners are all equally bad (C 846) and that his character is one of “utter unworthiness” (C 849).

By the novel’s end, then, Bellamy’s true nature as a blackguard has been fully revealed in all its loathsomeness. Originally coined in the sixteenth century to refer to a menial servant or the attendant to a group of thieves, the word blackguard had by the eighteenth century come to denote an anti-social character who took pride in his villainy, laziness, and profaneness, and Johnson defines it in his dictionary as a vulgar term for a “dirty fellow of the meanest kind” (P. Carter, *Men and the Emergence* 136). According to McCalman, blackguard culture in the eighteenth century consisted of brawling, drinking, smoking, swearing, singing of bawdy songs, casual sex, as well as various criminal acts such as theft and blackmail (26, 35) and was the norm among London’s middling ranks in the eighteenth century (27). After 1760s the blackguard character also became politicized, as John Wilkes, a radical agitator who was also a convicted felon, and, like Bellamy, a known gambler and abuser of his wealthy wife (A. Clark 143), fronted a masculine ideal of rough and vigorous manhood as an alternative to the refined gentleman that represented the hegemonic version of masculinity. However, by the 1790s this boisterous sub-culture was associated mostly with plebeian ultra-radicals (A. Clark 153), and had, as Burney’s depiction of Bellamy shows, lost any former positive connotations. The blackguard character had now become a virulent threat to the well-being of the family and, because of the parallel between the domestic and the political realms in anti-Jacobin fiction, to the nation. After his demise the mere mentioning of Bellamy’s name, as well as any other
recollection of him, makes Eugenia shudder (C 912), as did Burney’s readers, no doubt, at the thought of allowing a man like Bellamy access to political power or to genteel society and families.

III

As her dislikable upstarts show, Burney’s goal is not to get rid of the gentry and aristocracy, but, rather, like Jane Austen in *Mansfield Park*, to reform them. Judy Simons, for example, finds “the resemblances to *Mansfield Park* [to be] particularly striking” (95), and Claudia L. Johnson notices the resemblance between the two novels, as well (*Jane Austen* 25). Erin Mackie, in her turn, asserts that Burney’s critique of patriarchy “both exposes its abuses and imagines the nature of its reform (154). This statement appears to be particularly true in the case of *Camilla* where there is more potential for reform in the upper-class characters than there was in *Evelina* where, instead of inspiring positive change in the other men in his circle, the rather too-good-to-be-true Lord Orville withdraws with Evelina to Berry Hill, leaving the other upper-class men, such as Sir Clement, Lord Merton, Mr. Lovel and Captain Mirvan, to continue in their vices. In *Camilla*, on the other hand, although they are flawed because of their tendency to be superficial, egotistical, and short-sighted, most of Burney’s men of the upper class are redeemed by their generosity and morality, as well as their ability to improve, characteristics that are utterly lacking in the social climbers in the novel. Sir Hugh, Mr. Tyrold, Dr. Marchmont, Edgar, the Westwyns, Melmond, and occasionally even Sir Sedley and Lionel, all show kindness and charitableness that makes it evident that although they are in need of improvement in other areas, they are, in the end, the ones that represent the possibility of a society of social responsibility and sound moral values.
A society held together by individual acts of benevolence and charity, arising out of a vision of “an interdependent social order” based upon shared obligations (Gilmartin Writing Against Revolution 76) was the counterrevolutionary antidote to the radical vision of universal benevolence, derived from the works of Adam Smith, Francis Hutcheson, and Jonathan Edwards (Radcliffe 62) and put forth by Godwin in Political Justice. A number of anti-Jacobin novels, most notably George Walker’s The Vagabond (1799) and Elizabeth Hamilton’s Memoirs of Modern Philosophers (1800), ridicule Godwin’s dismissal of individual human affections, and conservative polemical writers like Hannah More and Thomas Gisborne countered the leveling ideas of Godwin and Paine with what Gilmartin refers to as a “political economy of charitable relief,” in which the benefactors, who give to those they find worthy because of their steady habits, acquire “the right and responsibility to supervise those they relieve” (Writing Against Revolution 60). Thus, as Grenby notes, philanthropy also became the rationale for a hierarchical society:

[Anti-Jacobin] novelists were stressing the social bargain in which each rank had their prescribed duty which contributed to the welfare of the whole. Charity, the chief duty of the elite, obviously illustrated this well, for it benefited society in material terms that were actually fairly demonstrable, or at least easily imaginable. An active philanthropy was the novelist’s shorthand for virtue ... But charity also became the symbol of all that justified rank and held society together.

(The Anti-Jacobin Novel 138)

One of Hannah More’s most popular Cheap Repository Tracts, The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain exemplifies this vision. In this story, the well-to-do Mr. Johnson meets with a poor shepherd, and, impressed with his work ethic and spirit of Christian resignation, Mr. Johnson rents the
shepherd and his family a better cottage and sets the shepherd up, under the his supervision and that of the local vicar, as the village’s Sunday school teacher. So, with the Shepherd and his wife praising God and their benefactor, who have made them not “rich, but useful” (62-63), the story ends in an affirmation of rural virtue and social hierarchy upheld by individual acts of charity.

In *Camilla* Sir Hugh, although the most flawed in judgment, is also the most prominent in benevolence: “Sir Hugh inherited from his ancestors an unencumbered estate of £5000 per annum; which he enjoyed with ease and affluence to himself, and disseminated with a good will so generous that he appeared to think his personal prosperity, and that of all who surrounded him, bestowed but to be shared in common” (*C* 10). When Edgar puts the prisoner saved from transportation up in his barn, Sir Hugh exclaims: “The barn! … Why did you not bring them to the servants’ hall …God forbid I should turn hard-hearted, because of their wanting a leg of mutton, in preference to their being starved” (*C* 109). He then gives the poor family three guineas, as well (*C* 110). Commenting upon his brother’s charitableness, Mr. Tyrold observes that “Nothing was too much to expect from his generous kindness” (*C* 763) and that “His heart … is so bountiful, and so full of kindness” that he is unable to economize out of concern for all the people and animals he has been the supporter of (*C* 787). Mr. Westwyn, in his turn, relates to his son that Sir Hugh lent him a thousand pounds when his own relatives refused and thus saved Westwyn from financial disaster (*C* 904). Additionally, when he finds out that his brother has been imprisoned for debt, Sir Hugh gives up every comfort as well as his estate to pay Mr. Tyrold’s debts (*C* 853-854).

Sir Hugh is extremely fond of his nephews and nieces, so he also extends his generosity to them. Despite his dissatisfaction with Clermont’s wish to tour Europe, Sir Hugh consents, generously agreeing to continue his generous remittances for another three years (*C* 51), and he
insists upon paying the debts of his two undutiful nephews (C 911). Moreover, although he can ill afford it because of Lionel’s demands, Sir Hugh is pleased to pay for what he thinks will be Camilla and Eugenia’s joint wedding, saying that although he will be short of money the rest of the year, it is a pleasure to him (C 751). Eugenia states: “My uncle … is incapable of giving pain to anyone” (C 177), and the narrator praises his kindness, as well, by observing that Sir Hugh “never harboured displeasure for two minutes in his life” (C 185). Rather, Sir Hugh is said to, “with the utmost alacrity,” meet the wishes of anyone (C 208). Camilla describes him as “all that is good and kind” (C 218), and consequently, he puts up very patiently and good-naturedly with Clermont’s rudeness (C 583). Additionally, as much as he dislikes and avoids Miss Margland, Sir Hugh keeps her in the house as Indiana’s governess out of respect and pity for her reduced circumstances (C 46).

Although Mr. Tyrold does not have the financial resources of his older brother, he is his equal in benevolence, exemplifying Gisborne’s advice to clergymen to be liberal in bestowing charity, compassion, and kindness (61). Mr. Tyrold is, moreover, a devoted husband, and treats his children tenderly and as friends (C 787). After Camilla and Edgar’s separation, Mr. Tyrold treats his daughter “with the most consolatory kindness” (C 755), comforts her with tender embraces, kisses and encouraging words (C 759), and although he is almost heart-broken by Edgar’s desertion, for Camilla’s sake, he attempts to appear cheerful (C 762). When he observes her continued depression Mr. Tyrold “redoubled his tenderness” (C 772), and his failure to cheer her up makes him “nearly bowed down with sorrow” (C 776) and “filled his mind with monopolizing apprehension” (C 789). When he and his wife realize that Camilla is missing, it is the “most dreadful moment of their lives.” Mr. Tyrold sets out immediately to search for her (886), and upon her return home, he embraces her “with tender blessings” (C 893).
Mr. Tyrold is, furthermore, a model of moral and religious rectitude, and he meets every calamity with the true Christian resignation and piety recommended by anti-Jacobian novelists like More, Hamilton, and West. When he learns that Edgar has left the country and that there is no hope of an immediate reconciliation between him and Camilla, Mr. Tyrold is at first devastated, but soon shows his usual fortitude: “He hung his head for a moment and sighed from the bottom of his heart, but the resignation which he summoned upon every sorrow was never deaf to his call” (C 758). Mr. Tyrold also teaches Camilla that self-denial is “the parent of our best human actions” (C 760), and Camilla observes that although his income has never been large, he has always adapted his expenses to his income (C 832). Mr. Tyrold is, furthermore, unselfish; although he pines for his wife’s good advice and commiseration, he is glad that she is away and spared some of the pain of Lionel’s disgrace (C 763), and forced to economize, the reductions in his own comfort do not bother him nearly as much as having to turn away his loyal servants (C 765).

Moreover, Mr. Tyrold has a strong sense of justice, and his integrity makes him refuse to hush up Lionel’s crimes: “I cannot spare you from disgrace by aiding you in corruption; I cannot rescue you from worldly dishonour, by hiding and abetting crimes that may unfold to eternal misery” (C 734), he admonishes his son. He pays his son’s debts, but only those he finds justified; all tradesmen are paid, but the demands of gamblers and usurers, he answers “with spirited resentment” and refusals (C 765), and he urges his brother to treat Clermont’s creditors the same way, claiming that “those dangerous vultures,” who take advantage of young inexperienced men by lending them money at outrageous interest rates, deserve to be punished, not rewarded (C 771). He therefore prefers going to prison rather than give in to Mr. Clyke’s
demands for interest, which he refuses from “detestation” of the illegal trade of lending money to minors (C 818).

Although unwilling to condone moral laxity, Mr. Tyrold is forgiving almost to a fault, and his wife calls him “the most lenient of fathers” (C 882). Since he is so magnanimous, Mr. Tyrold assures Dr. Marchmont that he bears no ill will against Edgar for breaking off the engagement with his daughter: “The world, Dr. Marchmont, is too full of real evil, for me at least, to cause one moment of unnecessary uneasiness to any of its poor pilgrims” (C 758), Mr. Tyrold reflects. Though Mr. Tyrold treats Lionel strictly, he quickly forgives him, too, in his heart (C 765), writes him a consolatory letter when he learns that Lionel has been disinherited (C 790), and sends him some money to get by when he receives Lionel’s penitent letter to Camilla (C 816). So forgiving and mild is Mr. Tyrold that when he for the first time frowns at Camilla, she finds it “awful” (C 788). However, when he sees her after her collapse, he assures her that “all shall be forgotten” as he blesses and embraces her (C 884). Although his judgment sometimes fails him and his advice to Camilla for how to proceed with Edgar is terrible, Mr. Tyrold does teach his children valuable lessons, such as always showing fortitude and striving for divine perfection (C 839), and because of his rectitude and kindness, his wife calls him “the prop of all” (C 881).

As a sign of his own good potential, Edgar admires his guardian immensely, and he shares Mr. Tyrold’s charitableness, a trait that makes Nowell Marshall describe Edgar as a model of “a masculinity outlined by civic humanism” (47). Edgar is described at the age of thirteen as an “uncommonly spirited and manly boy” who repays Mr. Tyrold’s care with “a fondness truly filial” (C 17). Unlike the foppish and conceited Clermont, who wishes to make the much criticized Grand Tour of Europe, Edgar, like Dr. Johnson, travels within Britain, touring
England, Wales, and Scotland (C 54). The narrator praises Edgar, saying that his manners and person make him attractive to the young, while his good morals and conduct endear him to those who are older and wiser. Furthermore, Edgar is eager to improve himself, and his good will and virtues “inspired general respect” and “the kinder mede of affection” (C 57).

Because of his many virtues, Edgar is highly valued by those who know him. Mrs. Tyrold, the model of sound judgment and correct values in the novel, declares Edgar a young man of delicacy and virtue, who is offended at any deviation from duty (C 120). She further declares that with him, Camilla would be “the happiest of her sex” (C 120), a sentiment echoed by Camilla who sees Edgar as “a younger Mr. Tyrold” (C 742). On another occasion, Camilla again compares him to her father by saying that Edgar, who has the money to relieve the poor, is able to “act all that my father so often plans and wishes” (C 151). This parallel is reinforced when Edgar impersonates a clergyman, and, as he approaches Camilla’s sickbed, overpowers her with recollections of her father (C 877). Eugenia thinks Edgar, next to Melmond, “the most amiable upon earth” (C 754) whereas Mr. Tyrold praises his sincerity and “manly and rational character,” observing that in Edgar “Promise was always short of performance” (C 755).

Always eager to do good deeds, Edgar is the only one, except for the fortune-hunting Bellamy, kind enough to dance with Eugenia at her first ball (C 64), and when all the young people walk to Sir Hugh’s barn, Edgar makes sure to lend Eugenia his hand to support her (C 110). As his letter after he has broken off with Camilla shows, he is, until Melmond joins him, the only young man in the novel who sees Eugenia’s worth (C 723). Moreover, while the other attendees at the public breakfast in Northwick completely ignore the poor, Edgar decides to stay behind in order to find a way to help the poor woman whose husband is be transported (C 95), and he saves them from poverty by employing the former prisoner and his wife and building
them a comfortable cottage to live in (C 150), thus acting upon Hannah More’s advice in The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain to improve the lives of the poor by making them useful and self-reliant. This generosity pays off; the couple is later, as “worthy established cottagers” and productive members of society, the first to welcome the newly married couple home to Beech Park (C 911). Edgar shows his generosity not only by the acts of charity recommended by Gisborne and More, but also by standing up for those in need of moral support. When Lionel ridicules Melmond for his violent admiration for Indiana, Edgar pities Melmond, and smooths the situation by desiring to be introduced to him (C 104). Camilla observes: “How like my dear father was that! to give relief to embarrassment, instead of joining in the laugh which excites it” (C 104). Finally, Edgar’s offer to accompany Mrs. Tyrold to Lisbon, so that she will not travel unprotected, makes her exclaim at his excellence (C 231).

Edgar is not only full of good intentions; he is, furthermore, often the only one who knows how to act quickly and decisively to deal with problems. When he realizes that Eugenia and Lavinia have been exposed to contagion, he immediately snatches the unvaccinated Eugenia away, rounds up the terrified girls and their helpless uncle, and makes arrangements for Eugenia and Lavinia to be quarantined (C 24). A few days later, as Eugenia has been dropped by Sir Hugh, it is again Edgar who comes to the rescue and with adroitness prevents the other girls from being injured, too. He then carries Eugenia inside and gallops off for a surgeon (C 27). Likewise, it is Edgar’s quick acting that prevents Eugenia from being abducted by Bellamy several times (C 335, 370), and Edgar shows braveness and goodness of heart when he defends Sir Hugh’s cocker spaniel from the attack of a vicious bulldog with his bare hands (C 538).

After his and Camilla’s re-engagement, Edgar admits that his treatment of her was based on appearances and that “upon cool reflection, a thousand palliations arose.” He realizes that he
judged Camilla’s transactions with Sir Sedley before he had fully investigated them (C 901), a way of thinking that he afterwards refers to as “barbarous waywardness” (C 902). After overhearing Camilla’s confession to her mother, Edgar admits that his actions were wrong and takes the blame for their separation and sufferings: “Ungenerous … ever to be lamented – and I had nearly said, execrated doubt, fills me with shame and regret – and makes me – even at this soft, reviving, heart-restoring moment, feel undeserving my own hopes!” (C 896). Calling his past behavior “a fever of the brain, with which reason had no share,” instead of continuing to trust Dr. Marchmont, Edgar puts himself under the management of the judicious Mrs. Tyrold (C 897). He begs Camilla’s pardon “for a distrust which I here for ever renounce” (C 899) and states that he will follow her example “of that trust and confidence, which my whole life shall look upon as its lesson” (C 900). After their marriage, his “generous confidence” makes Camilla happy to confide in him (C 913), and, clearly, Burney wants the reader to feel the same confidence in the now chastised Edgar as a husband, future father, and landlord. With him and Camilla in residence at Beech Park, both their family and community will, no doubt, be prosperous and morally sound.

Despite undermining Edgar’s confidence in Camilla as a result of his misogyny, Dr. Marchmont, too, has many redeemable qualities. The narrator calls him “a grace to society” (C 749), and the doctor continually distinguishes himself by his willingness to be of service to others. Faced with the angry bull that frightens Sir Hugh and his nieces, Dr. Marchmont remains calm (C 132), and he also reassures the ladies and offers his assistance with the utmost politeness and willingness (C 140). When Dr. Marchmont is interrupted in his studies, he, unlike Dr. Orkborne, puts his book away “not without regret to quit them, though wholly without reluctance to oblige” (C 148) because of his eagerness to please. It is also obvious that Dr. Marchmont cares
deeply for Edgar. He often shows affection for Edgar, and although Dr. Marchmont’s advice to Edgar for how to handle his relationship with Camilla is awful, he clearly acts out of a wish to promote Edgar’s happiness (C 149, 157). Dr. Marchmont, furthermore, encourages Edgar’s interest in charitable endeavors by praising Edgar’s assistance to the former prisoner and his wife, saying that he has done a service, not only to the couple, but to society as a whole by preserving them from further temptation to steal (C 152). Another sign of his generosity is that Dr. Marchmont, like Edgar, volunteers to travel with Mrs. Tyrold to Portugal (C 232), and when Edgar tells him about his reunification with Camilla, Dr. Marchmont is able to, from “the goodness of heart,” to congratulate Edgar heartily (C 903). At the end of the novel Dr. Marchmont not only sees Camilla’s true worth, but he acknowledges the “injustice, its narrowness, and its arrogance” of his views of women in general (C 913). Having denounced his misguided ideas, Gabriel Marchmont can be the arch-angel for his congregation and friends that his first name declares him to be.

Camilla’s two sisters find similar happiness to hers in their marriages to young men of the gentry, confirming the impression that, like with Charlotte Smith, this is where Burney’s confidence lies. Purged of their superficiality and self-centeredness, the men of the landed gentry can become good husbands and fathers both of their own families and of the nation. Melmond, for example, although he has to outgrow his childish infatuation with external beauty, proves himself honorable and kind early on. After he discovers that he will not inherit his aunt, he wisely avoids going to public places where he can meet Indiana as well as spend money he cannot afford, instead “virtuously staying home to care for his sick aunt” (C 663), whom he treats kindly despite her injudicious marriage to her butler (C 672). Melmond indignantly rejects the idea that he should marry Eugenia for her fortune, and only makes a declaration out of
kindness after Mrs. Mittin has gossiped about Eugenia’s love for him (C 677). Unlike Bellamy who passes himself off as a prosperous gentleman, Melmond is honest, so when he asks her father and uncle for Eugenia’s hand, he is determined to declare that he is destitute and has no prospects of inheriting anything (C 678). His sister, Mrs. Berlinton, assures Camilla that his honor, delicacy, tender and grateful nature will make his wife a happy woman, as she will “find his life devoted to the study of her happiness” (C 678), and the narrator describes him, like his sister, as “always open to distress, and susceptible to pity” (C 710). Melmond again proves his “amiable qualities” as he searches all over London for the abducted Eugenia before chasing her and Bellamy all the way to Scotland, hoping to save her from the forced marriage (C 799).

Therefore, the Tyrold family seconds his wish to marry the widowed Eugenia from knowledge of “his really exemplary character” (C 912). The reader can, then, feel reassured that Melmond and Eugenia together will carry on Sir Hugh’s traditions of charity at Cleves, but that they will do so in a rational, well-thought-out manner.

Camilla’s eldest sister, Lavinia, is also provided with a virtuous young gentleman. Hal Westwyn is praised for his “quickly sensitive soul” which makes him “yet more amiable” than his father’s partiality represents (C 837), and, furthermore, he is “modest, full of feeling, and stored with intelligence” (C 909). Young Hal shows his worth when he follows the libertine Halder, Girt, and Valhurst in order to protect the unknown Camilla (C 614). Moreover, when Girt subsequently insults Camilla, Hal evicts him from the room and avoids embarrassing her by relating why. Hal even risks the displeasure of his father in order to protect Camilla’s feelings (C 652). Like the other men in the novel, Hal comes to understand the danger of acting and judging based upon appearances. Admiring Camilla’s vivacity and beauty, he initially interprets Camilla’s gratefulness for his assistance as love: “Her first civilities had flattered both him and
his father into a belief of her favor” (C 680), and when she draws back, he imputes her reticence to “virgin modesty” (C 680) which he only finds charming. Hal soon realizes that he has misjudged the situation, though, and therefore acts more guardedly before he, convinced by the “modest pleasure” Lavinia shows in his company, dares to declare himself her admirer (C 904) and becomes her “deserving partner” (C 909).

Clearly, young Hal has become such a worthy young man as a result of his father’s firm but loving guidance and example. Although more intelligent than Sir Hugh, as the description “not wanting in shrewdness” shows (C 628), Mr. Westwyn is just as warm-hearted and generous, and out of friendship for Sir Hugh, Mr. Westwyn discharges Mr. Tyrold’s debt to Mr. Clykes (C 837). When he hears that Cleves is to be let, he immediately returns to Sir Hugh, so that he can help his old friend. Upon Edgar’s claim that he should be the one to help financially, Mr. Westwyn exclaims that his old friendship with Sir Hugh entitles him to be the first one to give his support to the Tyrold family (C 904). Moreover, because he firmly believes that a young man who is not “dutiful” is never worthy of his good opinion (C 774), Mr. Westwyn has avoided spoiling his son or overlooking any of his transgressions. For instance, after Hal has kicked Girt out of the room, Westwyn vows that if the perfumer is shown to have been unfairly treated, he will force his son to apologize (C 653). As a result of his father’s instruction, Hal, unlike Lionel and Clermont, is dutiful to his father, careful in his spending, and respectful to women.

Unlike the two Westwyns, the foppish Sir Sedley has a lot of improving to do, but even he shows potential for reform once he has shed his immaturity and mistaken notions of masculinity. Even as she notes his foppery, Camilla also takes notice of a glimmer in Sir Sedley’s eyes that seems to be laughing both at himself and at his company (C 64), an impression confirmed by Mrs. Arlbery, who states that Sir Sedley, when not acting the fop, is a
person who unites “the very essences of spirit, of gaiety, and of intelligence” (C 365). In support of her opinion, the novel’s editors note that Sir Sedley, who is more intelligent than Burney’s former fictional fops, Mr. Lovell and Mr. Meadows, probably gets his name from the Restoration dramatist and song writer Sir Charles Sedley, who was known for his urbane wit (C 934). Confirming this idea, we learn that when Sir Sedley is “free from airs” Camilla finds his conversation so agreeable, that she is sorry when it comes to an end (C 428).

Sir Sedley is not only intelligent, he is, in addition, capable of kindheartedness. When Camilla is told that her uncle is dying, Sir Sedley, “burying all foppery in compassion and good nature,” leads in assisting and accompanying Camilla to Edgar’s coach (C 324). Moreover, when he sees Camilla in danger because of Mrs. Arlbery’s panicked horses, Sir Sedley’s natural courage breaks though his assumed listlessness and “the effeminate part he was systematically playing,” and he, despite the danger to himself, darts forward and holds the horses long enough for Camilla to get out of the carriage (C 404). Afterwards, her gratefulness for his help touches him so much that “contrary to his established and systematic inattention,” he politely escorts her to her carriage (C 416). Later Sir Sedley feels genuinely concerned for Camilla when he finds out that she has no money (C 460), so when he sees Camilla’s compassion for the mistreated bullfinch, he buys it for her, since she cannot afford it herself (C 494). Although his vanity makes him certain that Camilla will accept him, he is sincerely penitent after she overhears him saying so to Mrs. Arlbery: “An immediate sensibility to his own impertinence now succeeded in its vain display; he looked not merely concerned, but contrite; and, in a voice softened nearly to timidity, attempted a general conversation, but kept his eyes, with an anxious expression, almost continually fixed upon hers” (C 509). As a sign of his potential, Sir Sedley, after he realizes that Camilla loves Edgar, sets off on a tour of the Hebrides. He thereby follows in the footsteps of the
morally correct Edgar (C 560), as he seeks the corrective impulses of nature and British culture rather than the dissipations of the Continent.

Like Sir Sedley, Lionel, too, possesses compassion and sound moral feelings underneath his nonchalant surface. After he has hurt and shocked his parents by the revelation of his blackmail, Lionel, despite pretending to be merry, is clearly emotional as he assures Camilla that he is sorry for what he has done (C 225). His exclamations, “This is too much - if I were a man I should shoot myself!” and “I am worked just now only as I ought to be,” clearly show that that he knows that his behavior is not right (C 228), and by the end of the novel, Lionel, too, shows potential for permanent reform. In the letter he writes Camilla from abroad, he claims to have learned to be “almost consumed with regret” over the sorrow he has caused his family because of his “wanton follies and vices,” and he now considers himself mad to have pursued a course of actions “so unmeaning, so unreflecting, and unprovoked, as well as worthless” (C 816). In the end, Lionel partially redeems himself by confessing his role in Camilla’s entanglements with Sir Sedley, an act that makes Edgar return immediately to England and to Camilla (C 898). The vicissitudes Lionel experiences after his flight from England makes him, at last, permanently repentant, and rather than fall back into his old bad ways, he accepts an appointment that carries him away from England where his family expects that time and adversity will fully reform his character (C 909).

As we can see, then, because of their already existing generosity and their potential for improvement, there is reason to believe that the upper-class men in the novel can become like the impeccable Lord O’Lerney, who is “a nobleman far more distinguished by benevolence and urbanity than by his rank” (C 405) and who is, as his name indicates, a man to learn from. Like Lord Orville in Evelina, whom Mackie describes as characterized by his capacity for “benevolent
sympathy with, rather than dominance over, others” (C 153), O’Lerney distinguishes himself by his desire and ability to serve others. Lady Isabella states that she has known him since childhood and always admired his eagerness to take every opportunity to do good deeds (C 831). He, therefore, offers to discharge Mr. Tyrold’s debts and “wait his perfect leisure for re-payment” (C 831). O’Lerney is, in addition, “extremely concerned” by Macdersey’s elopement with Indiana and wishes to immediately reassure her family of his intentions to arrange for Indiana’s future and vouch for Macdersey’s prospects, and he assures Camilla that although Macdersey is rash and indiscrete, he is also “honest, honourable, and good natured” (C 820). O’Lerney therefore joins judgment and generosity to make sure his kinsman Macdersey and Indiana are settled comfortably with a good income (C 909).

The critics who see *Camilla* as a radical work, then, fail to see the importance and political implications of the novel’s male characters as well as its ending. The last three chapters of the novel, dealing with Camilla’s return home, state without irony that her happiness is secured upon her return home to her guardians and to an Edgar who has learned from his errors. I agree with Gruner, who argues that Camilla’s happiness consists, after all, in a marriage which allows her to stay close to her paternal home, and a husband who is “the true son of [his] guardian” (20). Camilla herself states that her first day home, which welcomes her to “the paternal arms,” is a return “to peace – to safety – and primœval joy” (C 893), and she experiences “a delight almost aweful” as she is readmitted to her father’s study, which serves as the symbol of his status and authority as the head of the family and the parish (C 894). Having, like the heroines of most anti-Jacobin novels, realized the frailty of her own immature judgment, Camilla, in an affirmation of patriarchal authority, determines, “during her present season of inexperience, to repose the future choice of her connections, where she could never be happy
without their approvance” (C 903). The novel’s ending thus finds the reformed Edgar and Camilla residing in the midst of her family (C 913) where they all live happily, the lower-class male intruders erased from the narrative and the upper-class men chastened by their errors, recovered from their mistaken ideas of masculinity, and ready to perform their social and familial duties.
Chapter 5: Maria Edgeworth and the Effeminizing Power of French Ideas and Manners

I

Frances Burney is not the only novelist discussed in this dissertation whose male protagonists have to learn from their errors and re-evaluate their notions of masculinity. Much has been written about the reformation and reeducation of Lady Delacour in Maria Edgeworth’s novel Belinda, but in this chapter it is my goal to show that the reclaiming of Clarence Hervey, a character in several ways reminiscent of Sir Sedley in Camilla, from a feminized frequenter of female salons to acceptable male society and manly behavior is of equal importance in the novel. That notions of gender are unstable in the novel is supported by Deborah Weiss who finds that in Belinda, “Traits commonly ascribed to men, and those seen as natural to women, are set loose to float freely in the social sphere, attaching themselves to any individual, regardless of his or her sex” (449). The same can easily be said about Edgeworth’s 1806 novel Leonora in which the English gentleman Mr. L is temporarily seduced into acting the part of a sentimental and, as a result, feminized novel hero.

In Belinda Edgeworth creates a male character, Clarence Hervey, who although he is too intelligent to be a fop like Burney’s Sir Sedley, is lacking in masculinity because of his adherence to French ideas and manners. However, as Michele Cohen points out in her discussion of masculinity in Austen’s Emma, the solution to a problem in male politeness is not merely to enact its opposite (“Manners” 327). Lord Delacour proves that the direct opposite of Clarence Hervey’s feminized salonnier is also not an acceptable model of manliness. Therefore, on the other extreme, Lord Delacour has to be reformed from his twisted notions of masculinity which
make him believe that to possess manliness he has to completely disregard his wife’s opinions and socialize only with men in order to not be feminized by the society and influence of women. The fact that the two characters’ versions of masculinity are juxtaposed by Edgeworth is supported by Siobhán Kilfeather, who in her introductory note to the Pickering and Chatto edition of the novel notes that Hervey “performs a version of effeminacy that both reassures and infuriates the apparently more conventional Lord Delacour” (xx). Conventional as he may be, Lord Delacour’s version of manliness does not please Edgeworth any more than Clarence Hervey’s effeminate, French-inspired politesse. To reclaim Hervey to her ideal of rational sincerity is Edgeworth’s goal for her male protagonist. However, just as Lord Delacour’s version of manliness is not an acceptable solution, neither is the sincerity based purely on emotion as represented by Hervey’s rival for Belinda’s affections, Mr. Vincent. Enlightenment discourse had constructed a gendered dichotomy between reason and passion, in which women were seen as mainly emotional whereas men were supposedly governed by reason and logic, and therefore William Gouge noted in *Of Domesticall Duties* (1634) that “yet the man be as the head, the woman [is] as the heart” (qtd. in Shoemaker 24). Accordingly, the emotional Mr. Vincent is presented as an unsuitable model of manhood.

In *Leonora* the main male character, Mr. L, does not, unlike *Belinda’s* Hervey, come by his French ideals by travelling to France himself. Instead he is seduced by the Frenchified coquette, Lady Olivia, an overwrought romantic who is also an ardent admirer of Rousseau’s *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*. By engaging the married Mr. L in an extramarital affair, Lady Olivia attempts to live out a romantic drama that can provide her with the same intense emotions that she finds described her favourite novel, and as Mr. L is manipulated into acting the part of the hero in a sentimental drama, he is portrayed as failing to live up to the norms of a rational
Englishman as portrayed by General X and envisioned by his wife and her mother, the Duchess. Instead he is feminized to the point where he falls victim to the same type of hysterical (feminine) fever as many female heroines such as Burney’s Camilla and Austen’s Marianne.

As Linda Colley has shown, the war with France encouraged Britons to define themselves in opposition to a “French “other” (5) and as such, the reclaiming of Clarence Hervey and Mr. L is not only a symptom of the wane of politeness as the hegemonic version of masculinity, but a declaration of patriotism and loyalty to the crown. This is because, as Nancy Johnson points out: The “French threat” in the anti-Jacobin novel is embodied in the “French principles that infiltrate moral structures and endanger the fabric of English culture” (181). Also, exemplifying this fear of the subversive power of new ideas on individual freedoms Hannah More writes: “It is not so much the force of French bayonets, as the contamination of French principles that ought to excite our apprehension” (The Works 406). Conservative novelists frequently echoed this sentiment, and, as a result, in George Walker’s The Vagabond the main character and villain, Frederick Fenton, has imbibed the revolutionary ideals of his tutor Stupeo, and in a parody of Voltaire’s Candide the two move from place to place, trying to spread their revolutionary philosophy, which is largely an anti-Jacobin parody of Godwin’s Political Justice. Later Fenton teams up with Doctor Alogos, who is identified by Gilmartin as a parody of Joseph Priestley (Writing Against Revolution 154). Similarly, in Jane West’s A Tale of the Times the young and naïve Lady Monteith is seduced by the French trained philosopher Edward Fitzosborne, and Charles Lloyd’s Edmund Oliver and Henry James Pye’s The Democrat provide other pertinent examples of villains of French descent who attempt to spread Jacobinism in England.
To declare continental novels and philosophy, those of Rousseau, Voltaire, Hume and Kant in particular, the sources of radical contamination is a common anti-Jacobin strategy, and for instance used by Jane Austen when she satirizes Catherine Morland’s reading habits in *Northanger Abbey*, as well as Elizabeth Hamilton whose anti-heroine Bridgetina Botherim in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* “had never read anything but novels and metaphysics” (38). Rousseau’s *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* was one of the main targets of this propaganda: The Jacobin seducers of both Julia in *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* and Geraldine in *A Tale of the Times* use the novel as part of their strategies. This anxiety was based on the concern of rural England’s vulnerability to withstand metropolitan incursions, as seen in the invasion of *Leonora*’s Lady Olivia in who arrives at L Castle in the country from Paris by way of London, and the worry over the ability of private virtue, so emphasized by the Duchess in *Leonora*, to stop the spread of foreign ideological contagion (Gilmartin, *Writing Against Revolution* 161). So, when attempting to define Jacobinism in 1799, Francis Wollaston lists all its objectionable deleterious French influences:

To the liberty and equality of original free-masonry; to the fierce rancour of Voltaire and his self-called philosophers against Jesus Christ and his religion; to the democratic principles of Rousseau, and his visionary schemes about the origin of all government; these delegates [the Illuminati] added, the rage of Weishaupt and his pretended more enlightened followers, against all kings, or rather against all who under any title bear any rule among men. The fiery spirit of the French, kindled at once into a Flame. The names of free-mason, of philosophers, of friends to a social compact, of illumine or enlightened, were from that instant all absorbed in the one name of Jacobin (qtd. in Grenby 66).
As Grenby repeatedly points out, it was often not so much the actual writing of these philosophers and novelists that the anti-Jacobins reacted against as what they perceived as “the pernicious skepticism and sophistical delusions” that permeated the ideals of the Jacobins who were inspired by these continental thinkers (The Anti-Jacobin Novel 69). Another fear was that the emphasis on self-reflection and sensibility in sentimental novels would foster an individualism that was a threat to family structure and parental authority. So, although Rousseau, for instance, did not actually advocate marital infidelity in Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse, the anti-Jacobins saw it as an attack on established sexual morality, nonetheless. Lady Olivia’s real crime, then, is not as much the attempt at seducing a married man, as at trying to import continental ideals to England.

As a consumer of skeptical philosophy and sentimental novels and the advocate for marriage reforms, Lady Olivia easily fits into the mold of the agent spreading deleterious foreign ideas that had been created by anti-Jacobin writers. These novelists usually divided the emissaries into two categories. There were the dupes, who genuinely believed in the new philosophy and its potential to create a better society, and then there were the ones responsible for duping them. The latter figure is exemplified by Isaac D’Israeli’s Vaurien: a libertine who simply used the new philosophical discourse to further his own means and in particular to gratify his lust (Grenby, The Anti-Jacobin 120). Clarence Hervey clearly can be seen as one of the dupes whereas Lady Olivia, as we see as the plot unravels, belongs to the camp of the vauriens. The irony is, however, that as much as Lady Olivia believes herself to be the representative of French sexual mores, she has totally misunderstood what they stand for. Gabrielle de P, the correspondent whom Lady Olivia sees as her mentor, does not in the least concern herself with the sentimental love of Lady Olivia. She is a menteuse and the representative of sexual
relationships as a means to power, and as we see in the end has nothing but contempt for Lady Olivia’s romantic raving as soon as she realizes that Lady Olivia cannot be used in her spy schemes. In this regard, Olivia becomes at once the scheming amoral vaurien figure, as well as the dupe of another philosophe, and serves as the warning that although continental radicals might pretend to wish the best for the English, their only goal is to use the converts to their philosophy as pawns in their own struggles for power. To symbolize this foreign contagion, Mr. L, Lady Olivia’s victim transforms, as he becomes seduced by Lady Olivia, from an admirable man of reason and a good husband into a caricature of an effeminate character in a romantic melodrama.

As a whole, both Belinda and Leonora take place in the domestic sphere. How is it then that these two novels can be read as conservative or anti-Jacobin novels? The answer is to be found both in the view of the home as a miniature image of the state, common in anti-Jacobin literature, as well as the fear of the anti-Jacobins that French-inspired ideals such as the right to self-determination and advancement would eventually not only lead to the downfall of the monarchy, but also the destruction of the family values which society was built upon.

Edgeworth, then, follows a rich tradition of anti-Jacobin literature when she portrays Clarence Hervey and Mr. L as characters who have absorbed or been contaminated by French ideals. Therefore, Edgeworth does not only describe the decline of sensibility and politeness as ideals of hegemonic masculinity as the sun rises on the nineteenth century, she is also simultaneously making a conservative political statement in the context of the war with France in the aftermath of the French Revolution.
In Belinda Clarence Hervey has returned from the Grand Tour a polished gentleman who is filled with admiration for French manners and philosophers, Rousseau in particular, and although he rejects the morality of French women, he spends most of his time in female society, flattering and gallantly showing off his accomplishments to a coterie of admiring women. That this behavior is a direct result of his Continental travels is proven by the fact that when he is first mentioned by Lady Delacour, Hervey appears as a person of true manliness. In fact, he appears as a knight in shining armor who rescues Lady Delacour and Harriet Freke from a mob of farmers who are incensed by the two dueling ladies’ lack of feminine decorum. In doing so, he unites the two manly traits of bravery and intelligence. After this feat, he disappears from the scene in order to tour the continent and comes back stripped of his chivalric manliness. Instead, he has acquired French politesse, as Lady Delacour describes him as “much improved” (B 64) by his travels to Italy and France.

Belinda’s match-making aunt, Mrs. Stanhope, is the one who first describes Hervey in the novel, and she confirms the impression of Hervey as a model French salonnier. Mrs. Stanhope describes him as “an uncommonly pleasant young man… Besides he is a man of wit and gallantry, quite a connoisseur in female grace” (B 8). Belinda later reports that Hervey is also known for “his great address in affairs of gallantry” (B 144), a trait connected with the French. In A Comparative View Andrews, for instance, describes the main pastimes for men of rank in France to be amusement and pleasure, particularly gallantry with “the fair sex” (68-69). However, Andrews warns his English readers that such excessive attention to and communication with women can easily “enervate the mind of a man” and effeminate him (244-
246), and Edgeworth’s depiction of Hervey in the first part of the novel clearly show that this is the case.

The narrator describes Hervey as a man whose “chameleon character seemed to vary in different lights and according to the different situations, in which he happened to be placed. He could be all things to all men – and to all women” (B 14). This closely resembles John Andrews’s descriptions of the French man of politeness whose first rule is to please in conversation. Truth, on the other hand, which is important to the English, is, according to Andrews, of significantly lesser importance (A Comparative View 152). The narrator further describes Hervey as “a favorite with the fair sex; and of all his various excellencies and defects, there was none, on which he valued himself so much as on his gallantry” (B 14). In other words, he performs the part of the beaux described by Lady Anne:

> In the slight and frivolous intercourse, which fashionable belles usually have with those fashionable beaux who call themselves their lovers, it is surprising that they can discover any thing of each other's real character. Indeed they seldom do; and this probably is the cause why there are so many unsuitable and unhappy marriages. A woman who has an opportunity of seeing her lover in private society, in domestic life, has infinite advantages; for if she has any sense, and he has any sincerity, the real character of both may be developed. (B 240)

As Lady Anne makes clear, as long as young men and women perform according to the rules of polite society, they are putting on an act that makes it impossible for them to reveal their “real” character (McCann 59). In other words, in the same way a young woman whose first object is to amuse herself and attract potential suitors in the public space cannot prove herself according to the feminine ideal of the good wife, as long as Clarence acts like according to Frenchified rules
of politeness and gallantry, he is not suitable husband material because he does not embody Lady Anne (and Edgeworth’s) ideal of the sincere, rational man.

Docility is named by a number of eighteenth-century conduct book writers as an admirable trait in women. In Belinda Hervey has by virtue of his refined nature acquired this feminine trait. He is described by the narrator as “easily led” (B 14), and Lady Delacour brags that she could “lead him anywhere” (B 64). In addition to being admired for being tractable, women, as seen in Dr. Gregory’s Legacy to His Daughters, were also frequently advised to “affect the bliss of ignorance” (98). The latter is also advocated by Hannah More whose ideal woman in Coelbs in Search of a Wife has “no ambition to shine” in conversation by displays of superior wit or genius (168). Hervey is revealed to follow this advice as he, afraid to be thought a pedant, often “pretended to disdain every species of knowledge” (B 14). As a result of his docility and the fact that he thinks that his intelligence will make him unattractive, Hervey behaves more as one would expect of a woman than of a man.

Instead of utilizing his intellectual powers, Hervey is described as a frequenter of female salons; he is “constantly of all her ladyship’s parties, public and private” (B 14). When Hervey is in an assembly of women, his conversation, much like Sir Sedley’s in Camilla, is like that of a woman or the ultra-feminine fop; he prattles about fashion and gossip: “on fashionable bracelets” and “the various defects and absurdities of Mrs. Luttridge and her wig” (B 14). This behavior closely matches Carter’s description of the effeminate fop as a man mainly interested in gossip and “the feminine accessories of dress” (Men and The Emergence 144). Hervey’s femininity reaches its pinnacle when he dresses up as a woman and persuades one of Lady Delacour’s female guests that he is a French noblewoman. He is described as entering with “grace” and managing his dress with “skill and dexterity” (B 75). By describing Hervey’s ability to act and
speak like a woman as skilled enough to trick another woman, Edgeworth clearly shows us that he has occluded his male nature in the early parts of *Belinda*. 

Clarence Hervey’s lack of traditional male qualities in the early part of the novel is further emphasized by his last name. It is highly likely that Edgeworth, by giving him the last name Hervey, alluded to the well-known courtier, politician, and author John, Lord Hervey (1696-1743). According to James Dubro, Lord Hervey’s bisexual nature was an open secret, acknowledged in several letters by the Baron himself (90) and referred to by several of his literary and political adversaries. Horace Walpole, elaborating on a joke by Hervey’s friend Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, suggested that there “were three sexes: men, women, and Herveys,” and Alexander Pope modeled Sporus in his “Epistle from Mr. Pope to Dr. Arbuthnot” on Lord Hervey. The original Sporus was a young man, dressed up as a woman, whom Emperor Nero married, and Pope’s Sporus portrait emphasizes his unstable gender identity. Reading Pope’s poem, one is strongly reminded of Clarence Hervey masquerading as a woman in front of Lady Delacour’s guests:

His Wit all see-saw between *that* and *this*,

Now high, now low, now Master up, now Miss,

And he himself one vile Antithesis.

Amphibious Thing! That acting either Part,

The trifling Head, or the corrupted Heart!

Fop at the Toilet, Flatt’rer at the Board,

Now trips a Lady, and now struts a Lord (qtd. in Dubro 90)

Another scene that underscores Hervey’s lack of manliness in the beginning of the novel is his choice of costume for the masquerade where Belinda and Lady Delacour appear as the
tragic and the comic muses. Hervey has chosen to dress up as the serpent in Fuseli’s “well known painting” (B 23). In a textual note the editor of the Oxford World Classics edition of the novel, Kathryn Kirkpartick, identifies this painting (see Appendix B) as *Thor Slaying the Midgard Serpent* (B 486), the painting that earned Fuseli his membership in the Royal Academy (Cass 16). In this 1790 painting, which Martin Myrone describes as “a hedonistic indulgence in a fantasy of masculine physical supremacy” (268), the Nordic God Thor towers naked, showing off his muscular body over the slithering snake that he is about to kill. The serpent, on the other hand, although not obviously presented as feminine in the painting, is traditionally a mythological representation of the mother Goddess and as such a symbol of the feminine (Markale 6). Not only is the serpent a representation of femininity, but in this particular story of the Nordic god Thor, the serpent he fights is clearly identified as female, as she is he daughter of Loki and the sister of Fenrir.” (Tomory 102). Hervey, then, in his choice of a costume clearly aligns himself with the feminine.

Arguing for another Fuseli picture as the one alluded to by Edgeworth in this scene, Cass asks why Hervey would choose to dress up as a female serpent (18). In the context of the depiction of Hervey as a feminized man of French-inspired politeness, it seems clear that the answer is that Edgeworth, who, after all, pulls all the strings, might very well have chosen to dress Hervey up as a female serpent to make the same point as she made in the earlier cross-dressing scene: By spending to much time around women and acting very much like a fop in the first part of the novel, Hervey takes on a feminine identity. To further this point, the serpent/mother goddess is not the only female metaphor applied to Hervey early on in the novel. In the same scene, Lady Delacour, compares him to a dove (B 28) whose traditional mild, peaceful qualities makes it another feminine reference point.
Clarence Hervey’s lack of appropriate manliness is further emphasized by a number of literary references. In his first speech in the novel Hervey quotes the weak-willed, fickle, and, thus, unmanly Duke of Clarence in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. But this is not the only literary allusion that questions Hervey’s masculinity. When Lady Delacour approaches him at the masquerade, she quotes William Shenstone’s poem “Elegy XXVI. Describing the Sorrow of an Ingenious [sic] Mind.” This particular poem describes a man whose extreme sensibility endows him female characteristics as he “weeps with down-cast eyes” (1), produces “telling sighs” (3) and describes how his “poor wounded bosom bleeds” (12). On another occasion, when Hervey challenges his companion to a swimming contest and nearly drowns, Hervey again quotes Shakespeare, this time a passage from *Julius Caesar* in which Cassius accuses Caesar not only of physical weakness and feeble-mindedness but also of crying like a girl (I, 2, 140). Although Clarence does not cry like a girl, he does suffer the same fate as Caesar, almost drowning, and he is dragged out of the Serpentine River fainting and as helpless as the heroine of a novel of sensibility.

However, the literary works most obviously connected with Clarence Hervey in the novel is *Emile* by Rousseau and St. Pierre’s *Paul et Virginie*. Hervey’s associations with Rousseau are emphasized by the fact that his first name also closely resembles the name of Saint-Preux’ birthplace, Clarens, in Switzerland, which is also where Rousseau’s famous characters Julie and Wolmar live. When he read *Emile*, which, according to Catherine Toal, provides “a comfortable conservative framework for the novel” (3), Hervey is “charmed” as “this eloquent writer’s sense made its full impression upon Clarence’s understanding” (B 362). Disgusted with the morality of Parisian upper-class women, Hervey decides after reading Rousseau that the only woman that can make him happy is one who is possession of total innocence and natural simplicity. When
Hervey meets Rachel/Virginia, he decides to educate her after Rousseau’s system into a wife who is unspoilt by culture, and, as a result, a complete innocent. His catalogue of desirable feminine traits - simplicity, ingenuity, and ignorance (B 373) closely echo Rousseau’s description of Sophie: “She has taste without deep study, talent without art, judgment without learning” (446). What Hervey does not realize until later is that the result of such a natural upbringing does not at all suit him. When he is in Virginia’s company “his understanding was passive; he perceived that a large proportion of his intellectual powers and of his knowledge was absolutely useless to him in her company” (B 378). Not only is he again forced to suppress his intelligence in Virginia’s company, but the narrator also makes it clear that when it comes to his idea of making her into a copy of Rousseau’s Sophie, Hervey is guided by his emotions: “All difficulties disappeared before his sanguine hopes” (B 367), and he fails to reflect on the faulty reasoning the same way he would have “ had he not been engaged in defence of a favorite system of education, or if his pupil had not been quite so handsome” (B 372). As we can see, Hervey’s masculine attributes, his rational understanding, which for Edgeworth represented “le beau ideal of an English gentleman” (Cass 16), are suppressed as he lets his emotions steer him, and he lives out his Rousseauian dream in Virginia’s company. By doing so, he forgoes the objectivity and cerebration which, according to “the Enlightenment discourse of reason are aligned with masculinity” (Kirkley 97). Siobhan Kilfeather goes as far as to observe that “The adoption of Virginia is, among other things, a fantasy about male childbirth and nurturing” (29). By giving birth to and fostering his own wife Hervey, then, takes on the ultimate female characteristic, that of the mother.

Hervey’s feminization is, moreover, emphasized in the references to St. Pierre’s novel *Paul et Virginie* (1790) which is where Hervey finds Virginia’s new name. As an admirer of this
sentimental novel, Clarence identifies with what Heather MacFadyen calls the “trope of female reading” (428). The novel, which achieved iconic status in the eighteenth century (Egenolf 87), functioned as a reference-point for ideas of “primitivism, childhood love, natural education and sexual innocence” (Donovan 10). Commenting on Hervey’s decision to have Rachel/Virginia painted as St. Pierre’s heroine, Egenolf observes that he “engages in a projection of his own desire” (82). By identifying Rachel/Virginia with Virginie, as is obvious by the fact that he has her painted as the fictional character and uses her name, Hervey casts himself, since he intends to wed Virginia as soon as she is old enough, as the primitive, perpetually child-like, and as a result, feminized, Paul, who is the polar opposite of the ideal of the civilized and intellectual eighteenth-century man. The parallel is obvious when Virginia confides in her chaperone, Mrs. Ormond, after she has read the novel: “Virginia threw her arms round Mrs Ormond, and laid her head upon her friend’s bosom, as if she wished to realize the illusion, and to be the Virginia of whom she had been reading” Mrs. Ormond, clearly thinking about Hervey, responds: “‘I know all you think, and all you feel: I know,’ whispered Mrs Ormond, ‘the name that is on your lips’” (B 381). Just as Hervey intends to play the role of Paul, so Virginia, albeit unwillingly, and Mrs. Ormond, imagine that this is the role intended for him.

Eventually, after getting to know Belinda, Hervey realizes his belief in Rousseau has been mistaken and declares: “Nothing could be more absurd than my scheme of educating a woman in solitude, to make her fit for society” (B 472). His realization of the mistake is shown by the revival of Virginia’s "real" name, Rachel Hartley. Her last name very likely refers to David Hartley (1705-1757) who built upon John Locke’s empiricist ideas when he developed his association theory, and Catherine Toal argues that the name change “heralds the triumph of British empiricism over French Rousseauvianism” (220). Beccie Randhawa argues that Virginia
can never be accepted into English society as Virginia but only as Rachel Hartley once her “West Indian accoutrements [have been] stripped away” (195). Similarly, Clarence Hervey can only be accepted as an acceptable English upper-class man after his belief in Rousseau and other dangerous French ideals have been exposed as false.

III

This ability of the domestic subject to resist foreign infiltration is what concerns Edgeworth in the more overtly political novel Leonora, referred to by Marilyn Butler as a novel inspired by “paranoia about spy networks communicating with foreign governments.” Butler then goes on to describe L Castle as a metaphor for the English monarchy which has come under attack by French revolutionary ideas: “The English home in which most of the action of Leonora takes place, symbolizes England itself, which the French-minded Olivia attacks, undermines, and very nearly destroys” (“Introductory Note” xiii). However, the same can easily be said about the proprietor of L Castle and the novel’s main male character, Mr. L.

During a journey to Switzerland and Paris with her family in 1802-1803, Maria Edgeworth became acquainted with Madame de Staël’s epistolary novel Delphine, which, issued two months after the Edgeworths’ arrival in France, attracted massive attention as a libertarian book which flouted convention. Critics commonly condemned the novel’s defense of a subjective morality and defiance of authority, and, as, Butler points out, Edgeworth seconded the criticism of the novel’s impropriety, and composed Leonora as her response to Delphine (Jane Austen and the war of Ideas 146-147). Leonora’s female villain, Lady Olivia, is presented as someone who has absorbed French ideals and who is contemptuous of both English laws and customs. From her very first letter Lady Olivia identifies herself as influenced by the French as
she signs off with an “adieu” (L 2). Soon after arriving at L Castle, she discovers that with her inclination for “French ease, vivacity and sentiment,” she cannot care for Leonora, who is “far too English” for her taste (L 22). In the same letter, which is, as always, filled with French expressions, Lady Olivia negatively compares the English organization of family life to the French way. Lady Olivia, for instance, admires the French salon culture where men and women mix, and she ridicules English gentry custom where the men” retire half an hour after dinner” and is pleasantly surprised when at a party at L Castle the men were not impatient for the women to withdraw (L 49). She also admires the “systematized” gallantry of France (L 23) and is very provoked when Mr. L treats her with “an easy kind of indifference” which she finds very provoking “to a woman who has been accustomed to excite some sensation” (L 66).

This initiates a pattern where Lady Olivia, after describing English customs, always comes squarely down on the side of the French ones, declaring to her friend that “these things are managed better in France” (L 85) and ridiculing those, such as Leonora’s friend Helen, who are not acquainted with or reject Lady Olivia’s French ideals. She, in fact, finds the English manner of living so lacking in polish that she refers to it as “hottentot” (L 111). To her friend, Gabrielle de P, on the other hand, the “barbarous” English traditions of marital fidelity and filial obedience are simply incomprehensible, and she congratulates her English-born friend on becoming a “true Parisian” (L 116). Lady Olivia also employs a number of allusions in her letters that identify her as a sympathizer with France in general and with immoral women in particular. She praises the wisdom of Ninon de l’Enclos, a famous French author and courtesan, as well as Charles de Saint-Evremonde, a French author, who was exiled in England, and she compares herself to Louise de la Vallière, mistress of King Louis XIV. By doing so, Lady Olivia additionally presents herself as a romantic innocent. What she is not aware of at the time, however, is that,
just as Le la Vallière was out-maneuvered and supplanted in her lover’s affections by the scheming Marquise de Montespan, who pretended to be her friend, Lady Olivia’s friend Gabrielle became the mistress of Lady Olivia’s French lover, R, shortly after Lady Olivia left Paris.

Lady Olivia has come by her radical ideas by reading French and German novels as well as “metaphysics.” In her second letter to Leonora, Lady Olivia explains how these readings saved her from despair: “Metaphysics provided some relief, and I bewildered myself in their not inelegant labyrinth. But to the bold genius and exquisite pathos of some German novelists I hold myself indebted for my largest portion of ideal bliss (L 3). In addition to her “exquisite” German novels, Lady Olivia refers again and again to Rousseau’s Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse.

When Lady Olivia first arrives at L Castle, she describes Mr. L as “cold” and she doesn’t have any interest in knowing him (L 24), and she exclaims that “were Mr. L -- and I shut up for life in the same prison, were we left together upon a desert island, were we alone in the universe, I could never think of him” (L 44). She quickly begins to change her mind, however, when he starts behaving according to her rules of Parisian gallantry and “pays her a profusion of compliments upon the sweetness of my voice, and my taste in reciting” (L 44-45) and as she learns that he has visited and admired Italy and been described as “a passionate admirer of our sex” (L 49) there. Mr. L further gains her approval during Leonora’s birthday party when he wants to celebrate it with a French-inspired fête champêtre, and treats Lady Olivia in a “gay and gallant” way (L 55) and knows how to waltz in the Parisian manner (L 57). Gallantry is described by Andrews in A Comparative View as “the main pastime of men of rank in France” (68). Male displays of sober intelligence and reason, on the other hand, do not impress Lady Olivia, who believes that a man should be passionate and emotional rather than reasonable (L 40).
Accordingly, she criticizes Mr. L when he tries to convince Leonora to celebrate her birthday with a *fête champêtre*: “Foolish man! He should have tried compliments, or caresses” (*L* 50), and she later repeats this sentiment later when she is annoyed with him and calls him “one of these reasonable men” (*L* 68).

A reasonable man of supposed English qualities such as reticence and sensibleness is exactly what Mr. L is portrayed as before he falls prey to Lady Olivia’s seduction. Leonora’s friend Helen describes him as a sedate man who is not easy to get to know upon slight acquaintance: “I do not mean to call him inert. I always knew he had many excellent qualities; but these was nothing in his temper particularly agreeable to me… yet, since he is become Leonora’s husband, I find my understanding much improved, and I dare say it will soon be so far enlarged, that I shall comprehend him perfectly” (*L* 26). He is also described by her as rather grave and taciturn (*L* 27). Lady Olivia confirms this description when she describes how he responded to one of her flighty speeches “with only one of his English monosyllables” (*L* 44).

Before he becomes infatuated with Lady Olivia, Mr. L claims that he detests ostentation and affected sentiments, and he also declares the English taste for “real feeling” (*L* 51) to be superior to affected sensibility. The Duchess flatteringly praises his reason and his calm manners describing him as a “man of superior abilities… with a penetrating and discriminative judgment,” and as “a nice observer,” who conceals his “vivid imagination and strong sensibility” under “a cold exterior.” According to his mother-in-law, he is also diffident and possesses “little vanity, but a superabundance of pride” (*L* 60).

As we can see, Mr. L easily fits the eighteenth-century mold of appropriate English upper-class manliness, but after he has been seduced by Lady Olivia and her French ideals, Mr. L temporarily forfeits his claims to reasonableness, and therefore correct masculinity, and
becomes the victim of his emotions – a process that feminizes him. Helen refers to him as “a madman” for falling in love with Olivia (L 86), and “absolutely bereaved of judgment” (L 100), and General B echoes the sentiment when he describes Mr. L as “in love like a madman” (L 94) and compares him to a sleepwalker who needs to be watched over in order to not hurt himself (L 110). The general further writes to his friend that “‘At present ‘you are not fit to hear yourself convinced’” (L 131-132), and Leonora says to Lady Olivia: “By every art and every charm in your power – and you have many – you won upon his senses and worked upon his imagination” (L 102). Further confirming that Mr. L has lost his claims to rational manhood, the Duchess calls him “as one in a delirium of a fever” (L 107) while Helen describes him as “under the dominion of an artful fiend, who works as she pleases upon his passions” (L 92). Mr. L himself compares Olivia to an “enchantress” who has the power to “intoxicate me with her cup” (L 131) and to a spider who has caught him in a magical net (L 140). After he ceases to be in love with Olivia, he adds that he was suffering from a fever that caused him to commit extravagances “under its delirium” (L 150). All these examples show that in the eyes of those around him as well as in his own, Mr. L has acquired the traits of the stereotypical woman: bereft of reason and a passive victim of seduction.

To emphasize the fact that Mr. L is Lady Olivia’s helpless prey, Edgeworth has Lady Olivia use military language when she describes her attempts at seducing him: She wants to “humble proud reason to the dust” in her “ardour for universal dominion,” as she observes that “The struggle of the rebel heart for freedom makes the war more tempting, the victory more glorious, the triumph more splendid” (L 74), and is the same letter she concludes that “The arrow is lodged in his heart, and he must fall” (L 74). In her previous letter, Lady Olivia says that she will “instruct him” in the arts of love (L 67), and that she will let her influence over him “rise to
its acme” (L 73). Gabrielle seconds Lady Olivia’s idea that Mr. L is the passive force in the relationship as she instructs Lady Olivia on how to play her cards: “For of course you will govern the English ambassador” and “[women] always move in secret the springs of that vast machine, the civilized world” (L 118). What gives women this power, according to Gabrielle, is men’s passion for women: “I can engrave as well as La Pompadour could at least, and anticipating your victory my charming Olivia, I will engrave Cupid leading the bear in a chain of flowers” (L 123). Lady Olivia’s process of conquering Mr. L’s resistance and feminizing and transforming him into a French man of politesse finally meets with triumph when she manages to make him enter into the most feminine of territories, her dressing room, and makes him play the part of a French gallant as he assists her in the most feminine of occupations, her toilette (L 83).

This change in Mr. L suits Lady Olivia perfectly, as she desperately wants him to act the part of the sentimental hero of her favorite novels of sensibility: “Ask me no more to explain to you the cause of my melancholy. Too plainly, alas! I feel it is beyond my utmost power to endure it. Amiable Werther – divine St. Preux – you would sympathize in my feelings!” (L 136). Mr. L confirms this impression in a letter to General B where he complains about his inability to please Olivia: “I find it impossible to make Olivia happy … I have lately been tempted to think that Olivia never really loved any man but St. Preux” (L 137). Furthermore, Lady Olivia’s letter to Mr. L threatening suicide exclaims: “On her knees she writes this, her face all bathed in tears. And must she in turn implore and supplicate? Must she abase herself even to the dust” (L 148). Here she closely echoes one of Julie’s letters to St Preux: “Oh God! Have I been sufficiently humiliated? I am on my knees writing to you; I bathe my paper with my tears; I raise to you my timid supplications” (Rousseau, Julie 33). Lady Olivia’s staged suicide attempt is so true to Rousseau’s novel that even Mr. L notices the similarities: “At this moment, my dear general, a
confused recollection of Rousseau’s Heloise, the dying scene, and her room ornamented with flowers, came into my imagination” (L 152). Although he partially ridicules Lady Olivia’s attempts to cast him as the hero of their own drama of sensibility, Mr. L also tries to placate Lady Olivia by acting according to her melodramatic notions of romance, and, as a result, he becomes effeminate.

As a result of his attempts at living up to Lady Olivia’s demands and being her romantic hero, Mr. L cannot fulfill his duties as a landowner and Leonora’s husband and a father-to-be. As Mr. L flees his wife and estate to follow Lady Olivia, his son is born prematurely and dies, clearly as a result of his father’s actions and fall from appropriate manhood. To further emphasize Mr. L’s descent from correct manliness, Edgeworth, in addition, has him fall victim to the most feminine of ailments: nervous or hysterical fever. A disease described in the eighteenth century as the result of excessive sensibility and overwrought emotions, nervous fever was commonly described as a woman’s ailment. Candace Ward observes: “Disease theorists and other sentimental writers of the period routinely and persistently identified certain fevers with ‘different’ bodies – nervous and puerperal fevers with women’s bodies” (23), and the eighteenth-century obstetrician and medical writer Richard Manningham states, “The female sex, who are naturally of more tender and delicate constitutions; and therefore such as are always most liable to this sort of fever” (v-vi). Before he falls ill, Mr. L describes himself as “in such constant anxiety” that his health has suffered L (113), and he furthermore describes his feelings in terms often used to characterize women: “contradictory,” “changeable,” “under dominion of passion,” and “intoxicated with passion” (L 125). Right before he becomes ill, he writes that “My soul is torn with violence” (L 126), and as a result, he succumbs to a life-threatening case of nervous fever. General B describes the cause of Mr. L’s illness: “You know he is not one who often gives
way to his emotions, not one who expresses them much in words – but he could not command his feelings. The struggle was too violent. I have no doubt but that it was the real cause of his present illness” (L 157). The symptoms of his disease, a strong fever and delirious raving (L 157) closely resemble those of Julie when she is first separated from St. Preux.

Mr. L is finally able to live out Lady Olivia’s beloved novel, but not in the way she imagines. Rather than becoming like the male hero St. Preux, Mr. L acts the role of the heroine, Julie, who when parted from St. Preux, is seized with a “burning fever that only increased until finally it gave her transports” (Rousseau, Julie 74). By accepting Lady Olivia’s French ideals, identifying with Rousseau’s protagonists, and, finally, succumbing to the female disease of nervous fever which leaves him mentally and physically infirm, Mr. L has in the end become fully feminized.

IV

In Belinda Hervey has to be reclaimed from his belief in French-inspired manners and philosophy by Dr. X and Mr. Percival and reformed into a proper English manliness, which by the turn of the century had come to consist of manly simplicity and sincerity rather than superficial politeness (Tosh 461; Cohen, “Manners” 326). This, according to Tosh, was the leading characteristic of the English nineteenth-century gentleman and is a clear contrast to the eighteenth-century hegemonic ideal of politeness and sensibility. Dr. X, who rescues Hervey both from death by drowning and from the metaphorical death of his manliness does not believe in politeness: “‘As a polite man,’ said Dr X, ‘I believe that I should absolutely refuse to take any external evidence of a lady’s truth; but demonstration is unanswerable even by enemies, and I will not sacrifice your interests to the foppery of my politeness’” (B 132). Instead, Dr. X represents manly forthrightness and reason, as is seen when he refuses to indulge Lady
Delacour’s whims and superstitions and instead by use of scientific observation and method, relieves her both of her fear of cancer and her neurasthenia brought on by reading Methodist tracts.

Mr. Percival, as his last name indicates, is the novel’s depiction of the perfect English gentleman, and he is presented as a man of learning and social responsibility, the ideal head of the family, household, and the estate. As a husband and father Mr. Percival sets the example of benevolence and sincerity, as Belinda observes that in his household sincerity and rational thinking are highly prized: “In conversation every person expressed without constraint their wishes and opinions; and wherever those differed, reason and the general good were the standards to which they appealed” (B 215), and Mr. Percival’s conversation is noticeably different from that of Hervey in the first part of the book. Mr. Percival sets the example for a family life characterized by “candor, education, mutual respect and affection” (Egenolf 79), and together with his wife he models “Enlightenment ideals of sociability and education” (Egenolf 95). As opposed to the effeminate frivolity of Hervey, Mr. Percival’s “pursuits and general conversation were in the happiest manner instructive and interesting to his family” (B 216), and he is described by Belinda to be the result of “good nature, joined to good sense” (B 323).

In order to make his new friend realize that he wastes his talents and is not true to his own nature when he spends his time courting dissipated ladies and frequenting female salons in the company of people like Sir Philip Baddely, Dr X with his characteristic frankness confronts Hervey on how he presents himself:

What a pity, Mr. Hervey, that a young man of your talents and acquirements, a man who might be anything, should – pardon the expression – choose to be – nothing – should waste upon pretty objects powers suited to the greatest – should
lend his soul to every contest for frivolous superiority, when the same energy concentrated might ensure honourable preeminence among the first men in the country. – Shall he, who might not only distinguish himself in any science or situation, who might not only acquire personal fame, but, O, far more noble motive! – who might be permanently useful to his fellow creatures, content himself with being the evanescent amusement of the drawing room? (B 116)

The gendered connotations of Dr X’s words are unmistakable. His accusation that Hervey wastes his attention on “petty” and “frivolous” pursuits of the drawing room, the domain of women, echoes several of the criticisms of dissipated eighteenth-century women including those directed against Lady Delacour in the novel and makes it clear that Hervey is not acting like a man when he spends his time on these activities. However, as much as this speech rouses Hervey, he has already, after he met Mr. Percival and resumed his acquaintance with Dr. X, turned his mind and conversation away from gossip and fashion and towards more substantial matters more becoming of a man:

Nothing amusing or instructive that could be said about the game of chess escaped him, and the literary ground, which the slow don would have taken some hours to go regularly over, our hero traversed in a few minutes. From Twiss to Vida, from Irwin to Sir William Jones, from Spain to India, he passed with admirable celerity, and seized all that could adorn his course from Indian antiquities or Asian researches. (B 113)

For this performance Hervey earns Dr. X’s admiration, and he confirms his masculine status by comparing himself to Sir Walter Raleigh, whose “exploration and dominion of the seas was one of the most significant instances of masculine prerogative in the Renaissance” (Breitenberg 194).
Just as literary allusions underscore Hervey’s lack of manliness in the first part of the novel, they also support his newfound sense of male propriety after he has been rescued from drowning and from his effeminacy by Mr. Percival and Dr. X. Hervey now quotes Cicero (B 349) whose rhetorical handbooks are described by Erik Gunderson as productions of “virile goodness” (8). Gunderson quotes Maude Gleason, too, as he argues that Cicero’s rhetorical eminence grants him status as a man: “In a value system that prized rhetorical skill as the quintessential human excellence, and in a society so structured that this perfection could be achieved only by adult males, arbiters of rhetoric were also arbiters of masculine deportment” (Gleason 104). Similarly, Hervey’s words and literary allusions function symbolically as signifiers of his newly assumed male persona.

Hervey’s newfound sense of identity soon manifests itself in positive actions. He decides to reform Lady Delacour, a plan that wins Dr. X’s immediate approval, and the same day as this communication is made, Hervey’s new manliness is on display as Lady Delacour is thrown out of her coach. In an act of manly chivalry and protectiveness, Hervey catches her in his arms and carries her upstairs. Furthermore, he abandons his gallantry for a more proper behavior. The narrator remarks that Hervey had “never paid her ladyship such respectful attention in his life, as he did this evening” (B 175). He also patronizes the Rev. Mr. Moreton, who is one of Harriet Freke’s victims. Having opposed Mrs. Freke, she made sure that Mr. Moreton was cut from a valuable living that had been promised to him, but Hervey gives him one at his own disposal instead as a reward for his “excellent conduct” (B 254). He, moreover, “supported by the consciousness of his own honour and generosity” (B 420) saves his rival Mr. Vincent from his gaming debts and gambling addiction, even though he believes that this will promote Mr. Vincent and Belinda’s marriage.
Like Dr. X, Hervey has learnt to put sincerity above politeness, and he exclaims: “For I believe that half the miseries of the world arise from foolish mysteries – from the want of courage to speak the truth” (B 194). Later on, after discussing Thomas Day’s poem “The Dying Negro” with Belinda and Mr. Vincent, Hervey adds that ‘this writer (Mr Day) was an instance, that genuine eloquence must spring from the heart” (B 349). Not only has Hervey come to put sincerity over politeness, he has learned to curb his enthusiasm and emotions in a way becoming a rational man, too. Towards the end of the novel when he prepares to marry Virginia, rather than break her heart, the narrator observes that: “His passions were naturally impetuous; but he had, by persevering efforts, brought them under subjection of his reason” (B 417). As a result, by developing from a disciple of Rousseau and politesse into a rational man who believes in the supposed British trait of sincerity, Hervey has regained his masculinity.

As much as many eighteenth-century critics of the culture of politeness liked to fault the company of women, Edgeworth shows her readers that for a man to retreat into total homosociality is as unlikely to result in proper gentlemanliness as is the fop’s preference for the company of women. Lord Delacour, Clarence Hervey’s opposite, proves that while the constant association with frivolous women whose conversation consists of trivial nonsense might jeopardize a man’s manliness, the company of morally abandoned men can make a man into a brute, a far cry from Edgeworth’s ideal man. The first time Belinda (and the reader) sees Lord Delacour, he is dead drunk and is about to be carried to bed by two servants, and Lady Delacour describes the scene as “the funeral of my lord’s intellects” (B 11). That this assessment is accurate is proven when Lady Delacour comes home injured from the Queen’s birthday, and Lord Delacour in his intoxicated state confuses Hervey with Colonel Lawless whom Lord Delacour had killed several years earlier. Lady Delacour describes her husband as “So
desperately afraid of being governed by his wife, that he would turn gambler, jockey, or sot; merely to show that he can govern himself” (B 12). Lord Delacour affirms this description by answering that “Flatly, then, I have to inform you, Lady Delacour, that I will neither be contradicted nor laughed at.” Here it is obvious that Lord Delacour resembles Dr. Gregory’s foolish husband whose main motivation is the fear of being ruled by his wife and as a result “is continually doing absurd and disagreeable things, for no other reason but to show he dares do them” (124).

To prove to his wife that he is not to be influenced by her opinion, Lord Delacour seeks the company of other noblemen whose main occupation seems to be eating and drinking until they reach total stupor. Lord Delacour’s other main amusement is the all-male activity of betting on racing horses. Lady Delacour describes her husband’s social gatherings as “gander feasts” (B 34), no doubt playing on the word gander’s double meaning as both male and foolish (OED). This is not the only time the beastly nature of Lord Delacour’s behavior is alluded to. Additionally, Lady Delacour compares him to a fish, the torpedo (B 38), and, revealingly, the host of the Bacchanalian feasts that Lord Delacour attends is Lord Studley (B 137).

Although Lord Delacour’s mantra is “I am not a man to be governed by a wife,” the irony is that in his absurd attachment to men, regardless of their intelligence or station, Lord Delacour is governed by his servant instead (B 260). His lordship’s personal servant, Champfort, in revenge for being called a bad haircutter by Lady Delacour, manipulates him into believing that he is rumored to be governed by his wife. Champfort is described by his fellow-servant Marriott as being “paramount in the house” and while he retains his power over Lord Delacour, he manages to create numerous misunderstandings between the couple as well as spread the rumor that Belinda is aiming to become the next Lady Delacour should her ladyship die. After
Champfort has been fired by Lord Delacour, and Belinda and Lady Delacour decide to wean his lordship from his “gander feasts” and Lord Studley’s burgundy, the two ladies decide to show him that the comforts of home and female company will not only be pleasant but also beneficial. To bring out Lord Delacour’s talents, Lady Delacour successfully prescribes art, music, and sober conversation (B 283) in the company of herself and Belinda: “The perception that his talents were called out … made him excellent company” (B 284). This scene shows that the presence or absence of women or lack thereof is not what matters when it comes to preservation of manliness. What matters is the type of conversation. If the conversation is trivial and consists of fashion and gossip, the type of talk typically attributed to women, it will produce an effeminate man like it did with Hervey, but if the conversation and activities are rational and edifying, it does not matter who the companions are.

By the end of the novel, Lord Delacour, too, has been reclaimed and appears as a man of reason and active benevolence. He commissions Hervey to find out whether Mr. Vincent is a gambler in order to protect Belinda, and the penultimate chapter finds him at the head of the table, presiding, apparently soberly, over a mixed gender dinner party, the voice of reason as he contradicts the gossip that Hervey has been married to Virginia and appeals to his wife for her support: “‘My dear Lady Boucher,’ interrupted lord Delacour; ‘you must be misinformed in that particular: fortune is no object to Clarence Hervey; he is too generous a fellow to marry for fortune. What do you think – what do you say, Lady Delacour?’” (B 455). In the last scene of the novel, as Lady Delacour stages the final tableau, Lord Delacour is presented as the good father and family man as he enters holding Helena’s hand and receives his wife’s praises. Accordingly, McCann observes that: “Conjugal love and the integrity of domestic, familial bonds are represented in the novel as inseparable from the norms of rationality, privacy, and interiority that
characterize what I am calling the enlightenment subject…Conjugal love measures the ability of Edgeworth’s characters to interact independently of irrational motivations” (57). By reforming Lord Delacour into a family man who socializes with both men and women whose conversation and actions are rational, Edgeworth has restored Lord Delacour to the status of a proper English gentleman.

As mentioned above, both Tosh and Cohen emphasize sincerity as an important trait in the hegemonic version of masculinity of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. However, in Belinda Edgeworth makes it clear that as admirable a quality as sincerity might be, without the guiding voice of reason, this trait will not produce a proper man. Mr. Vincent, Belinda’s second suitor and Mr. Percival’s former ward is presented as a man whose foremost trait is his sincere and frank nature, but who is very much deficient when it comes to acting and thinking rationally. He is described as a young man whose “countenance was open and friendly… full of fire and animation.” His temper was “frank and ardent…incapable of art or dissimulation, and so unsuspicious of mankind that he could scarcely believe falsehood existed in the world, even after he had been its dupe (B 217). Mr. Vincent is not only naïve to the point of being gullible, he is also said to be totally deficient in “the power and habit of reasoning,” to disdain “reason as a moral guide” (B 424), and to be in possession of a “never-failing flow of animal spirits” (B 218). He is, moreover, several times described to be full of candour (B 234, 248, 346) and generosity (B 258-259), to possess a “sanguine temper” (343), to be “open-hearted” (419), “guided by sudden impulse” (B 439), and with an “impetuosity [that] was not to be restrained” he showed “more spirit than temper and more courage than prudence” (B 443-444).
Mr. Vincent’s impulsiveness and lack of rationality not only aligns him with women, but he is also presented in the novel as distinctly un-English as a result of his Creole identity and upbringing. According to Beccie Randhawa, Creoles were all imagined to “be contaminated by both their repugnant practice of keeping slaves and the opulent ways in which they disposed of their riches” (186). In eighteenth-century discourse there is a strong link between luxury and effeminacy. John Brown, for example, in his indictment of the English nation, writes that the character of the times is characterized by “vain, luxurious and selfish EFFEMINACY” (29), which he describes as the results of too much foreign travel (34-5) and trade in colonial luxury goods (153). Too much contact with colonials, it was agreed, would serve to effeminize the English, and, as a result, men brought up in the colonies were tainted and inferior to men brought up at home in England.

In Edward Long’s *A History of Jamaica* the author makes use of a number of gendered terms to describe the white creoles. While he prizes their hospitality and friendliness, Long also criticizes their lack of reason or manly energy, using words that correspond closely to those used by contemporary critics of female manners, such as Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: According to Long, the creoles are “possessed with a degree of supineness and indolence in their affairs,” “liable to sudden transports of anger…lively imagination…fickle and desultory in their pursuits…some tincture of vanity (265). Long’s contemporary J.B. Moreton agrees, noting that “[Creole men] are of a sickly, pale, yellowish complexion, meager, weak, generous, kind and hospitable to excess; proud, vain, high-spirited and flighty to an extreme, lazy, dull and indolent” (104-105). As we have seen above, Mr. Vincent shares in most of these characteristics, and he is thereby shown to share character traits with women, too. The source of the undesirable characteristics of the Creoles was in most cases thought to be too close
a proximity to the African slaves the planters supervised (Greenfield 220), and in Mr. Vincent’s case this is the very source. The narrator informs us that Mr. Vincent’s gambling habit was formed as he was “playing with eagerness, at games of chance, with his negroes” (B 422).^13

Mr. Vincent’s impetuous and emotional nature leads to a noticeable unmanly lack of self-control, and, as a consequence, he often has trouble controlling his emotions. For instance, when he sees Clarence Hervey and Belinda together, he is “seized with a transport of jealousy, he darted at Mr Hervey a glance with mingled scorn and rage; and, after saying a few unintelligible words to Miss Portman and Lady Delacour, he left the room” (B 352). When attempting to quit gambling, a habit he knows is a vice, he finds that his emotion was stronger than his conviction; his feelings were always more powerful than his reason… he thought that the feelings of a man of honour were to be his guide (B 423). As a result, Mr. Vincent nearly ruins himself at Mrs. Luttridge’s infamous roulette table as he loses tens of thousands of pounds in a few sittings: “He could not help feeling, that it was sordid, selfish, avaricious to dread their possible loss; and thus social spirit, courage, generosity, all conspired to bring our man of feeling to the gaming-table” (B 427). Once he thinks he has lost his fortune and, therefore, Belinda, Mr. Vincent again falls victim to his feelings and “in the agony of despair” (B 433) attempts suicide, only to be rescued by Clarence Hervey who has used his powers of observation and reasoning to deduce that the table was rigged. In the exchange that follows, the contrast between the two is striking. While Mr. Vincent’s eyes “flashed with anger” and he “looked wildly at the pistol” and

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^13 Greenfield also notes that although Mr. Vincent’s close relationship with his servant, Juba, “functions in part as a foil to make his master appear more European and civilized, the novel draws increasing attention to the kinship between Mr. Vincent and ‘negroes’” (220). It is evident to the reader that Juba, in his childish simplicity and unrestrained shows of affections and sorrow, as well as his superstition, is a caricature of Mr. Vincent. Surprisingly, though, Greenfield identifies Juba’s name as a common woman’s name (220) rather than as the name of the king of Numidia and ally of Pompey the Great.
levies unreasonable accusations and challenges at Clarence while “raising his voice to the highest pitch of indignation,” Clarence shows “calm and presence of mind,” replies “calmly,” and asks Mr. Vincent to “command yourself for a moment” and “use your reason” (B 431-432). Since, as Kirkley notes, being motivated by feelings is a feminine characteristic in Enlightenment discourse (97), Mr. Vincent is clearly lacking in manliness and not a fit husband for Belinda, or as Lady Delacour eloquently sums it up by associating him with the infamous Kotzebue play *Lovers’ Vows* which was also targeted by Jane Austen in *Mansfield Park* after his departure for Germany:

I dare say he will find in the upper or lower circles of the empire, some heroine in the Kotzebue taste, who will alternately make him miserable till he is happy; and happy, till he is miserable. He is one of those men, who require great emotions.

Fine lovers these make for stage effect! – but the worst husbands in the world! (B 451)

Having thus dismissed the overly emotional Mr. Vincent and reformed the effeminately polite Clarence and the brutish Lord Delacour, Edgeworth has established domestic order for her female characters and for England as the characters have learned to temper their dispositions and to resist foreign influence in a way becoming of English gentlemen.

V

Unlike *Belinda*, the much shorter *Leonora* does not offer competing misguided models of masculinity. The novel does, however, offer characters like Dr. X and the Percivals in *Belinda*, who represent proper English values and manners. Attempting to first hold on to and later reclaim Mr. L from Lady Olivia and her French-inspired values to the status of a good husband
and a proper manhood, Leonora is presented as the ideal dutiful woman whose high moral standard is formed, not only out of a sense of duty to herself, her husband and her children, but to society at large. In her emphasis on reason, virtue and dignified behavior, the antithesis of Olivia, Leonora has a lot in common with Belinda. As opposed to Lady Olivia, Leonora’s highest motivation is to act with virtue and in a way that will secure her not only the love of her husband, but also his esteem, and she repeats her mother’s belief that for a woman to act virtuously and dignified, is not only of consequence to herself, but to society as a whole:

What would become of the good order of society or the decency of families, if every politic wife were to receive or invite, or permit her husband’s mistress to reside in her house? What would become of conjugal virtue in either sex, if the wife were in this manner not only to connive at the infidelity of her husband, but to encourage and provide for his inconsistency? (L 64)

Edgeworth sees society as a living organism of which individuals are the cells, so to speak, and she therefore attacks romanticism because its insistence on the supreme value of each individual strikes her as unworkable. Therefore, it is as important to the nation’s well-being for Mr. L to act according to his duties as a member of the English gentry as it is for Leonora to fulfill the duties of the good wife and mother-figure. In contrast to the hysterical Olivia, whose only thoughts are for herself and her own misfortunes, Leonora suffers in dignified silence, and all her acts are rationally considered before she carries them out. Leonora, on the other hand, follows her reason and the advice of her mother and represses her emotions in order to not push her husband further away. Rather than acting according to any philosophy, she uses what her mother calls her “common sense” and “presence of mind” (L 102) to finally win back her husband. Thus she sets her husband an example to follow as he is recovered from his bout of French gallantry and
sensibility and back to what the Duchess calls the masculine sprit – fortitude and magnanimity (*L* 12).

Although, Leonora over all is the poster child for the coveted anti-Jacobin ideal of filial obedience, all her troubles would have been avoided, Edgeworth seems to say, if she had heeded her mother’s advice to have nothing to do with Lady Olivia in the first place. Although her advice to her daughter to not show any jealousy when her husband flirted with Lady Olivia was a tactical blunder with nearly catastrophic consequences, the Duchess proves that trouble is inevitable when children do not obey their parents without questioning or reservations. The Duchess is, furthermore, proven right in her insistence that Leonora’s ideas of critical engagement with the subversive forces are untenable. The Duchess here expresses what Gilmartin describes as the commonly expressed anti-Jacobin skepticism of engaging with and intervening in radical public affairs. A similar view is expressed in Thomas Harral’s *Scenes of Life* when the young and naïve Sir Frederick Stanley is prevented by his advisor from disputing with the unruly members of a radical debating society (*Writing Against Revolution* 182).

Leonora’s and the Duchess’s conservatism is not only presented through their actions and the Duchess’ advice to her daughter, but through a number of literary allusions, as well. Leonora, for instance, quotes the Loyalist epic *Gondibert* which has much in common with Burke’s *Reflections* as it, in the context of the Civil War, mourns the death of epic heroism and lambasts “the mob mentality of Puritan populism” (Welch 589-590). In addition, Leonora quotes Milton’s *Comus* (16). Milton, although he worked for Cromwell’s Commonwealth, wrote the arguably greatest English epic of all time and represents, along with Shakespeare, the most highly admired English poet, and as such, and as a representative of protestant morality, he is clearly juxtaposed with Lady Olivia’s literary idols. *Comus* presents not only the ideal of female chastity, and
problematic masculinities, but, according to Rebekah Greene, British political unity, too (210). Furthermore, the Duchess invokes Sir Charles Lucas, military, royalist hero of the Civil War who was awarded a posthumous peerage for his loyalty to the king in 1666 (L 7).

The Duchess also presents a traditional Burkean, conservative world view as she quotes the marquis in *Gil Blas* who said that even the peaches of modern days had deteriorated. It is somewhat surprising that the Duchess, who ridicules Lady Olivia’s novel reading habits, would refer to a picaresque novel, but in doing so, she does the same as Edgeworth herself in the preface to *Belinda*. There Edgeworth distinguishes between worthy novelists and those who are less so. Although *Gil Blas* is today often thought of as a typical picaresque novel, Margerite Iknayan argues for the moral qualities of Lesage’s novel that makes it acceptable reading to the Duchess: “In the early years of the nineteenth century moral instructiveness weighed as heavily as any other quality in *Gil Blas’s* favor; for the novel’s series of amusing tales with implicit lessons admirably exemplified the classic principle of *utile dulci*” and was referred to by French critics as “un ouvrage moraliste” (372). *Gil Blas*, then, is on the same end of the spectrum as Edgeworth’s Burney, Inchbald, and Dr. More as opposed to Lady Olivia’s novels of sensibility that according to the Duchess “bewilders the feverish imagination” (L 13).

Along with Leonora and her mother on the side of traditional English values and against Lady Olivia’s individualistic sentimentality stands also Mr. L’s old friend and confidant, General B. The general has several things in common with Dr X in Belinda. He is a professional man completely devoted to his duty and to the well being of his fellow citizens. An officer of the army, the general is constantly on the move to protect England and her interests as he goes on diplomatic missions (L 35) and supervises the construction of defense structures (L 110). By having “his foot constantly in the stirrup” (L 94) as he works for the greater good of society, the
general represents not only the conservative ideals of the Duchess but also an active, chivalric masculinity much alike that of both Dr. X and Mr. Percival in *Belinda*. Also, noticeably, the initial for his last name, B, is reminiscent of the benevolent English gentleman Lord Bomston in *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* who with good sense and good nature takes St. Preux under his wings by interceding for him with Julie’s family. As General B saves Mr. L’s life by watching over him and getting him medical attention, so Lord Bomston saves St. Preux from committing suicide as a consequence of his despairing love. Moreover, as the general does with Mr. L, Lord Bomston reasons with St. Preux and urges him to use his own reason.

Always the advocate of common sense and logic, the general’s letters are short and to-the-point, and he argues reason against overwrought sentiment (*L* 95). His wording reveals his belief in logic and reason. For example, he observes that a man should see “not just the surface, but the bottom of things” (*L* 21), and throughout his letters he relies on words like “proven” (*L* 21), “judgment” (*L* 34), “calculated” (*L* 42), “self-evident proposition” and “granted” (*L* 69), “proof” (*L* 95) “common sense” (*L* 132), and “rationale” (*L* 172). As opposed to his faith in reason and logic, General B has very little patience with sensibility which in his estimation “produces a multitude of sins” (*L* 95). He also mocks the term as an empty phrase used by women of flawed moral fiber: “Pray what brings hundreds and thousands of women to the Piazzas or Covent Garden but sensibility? What does the colonel’s, and the captain’s, and the ensign’s mistress talk of but sensibility? And are you, my dear friend, to be duped by this hackneyed word?” (*L* 95). Lady Olivia’s sentimental philosophy he refers to as “some metaphysical quirk” (*L* 96), “absolute nonsense” (*L* 145), and a “sentimental logic” that can turn virtues into vices and vices into virtues, until you cannot know them asunder” (*L* 147).
Just like he ridicules the use of the word sensibility, General B sees little value of in the French Revolution or in fashionable French society, as well. He sarcastically dismisses it with a comment that in France people of fashion “practice the oldest follies the newest ways,” and he refers to “the horrors of revolution” and says that the “public has been steeped up to the lips in blood” (L 20). Accordingly, the general mocks the usual English visitors to Paris who go there in quest of dissipation and to learn the rites of politeness. Instead of participating in frivolity and public entertainments, he claims to have enjoyed the company of “the best private societies in Paris” which he describes as consisting of members of the ancien régime: “men of letters and science” devoted to “domestic duties” and “to literary and social pleasures” (L 21). By virtue, then, of his political conservatism and emphasis on duty and rationality, General B is aligned with Leonora and the Duchess in the fight to rescue Mr. L from his effeminate status as a man of feeling and French gallantry. Therefore, he rejoices when at the end of the novel the Duchess prophesies that Mr. L and Leonora, like Mr. Percival and Lady Anne in Belinda, will in the future enjoy domestic bliss in the company of “persons of the best information and of the highest talents” and that Mr. L in the company of “his most rational friend and his most charming companion” will be inspired to “every generous and noble exertion” (L 174).

As we can see, although Leonora is more overtly political, both Belinda and Leonora are domestic novels that participate in the war of ideas by presenting to the reader the pernicious tendencies of not only political but also moral ideas and social manners of French origin. According to Edgeworth and her fellow conservatives, such ideas not only had the power to cause political mayhem, but also to destroy families by tempting both men and women to stray from their duties. For women this most often came in the shape of loss of modesty and sexual licentiousness which would make them immoral or masculine, whereas, as this chapter shows,
men were at risk of forfeiting their manliness by adopting effeminizing French manners and beliefs incompatible with English, and therefore loyal and trustworthy, simplicity, and solid sense.

In Belinda Clarence Hervey has, after taking the Grand Tour, acquired French manners and idolizes the behavior of the Parisian salonnier. In Leonora Mr. L becomes infatuated with the idea of romance that he is presented with by Lady Olivia who has, she thinks, adopted French manners and offers Mr. L the opportunity to play the part of a romantic hero modeled upon sentimental novels such as Rousseau’s Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse. Of course it is worth noting that the true Frenchwoman in Leonora, Gabrielle de P., feels nothing but contempt for Olivia and only flatters her as long as she is useful to Gabrielle in her political and amatory intrigues. Accordingly, Edgeworth follows in the footsteps of several other conservative novelists who show the converts to French ideals to be inept imitators of the ideals the authors ask their readers to reject. As we can see, though, even dupes can temporarily create disorder and threaten the established moral and political order as they go about spreading their ideas. In Leonora and Belinda both Mr. L and Clarence Hervey, after temporarily being seduced by French manners, have to be instructed by other more appropriate figures of male behavior and learn to fit into Edgeworth’s ideal of the rational and prudent English gentleman.
Chapter 6:

*Emma*: A New Manliness for the Nineteenth Century

When Jane Austen’s nephew, James Edward Austen-Leigh, published his memoir of his novel-writing aunt in 1870, he took great pains to distance her from the political discourse of her time. According to her nephew, Austen had absolutely no interest in writing about “the great strifes of war and policy” that had torn Europe apart during the years she wrote her novels (173). Austen-Leigh’s anxious bolstering of his aunt’s credentials as an early Victorian gentlewoman who, like Frances Burney, concerned herself with the domestic sphere only, was so successful that, according to Mary Spongberg, an image of a politically “unconscious Austen” (276) was created. Lay readers and critics bought into this myth for 100 years until it was finally debunked by Butler’s *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975) and Warren Roberts’s *Jane Austen and the French Revolution* (1979). Both aligned Austen with Toryism and Burke, or as Terry Eagleton satirized it: “When you get down to it, she’s just a straight Tory” (24),14 an assumption Claudia L. Johnson later argued is simplistic and mainly based on Austen’s family and class background (*Jane Austen* xviii). Johnson seeks to complicate the view of Austen as a doctrinaire conservative,15 a view that, as this chapter will show, is supported by Austen’s questioning of

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14 For more on Austen as a conservative, see also Mary-Elizabeth F. Tobin, who sees Austen as “an apologist for the landed classes” (425); Meenakshi Mukherjee’s characterization of *Emma* as a novel which “reconfirms class boundaries and special enclosure” (141); Nicola J. Watson’s argument that Austen’s narrative strategies, which focus on the disciplining of individuals by forces of social correction, links her to the anti-Jacobin tradition (3); Clara Tuite’s discussion of Austen’s use of the gypsies in *Emma* as the defense of enclosures and “the elite culture of the country house” (138); Tandon who describes of Austen’s tendency to “take the world as it is as a sign of her ‘conservative temperament’” (17), Galperin’s claim that *Emma* is an expression of nostalgia for the world of “paternalistic protectivism” (199-202); and Anthony Mandal, who argues that Austen celebrates “Tory, gentry-specific values” in *Emma* (135).

15 Other critics who have opposed Butler’s view of Austen as a conservative are John P. McGowan, who argues that: “Much in Austen's novels evidences a loss of faith in social rank's ability to indicate true personal worth” (10);
authority and society in *Emma*, in which repression and rigid social and economic structures from the past degenerate and feminize several of the novel’s male characters. Just as the craze for French politeness and fashion had the power to feminize Edgeworth’s Clarence Hervey, a repressive, stagnant society, like that of England after the French Revolution, could also result in a lack of manliness.

In *Emma* Frank Churchill, the dependant of his autocratic aunt, and Mr. Elton, a young man relegated to making a career in the church where success in the nineteenth century most often hinged on whom you knew or were related to, are both dependent on an aristocratic system of patronage, while Mr. Woodhouse, because of his fear of change and adherence to stale formulas of gallantry, is mentally stuck in the past. All three are characterized by a lack of manliness, as they all conform to outdated eighteenth-century notions of politeness. As opposed to these three gallants, we find another group consisting of Mr. Knightley and Robert Martin, who represent a new egalitarian concept of masculinity that values what social historian John Tosh calls “manliness” over “gentelmanliness.” The difference between the two, Tosh explains, is that manliness, which was to become the hegemonic version of masculinity in the Victorian era, is socially inclusive and based on moral character rather than social status. Manliness had to be earned by “mastering the circumstances of life and earning the respect of one’s peers,” and, as opposed to the more hierarchical notion of masculinity in the eighteenth century, Tosh argues, manliness as it was developed during the nineteenth century lay within the grasp of every man ("Gentlemanly Politeness" 458). A man could therefore be lauded for his gentleman-like

James Thompson, who notes that Austen’s representations of character reflects bourgeois individualism rather than conservative moralism (8); Gary Kelly, who groups Austen as one of the novelists “supporting moderate reform” ("Jane Austen’s Imagined Communities” 129) and Peter Knox-Shaw, who characterizes Austen as “a writer of centrist views” (5). Feminist critics, such as Margaret Kirkham (*Jane Austen Feminism and Fiction* xi); Mary Poovey (*The Proper Lady* 203); Mary Evans (43-63); and Margaret Doody (“Introduction” xiv-xv), and have also remarked on the subversive qualities in Austen’s novels as well as the links between Austen and Wollstonecraft.
behavior and gentlemanly appearance regardless of his birth or fortune. Joseph Kestner states that Austen’s next novel, *Persuasion*, is a rejection of “an enervated, desiccated concept of masculinity” (158), but this is a line of thinking on Austen’s part, I contend, that is already well under way in *Emma*. In fact, we even see it a bit in *Mansfield Park*, where Henry Crawford has a slight twinge of envy with respect to Fanny’s brother William, who is a warrior rather than a gentleman; it is part of what inspires him to use his influence with his uncle to get William promoted to lieutenant. Like Edgeworth’s, Austen’s rejection of eighteenth-century modes of masculinity not only shows the clash of notions of sociability and gender belonging to two different centuries, but it also has political implications. The effete products of an outdated, aristocratic system and world-view can neither lead England into political and economic prosperity, nor gain victory over Napoleon’s France. For this we need to look to the manly Mr. Knightley and his tenant farmer, Robert Martin, who with their emphasis on generosity, reason and sincerity are reminiscent of Edgeworth’s Mr. Percival and General B, as well as the reformed Clarence Hervey and Mr. L. As such, Austen’s solution for how to reinvent manliness is not too different from Edgeworth’s, but Austen’s “new” men do bring to the table a new emphasis on personal merit regardless of social status that feels distinctly more modern and democratic, so where Edgeworth made a counterrevolutionary statement by dismissing French manners, Austen’s message, while also rejecting French-inspired politeness, is progressive and reformist.

Following the recognition that Austen was, in fact, aware of and often responding to political events, *Emma*, a work written during the Napoleonic wars, has become acknowledged as a work filled with nationalist overtones. Despite the fact that none of the characters refer to the war with France or to politics, several readers have noted that Austen’s “3 or 4 Families in a

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16 *Emma* was completed three months before the English victory at Waterloo (Brownstein, “England’s *Emma*” 227).
Country Village” (*Letters* 287) serve as a microcosm of England. This approach makes sense since, as David Monaghan explains, according to the eighteenth-century world-view, God created the world with such precision that “each unit, whether it be the primary one of the individual or one of the smallest social groupings of the family and the village, is a microcosm of the whole” (110). Therefore, in order to understand the forces at work in society, the writer did not have to use large-scale methods, but merely had to study the behavior of the individual in the context of his or her family or immediate community (Roberts 2). Thus, the act of opening a door for a lady was, as Monaghan points out, “in a sense, as vital to the preservation of English society as serving in Parliament or administering justice” (110).

The England of 1814 is, despite its acknowledged superiority to France, nonetheless in need of reforms. The lack of political freedom and meritocracy, leaving young men dependent on a system of patronage, as well the fear of change, has left England stagnant and claustrophobic, and Highbury, as the mirror of greater society, reflects this. Highbury is a village where everybody knows everybody’s business down to their exact daily routines, where there is no privacy, and a strict social hierarchy regulates social intercourse and economic opportunities. It is this stagnancy, this feeling of “endlessly swimming through gruel” (Everett 14) that Emma senses when she dreads the “long evenings” she is to pass after the Westons’ marriage (*E* 20) and

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17 Already in 1957, Lionel Trilling argued that *Emma* is “touched – lightly but indubitably – by national feeling” (53) and other critics who have seen Highbury and *Emma* as representations of England include Warren Roberts (7), Roger Sales (143), Rachel Brownstein (“England’s *Emma*” 227), Oliver MacDonagh (143-144), William Galperin (186), Michael Kramp (*Disciplining Love* 112), and Anthony Mandal (160).

18 Accordingly, Monaghan states that because nothing changes or happens there, Highbury “has become moribund” (“Jane Austen and the Position of Women” 115), a word also used by William Galperin to describe the world of the novel, whom he says is as decaying as the ballroom at the Crown Inn (180). Tony Tanner argues that everything in Emma’s society is “absolutely fixed” (190) while Thorell P. Tsomondo argues that “Highbury is an insular insulated space” (189). Rachel Brownstein contends that the focus on dead creatures in the description of Highbury suggest “an ominous gloom” (*Why Jane Austen?* 141) whereas Colin Winborn describes Highbury as “stale” (114).
which makes her react with “hyperactive matchmaking” (Tandon 152). Knowing that every day will be exactly like the one before it and as lacking in stimulation or opportunity for renewal, Emma sees the future as bleak indeed. Claire Lamont, therefore, recognizes in Emma’s wish to see the sea a longing for wider horizons (305). Instead of making it to the sea-side, or anywhere else for that matter, Emma is confined to her village. Jane Fairfax experiences the same feeling of claustrophobia when she finds that in Highbury she cannot even go to the post office (E 273) or take a walk in the meadows (E 367) without all of her acquaintance finding out within a day.

The feeling of entrapment is, furthermore, evident in the descriptions of Highbury’s geography in chapter 10. The village is described there as consisting of narrow, winding lanes and tall hedges, giving one the feeling of being caught in a maze where one will be going in circles without ever making real progress (E 81-85). Additionally, in Highbury nothing unexpected ever happens, so when Emma looks out on the street there, she knows exactly what to expect: “Mr. Perry walking hastily by, Mr. William Cox letting himself in at the office door, Mr. Cole’s carriage horses returning from exercise, or a stray letter-boy on an obstinate mule, were the liveliest objects she could presume to expect” (E 216). Highbury is, in fact, so backward and conservative that there “the rights of men and women” is represented as a laughing matter and converted to the right to not be deprived of supper during a ball (E 236). In such a community, without the stimulus of political freedoms or the ability to succeed based on merit rather than connections, young men are left dependent on pleasing those who hold power and come to resemble the French courtiers of the ancien régime who turned to frivolity and gallantry, since they had no political power in an absolute monarchy.

In A Comparative View of the French and English Nations (1765) John Andrews describes how bluntness of speech and deportment in favor of a more refined mode of address
were abandoned in France at the same time as political freedoms gradually disappeared. According to Andrews, Richelieu’s successor, Mazarin, found it necessary to quell the natural fierceness and violence of temper of the French. He therefore initiated a new style consisting of gentleness and smoothness of manners (16-18), and insinuation and flattery became the weapons to secure political survival (19). The French simultaneously developed an affinity for dissipation, and amorous escapades, and Andrews argues that the reason for this was that the French did not dare meddle in politics (70). As Knox-Shaw suggests, then, the spread of courtly manners were closely associated with “the politics of absolutism” (207).

Deprived of political freedom the French sought the company of women, and, as a result, lost some of their manliness. Political tyranny made a “generous, manly frankness” impossible, Andrews concluded (159). Noticeably, it is this very quality that Emma’s Knightley finds so lacking in Frank Churchill, and that Emma finds fault with in the simpering and flattering Mr. Elton. Both, as Robert Miles observes, engage in social games and charades as their “status remains unfixed” (81), and, as a result, both have become what Brian Southam refers to as “the quasi French-Monsieur Englishman artful, devious, glib and deceitful, a foppish, rootless creature of frivolity and fashion” (272). As for Mr. Woodhouse, he is his own master, but his distaste for anything new, as well as his egotism, his preference for the company of women, and his allegiance to a superficial kind of chivalry and politeness, like, in the eyes of many Englishmen, that of the French, make him manipulative and effete. He is, in fact, frozen like the maiden in his favorite poem, since he is both feminized and stuck in the past, not realizing that he is no longer living in the mid-eighteenth century of his youth.

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19 It is not the first time Austen makes this argument. Willoughby, Robert Ferrars, and Wickham share with Frank and Elton similar dispositions and situations as the dependents of the whims of autocratic relatives or benefactors, and although Edward Ferrars is infinitely closer to Knightley’s definition of English amiableness, he shares some similarities with Frank, such as having entered into a secret engagement which would, if discovered by the family matriarch, cause him to be disinherited.
II

The dichotomy between English and French modes of masculinity as represented by George Knightley and Frank Churchill has been insightfully delineated by, amongst others, Ward Hellstrom, Joseph A. Kestner, Rachel Brownstein and Brian Southam, who argue that not only the two characters’ first names, but also their leading characteristics such as Frank’s frivolousness and dishonesty and Mr. Knightley’s sincerity and helpfulness, show them to be the representatives of the types of manliness typically ascribed to the two nations (Southam 272).

What Southam and other critics have missed, however, is the reason why Frank Churchill, a young man who has never been to the continent; in whose veins run nothing but English blood; whose first name reminds us of Austen’s highly patriotic and admired brother, Francis, nicknamed Frank (Tomalin 195); whose last name invokes the national hero Lord Marlborough; and whose father is the forthright Mr. Weston has developed this French persona. The reason, I argue, is not that he, despite his Romantic leanings and longing for foreign travel, is unpatriotic by nature, but, rather, that he has been brought up in a home without any freedom of opinion or speech. Thus, while Penelope J. Fritzer argues that Frank has been spoiled by overindulgence in luxury (65), it is my contention that it is rather his lack of autonomy that has reduced him to a flatterer and coxcomb. Caught in an absolute regime, or, as Megan Woodworth briefly refers to his situation, in “a feudal Gallic context” (194), Frank has like the French courtiers come to rely on the shallow and insincere style of politeness that Chesterfield admired.

Much like the absolute monarchy of pre-Revolutionary France, but also like England after Pitt’s crackdowns in the 1790s, Frank’s home, Enscombe, is run by a controlling ruler, Mrs. Churchill, who, in Gilbert and Gubar’s words, despite never actually appearing, acts as “a causal
agent of the action” (79). In the novel itself, Mrs. Weston states that “Mrs. Churchill rules at Enscombe” (E 115), and “Everything gives way to her” (E 116). Mrs. Churchill is also, possibly in allusion to the French royal mistresses of Louis XV, Mesdames Pompadour and Du Barry, described as “a capricious woman” who governs her husband entirely (E 18), and the reader is assured that while Mr. Churchill is “feared by nobody” (E 364), Mrs. Churchill is only to be pleased “by a good many sacrifices,” and she “must be pleased” (E 113). Mr. Weston, the source of most of our information about this formidable lady, further claims that allowances always have to be made for “her whims and caprices” and that she expects to always have things her own way unless one wants to suffer under her “devil of a temper” (114). Her status as an absolute ruler is further confirmed as Mr. Weston states that “She will not be second to any lady in the land” (E 285). The novel makes it clear that anyone that hopes to be tolerated at Enscombe must defer to Mrs. Churchill and that no opposition is tolerated. The consequences of offending Mrs. Churchill are exemplified by her throwing off her sister upon her marriage to the socially inferior Mr. Weston (E 16).

Because of her despotism, Mrs. Churchill only allows Frank to see his father once a year after he has been adopted by her (E 18). Mrs. Weston confirms that Frank’s ability to visit his father and step-mother “depends entirely upon his aunt’s spirits and pleasure” (E 115), and Frank admits to Emma that being able to cultivate his own acquaintances and interests is extremely difficult (E 206). Therefore, Frank’s darling wish before he met Jane Fairfax, to travel abroad, was absolutely denied by Mrs. Churchill, who demands that he always be within a distance to immediately come back to Enscombe when she wishes (E 206). Accordingly, when she bids him return to her during his stay in Highbury, his going is “inevitable” and must take place “within a

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20 Wiltshire expresses the same ideas when he states that Frank’s aunt is “the origin of the novel’s events” (Jane Austen and the Body 123).
few hours” (E 240). Returning to his aunt, Frank is so afraid of being late that he “dared” not stay longer than to see Harriet safe with Emma after he has saved Harriet from the begging gypsies (E 313).

Confirming her status as a monarch, when she dies, Mrs. Churchill is again spoken of in royal terms: “The great Mrs. Churchill was no more” (E 363), is the expression used, which makes it seem as though it is a queen, not an obscure gentlewoman from the North of England who rarely mingled in society, who has died. Now that she is passed away, the people of Highbury can echo the French saying “La reine est morte; vive la reine.” Realizing that the tyrant of the family is no more, Emma instantaneously reflects that now that his aunt is gone, Frank is “freed” (E 363), and, apparently, Frank is not the only one who feels like he has gained his liberty. Mr. Churchill immediately goes to visit an old friend, whom he had promised to visit the last ten years (E 364). Clearly, his wife’s death is what enables him to finally fulfill his promise. Furthermore, whereas it is agreed that Frank’s engagement to Jane would have stood no chance of being sanctioned by his aunt, and that she would have “required” her husband to be of the same opinion, after her death, Mr. Churchill quickly gives his consent with “very little persuasion” (E 374).

The threat that any symptom of independence will result in the loss of his imperious aunt’s favor reduces Frank to flattery, a reliance on frivolous pastimes, and secret stratagems in order to stay “alive” that is, in his ruler’s favor, at Enscombe. Thus, like the courtiers of France, Frank relies on French modes of behavior, such as gallantry and politeness,21 or what Mary Waldron refers to as “manner and a general agreeableness” (152), as well as insincere

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21 In An Essay of Politeness (1775), John Harris denounces the French style of politeness in words that are a strikingly close fit with Frank’s behavior: “I would not make it [politeness] an outer garment, as the French do. It being the fashion of that country for every person to wear it, and compliments are their inseparable companion, it is so easy and familiar – with them that everything is disguised under that thin garb” (42).
stratagems, to not antagonize his aunt. In many ways he seems to follow the francophile Lord Chesterfield’s advice: “The height of abilities is, to have volto sciolto and pensieri stretti; that is, a frank, open and ingenuous exterior, with a prudent and reserved interior; to be upon your own guard, and yet, by a seeming natural openness, to put people off theirs” (Stanhope 105).

Margaret Wye argues that like Emma, Frank has learnt that a direct approach is unlikely to result in success, and he has “therefore developed an aptitude for subterfuge and indirection aimed at placating and controlling the surrounding environment” (150). Frank, for instance, despite having no intention of visiting Highbury until Jane Fairfax arrives in the neighborhood, writes what is said to be “very handsome” letters to his father and step-mother, which make Mrs. Weston form “a very favorable idea” of him and make Mr. Weston expect his son’s immediate arrival (E 19). However, although Frank’s father and step-mother are blinded by their hopes of seeing him, the fact that these shallow assurances of dutifulness are written out of a need to placate his aunt is conceded even by Mr. Knightley, who reasons that through his “flourishing” letters, Frank has found a method to “keep peace at home [Enscombe]” (E 140).

When he finally shows up, Frank continues to be eager to make himself agreeable by flattery. He pleases his father by describing his visit as coming “home” (E 179), and he impresses all his new acquaintances by praising Highbury and confesses an interest in the village that one would only take in “one’s own country” (E 179), as well as a wish to be considered “a true citizen of Highbury” (E 187). His lavish praise of Mrs. Weston makes Emma reflect that he knew “how to please” and “understood what would be welcome” (E 180). Mr. Knightley, on the other hand, refers to Frank’s behavior with the French terms “maneuvering and finessing”

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22 As Fiona Stafford points out in a note in the Penguin Classics edition of the novel, Frank’s reference to citizenship not only shows him to be a flatterer but also further strengthens his association with France (466) whereas Brownstein suggests that his use of Latin is not only pretentious but also “possibly even sarcastic and unpatriotic” (Why Jane Austen? 216).
and states that Frank is “amiable only in French” (E 141). Michele Cohen observes that in the eighteenth century the “vivacity of discourse the French displayed” was considered very pleasing but lacking in sincerity (Fashioning Masculinity 3), and similarly Mr. Knightley claims that Frank’s French way of being “aimable” consists of an outward show of agreeableness, but a lack of “English delicacy” towards other people’s feelings (E 141). Mr. Knightley’s opinion is justified when we find Frank encouraging Emma’s acerbic wit towards her companions and thereby hurting the kindly Miss Bates at Box Hill, and we can conclude that June Sturrock is correct when she asserts: “In Emma, verbal style indicates moral style” (93). However, these lapses in morality are caused by Frank’s status as an oppressed subject, and this is spelled out by Austen in the discussion of Frank’s wish to travel abroad, which has made some critics, such as Brownstein, see him as a Byronic figure (Why Jane Austen? 215). Frank’s reasoning to Emma as they discuss his shocking statement that he is “sick of England” (342) is that he wants to go because he is “thwarted in anything material” by his aunt (342). In support of the theory that Frank acts the part of the gallant out of necessity, there are indications that, despite claims by, for instance, Alistair Duckworth (163) and Hazel Jones (56-57) that he enjoys his part as an intrigue-maker, Frank is often uncomfortable with his lies, and would rather be truthful. For example, he declares to Emma: “Then I will speak the truth, and nothing suits me so well” (E 183), and there is a point when he almost confesses the entire charade to Emma, then catches himself and goes on as if nothing had happened. Emma, in her blindness, interprets his faux pas as stifling a proposal of marriage to her rather than revealing his engagement to Jane, not recognizing Frank’s desire to end his lying charade of a courtship to her.

Convinced that his wish to marry the poor daughter of a deceased army lieutenant would enrage his aunt, as his mother did when she married beneath her, Frank relies on a similar system
of falseness in his relationship with Jane Fairfax. Not only does he conceal their engagement, but he pretends to neither know nor at all admire Jane. Being forced to acknowledge that he was introduced to her at Weymouth, Frank pretends to Emma that he does not remember her aunt and grandmother’s last name and, moreover, to be completely disinclined to visit them (E 182). His “forced” visit he describes as disagreeable, and the length of it he attributes to being detained by Miss Bates’ verbosity. Jane Fairfax’s claims as a beauty are dismissed by saying that she has “a most deplorable want of complexion” (E 187), and later caught staring at Jane, Frank pretends to be criticizing her hair-do (E 207). At the Coles’ dinner party, he pretends to not want to dance with her, claiming that “her languid dancing” could not possibly agree with him (E 214). Frank also relies on feeble excuses such as having run into some of his acquaintance in Highbury that he wants to return to (E 296), making sure Miss Bates has an umbrella (E 302), or the need to return a pair of borrowed scissors (E 313) to sneak off to see Jane.

Andrews argues that the during absolute rule, the French turned to dissipation and a constant quest for amusement, since they dared not assert their political rights, and in Emma Frank makes use of a similar strategy. Rather than petition his aunt for the right to visit his father, he idles away his time at Weymouth, and Mr. Knightley, although prejudiced against Frank, is probably correct in accusing Frank of leading a life of “idle pleasure” (E 140). Echoing Andrews, Mr. Knightley argues that being brought up in an autocratic environment has taught Frank, by his aunt’s example, “to care very little for any thing but his own pleasure” (E 137). As a proof of this, Frank’s first enquiries about the neighborhood he is visiting, whether there is music and dancing to be had (E 180), reveals his superficial and dissipated nature as much as the fact that everybody finds it perfectly plausible that he is the kind of young man who would ride
to London merely to get a haircut. As Sarah Frantz points out, not only is Frank’s raffishness an indication of his moral qualities, but it also compares unfavorably to Mr. Knightley's plain dress, as the latter’s unfashionable gaiters, which protect his trouser legs when walking through muddy fields, prove him to be “the competent, hands-on, hard-working English landholder so necessary to national stability” (170-171). Similarly, in Sense and Sensibility Colonel Brandon’s unfashionable flannel waistcoat, according to Eileen Sutherland, aligns him with the bravest military men of his time” (58). Frank’s frivolousness is also noticeable by the fact that all his praise of Jane consists of praise for her beauty (E 446-447, 448), and that as soon as their troubles are over, he thinks all of his and Jane’s perplexities and difficulties in keeping their engagement a secret as a great joke. As he laughs heartily at his own blunder in revealing news that he gained in a letter from Jane, she admonishes him for his levity (E 449), as does Emma after finding out about his engagement to Jane (E 395).

No wonder Emma is shocked at this news, since, despite being engaged to Jane, Frank, in accordance with his French system of gallantry, treats Jane with “seigniorial heartlessness” (P. Smith 230) and behaves to Emma in such a way that she appears to be “his peculiar object” (E 200). For instance, on rejoining the ladies in the Coles’ drawing room, he merely greets Jane in passing on his way over to Emma, and he refuses to sit down until he can get a seat next to Emma (E 205). On the outing to Box Hill Frank’s behavior is again noticeably French as he engages in a frivolous flirtation with Emma. As part of his act of courting Emma, Frank also orders the others to take part in his game, and this use of the imperative, as Deidre Lynch points out, reinforces hierarchies when everybody is supposed to be on an equal footing (par. 15). Thus, Frank posits Emma as an all-powerful queen whose orders are being carried out by her courtly

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23 Frank’s stylishness and frivolousness have made both Roger Sales (144-145) and Megan Woodworth (194) identify him as a Regency dandy closely modeled upon the Prince Regent.
lover, and, accordingly, Frank’s libertine behavior is identified by Jason Solinger as the result of an “absolutist and patriarchal ethos (93). Like the French aristocrats, whose main pastime, Andrews claims, is amorous escapades, Frank uses flirtation as both a reaction to his lack of freedom and as a smokescreen to avoid the detection of his engagement to Jane, and Emma emphasizes the French tendencies of his behavior when she, upon learning the truth, pronounces it to have been nothing but “a system of hypocrisy and deceit, espionage, and treachery” (E 375). The word espionage was, like maneuvering and finesse, at the time a relatively new loan word in English and still heavily associated with the French (Southam 273). However, as Frank’s explanatory letter makes explicit, his behavior is not caused by an admiration for French manners, but, like all most his behavior, by his fear of his despotic aunt (411). David Ball is therefore correct in arguing that “The element of selfishness and irresponsibility in Frank’s behaviour … may be linked to the relative uncertainty, up to the conclusion of the novel, of his social position” (48).

By engaging in French modes of behavior, however, Frank, like Edgeworth’s Clarence Hervey, becomes less manly. His tendencies towards effeminacy are observed by Emma and Mr. Knightley. Before she has even met Frank, Emma compares Frank to a woman as she reflects upon his lack of freedom: “A young woman, if she fall into bad hands, may be teased, and kept at a distance from those she wants to be with; but one cannot comprehend a young man’s being under such restraint, as to not be able to spend a week with his father, if he likes it” (E 116). Emma, furthermore, argues that Frank is in a state of “dependence” (E 138), that his habit of obedience and “long observance” might prevent him from asserting his independence (E 139), and that his behavior to his aunt shows him to be of a “yielding, complying, mild disposition” (E 140). What Wollstonecraft referred to as such “sweet docility of manners” (A Vindication of the
Rights of Woman 111) were qualities recommended for young ladies by famous conduct book writers such as Fordyce and Gregory, and by attributing them to Frank, Emma categorizes him as feminine. Additionally, Emma calls Frank “the child of good fortune” (E 414), not only highlighting his immaturity but also reminding us of Wollstonecraft’s assertion that women, as a result of their dependence on men, had become childish creatures (50). Emma’s summing up of Frank’s behavior shows how lacking in manliness his actions have been: “So unlike what a man should be! – None of that upright integrity, that strict adherence to truth and principle, that disdain of trick and littleness, which a man should display in every transaction of his life” (E 373). Mr. Knightley, in his turn, compares Frank’s handwriting to that of a woman because of its smallness and lack of strength (E 276) and argues that Frank should act as “a man of sense” and stand up for himself. Instead, Mr. Knightley argues, Frank is “weak,” a characteristic that again feminizes him (E 140). In order to act like a rational man, he ought, Knightley claims, to resist Mrs. Churchill’s unreasonable dictates and firmly have “shaken off all that was unworthy in their authority” (E 140). Not only is this an indictment of Frank’s lack of manliness, it is also a statement that contradicts every anti-Jacobin novel’s insistence upon the necessity for an absolute deference to the authority of parents and guardians, and by extension to the government, and, therefore, a most radical statement.

Frank Churchill is not the only dependent male character in Emma. Although he is not plagued with interfering family members, Mr. Elton depends on pleasing those above him in order to make his way in the world. Little is revealed about his background other than Emma’s guess that he is not of a family that would be likely to object to Harriet’s background (E 34) and that he has no “alliances but in trade” (E 129). Although he is said to have a small independent income, Mr. Elton’s fortune, much like Frank’s, depends on patronage rather than his own
achievements. As the daughter of a clergyman and the sister of two ordained ministers, Jane Austen knew the career expectations for members of the clergy first-hand, and for the modern reader’s benefit in *Jane Austen and the Clergy* Irene Collins outlines the lifestyle and career options for clergymen in England during Austen’s life-time. After ordination, a clergyman had to make his living within a patronage system dating back to the Middle Ages, which meant that if a young man could not be provided with a living by his family, he had to seek out another patron that would be favorably impressed enough with him to offer him a vicarage or a rectory, which often required the young clergyman, as Mary Wollstonecraft strikingly puts it in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, to “obsequiously respect the opinion of his rector or patron” (28-29). If no such offer was forthcoming, an ordained minister might end up as a university fellow or an assistant curate on a small stipend (Collins 20-21).

While Jane Austen’s father owed his preferment to his second cousin, Thomas Knight, who held the advowson of several livings (Collins 2), several of her fictional clergymen had to rely on the bounty of relative strangers. Mr. Collins had his living bestowed upon him by Lady Catherine de Bourgh, and Edward Ferrars, after he was thrown off by his mother, was provided for by Colonel Brandon. In *Emma* we are not told explicitly how Mr. Elton came to be the vicar of Highbury, but if, as seems extremely likely, the living belongs to Donwell Abbey and Mr. Knightley, this would certainly explain Mrs. Elton’s desire to ingratiate herself with Mr. Knightley, as well as Mr. Elton’s eagerness to be considered “Mr. Knightley’s right hand” (*E* 426-429). Like so many other young men of his profession, then, Mr. Elton is reliant on a system in which pleasing people in positions of power and influence is of vital importance to his prospects. By the nineteenth century, however, such a reliance on patronage had started to be seen as undignified and unmanly: “Look not for success to favour, to partiality, to friendship, or
to what is called interest; write it on your heart that you will depend solely on your own merit and your own exertions” (17) announced William Cobbett in his Advice to Young Men in 1829. Although Mr. Elton seems to think that he has done well for himself in becoming the vicar of Highbury and does not seem bothered by “the heart-aches of slaves” that Cobbett warns against (17), we are still told that “the vicarage of Highbury was not large” (E 34) which means that, like so many others in his profession, Mr. Elton has only two options if he wants to improve his income. One is to find a more prosperous living, either by becoming a pluralist or by exchanging his current living for a better one, both unlikely considering Mr. Elson’s apparent lack of connections in the landed gentry or aristocracy, and the other is to marry into money. Both methods require a reliance on personal graces in order to succeed, and Mr. Elton chooses, like Frank, to resort to an eighteenth-century mode of insinuating softness of manners and gallantry.

Clearly, being, as Emma scornfully pronounces him, a “nobody” without any connections other than tradespeople (E 129), Mr. Elton has realized that his best bet for bettering his lot is to capture the attention and heart of an heiress such as Emma. Charles H. Hinnant therefore equates Mr. Elton to Austen’s other despicable clergyman, Mr. Collins, as he argues that they both undertake “sham courtships” (303). Realizing this fact, Mr. Knightley discloses to Emma that Mr. Elton intends to marry up in the world: “Elton may talk sentimentally, but he will act rationally,” and he therefore talks, Mr. Knightley reveals, when among men, with great enthusiasm of some young ladies of his acquaintance who have 20,000 pounds settled upon them (E 64). Mr. Knightley is proven right when Elton haughtily pronounces Harriet to be beneath his “level” (E 125), and despite his claim to love Emma ardently, after she has rejected him, he becomes engaged to another well-to-do woman within four weeks.
His wife’s fortune, the narrator comments, is of “some convenience” to Mr. Elton (E 170), and that his motives were mercenary is confirmed by his boast to his friend that the lady had been “so easily impressed” as to make the courtship a very short one (E 171). Mr. Elton is, therefore, content to put up with being called Mr. E (E 257) and cara sposo (E 259) and to pretend affection. It is therefore easy to agree with Peter Knox-Shaw’s observation that “Person counts for little, it is plain, in Mr. Elton’s quest for a wife” (209). However, as much as we can join Austen in condemning such opportunism, we should nonetheless recognize that Mr. Elton, unlike Mr. Collins, is not without good qualities, such as working to better the lot of the poor (145, 358); taking an active, competent interest in the administration of his parish; and being reckoned a good companion by other men (E 64). We should therefore acknowledge that it is probably the lack of other opportunities for upward mobility that motivates Mr. Elton. The irony, however, is that Mr. Elton has merely exchanged one kind of dependency and degradation for another. From being a clergyman of modest income, he now has the means to live more comfortably, but, as a result of offering himself to the heiress to what might very well, given her Bristol connections, be a slave trading fortune (whose maiden name appropriately is Hawkins), he now has to put up with his wife’s overbearing behavior. For all of Mrs. Elton’s protestations that her husband is her “lord and master” and she the true example of “conjugal obedience” (E 428), she is clearly the one who calls the shots in the Elton household, and this both degrades and feminizes him. Furthermore, as Penny Gay points out, Mrs. Elton can easily be associated with the absolute regime of pre-Revolutionary France. She uses French phrases, like demanding a carte blanche to direct the outing to Donwell; she wants absolute social power in Highbury; and she wants to imitate Marie-Antionette’s milkmaid performances at Versailles by riding on a donkey and holding a straw basket (59). Sturrock, in her turn, states that Mrs. Elton’s constant
project is self-aggrandizement (90), a trait reminding us more than a little of Louis XIV. Mr. Elton, then, remains the gallant courtier although now he has to please his autocratic wife in addition to his patron.

The reader has been invited to think of Mr. Elton in feminine terms long before he is put under the sway of his spouse, though. Before he even enters the scene, Elton is described to us as “a very pretty young man” (E 15), and we are later assured that in Highbury he is considered to not have “his equal for beauty or agreeableness” (E 66). That this agreeableness is of a womanly kind becomes obvious as Emma points out his “gentleness” (E 33) and “softness” (E 34) as his foremost characteristics. In contrast, Emma is spoken of as “handsome.” The softness that Emma notes has been cultivated by Mr. Elton, who evidently has decided to use his personal graces for all they are worth, as he presents himself as a “man of feeling” in order to, he thinks, impress Emma. Consequently, he speaks with a “sighing manner” (E 42), answers her questions in a “voice of sentiment,” as his “every feature works” to please the ladies in his company (E 106). His reference to the excellencies of sheepskin as “a device” to keep from feeling the cold right before he proposes to Emma, is of course a hint that Mr. Elton is indeed a wolf in sheep’s clothes, using sentimentality as his own cover to mask his cold and calculating plans to get ahead in the world (E 109).

Mr. Elton’s hypocrisy is so obvious that even Emma, despite her blindness before his proposal, notices and reflects that he “is almost too gallant to be in love” (E 48) with Harriet, and on another occasion she finds “the parade in his speeches” so ridiculous that the cannot help laughing (E 80). His proposal to Emma is one long, sentimental cliché; he declares that he adores her, and that his “ardent attachment” and “unexampled passion” makes him “ready to die” if she refuses his proposal (E 123). Not only does his language align him with conventional gallantry,
but the fact that his unwanted love-making takes place in a carriage further emphasizes the
parallels between his modus operandi and that of other predatory characters who hide their
salacious motives underneath a mask of courtesans, such as Richardson’s Lovelace, Charlotte
Smith’s Lord Delamere, and Frances Burney’s Sir Clement Willoughby.

After he has lost the hope of securing Emma and her 30,000 pounds, Mr. Elton is smart
enough, although he is resentful of Emma, to try to retain a good relationship with Mr.
Woodhouse as his note to Emma’s father upon his departure for Bath shows (E 132). Since he
does not dare to show his resentment to Emma because of her social position, he takes his
disappointment out on Harriet instead (E 262). Unlike Mr. Knightley, who goes out his way to be
courteous and helpful to those in inferior circumstances, such as the Bateses, Mr. Elton is often
less than pleasant to those beneath him, showing that his manners are nothing more than a
“social mask” (Woodworth 192) made of a French-inspired mixture of superficial politeness and
gallantry to achieve his goals. For instance, after Emma has turned him down and praising
Harriet can no longer do him any good, Mr. Elton treats Harriet in manner that is “sneering and
negligent” (E 262) and with “smiles of high glee” towards his wife, he refuses to dance with
Harriet (E 307). Emma declares that his behavior shows his “littleness” (310), but his attitude
also exemplifies the difference between what was thought of as the shallow,
French/Chesterfieldian style of politeness as opposed to the sincere civility of an Englishman.

According to Locke, with whose work Austen was acquainted (Bour 160), civility is “that

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24 A refusal to dance with a young lady is, as we know from *Pride & Prejudice*, a great rudeness and a failure to
show appropriate manly qualities. Locke, for instance, thought dancing an important activity for a gentleman.
Therefore, like Darcy, Knightley has to learn to appreciate dancing (Bour 165-166). Monaghan agrees, arguing that
Knightley’s disapproval of dancing shows “an emotional immaturity which causes him to withdraw from
involvement with women” (“Jane Austen and the Position of Women” 117). Fritzer, on the other hand, points out
that like all other activities dancing must be enjoyed in moderation, and therefore Frank’s “excessive zeal for
dancing” shows weakness of character (38-39).
general good will and regard for all people which makes anyone have a care not to show in his carriage any contempt, disrespect, or neglect of them” (Locke 107). This English true civility is exemplified by Mr. Knightley, who, although to appearances more curt, shows consideration for everyone regardless of their position or their usefulness, and who would never, like Frank, participate in ridiculing Miss Bates, or like Mr. Elton, mortify a young girl like Harriet in public.

Although he would never knowingly slight or ridicule a lady, old or young, Mr. Woodhouse shares with Frank and Elton the allegiance to eighteenth-century modes of masculine behavior. Whereas Frank Churchill and Mr. Elton both depend on the favors of their superiors, Emma’s father lives a comfortable, privileged life on his inherited estate, Hartfield. “Scarcely second” in their village (E 129) even to Mr. Knightley, Mr. Woodhouse does not need favors from anyone. Instead he will pass on thirty thousand pounds to each of his daughters when he dies. His fortune, though, is of an obscure origin and probably indicates that he is a rentier, and as such, it is clearly not the result of that dignified exertion that we see Mr. Knightley perform as a progressive farmer and which Tosh lists as one of the requisite qualities of nineteenth-century manliness (“What Should Historians Do” 186). While Frank is associated with the absolutism of pre-Revolutionary France and Mr. Elton represents the feudalist economic system of the ancien régime, Mr. Woodhouse is, as both Claudia L. Johnson (Equivocal Beings 198-199) and Megan Woodworth (192) have pointed out, the representative of the Burkean veneration for the past. He is also another autocratic ruler, but unlike Mrs. Churchill, who rules with her temper, Mr. Woodhouse is manipulative and uses hypochondria and whining as a means of power (Fergus “Male Whining” 103), making Wye conclude that Mr. Woodhouse and Mrs. Churchill are, although they use different means, equally dominating (150).

25 For another, excellent analysis of the parallels between Mr. Woodhouse and Mrs. Churchill, see John Wiltshire’s Jane Austen and the Body (117-125).
however, that whereas Mrs. Churchill’s power renders Frank powerless and effeminate, Mr. Woodhouse’s invalidism, as much as he tries to circumscribe Emma’s movements, in fact ends up making Emma more powerful, independent, and, in a sense masculine.26

One of the ironies of the parallels between Burke and Mr. Woodhouse, however, is that unlike the French king, whom Burke depicts as a loving father to his family and country (111), Mr. Woodhouse is not doing his duty and taking appropriate responsibility as a father.27 As long as he is not inconvenienced or suffers no fears for his own or her safety, he lets Emma do as she wants with no guidance, and the narrator remarks that one of the evils in Emma’s situation is “the power of having rather too much her own way” (E 7). Mr. Knightley voices similar concerns when he confides to Mrs. Weston that the premature freedom and responsibility Emma has been given have been to her detriment (E 36). Not only does Mr. Woodhouse fail to provide Emma with parental guidance, he also, as Janet Todd notes, “creates a circle of admiration” around her (98), and in effect attempts to make her the queen of his absolute monarchy. In sum, Mr. Woodhouse is a failure as a father, and this deflates not only Burke’s myth of the absolute monarch as a benevolent father-figure, but it also effeminates Mr. Woodhouse, since male household authority has been identified as central to the conception of eighteenth and nineteenth-century masculinity (Tosh “Old Adam” 66-67). Mr. Woodhouse’s consistent failures as a father and leader of the household are not the only things that debunk the Burkean ethos in the novel, however. Mr. Woodhouse’s surname makes fun of Burke’s metaphor of the house that must only

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26 In Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel, Claudia L. Johnson outlines the longstanding critical tradition of seeing Emma as a masculine figure (122-125).  
27 A number of critics have noted Mr. Woodhouse’s failure as a father: Alistair Duckworth observes that Emma’s father takes “parental ineffectiveness” to the extreme (148); Tony Tanner calls him “a travesty of a father” (200); Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that Emma’s father fails to provide her with the necessary guidance because he is enclosed in his infantile self-concern” (163); and Mary-Elizabeth F. Tobin states that Emma hasn’t been taught to be socially responsible by her father (418).
be changed gradually (Reflections 249-250); clearly, the materials this house is built of are completely rotten and ready to be torn down and replaced.

We are constantly reminded that like a true conservative, Mr. Woodhouse’s greatest aversion is change and new modes of living. In the very first description of him we are told that he “hates change of every kind” (E 9), and this is a sign that he is a superannuated figure: “Those few characters in Austen’s novels who do hold on to old ways express ideas which are being superseded in the novel in which they occur” (Lamont 669). For instance, Mr. Woodhouse likes to have his suppers with “the cloth laid” because it was the fashion when he was young (E 25), and he does not like the company of strangers because he finds a voice he is unaccustomed to hard to like (E 259). It is also his hatred of change that makes him dislike weddings: “Matrimony, as the origin of change, was always disagreeable” to him, Emma reflects (E 9). Therefore, nine years have not reconciled him to the marriage of Isabella, and the transformation of Miss Taylor into Mrs. Weston upsets him so much that regret for her is his main topic of conversation for months after the wedding. Upon Mr. Elton’s marriage, he likewise comments that the young man “ought not to have married” (E 260), and the revelation that Emma means to marry, as well, makes him so miserable that she almost despairs of it happening (E 452). Mr. Woodhouse’s aversion to weddings and the change they occasion is further evidenced by the fact that his favorite poem is about a frozen maid, the state he would like his daughter to remain in, too, as he, as Maaja A. Stewart notes, always seeks to immobilize her (81).

In addition to a decided aversion to change, Mr. Woodhouse’s two other defining characteristics are his feebleness and his lack of intellectual vigor. Because of these failings, Mr. Woodhouse is unable to be the leader of the household that he ought to be, and he is certainly not
respected by his male peers, who treat him more like a spoiled child than as an equal. Instead of consulting Mr. Woodhouse, frequently, such as when Emma and Mr. Knightley settle between themselves how to transport everyone home from Randalls on Christmas Eve (E 122), decisions are made over his head before cajoling him into going along with the plans. Mr. Woodhouse’s role as a “professional invalid” (Sales 136), a sufferer of “nerves,” and his dim-wittedness, therefore, make him come across more as one of the sickly, nervous women that Wollstonecraft complains about and that Austen has already ridiculed in Mrs. Bennet, than as the venerable patriarch he believes himself to be. Mr. Woodhouse’s lack of manliness, which not only reminds us of Mrs. Bennet, but also shows the parallels between him, Mr. Elton and Frank, is further confirmed by his preference for the company of women, particularly that of Miss Bates, whose stereotypically feminine modes of conversation, trivial chatter and gossip, suit him perfectly (E 22). Therefore, at the Randalls dinner, he almost immediately follows the ladies into the drawing-room, happy to leave the men behind to seek the company of “those with whom he was always comfortable” (E 115). Furthermore, like a woman, Mr. Woodhouse is extremely concerned about domestic matters such as which bedrooms their overnight guests have been assigned (E 77), and when reluctantly hosting a dinner, he refuses to do the duty of the man of house by presiding at the head of the dinner table, a duty he significantly hands over to Mr. Knightley (E 271).

In addition to being effeminate, Mr. Woodhouse shares with Frank and Mr. Elton a decided preference for an eighteenth-century-style politeness which is gallant on the surface but

28 Tosh describes the three components of nineteenth-century hegemonic masculinity as consisting of a man’s status as the leader of a household, being the source of the family’s income, and the recipient of male peer-approval (“What should Historians Do” 185-186).
29 As Wiltshire points out, sickness in general and nervous disorders in particular, were associated with women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Jane Austen and the Body 119). Many critics have therefore ridiculed Mr. Woodhouse as “a silly old woman,” and Claudia Johnson points to Edmund Wilson as the first one to do so (Equivocal Beings 197).
of little substantive value. He, as Sturrock points out, enjoys Mr. Elton’s flattery (92) and treats
the women around him with an antiquated courtliness that makes Emma comment that “He loves
anything that pays a woman a compliment. He has the tenderest spirit of gallantry towards us all’
(E 75). However, like that of Frank and Mr. Elton, Mr. Woodhouse’s courteousness is a thin
cover for his own egotism, or what the narrator refers to as his “habits of gentle selfishness” (E
9). So whereas Woodworth concludes Mr. Woodhouse to be an “aged hero of sensibility” (192)
and Johnson declares him to be characterized by his “benevolent nerves” (198), it is my opinion
that Mr. Woodhouse is completely lacking in the humanity and sincerity that was emphasized by
the proponents of sensibility (P. Carter, Men and the Emergence 89). Moreover, male feeling
was supposed to be directed towards caring for and feeling sympathy for the helpless (Bailey
174), and in his utter lack of such concern, Mr. Woodhouse is much more closely aligned with
French politesse. So, for all his professions of missing his eldest daughter, Mr. Woodhouse
cannot be convinced to make it the sixteen miles to London, a distance traveled round-trip in a
day by both Mr. Elton and Frank Churchill, to see his daughter and grandchildren. Instead, he is
content to stay home and bewail how long it has been since he has seen them. When his daughter
and family visits, Mr. Woodhouse, again guided by egotism, does not even want Mr. Knightley,
who has generously given up his claim to have his brother and family stay at Donwell Abbey, to
dine with them, as he wants Isabella all to himself (E 95). Moreover, he frets over Mr.
Knightley’s leaving them to visit London for a few days, but can at the same time, talk “with
cheerfulness” about Jane Fairfax’s engagement to become a governess, since her presence does
not affect his well-being (E 362-363). Because of his selfishness, therefore, more than anything,
it is Emma’s assurance of the benefit to himself that reconciles Mr. Woodhouse to Emma and
Mr. Knightley’s marriage: “Having Mr. Knightley always at hand” (E 436), or as Jonathan
Grossman terms it, as his “dutiful assistant” (151), is an argument that clearly carries weight and contributes to Mr. Woodhouse’s getting used to the idea that Emma will marry. Allowing Mr. Knightley into his home to take the permanent place at the head of his table, Mr. Woodhouse is merely acting out of convenience to himself, but what he is not aware of is that he also symbolically moves Hartfield into the nineteenth century.

III

As opposed to Frank, Mr. Elton, and Mr. Woodhouse, Mr. Knightley possesses an independence of mind and situation which leaves him free to dispense with servility, stratagems, and antiquated rituals of social polish. Unlike Mr. Elton and Frank, he is his own master with no one but his own sense of right to please, and unlike Mr. Woodhouse, he is progressive-minded and sees change as a potential for good rather than as a threat. He is a responsible, benevolent landlord and land-owner as shown by his concerns for the common folk’s convenience when making alterations to one of the paths through his property (E 102), and his interest in scientific farming methods shows him to not be afraid of modernization. As what the narrator describes as “a sensible man,” (E 11), Mr. Knightley is a leader of his community, and as such, we are told, he is considered “a general friend and adviser” in Highbury (E 59).

Unlike Frank, Mr. Elton, and Mr. Woodhouse, Mr. Knightley is no friend to flattery and empty gallantry: “Emma knows I never flatter her” (E 12), he declares, and the one time he almost kisses her hand, Emma is surprised, since “His manners had in general so little flattery” (E 362). Accordingly, Mr. Knightley dislikes Emma’s friendship with Harriet because Harriet is “a flatterer,” and he foresees that this will only increase Emma’s intellectual vanity (E 37). Because he never stoops to flattery, Mr. Knightley is not afraid to speak the truth in an almost
brusque manner, so when he thinks Jane Fairfax is being overburdened by singing, he unceremoniously interrupts and orders her to stop: “You have sung quite enough for one evening – now, be quiet” (E 213). Mr. Knightley also has no problem telling Mrs. Elton that she is not allowed to do the inviting to his house or take over the planning of his party (E 333). Additionally, Mr. Knightley sees it as his duty, in the spirit of true friendship, to put honesty over flattery whenever Emma misbehaves, like he does when he takes her severely to task for being rude to Miss Bates (E 351-352). As we can see by his discarding of gallantry, there is no doubt then that Jan Fergus, commenting on Mr. Knightley’s willingness to engage with Emma as an equal in conversation, hits the nail on the head when she calls Mr. Knightley “a new model of an English Gentleman (“The Power of Women’s Language and Laughter” 120).

Honesty, rather than courtliness, is one of the main qualities Mr. Knightley esteems in others as well as himself. He has the frankness that the three other male characters do not, and, accordingly, he states that he would not marry Jane Fairfax because she does not have an open temper (E 267). So, whereas Mr. Knightley at first disapproves of Emma’s intimacy with Harriet, whom he calls ill-informed, his opinion of her changes drastically for the better when he discovers her forthrightness and candidness: “He praised her for being without art or affectation, for having simple, honest, generous, feelings” (E 384). To Emma he argues that the bad example of Frank’s Churchill’s conduct “proves the beauty of truth and sincerity in all our dealings with each other” (E 417), and Mr. Knightley’s sincerity is not only expressed by words, but also in his body language. Therefore, instead of putting on a false front, he lets Emma see by his graveness that he is still upset with her the day after their quarrel about Harriet’s rejection of Robert Martin (E 361), but as soon as he realizes that Emma is penitent, his expression changes into “a glow of regard” (E 362).
Like his straight-forward behavior to Emma, Mr. Knightley’s greeting of his brother, whom he has not seen for months, is “in the true English style,” unceremonious and seemingly unemotional, but is also, as the narrator reflects, the calm expression of an attachment that would lead both brothers to do anything needed to help the other (E 95). This is a fact even recognized by Mrs. Elton, who exclaims that under his “peculiar sort of dry, blunt manner,” Mr. Knightley has “the warmest heart” (E 334). Even when he proposes, Mr. Knightley confesses an inability to be gallant, declaring to Emma “I cannot make speeches …If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more” (E 403). This, of course invites a comparison with Mr. Elton’s abundance of “sighs and fine words” that Emma instantly realizes are nothing but a sham (E 128). On the contrary, Mr. Knightley’s proposal to her is made in “plain, unaffected, gentleman-like English” (E 419).

Unlike his younger brother, Mr. Knightley’s occasional lack of suaveness does not conceal his true civility, which, rather than consisting of trite compliments, shows itself as an eagerness to serve and promote the happiness of others that his brother sometimes fails in. Out of kindness to Mr. Woodhouse, Mr. Knightley gives up his claim to have his brother and family stay with him instead of at Hartfield when they come down for the holidays (E 77), and when his brother loses patience with his father-in-law, Mr. Knightley diffuses the tension by diverting his brothers’ attention with talk about improvements to Donwell Abbey, and his “alertness” soothes Mr. Woodhouse’s agitation (E 102). When Mr. Woodhouse is frantic about the Christmas Eve snow storm, Mr. Knightley, while the others merely speculate, walks outside to examine the snow-fall and talk to the coachmen, and, as a result, he is able to reassure every body that there is no real cause for concern (E 121). In another act of unobtrusive kindness, Mr. Knightley rents horses in order to convey Jane Fairfax and Miss Bates to an evening party (E 208), and Emma’s
reaction discloses how characteristic of Mr. Knightley such benevolence is: “I know no man more likely than Mr. Knightley to do the sort of thing – to do anything really good-natured, useful, or benevolent. He is not a gallant man, but he is a very humane one … and for an act of unostentatious kindness, there is nobody whom I would fix on more than Mr. Knightley” (E 208).

Mr. Knightley’s chivalric nature, easily distinguishable by his name, has made several critics see him as a reversion to the feudal ideals of the past. Johnson, for instance, argues that that while Knightley performs a new "humane" British masculinity, he simultaneously “harkens backward” to the chivalric ideals of the Enlightenment (Equivocal Beings 203), a stance also taken by Michael Kramp (Disciplining Love 110-111). In a closely related vein and also looking to the past, Woodworth sees Mr. Knightley as a descendant of Burney and Edgeworth’s male characters (197), but in focusing on chivalry as an ideal of the past, it is easy to ignore the emergence of the knightly ideal in the nineteenth century. In “The Old Adam and the New Man” Tosh points to “the vogue for medieval chivalry” as one of the distinguishing features on this century, and Kestner observes that by embodying a masculinity constructed by “the paradigm of St. George” (150), Mr. Knightley, like Mr. Percival in Edgeworth’s Belinda, fits into a fresh tradition of modeling masculinity upon England’s patron saint that lasted from the publication of Emma until the end of World War I (151). Mr. Knightley’s chivalry then, especially when seen in conjunction with his other distinguishing features, his egalitarian view of manliness and his professionalism as a land-owner, mark him as a progressive figure and a proto-Victorian man, or as Brownstein compellingly puts it in Why Jane Austen?: “The bluff middle aged hero named after the English Saint George is a modern version of the perfect gentle knight, a traditional gentleman farmer in a newly commercial society” (197).
Not surprisingly, Mr. Knightley’s estate reflects his personality. Unlike, for example, Sotherton in *Mansfield Park*, Donwell is unimproved as Emma notes during the strawberry party (*E* 335), and Wiltshire observes that Donwell’s lack of “fashionable smoothness” represents the honesty and “moral integrity” of its owner (“*Mansfield Park, Emma, Persuasion*” 74). But whereas a number of critics have taken Emma’s admiration for Donwell Abbey’s “sweet view” and “English verdure, English culture, English comfort” (*E* 338) as a description of England as it is, I think it depicts England as it should be and currently is only at Donwell, but not in society at large. At Enscombe where the cold mirrors the “pride and reserve” of its owners (*E* 186), or at Hartfield (which only has a few lawns and a shrubbery), where we find little of the verdure that characterizes Donwell, or in stagnant Highbury, for instance, we find the oppressiveness Emma finds so reassuringly lacking at Mr. Knightley’s. Therefore, when we look with Emma at the grounds surrounding Donwell Abbey, we see England as it ought to be once it has been freed from the obsession with the past, the political oppression and the lack of meritocracy that leave men servile and insincere.

When Mrs. Weston declares that no one “but Mr. Knightley would be able to give up his own home and independence” and be able to bear with Mr. Woodhouse (*E* 437), her praise is not merely a testament to Mr. Knightley’s generosity but also to his high regard for his own independence as well as that of others. Acknowledging this trait to be Mr. Knightley’s foremost feature, Emma in defending Frank’s failure to come to Highbury, reminds Mr. Knightley of his enviable status as an independent man (*E* 139), and it is his “health, activity, and independence”

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30 It is therefore exactly why Lionel Trilling calls the England depicted in *Emma* “an idyll” and warns us against “identifying it with the real England” (“*Emma and the Legend of Jane Austen*” 99); Wiltshire argues that the description in question is “the fantasy of the pastoral paradise” (“*Mansfield Park, Emma, Persuasion*” 74); and Peter Smith states that the description in question “by no means refers to the Highbury countryside in general, but specifically to the ancestral seat of Highbury’s chief landowner” (222).
that makes him, to Emma’s dismay, prefer riding or walking to being driven about in a carriage (E 199)\textsuperscript{31}. Mr. Knightley in his turn congratulates Mrs. Weston on her marriage because it is “a question of dependence or independence” (E 12) and argues to the self-centered Mr. Woodhouse that all Mrs. Weston’s friends should rejoice to see her “in a home of her own” rather than living in a state of dependence in someone else’s house (E 13). Mr. Knightley also shows his independence in being, along with Emma, one of the very few in Highbury who refuses to be patronized by Mrs. Elton. Although she insists that “she will not let him off,” he, as opposed to Mr. Elton, who fulsomely declares it impossible to contradict a lady (E 41), persists in declining her dictates (E 357). Mr. Knightley also, rejecting the absolutism that Mr. Woodhouse, Frank, and Mr. Elton insist gives Emma a right to command them, resents Emma’s attempts at controlling others. Hearing of her plans to unite Harriet Smith and Mr. Elton, Mr. Knightley indignantly insists upon Mr. Elton’s right to direct his own life, exclaiming: “Depend on it, a man of six or seven-and-twenty can take care of himself” (15).

As we can see, then, Mr. Knightley is a progressive character whose conception of manliness is egalitarian and democratic. Unlike the snobbish Emma who could not, she claims, visit “the yeomanry” at Abbey Mill Farm (E 52), Mr. Knightley has no problems being considered as a “best friend” by Robert Martin (E 58) or admitting that he would prefer the company of his steward to a fashionable assembly (E 240), proving William Deresiewicz’s claim that Jane Austen accepted new, Romantic ideas of intimate relationships free from “conventional

\textsuperscript{31}The importance of a carriage as a symbol of status and social prestige is confirmed by the fact that Mr. Perry’s success as an apothecary is confirmed by his considering acquiring a carriage (324) as well as Mrs. Elton’s harping on her sister and brother-in-law’s two carriages. For more on carriages as status symbols also see Roger Sales’ Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England (152-153), Juliet McMaster’s “Class” and Edward Copeland’s “Money” in The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen.
hierarchies and categories” (86). There are, no doubt, traces of traditional paternalistic attitudes in Mr. Knightley’s relationship with Robert Martin, but at the same time, as Simon White observes, Mr. Knightley in many regards seems to see Mr. Martin as his equal and “sees nothing mutually exclusive in his status as both a farmer and a gentleman” (91). Arguing for personal relationships based on equality, Mr. Knightley is eager for Emma to forgo her friendship with Harriet in favor of Jane, who is Emma’s equal, socially and intellectually (E 160). Although it takes Emma to the end of the novel to convert to his reasoning, she always acknowledges “the real liberality of mind” that cannot make him unjust to the merit of another person (E 142).

Clearly, Mr. Knightley has long understood what Mr. Darcy is barely starting to grasp at the end of *Pride and Prejudice*: status and moral qualities are not tied together. Therefore, to call Mr. Knightley afraid of change (187-188, 192) and snobbish (196), as Galperin does, could, if we look at the text, not be farther from the truth.

Moreover, in line with Tosh’s description of nineteenth-century manliness as closely tied up with the notion of earning one’s income by dignified, rewarding employment, Mr. Knightley has made the cultivation of his estate his profession. By “keeping in hand the home farm at Donwell” (E 96), as well as taking an interest in scientific farming methods, and if not reading, busy “settling his accounts” (E 291) or deciding which trees should be taken down (E 96), Mr. Knightley is clearly a different type of landlord than his precursors, Mr. Darcy, whose extended absences from Pemberley makes such an active interest unlikely, and Sir Thomas, who is more interested in managing his Antigua estates than the land around Mansfield Park.32 I can,

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32 Simon White notes that these minute decisions would normally be made by a land steward, and, therefore, Mr. Knightley’s involvement shows that he is as much a serious farmer as a gentleman who sees his farm as a diversion from the more important task of “producing polite society” (92). Along the same lines, Janet Todd remarks that in his willingness to engage with the day-to-day tasks of his farm as well as in his willingness to reform, Mr. Knightley even comes close to the radical Tom Paine’s approved agricultural worker (107).
therefore, not agree with Christopher Clausen in saying that “Until *Persuasion*, no hero chooses his vocation in life voluntarily or practices it ambitiously” (92). Mr. Knightley might have inherited his estate, but he approaches the running of it with ambition and excitement and is, as Duckworth concludes, a stellar example of “one of Jane Austen’s professionals” (155) and “no backwoods Squire Western, but a sophisticated agricultural capitalist, keeping one eye on the land and the other on nearby London” (Delany 544). Despite his status as a member of the landowning gentry, then, Mr. Knightley has far more in common with not only Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion*, whom Jason Solinger calls “the most modern of Austen’s men” (92), and Jocelyn Harris sees as the representative of “a new kind of masculinity and a new kind of Englishness” (181), but also later nineteenth-century protagonists such as Mr. Thornton in Gaskell’s *North and South* and Dr. Woodcourt in Dickens’ *Bleak House* than he has with Richardson’s Grandison or Burney’s Lord Orville.

In line with Austen’s radical transformation of manhood from what Tosh refers to as the aristocratic, “uninhibited Georgean libertine” towards the “sober frock-coated Victorian” (The Old Adam” 218), not only is Mr. Knightley presented as a model of progressive manly decorum, but so is his protégé, Robert Martin, whose credentials as a modern man are confirmed by George Eliot’s use of him as an inspiration for her 1859 novel *Adam Bede* (Moers 51). Like Mr. Knightley, young Martin exemplifies the nineteenth-century commitment to professionalism by actively engaging with his farming and striving to be as efficient a farmer as possible. As proof of this, Harriet reports that he had been paid more for his wool than any other farmer in the area (*E* 28) and that he reads the Agricultural Reports (*E* 28). As much as Emma frowns upon Martin’s forgetting to get a novel Harriet has recommended to him when he is in town on business (*E* 32), it is in reality a testament to the fact that he takes his occupation seriously, and
despite this glitch, even the snobbish Emma, as Michael Gamer observes, is forced to admire him more than she is willing to admit (par. 5).

Like Mr. Knightley, Martin is, furthermore, a rational man who favors simplicity and plainness, as is evidenced in his letter to Harriet which even Emma has to praise: “The language, though plain, was strong and unaffected … It was short, but expressed good sense” (50). Mr. Knightley praises his protégé’s good judgment by saying, “I never hear better sense from any one than Robert Martin” (E 58), as well as his lack of conceit (E 61). In favor of his marriage to Harriet, Mr. Knightley claims that she could not be in better hands with anyone than young Martin, on whom Mr. Knightley owes himself dependent, saying that he could as ill spare him as he could William Larkins” (E 442). Moreover, Martin’s behavior to Harriet after she has refused him is a clear contrast to that of Mr. Elton; whereas Mr. Elton takes enjoys humiliating Harriet, Robert Martin elicits praise even from the prejudiced Emma who is forced to admit that he behaved with “real feeling” and “genuine delicacy” (E 168). Penny Gay therefore correctly states that “Robert Martin’s marriage to Harriet will symbolize a new marriage ideal which disregards old class ideals and values commitment to family and community (60). The fact that Jane Austen, unlike Frances Burney, is able to imagine a man of plebeian background with such stellar sense, morals and manners is a testament to her progressive views.

In short, Robert Martin shows, by his attachment to his profession, his generosity towards his mother, sisters, and Harriet, as well as his ability to elicit admiration from Mr. Knightley, that he lives up to the standards for nineteenth-century manliness, and, therefore, it is not surprising that Emma notices the same fecundity and sense of hope that she senses at Donwell Abbey as

33 Louise Carter has shown in her analysis of the popular reactions to the divorce trial of Queen Caroline in 1820 that the working and middle class defenders of the queens supported a vision of masculinity “in which character, sincerity, respectability, piety, duty and domestic steadiness” dominated (265). See also Tosh, “The Old Adam” 221.
she notes Abbey Mill Farm’s “prosperity and beauty, its rich pastures, spreading flocks, orchards in blossom, and light column of smoke ascending” (E 338). Unlike at Hartfield, which has almost no land (E 125), or at the Vicarage, where the bareness is revealed by that fact that it is crammed up against the road and has “no advantage of situation” (E 81), at Abbey Mill Farm Robert Martin depends on his own sense and hard work, rather that the patronage of his social superiors. Therefore, we find there the same opportunity for progress and prosperity that one finds at Mr. Knightley’s.

In conclusion, it is clear that especially when contrasted with Frank, Mr. Elton and Mr. Woodhouse, Mr. Knightley and Robert Martin clearly indicate Austen’s view that without liberty, the ability to be evaluated based on personal merit, civility based on the wish to serve others rather than obeisance to shallow forms of politeness, as well as openness to change, England will weaken and stagnate. *Emma*, therefore, can be said to be nationalist in its celebration of the potential it sees for England if the French-inspired “foppery and nonsense” (E 192) associated with the eighteenth century can only be discarded. *Emma* can, consequently, be seen as a progressive text, not in the mode of the 1790s when Jacobin writers celebrated the French Revolution, but as a questioning of the condition of England, which the novel concludes to be oppressive, politically and economically, and as what Anthony Mandal sees as the attempt at reinvigorating social structures (167). Moreover, it is clear that Austen is among the first to participate in what Nancy Armstrong describes as the nineteenth-century domestic novel’s new tendency to “represent an individual’s value” according to his or her “qualities of mind” rather than in terms of a status system (4). Raymond Williams is therefore correct in arguing that Austen is closely related to Victorian moralists who realized that there is “no necessary correspondence between class and morality” (*The Country and the City* 117). Consequently,
Austen deserves Everett’s appellation as “the first true 19th-century novelist,” as *Emma* is a notable forerunner to the later nineteenth-century novels of Eliot, Gaskell, and Dickens which also democratize masculinity by questioning established hierarchies, discarding superficial gallantry, and celebrating the same no-nonsense male ethos found in Mr. Knightley and Robert Martin.
Appendix A


*The Analytical Review or History of Literature, Domestic and Foreign, on an Enlarged Plan, Containing Scientific Abstracts of Important and Interesting Works, Published in English; A General Account of such as Are of Less Consequence, with Short Characters; and Notices, or Reviews, of Valuable Foreign Books; also the Literary Intelligence of Europe, &c.* Vol. 23. London: J. Johnson, 1796.


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