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CHARLOTTE SMITH, POPULAR NOVELIST

by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION: CHARLOTTE SMITH'S CAREER

During the period between the death of Tobias Smollett in 1770 and the publication of Sir Walter Scott's Waverly in 1814, the English novel declined in quality but increased in terms of the number of works published. Indeed, there have been few times in the history of prose fiction when novels were produced so prolifically. Professor Heilman states that eighty-one novels were published in 1788, and that by 1800 the number rose to 117.<sup>1</sup> This is a phenomenal production for a small country with a relatively low literacy rate. But if the volume of fiction published increased steadily, the quality did not. Walter Allen's description of the final decades of the eighteenth century as "fallow" in terms of the novel is but too just.<sup>2</sup>

Not all of the fiction produced during this period should be condemned out-of-hand, however. The works of a good many authors have survived, and some half-forgotten ones deserve more praise than they have received. Among the former, one

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Bechtold Heilman, America in English Fiction: 1760-1800 (Baton Rouge, 1937), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Allen, The English Novel (New York, 1954), p. 79.

might mention those of Fanny Burney, who, within the narrow confines to which she limits herself, achieves a great deal. She is not capable of the slow building of character through what Harrison Steeves calls "the closeness and assiduity of . . . analysis of mind and motive"<sup>3</sup> that one finds in Richardson; but she is a close observer of the spectrum of society within her limited view and some of her characters, such as the Branghtons in Evelina and Mr. Briggs in Cecilia, certainly come alive. Mrs. Radcliffe's works are, at their worst, literary curiosities; but at their best, she achieves an admirable blending of character and setting, and her influence on the first generation romantics is well known. Among the latter, authors who are half forgotten, stands Charlotte Smith. She breathed at least some new life into the Richardson-Burney sentimental characters, used a fresh approach to the portrayal of natural scenery, and brought a kind of social concern to the novel that was unique to her time. A reading of her novels leads one to wonder, as Walter Allen does, why she has been so persistently underrated.<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Smith was one of the best known literary personages of her day. Her works were highly regarded by Cowper, Fanny Burney, Joseph Warton, and Sir Walter Scott, but her fame died out in the early nineteenth century, possibly because

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<sup>3</sup>Before Jane Austen (New York and Chicago, 1965), p. 78.

<sup>4</sup>Page 98.

her radical views were no longer palatable to a conservative, middle-class audience. A few biographical essays on her life appeared in the first two decades of the century. Mrs. Barbauld included such an essay in her *British Novelists Series* edition of The Old Manor House in 1820. Also, Sir Walter Scott combined a biographical essay by Mrs. Dorset, Mrs. Smith's sister, with his own assessment of her works in Lives of the Novelists (1821). Sir Egerton Brydges presented a brief biography and criticism of her works in his Censura Literaria (1805-1809), and later included the same material in Imaginative Biography (1810). The only full-length biography, Florence M. A. Hilbish's Charlotte Smith: Poet and Novelist, appeared in 1941.

Charlotte was the eldest daughter of Nicholas Turner, a fairly well-to-do country gentleman. Her mother died in childbirth when Charlotte was three, but she seems to have been given the education in "accomplishments" that was customary for young ladies of her day. Mrs. Dorset states that she attended a fashionable boarding school in Kensington from her eighth until her twelfth years, after which she was educated at her father's London home. There is no way of knowing how extensive her early education was, but at some time in her life before the beginning of her literary career she apparently read extensively. In her novels she not only cites the English writers of distinction, but also many continental authors, including Rousseau, Voltaire, and Montesquieu from the French, and Ariosto, Guarini, and

Petrarch from the Italian, usually without bothering to translate quotations.

When Charlotte was fifteen, her father decided to marry again. Charlotte's aunt, who had been a second mother to her, felt it would be difficult for the young lady to adjust to a "mother-in-law," and persuaded Mr. Turner to seek an advantageous match for her. She was accordingly introduced to Benjamin Smith,<sup>5</sup> son of Richard Smith, a West India merchant and East India director, and the two were married when Charlotte was fifteen. Shortly afterward, Mr. Turner married a Miss Meriton, and from the number of cruel step-mothers in Mrs. Smith's novels, one might conclude that her aunt's fears were justified.

The transition into marriage and the new society to which she was introduced was apparently not pleasant for Charlotte. She was accustomed to the genteel manners and tastes of the home of an English gentleman, but the home of Richard Smith in Cheapside, where Benjamin and Charlotte lived, had none of the cultural refinements she had previously known. The Smiths were a mercantile family, and their friends were lawyers, India merchants, and counting house people. Her mother-in-law, an invalid who died while Charlotte lived in this house, considered her a poor economist and continually

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<sup>5</sup>Florence M. A. Hilbish, Charlotte Smith: Poet and Novelist (Philadelphia, 1941), pp. 41-53. Miss Hilbish notes that there is some confusion on whether Mrs. Smith's husband's first name was Benjamin or Thomas, but produces documents to show that it was the former.



harpred at her on the subject.<sup>6</sup> Richard Smith was in poor health, and Charlotte was required to be in constant attendance on him. She was forced to live in this home until she was seventeen and had borne two children. The first child died while she was confined with the second, and her health was so affected that Richard Smith was persuaded to give her a small house in Southgate, a village near London.

It was in this house that she began to realize her situation. Mrs. Dorset states that she read omnivorously while living there and that her reading caused her to look at her situation more closely. It was obvious that her husband's faults were irremediable. He was an extravagant man who was poorly qualified for business, and Charlotte bore the brunt of the blame with the family for his poor economy.

Within a few years, Mrs. Smith's family became too large for the house in Southgate (she gave birth to three more children there), and a larger house was taken at Tottenham, so that Benjamin could be nearer to his business in London. Three more children were born there. While they lived in Tottenham, Charlotte answered a "libel" against Richard Smith so effectively that "he saw the power of her pen and often engaged her services."<sup>7</sup> She seems to have

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<sup>6</sup>Mrs. Dorset's biographical essay in Sir Walter Scott, "Charlotte Smith," Biographical Memoirs of Eminent Novelists and Other Distinguished Persons, The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. (London, 1834), IV, ii, 28.

<sup>7</sup>Hilbish, p. 64. None of Mrs. Smith's biographers seem to know the exact nature of the libel or where Charlotte's answer appeared.

earned a good deal of respect from her father-in-law, as he offered her "a considerable allowance"<sup>8</sup> to live in London and help in the operation of his business. She did not wish to live in the city, however, and, apparently recognizing her husband's defects, persuaded Richard Smith to take Benjamin out of the business and purchase him an estate in the country. Accordingly, the family moved to Lyss Farm in Hampshire in 1774.

By the time of the removal to Hampshire, Charlotte had seven children living, and she gave birth to three more while living there. Her father-in-law, who had proven to be her best friend, died in October, 1776. It is ironic that his will, in which he shows the intention of leaving her children well provided for, should have been the instrument to plague Mrs. Smith for the remainder of her life. Richard Smith's widow (he married Charlotte's aunt after the death of his first wife), Benjamin, and Charlotte were appointed joint executors. But it was an extremely complicated document,<sup>9</sup> which eventually inspired a legal entanglement reminiscent of Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce. A good deal of the difficulty was caused by Benjamin's failure to pay the other legatees as specified in the will, forcing them to resort to the law.

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<sup>8</sup>Dorset, 34.

<sup>9</sup>Hilbish, pp. 72-81. Miss Hilbish includes a copy of the will as an appendix to her book.

The Smiths lived for ten years on their estate in Hampshire. Apparently Mr. Smith continued to live beyond his means, for Sir Egerton Brydges states that he "kept a larger establishment than suited his fortune."<sup>10</sup> He was appointed High Sheriff of the county, and was awarded a "lucrative contract"<sup>11</sup> with the government, the exact nature of which is uncertain. He probably owed both the appointment and the contract to the good offices of his brother-in-law, Mr. Robinson, then Secretary of the Treasury. He lost the contract in 1783, however, and this loss brought on financial ruin. He was imprisoned as a debtor at King's Bench, where he remained for seven months in 1783 and 1784, and was released when Mrs. Smith placed the estate in the hands of trustees.

Mrs. Smith began her career as an authoress in 1784. While her husband was at King's Bench, a friend<sup>12</sup> persuaded her to attempt publication of her poetry, which she had apparently been writing for some time. After two publishers had declined to pay money for her work, she sent the poems to William Hayley, a poet and novelist of some distinction at the time. He not only encouraged her but permitted her to use his name in the dedication. She then had the volume of poems published at her own expense under the title

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<sup>10</sup>Censura Literaria, VII (London, 1815), 243.

<sup>11</sup>Dorset, 37.

<sup>12</sup>Mrs. Dorset identifies him as Bryan Edwards (on p. 38), author of History of the West Indies and "some poems of distinction."

Elegiac Sonnets. Her work was popular enough to relieve her immediate needs for money and to go through eleven editions by 1851.

Her husband was released from prison in July of 1784, but he was soon forced to go to France to avoid his creditors. Charlotte accompanied him to Dieppe, and then returned to England to attempt to reconcile the creditors. But she joined her husband in Normandy when he rented a dilapidated chateau there. They spent a difficult winter in this chateau, for firewood had to be purchased in Dieppe, a day's journey away, and it was very expensive. In addition, she gave birth to a child during this particularly harsh winter. Mrs. Dorset tells of the following incident that occurred after the birth of that child:

A few days afterwards, she was astonished by the entrance of a procession of priests into her bedroom, who, in defiance of her entreaties and tears, forcibly carried off the infant to be baptized in the parish church, though the snow was deep on the ground and the cold intense . . . . She concluded her boy could never survive this cruel act of the authority of the church: he was, however, soon restored to her, without having sustained the slightest ill consequences.<sup>13</sup>

It was at this time that she was introduced to the Abbé Prévost's Manon l'Escaut and made a translation of it.

Mrs. Smith returned to England in the spring of 1785 and managed to pacify her husband's creditors. When he returned they moved to a house in Sussex where they had resided after the sale of Lyss Farm. This residence proving too expensive, they took a run-down manor house at Woolbeding,

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<sup>13</sup>Dorset, 41-42.

Sussex. While there, Mrs. Smith attempted to raise money by publishing her translation of Manon l'Escaut. The work was severely criticized as immoral by the well-known English critic George Steevens, to whom she had sent a copy for his opinion. The tone of his comments is indicated in the following passage from his letter to her:

I am beyond measure provoked at books, which philtre the passions of young people till they admit the weakest apologies for licentiousness; and this story is so managed, that one cannot occasionally withhold one's pity from two characters, which, on serious reflection, ought every way to be condemned. But I would ask, How are the hero and heroine punished? She dies, not in consequence of her vices, but drops by a natural though sudden attack of illness, and at the age of twenty-two he is liberated from a female,<sup>14</sup> from whom he has received as much delight as sorrow.

After this letter and a condemnation in the Public Advertiser, she withdrew the work from publication. But the book was apparently sold without the name of the translator on the title page. She also translated Les Causes Célèbres at about this time. This work, which is a group of supposedly true stories about French court cases, was later published as The Romance of Real Life.

In 1786 Mrs. Smith decided on a separation from her husband. The specific causes are not known, but his poor judgment and extravagance had certainly caused her enough pain to justify her action. Her friends deplored her failure

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<sup>14</sup>Dorset, pp. 43-44. Mrs. Dorset states that her sister would have met with the same "just criticism" of any French novel she had translated, for "those who insist on strict morality must seek it in a purer source."

to retain her own fortune, but thought the separation long overdue. During the remainder of her life she was the sole support of her family, moving from Whye, to Sussex, to Chichester, to Bath, and other places too numerous to detail here. She continually struggled to unsnarl the legal entanglement of Richard Smith's will in order to save the inheritance of her children. There were numerous trips to London for this purpose scattered through these years after the separation. The estate was not officially settled until several months after Mrs. Smith's death. She was constantly in poor health, apparently suffering from chronic arthritis. This malady twisted her fingers and made writing painful. She knew both William Hayley (who at first courted her friendship but later snubbed her) and William Cowper, spending a good deal of time in the home of the former. She was also subjected to a good deal of sorrow on her children's account. Only six of her twelve children were living at the time of her death in 1806. The details of the later years of her life are rather obscure, but enough can be gathered from the prefaces of the novels and her extant letters to show that she was greatly vexed by domestic troubles.

Throughout these later years, she supported her family almost entirely with her pen. The first of her novels, Emmeline,<sup>15</sup> appeared in 1788. Then in succession followed

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<sup>15</sup>The subtitles of Mrs. Smith's works will be omitted in the text of this study, but will be included in the bibliography.

Ethelinde (1789), Celestina (1791), Desmond (1792), The Old Manor House (1793), The Wanderings of Warwick (1794), The Banished Man (1794), Montalbert (1795), Marchmont (1796), The Young Philosopher (1798), and Letters of a Solitary Wanderer (1800).<sup>16</sup> She also wrote two more poetic works, The Emigrants (1793) and Beachy Head (1807, posthumously), and added material to the frequent editions of Elegiac Sonnets. In addition, she wrote several children's books, including Rural Walks (1795), Rambles Farther (1798), Conversations, Introducing Poetry (1804), History of England (1807, probably finished by another writer), and The Natural History of Birds (1807). She is often credited with writing the play What Is She (the CBEL, for instance, includes it as one of her works), which was performed and published in 1799. But there seems to be considerable doubt as to her authorship of the play.<sup>17</sup> One other work has been attributed to her, D'Arcy, a novel published in 1793. Contemporary studies, however, seem to have proven rather convincingly that she did not write this novel.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>This work is not, strictly speaking, a novel, but rather a series of novellas which are presented as stories unearthed during the travels of a somewhat Wertherian young man.

<sup>17</sup>Miss Hilbish doubts that Charlotte Smith wrote the play, but admits that there is little evidence on which to base a case.

<sup>18</sup>Professor McKillop published several of Mrs. Smith's letters that are held by the Huntington Library, and in one of them she writes: "I never wrote a line of the novel you name called D'Arcy, or ever saw or heard of it." See "Charlotte Smith's Letters," HLQ, XXVIII (1952), 244.

It should be mentioned that Mrs. Smith is one of the most autobiographical of novelists. Time after time she introduces married women with bad husbands as characters. Usually these characters give their "histories" as digressions from the main plot line. Mrs. Stafford, in Emmeline, has a foolish husband who indulges himself in expensive follies like manuring his crop land with old wigs. When he loses his estate and goes to Normandy to escape imprisonment for debt, Mrs. Stafford follows, after attempting to placate the creditors. Mrs. Denzil, in The Banished Man, escapes a ne'er-do-well husband and supports her family with her pen. In this novel, in fact, d'Alonville, the hero, a royalist emigrant forced to flee France by the revolution, marries Mrs. Denzil's daughter, just as the Chevalier de Faville, also an emigrant, married Mrs. Smith's second daughter, Augusta. Geraldine Verney is the heroine of Desmond, not a secondary character, but she has a cruel husband who loses his fortune through gambling and takes her to France. Almost every novel contains this sort of fiction with an autobiographical base.

Despite the fact that Mrs. Smith puts herself in her novels so frequently, the prefaces to these works and her correspondence would suggest that the authoress felt no great love for the craft of fiction. In the Preface of Marchmont, for instance, she informs the reader that she has been writing novels "from necessity and by no means



from choice"<sup>19</sup> for eight years. But this sort of reference to the writing of fiction is rather conventional in the late eighteenth century and should, perhaps, not be taken quite literally. For one thing, it would be demeaning for a gentlewoman to be forced to earn her own bread. But also, fiction was simply not taken seriously as an art form. The novel was in a transition period between the greatness of Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, and Smollett and the achievement of the Victorians. Sir Walter Scott's description of novels as "Those light and airy articles which a young lady might read while her hair was papering"<sup>20</sup> is typical. Thus Mrs. Smith wrote in a letter: "It is on the Poetry I have written that I trust for the little reputation I may hereafter have."<sup>21</sup> But in spite of her protestations to the contrary, it is apparent that she did take some pride in her fiction. In a letter to Cadell and Davies, her publishers at that time, dated September 2, 1805, she writes: ". . . I trust I am as little as may be infected with the vanity of an

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<sup>19</sup>(London, 1796), I, vi.

<sup>20</sup>Sir Walter Scott, "Maturin's Fatal Revenge," in Miscellaneous Prose Works, XVIII (London, 1835), 158-159. Scott is apparently using a conventional expression. Mary Wollstonecraft states that she would like to make her novel so interesting "that the fair peruser should beg the hairdresser to settle the curls himself, and not interrupt her" (Mary, a Fiction [London, 1788], p. 7). In Mrs. Smith's Ethelinde, Clarintha Ludford states that the pages of novels should have wide margins and "a vast deal of white paper" so that paper may "read them so easily while their hair is dressing" ([London, 1789], II, 168).

<sup>21</sup>Quoted in the unpubl. diss. (University of Southern California, 1966), by Rufus Paul Turner, "Charlotte Smith: New Light on Her Life and Literary Career," p. 196.

author and that I know myself, tho it is the rarest of all knowledge; yet I will not affect to say I am not conscious of being some degrees above most of the lady writers of the day."<sup>22</sup>

But whatever Mrs. Smith's attitude toward her novels may have been, the readers and critics of her day seem to have liked them. The periodical reviewers, in fact, were unusually kind to her. Most of the reviewers held the novel in low esteem as being too often a bad influence on young minds, but Mrs. Smith's works were seldom harshly criticized by them. More often than not, in fact, their praise was extravagant. There was a perceptible shift, however, after the publication of Desmond, in 1792, a novel in which she sides with the revolutionaries in France and permits her hero to stray beyond the pale of conventional morality without punishment in the last chapter.

Emmeline, her first novel, was greeted by the reviewers with high praise. The writer for the Gentleman's Magazine notes only that because of lack of time he will give a sample of the work of this "pathetic poetess" and presents "Ode to Despair," which is contained in the novel.<sup>23</sup> But the reviewer for the Critical Review states "we think it may stand next to Miss Burney's works" with only an imperceptible inferiority to Cecilia, and he feels that "the moral of every part is excellent."<sup>24</sup> The Monthly Review

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<sup>22</sup>Quoted in Turner, pp. 163-164.

<sup>23</sup>LVIII (April, 1788), 335.

<sup>24</sup>LXV (June, 1788), 530-531.

finds "that the whole is conducted with a considerable degree of art; that the characters are natural, and well discriminated; that the fable is interesting; and that the moral is forcible and just."<sup>25</sup> Ethelinde was also highly praised. The European Magazine, in a short review, refers to "elegant descriptions of abounding scenery" which "sometimes forcibly affect the heart; but the mind is constantly inspired with the liveliest pleasure and imagination."<sup>26</sup> Celestina was greeted by the Monthly Review as among the best productions of "this department of literature," and the reviewer states that "the sentiments are such as could only have been dictated by true sensibility; the descriptions of natural scenery are elegant and picturesque."<sup>27</sup>

The publication of Desmond, in 1792 did not cause an immediate shift on the part of the reviewers, but the novel, which presents a hero (Desmond) who approves of the French Revolution, forms an attachment for a married woman, and fathers a child by still another married woman, was very heady stuff for its time. The reviews, however, were favorable. The Monthly Review comments as follows: "Novels, which were formerly little more than simple tales of love, are gradually taking a higher and more masculine tone, and are becoming the vehicles of useful instruction."<sup>28</sup> The

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<sup>25</sup>LXXIX (Sept., 1788), 242-243.

<sup>26</sup>XVII (April, 1790), 270.

<sup>27</sup>VI (Nov., 1791), 289.

<sup>28</sup>IX (Dec., 1792), 406.

only adverse criticism from this reviewer is the comment that the presentation of a "criminal amour with a married woman"<sup>29</sup> seems unnecessary.

The reaction of the public seems to have been less enthusiastic than that of the reviewers. Mrs. Dorset states that the favor her sister had found with William Hayley aroused the jealousy of a host of literary ladies who coveted that honor for themselves, and these "muses," as Hayley called them, used Desmond as an excuse to condemn the author for immorality and to spread vicious gossip about her. Even Mrs. Dorset cannot refrain from referring to the "immoral tendency" of the work, and Miss Hilbish, in the enlightened year of 1941, calls the affair between Desmond and Josephine "a justly condemned irrelevant episode."<sup>30</sup>

At any rate, there is a noticeable shift on the part of the reviewers toward Mrs. Smith's novels. The writer for the Critical, in reviewing The Old Manor House, which follows Desmond, is a good example: "From the name of Mrs. Charlotte Smith we certainly were led to expect something above the common love cant of novels." He goes on to deplore the lack of "moral rectitude" and "honorable sentiment" in the novel.<sup>31</sup> The Banished Man was reviewed somewhat more favorably since, on the surface, at least, it renounces her earlier view on the French Revolution and makes "an Englishman

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 412.

<sup>30</sup>Page 148.

<sup>31</sup>VIII (May, 1793), 44-54.

thrill with added horror at the idea of introducing into England any portion of those sentiments which have already wrapt an empire in flames."<sup>32</sup> The Critical reviewer, however, took umbrage at some remarks in the preface of the novel in which the authoress strikes back at critics who accuse her of using her fictional works to carry out a personal vendetta. He advises her to take her quarrel with the critics to court, and states her purpose in writing this novel to be that of furnishing "her bookseller with a certain number of volumes" and reinstating her credit with the public after her offenses in Desmond and The Old Manor House.<sup>33</sup> In Montalbert, she returns to the earlier theme of the distressed heroine who discovers her high birth through marriage for love and right conduct, and the novel was given a more cordial reception by the Critical. The reviewer for that journal, taking notice of the work two years after its publication, devotes only four sentences to his comments on it, but praises it in the usual trite phrases about scenes that "are natural," characters that are "strongly drawn," and language that is "pure and flowing."<sup>34</sup> In Marchmont, however, she is extremely critical of English law, and it is perhaps significant that the work was reviewed in only two journals, the Critical and the

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<sup>32</sup>European Magazine, XXVI (Oct., 1794), 273.

<sup>33</sup>XIII (March, 1795), 275.

<sup>34</sup>XX (Aug., 1797), 469.

Analytical Review. The Critical condemns the novel, but the Analytical is somewhat kinder, excusing the severity of her criticism on the basis of her misfortunes. The Young Philosopher, her last full-length novel, was given mixed reviews. The Monthly Review expresses itself as disappointed in her production, partly because of the "democratic cant" in the work and partly because her treatment of the legal profession "infallibly tends to instill into young minds . . . very narrow and illiberal prejudices."<sup>35</sup> The Analytical and the Critical make the same sort of charges, but both find much to admire in the novel. The reading public apparently shared the critics' reservations about the last two novels, as neither went to more than two editions.

Mrs. Smith was never subjected to the biting criticism that the reviewers were capable of giving. Her novels were usually praised by them as being far above the "absurd productions of the novel writing horde."<sup>36</sup> But when she approached subjects that were considered to be forbidden to the writers of "mere fiction"--criticism of political and economic institutions and love relationships that were at least mildly irregular--they changed from wholehearted to somewhat guarded approval. One must agree with Professor Foster's comment when he states that the reviewers "usually

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<sup>35</sup>XXVIII (March, 1799), 347.

<sup>36</sup>European Magazine, "Review of The Banished Man," XXVI (Oct., 1794), 277.

paraded under the banner of morality, but their real cause was literary and political conservatism."<sup>37</sup>

A few other writers took notice of Mrs. Smith's novels in the years immediately following her death in 1806. Sir Egerton Brydges gives a rather spirited defense of her works in Censura Literaria. He defends her novels against the charges of immorality, charges which, he claims are brought by those who "read with pleasure of fashionable intrigue; and wade with interest through all the base and stupid ordure of a circulating library."<sup>38</sup> He further defends her works against those "who hang with rapture over the hobgoblins of the nursery" and condemn her novels because of their lack of "moral effect." He feels that the "innocent amusement of the mind" and the presentation of "scenes which enchant the fancy and melt the heart"<sup>39</sup> is moral effect enough. In concluding his commentary on her novels, he suggests that her political principles alienated many and her touches of character were "too exquisite for the apprehensions of some."<sup>40</sup>

Sir Walter Scott includes a brief criticism of Mrs. Smith's novels after the presentation of Mrs. Dorset's biography. Mrs. Dorset had felt that her sister's poetry

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<sup>37</sup>J. R. Foster, "Charlotte Smith, Pre-Romantic Novelist," PMLA, ILIII (1928), 464.

<sup>38</sup>252.

<sup>39</sup>253.

<sup>40</sup>254.

was of more permanent value than her fiction, but Scott disagrees, while allowing "sweet and high praise to the sad effusions of Mrs. Smith's muse."<sup>41</sup> He is particularly enthusiastic about Emmeline: "It contained a happy mixture of humour, and of bitter satire mingled with pathos, while the characters, both of sentiment and of manners, were sketched with a firmness of pencil, and liveliness of colouring, which belong to the highest branch of fictitious narrative."<sup>42</sup> Amusingly enough, he condemns Emmeline's desertion of a "first attachment" (as would, no doubt, Jane Austen's Marianne), and justifies this criticism on the grounds that her action carries prudence to the point of vice. His praise of Ethelinde is somewhat less enthusiastic, but he finds much to admire in The Old Manor House, particularly the gothic passages. He very justly criticizes the haphazard plot structure too often found in Mrs. Smith's novels. But he does not mention the political themes in Mrs. Smith's works.

Mrs. Barbauld wrote a brief biographical and critical preface for the 1820 edition of The Old Manor House in her British Novels Series. She calls Celestina and Emmeline the "two most finished"<sup>43</sup> novels by Mrs. Smith, and The Old Manor House the most popular. Like Mrs. Dorset, Mrs.

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<sup>41</sup>59.

<sup>42</sup>60.

<sup>43</sup>(London, 1820), vii. The Old Manor House is volume 36 and 37 of the series.