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***PICTURING BENEVOLENCE:
THE PICTURESQUE AND RADICAL CHARITY¹***

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Abstract: *During the final decades of the eighteenth century, when the dictates of Adam Smith's theory of political economy began to take hold, charity became deeply unfashionable. In consonance with Smith's dictates, though conceived independently of them, William Gilpin's theory of Picturesque beauty suggested protocols for representation that excluded the picturing of charitable acts along with other kinds of sentimental narrative. Against political economic hostility to acts of charity and Picturesque reluctance to picture such gestures of sympathy for and solidarity with the poor, some English women writers continued to perpetuate in fiction a mid-century tradition of charitable benevolence. The novels of Sarah Fielding and other women writers of the 1740s and 1750s continued to resonate between the 1770s and 1790s with such writers as Frances Burney and Elizabeth Inchbald. Inchbald's *Nature and Art* is particularly noteworthy and important in its radical combination of charitable benevolence with Picturesque dishevelment. In this fiction of charitable benevolence there is a hearkening back to seventeenth-century ideas of charity as the poor's rightful property and the body politic as properly a commonwealth. We might say that Inchbald, like Sarah Fielding before her, refused to relinquish the Enlightenment grand narrative of human emancipation in favour of the grand narrative of progress, defined ever more narrowly as the progress of capitalism.*

In later eighteenth-century English writing, parting with money to the poor became increasingly fraught, if it was represented at all, and it was women writers who continued to provide the most vivid pictures of active charity. As Enlightenment ideals of human perfectability and social sympathy gave way to political economy and its Romantic critique, accounting for charitable giving in fiction by means of pounds, shillings, and pence, and the Daniel Defoeian clinking of purses at moments of extreme feeling, both became increasingly problematic. Yet, for far too long, the failure of the democratizing experiments of the revolutionary Commonwealth and Protectorate during the 1640s and 1650s has been interpreted as the definitive end of something. Against the current of hostility to visions of commonwealth and charity as the poor's right to redistribution, some women writers of mid-century continued to advocate these ideals, and some women writers later in the century perpetuated this strain of radical, materially manifested fellow-feeling.

If women's writing sometimes suggests alternative periodisations to traditional literary historical ones, the case of mid-eighteenth-century Englishwomen's sentimental fiction, as I have argued else-where, offers a vision of continuity between the radical religious enlightenment of the seventeenth century and eighteenth-century fiction that has not yet been fully appreciated or understood.² In later decades, writers

¹ A version of this paper was presented as a keynote speech at the International Conference of the English Department, University of Bucharest, in June 2008 (editors' note).

² See my essay, 'Picturing Benevolence Against the Commercial Cry, 1750-1798: Or, Sarah Fielding and the Secret Causes of Romanticism' in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1750-1830* (Volume 5 of *The History of British Women's Writing*), ed. Jacqueline Labbé (Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming).

such as Frances Burney and Elizabeth Inchbald harked back to this mid-century picturing of benevolence, despite a cultural shift against such gestures, as this essay will show.

By the last decades of the century, Adam Smith's "moral sentiments" were those that best served to constitute the self or subject most appropriate for the capitalist marketplace and commercial society, and were most easily reconcilable with producing the "wealth of nations".³ These commercial tenets of social life displaced earlier debates about self-interest, the motivating force so crucial for Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Bernard Mandeville, in contention with the Earl of Shaftesbury's and Francis Hutcheson's defense of the defining human attribute as benevolence, which manifested itself in a tendency towards universal sympathy with fellow creatures. A significant casualty of political economic policy's war on benevolent redistribution of wealth was charity towards the indigent poor in the direct form of almsgiving.

Beginning in the 1770s and gathering force in the 1790s, political economy in theory and practice rendered risible or impracticable what had formerly seemed the noblest of human desires, or the most communal and politically progressive of Christian dictates. If, as Jean-François Lyotard opined, the Enlightenment spawned two grand narratives, the narrative of human emancipation and the narrative of the progress of knowledge, by century's end, the narrative of progress had gained ground at the expense of the other, the narrative of human emancipation (Lyotard 31-37). By the end of the eighteenth century, progress could largely be translated into the progress of capitalism as it developed from mercantilism towards its fully-fledged industrial form, with an emphasis on productivity and technological innovation, while human emancipation, on the other hand, tugged either in the direction of idealist abstractions of universal brotherhood and the rights of man, or towards more materialist alternatives to laissez faire ideology – proto-socialist and communist alternatives. Out of these contradictions would come Romanticism, itself a contradictory formation, divided between utopian socialist Pantisocratic impulses and the Wordsworthian programme of feeling as a sufficient good in itself.

Romanticism is a complex phenomenon, but when attempting to distinguish the characteristic preoccupations of so-called Romantic writing from earlier eighteenth-century precedents, one difference that emerges with increasing intensity is the substitution of the abstract for the material. As Jerome McGann and Marjorie Levinson have shown, the Romantic ideology tends to suppress the social and economic circumstances of a text's production, its material conditions of existence, while making a virtue of this resistance to the dictates of the market.⁴ We might extrapolate from this suppression of textual origins a further suppression: that of the material basis of human existence as it appears increasingly a burden to be borne by those condemned to a life of unremitting labour in the political economists' regime of ever-intensifying production.

Major social tensions and philosophical debates were figured in women's novels of mid-century as in the new charitable institutions of mid-century analyzed by Donna Andrew – the London Foundling Hospital, the General Lying-in Hospital, the Marine Society, the Lock Hospital for venereal diseases, and the Philanthropic Society (Andrew 3, 7). In both philanthropic writing and in fiction, during the middle decades of the century, the fate and future of the nation were debated with regard to the proper management of benevolence. That England was at war with France during the 1740s and 1750s had a

³ See Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), and *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, and W. B. Todd, eds., 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

⁴ McGann advocates that readers turn this Romantic ideology on its head in the service of a critical reading practice: 'One of the basic illusions of Romantic ideology is that only a poet and his works can transcend a corrupting appropriation by "the world" of politics and money. Romantic poetry "argues" this (and other) illusions repeatedly, and in the process it "suffers" the contradictions of its own illusions and the arguments it makes for them. The readers of such works can benefit from them by turning this experiential and aesthetic level of understanding into a self-conscious and critical one'; Jerome J. McGann, *Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 13. On 'the suppression of the social', see also Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 37-43.

profound effect on contemporary social theory. Andrew notes that: “Many saw the War of Jenkins Ear (1739-1741), the War of the Austrian Succession (1739-1748), and the subsequent Seven Years’ War (1756-1763) as crucial in deciding England’s destiny” (Andrew 55). Concerted efforts to increase population and improve the health and strength of the labouring force that fed the navy, army, and colonial settlement, as well as trade and industry, included charities devoted to preserving life and promoting fecundity. By century’s end new demographic and social concerns had arisen to replace this mid-century desire for national fecundity with calls for national efficiency and increased productivity amongst the labouring classes.

In *Novel Relations*, Ruth Perry has brilliantly shown how, during the middle and later decades of the eighteenth century, “the emotional capital” of kinship was being rewritten, and the extended family displaced by the conjugal couple and its offspring (Perry 97). I would argue that the symbolic and real, material capital of charitable benevolence similarly suffered a sea change, and that as with the extended family, so also with the family of mankind: an abrupt lopping off of previously deserving branches occurred, in keeping with the dictates of political economy and the modernizing and streamlining of the work force.

No Alms, Please, We’re English

In *A Sentimental Journey* (1768), the distress that Laurence Sterne’s protagonist habitually overlooks at home returns to haunt him in his self-justifications abroad, as he tries to excuse himself from giving alms to a monk:

The moment I cast eyes upon him, I was predetermined not to give him a single sous. . . [P]oor as I am, continued I, pointing at my portmanteau, full cheerfully should it have been open’d to you, for the ransom of the unfortunate—The monk made me a low bow—but of all others, resumed I, the unfortunate of our own country, surely have the first rights; and I have left thousands in distress upon our own shore (Sterne 5-6).

The consequence is the same in both instances: whether at home or abroad, Yorick fails to give money to anyone. National prejudice and anti-Catholicism may combine in his lack of charity to a mendicant monk in France. Yet Yorick has, ironically – since this is Sterne who has not completely given up on the possibility of human benevolence willing out – been neglecting “thousands” of his unfortunate countrymen without any crisis of conscience whatsoever.

Ironical about the commercialization of English society which far exceeded anything to be seen in Scotland, Henry Mackenzie’s *The Man of Feeling* (1771) epitomizes the watershed from an open-handed advocacy of benevolence to more tightfisted measures of charitable behavior, casting a quizzical eye upon benevolence and expenditure on another’s behalf, whether of tears or coins, human sympathy or banknotes. When Harley, the benevolent protagonist, the remnant of a dying breed, encounters a beggar and his dog early in his travels, he does so within a mode of mock-Picturesque pictorialism that anticipates later portrayals in James Plumptre and elsewhere.⁵ The encounter is also one in which the narrator erupts into the text in a strangely coy way, echoing Sterneian irony at English middle-class meanness and turning it on its head:

⁵ James Plumptre created Miss Beccabunga Veronica as a parody of the sentimental female traveller emoting over incidents in order to record them in her Picturesque journal: “It was a blind beggar, relating in plaintive numbers his melancholy story. . . A little dog was attached to his side, who, in supplicatory posture, joined in the eleemosynary claims of his master. I dropped a trifle into the maimed mendicant’s hat with a tear – another was about to follow it, but, ashamed of the amiable weakness, I caught the foolish pearl in my handkerchief, and treasured it up in the faithful repository of my bosom.” There, I think that a very *happy* sentence. What is your opinion, Sir Charles?; [James Plumptre], *The Lakers: A Comic Opera, in Three Acts* (London: Printed for W. Clarke, 1798), 15.

Harley had drawn a shilling from his pocket; but virtue bade him consider on whom he was going to bestow it.--Virtue held back his arm: --but a milder form, a younger sister of virtue's, not so severe as virtue, nor so serious as pity, smiled upon him: His fingers lost their compression;--nor did virtue offer to catch the money as it fell. (Mackenzie 18)

Once upon a time, Harley's gesture of giving a shilling in exchange for the beggar's story would have been unproblematical, but now it is fraught with hazards. What was once a just redistribution of wealth is now in the age of political economy a deterrent to laboring-class independence and industry. When the dog snatches up the money and delivers it to his master, the narrator remarks that this trick is "contrary to the most approved method of stewardship" – a tortuous allusion to the commercial society that is hounding Harley out of rural retirement in hopes of bettering his fortune of barely 250 pounds a year. The pleasure of giving has been entirely discounted in relation to the costs of benevolence as a deterrent to maximal extraction from the labourer.

The Persistence of Active Charity: Frances Burney

By contrast, in *Evelina* (1778), Frances Burney shows in Evelina's parting with her purse to help the impoverished MacCartney a different spirit of the sort Sarah Fielding would have approved: Evelina reports, showing compassion for MacCartney's dignity as well as his hunger: ". . . all that I had heard of his poverty, occurring to me, I was upon the point of presenting him my purse, but the fear of mistaking or offending him, deterred me" (Burney 214). When MacCartney cannot speak to her directly, she speaks for him, reinstating the tradition of charity as bringing pleasure to the donor: "I now put my purse in my hand, and following him, said, 'If indeed, Sir, I can assist you, why should you deny me so great a satisfaction?'" MacCartney answers: "Your voice, Madam, is the voice of compassion!--such a voice as these ears have long been strangers to!" (Burney 215). Her quarrelsome cheapskate relations the Branghtons peremptorily call her upstairs, and Evelina acts the part of a silent benefactor: "I let fall my purse upon the ground, not daring to present it to him, and ran up stairs with the utmost swiftness" (Burney 215). She has delivered the goods, however modest the contents of her purse. The conscience of Burney's novel, the Reverend Mr. Villars, applauds Evelina's action in exactly the terms employed by mid-century writers such as Elizabeth Justice, or eighteenth-century clerics such as Thomas Secker and Daniel Waterland: "O my child, were my fortune equal to my confidence in thy benevolence, with what transport should I, through thy means, devote it to the relief of indigent virtue!" (Burney 216).⁶

⁶ [Elizabeth Justice], *Amelia, or, The Distress'd Wife: A History Founded on Real Circumstances*, By a Private Gentlewoman (London: Printed for the Authoress, 1751). Daniel Waterland (1683-1740) preached that: 'To feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, is kind and Christian, though the persons so relieved be strangers and aliens, and even useless or ill-deserving'; 'The Duty of doing Good, A Sermon preached before The University of Cambridge, at St. Mary's Church, On Commemoration Sunday, Nov. 2, 1712', *The Works of The Rev. Daniel Waterland, D.D., Formerly Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, Canon of Windsor, and Archdeacon of Middlesex*, 2nd edn, 6 vols. (Oxford: At the University Press, 1843), 5: 307. Thomas Secker (1693-1768) preached that: '[W]e have two Sorts of love: one of Esteem, founded on the Opinion that men are deserving; the other, of mere Benevolence, founded on the Knowledge that they are capable of Pleasure and Pain. The former we may justly be expected to have for all we can: the latter, for all absolutely'; *Sermons on Several Subjects, by Thomas Secker, L.L.D. Late Lord Archbishop of Canterbury. Published from the Original Manuscripts, By Beilby Porteus D.D. and George Stinton D.D. His Grace's Chaplains. A New Edition*, 7 vols. (London: Printed for F. and C. Rivington and B. and J. White, 1795), 2: 87-88.

Picturing Benevolence Amidst Violence and Decay: Perplexities of the Picturesque

The backlash against the practice of benevolence as active charity – in almsgiving and other forms – we can attribute to the economic, political, and demographic phenomena that the political economists sought to theorize. The backlash against picturing benevolence, however, also had its origins in the new Picturesque protocols of William Gilpin, which were themselves devised in relation to the same phenomena that gave rise to political economic theory. Gilpin declared, when characterizing fit subject matter for Picturesque representation: “Low arts of husbandry exclude: The spade, / The plough, the patient angler with his rod, / Be banish’d thence” (Gilpin 20). Instead, Picturesque beauty required more leisured, less laborious figures in the landscape:

. . . far other guests invite,
Wild as those scenes themselves, banditti fierce,
And gipsy-tribes, not merely to adorn,
But to impress that sentiment more strong,
Awak’d already by the savage-scene. (Gilpin 21)

The Picturesque is both a mode of representation and a style possessing a certain characteristic content. As a mode of representation, the later eighteenth-century Picturesque emphasizes roughness, wildness, and the line, as in drawing, over the sense of embodied mass given in painting. As a style with characteristic content, Gilpin’s Picturesque features bandits, gypsies, and other walkers on the wild side, in proximity to wild scenery and ruined habitations. John Barrell connects these figures, who signify the absence of human labour, with Gilpin’s desire, as a gentleman amateur (a schoolmaster and vicar), to distinguish the practice of Picturesque drawing from any mechanical or manual trade. As an amateur’s pastime, the picturesque might then appeal to genteelly self-improving audiences sufficiently to provide both patrons and prospective pupils (Barrell 96-97). Kim Ian Michasiw, following Rosalind Krauss, describes Gilpin’s enterprise as playfully proto-postmodern, its rules deliberately artificial and arbitrary, emphasising that an actual landscape perceived within the Picturesque mode is always measured against a pre-existing notion of “the Picturesque” and is thus a copy of an ideal original, which is itself a representation (Michasiw 96). What Michasiw celebrates as subversive of the moral ambitions of Kantian aesthetics – the Picturesque’s playfulness and emphasis on representation for its own sake – is given a darker cast by John Barrell and Stephen Copley. For them, this avoidance of seriousness in Gilpin’s Picturesque leads to an exclusion of the social. Barrell describes the Picturesque as: “a Polaroid lens, which eliminates all sentimental and moral reflection” (Barrell 104). Gilpin’s Picturesque, according to Barrell, “is thus also absolutely hostile to narrative; and when it depicts figures it attempts to do so in such a way as raises no question about their thoughts or feelings or their interactions with other figures” (Barrell 104). Copley agrees regarding the suppression of narrative, and illustrates it by reading Gilpin’s description of the old woman who lives within the ruins of Tintern Abbey as a ‘narrative suppression of the act of charity’, in which the “imperative of the narrative sequence” ‘truncates the potentially sentimental episode’ that had begun to develop; rather than picture giving money to the old woman in return for her guided tour and story of destitution, Gilpin hurries on to the next landscape description (Copley 152)⁷. For Copley, there is a conflict within the Picturesque between “sentimental engagement” and “aesthetic enjoyment”, with Gilpin opting for “the picturesque attractions of decrepitude” over any picturing of active benevolence (Copley 153, 144). Picturesque theory, according to Copley, could be said to aestheticise “the visible signs of economic deprivation” rather than pointing towards its relief (Copley 144). And so, although the clinking of coins into the fists of vagabonds, gypsies, beggars, and other representatives of the non-industrious poor appears to have been perfectly acceptable to Gilpin the

⁷ The incident at Tintern Abbey is to be found in *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, &c. relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; made In the Summer of the Year 1770, by William Gilpin, M.A., Vicar of Boldre near Lymington* (London: Printed for R. Blamire, 1782), 36-37.

generous Vicar of Boldre in the New Forest, they were not to Gilpin the aesthete (Everett 134). Charity was a good thing in life, but not in art. Picturesque aesthetics, according to this reading of Gilpin, requires the suspension of any evidence of the cash economy, including almsgiving, just as it demands the exclusion of toiling labourers.

Gilpin's Picturesque, then, in so far as it is a leisured pastime dedicated to enjoyment, can only intermittently or obliquely engage with social commentary, let alone intervention or protest. However, as it was taken up during the turbulent decade of the 1790s by artists such as George Morland, or writers including Elizabeth Inchbald and William Wordsworth, the Picturesque can be read as more ambivalent in attitude and more ambiguous in significance with regards to the social. Rather than entirely bracketing off any consideration of economic and social conditions, and rather than entirely suppressing any "sentimental engagement" with their often violent effects, the Picturesque might be read as implicitly invoking for consideration the effects of agricultural "improvement" and the intensification of capitalist exploitation of the natural world. During what Robert C. Allen calls the second or landlord's agricultural revolution (1750-1850), the increasing of agrarian industry through the last wave of enclosure of common lands, and the engrossment of land by large landowners, led to considerable upheaval and depopulation in the countryside (Allen 21). This second agricultural revolution put into practice the dictates of political economy by emphasizing efficiency of production and maximal extraction from both land and labourers. By the 1790s, the evocation of what I have called the Picturesque's characteristic content – signs of economic deprivation, abandoned or ruined habitations, gypsies or other vagrants – might be understood to register unease at the policies that had brought about this evidence of decay of traditional agriculture, especially the disappearance of smallholders, cottagers, or "peasant" farmers. Questions might implicitly be raised about the political, economic, and social causes of this change. The bracketing off of sentimental engagement or possible protest might then seem a more fragile affair, with evidence of these political economic forces frequently threatening to re-emerge in the picture, producing ambivalence and instability within Picturesque art and writing. By the late 1790s, I would suggest, the Picturesque had become a code with richly ambiguous possibilities that could be evoked by the briefest of excursions into a particular kind of pictorial language.

The Persistence of Active Charity: Elizabeth Inchbald

Against the tide of dematerialization of benevolence, and in an idiom that resonates in complicated and contradictory ways with Wordsworth's, Elizabeth Inchbald's novel *Nature and Art* (first published 1796, revised 1797) attempted a partial reinstatement of active charity. With its echoes of mid-century sentimental fiction by women such as Sarah Fielding, *Nature and Art* evinces how during the 1790s women's writing could represent a struggle against dominant aesthetic developments, harking back to female-authored fiction of the 1740s and 1750s. Inchbald, a Catholic, and thus at odds with the English mainstream, revived a tradition of charity that had medieval Christian, but also seventeenth-century commonwealth and proto-socialist roots. Good and bad brothers structure the narrative, a favourite theme of Sarah Fielding's. The rather tentative and unsatisfactory ending involves a little Family of Love in the Fieldingesque mode: the two Henry Norwynnes and young Henry's wife Rebecca form a poor but happy smallholding commune, much as David and Camilla, with Valentine and Cynthia, the two couples' children, and Camilla's and Valentine's father do in *David Simple, Volume the Last* (Fielding 372).[26] Inchbald writes more confidently of the tragic wastage of Hannah Primrose than of its utopian alternative, but nevertheless ends her novel on a note of hope for social reformation. First written in 1796, one year after Coleridge and Southey abandoned the project of Pantisocracy, and revised in 1797, while Coleridge was collaborating with Wordsworth on precisely those poems that suppressed signs of active benevolence or intervention, *Nature and Art* propounded a different – dare we call it a materialist feminist? – tradition. *Nature and Art* looks backwards and forwards at once, and refigures mid-eighteenth-century debates to question what has become of sympathy and benevolence amongst that "polite and commercial people" extolled by William Blackstone, the nation most likely to succeed in staking a claim to global empire (Blackstone qtd. in Langford 1).

In the story of Hannah Primrose, Inchbald interweaves Picturesque pictorialism, fashionable in the 1790s, with the picturing of active benevolence, an unfashionable subject within Picturesque protocols. What is strikingly innovative in Inchbald's approach to representing benevolence is that she both acknowledges the tradition of active charity and employs Picturesque conventions to convey its effects. Seduced and abandoned by William Norwynne, the second generation's bad brother turned upper-class seducer, Hannah Primrose instantiates the despoliation of the English countryside. Her very name links her with the Primrose family of Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and thus with unpretentious rural piety, and with the botanical beauty of wild places and wayside remnants of once flourishing woodlands. The primrose is a fragile looking but hardy flower that appears where it might not be expected to appear, adorning otherwise un-ornamental spaces. Since it blooms intermittently throughout the coldest of English winters, the primrose represents a kind of sturdy toughness combined with the most delicate of colours and scents. Cast off by her lover, and then left friendless after the death of her parents, Hannah, with her infant son, seeks employment where she is not known. Inchbald combines two disparate languages, the language of benevolence, honoured both in the breach and in the observance, and the language of the Picturesque:

In vain she offered herself to the strangers of the village in which she was accidentally cast, as a servant—her child, her dejected looks, her broken sentences, a wildness in her eye, a kind of bold despair which at times overspread her features, her imperfect story, who and what she was, prejudiced all those to whom she applied, and, after thus travelling to several small towns and hamlets, the only employer she could obtain was a farmer, and the only employment, to tend and feed his cattle, while his men were in the harvest, tilling the ground, or at some other labour which required, at that time, peculiar expedition. Though Hannah was born of peasants, yet, having been the only child of industrious parents, she had been nursed with a tenderness and delicacy ill suited to her present occupation—but she endured it with patience; and the most laborious part would have seemed light, could she have dismissed the reflection—what it was that had reduced her to it (Inchbald 123).

Hannah's appearance in distress is quintessentially Picturesque -- from the dejection of her countenance, sometimes giving way to bold despair, to the wildness in her eye. Her vagabondage too renders her a perfect subject for one of Gilpin's illustrations. Remember that only the wandering poor, not the settled, industrious poor, were fit inhabitants for Gilpin's scenes. Hannah embodies this displacement, this uprootedness from the land; she is a vagrant in search of somewhere to dwell, however temporarily. Dejection, wildness, and bold despair are the companions of wayfarers, the denizens of the road. Hannah becomes gypsy-like.

Haunted by her seduction and ruined chastity, the disgrace which has contributed to her parents' early deaths – “what it was that had reduced her to” this vagrancy – Hannah in this passage figures as both a Picturesque subject and an object of traditional benevolence. The farmer who employs her harks back to a tradition of active charity familiar from Sarah Fielding and others. Although no scene picturing the farmer's benevolent response to Hannah's vagabondage – the wildness that renders her frightening to employers and unsettling to society – occurs in the novel, his action secures her future. His hiring of her to tend his cattle *is* active charity. Her wages are paid, and no repentance or pious reformation exacted. She is not expected to abase herself before his charity. He does not require of her any acknowledgement of her “obligation” to him, a crucial word in the discourse of benevolence. The farmer's generosity, however practically minded and self-interested, opens a space in which Hannah can experience a brief period of respite and renewed hope for the future, redeemed by honest labour:

Soon her tender hands became hard and rough, her fair skin burnt and yellow, so that when, on a Sunday, she has looked in the glass, she has started back as if it were some other face she saw instead of her own. But this loss of beauty gave her no regret—while William did not see her, it was matter of indifference to her, whether she were beautiful or hideous. . . .By herding solely with the brute creation, she and her child were allowed to live together, and this was a state she preferred to the society of human creatures, who would have separated her from what she loved so tenderly.—Anxious to retain a

place in which she possessed such a blessing, care and attention to her humble office caused her master to prolong her stay through all the winter—then, during the spring, she attended his yearning sheep—in the summer, watched them as they grazed—and thus season after season passed, till her young son could afford her assistance in her daily work (Inchbald 123).

The sunburnt heroine recalls Mary Collyer's Betty Barnes, whose complexion is a teasing reminder that not only the most highly borne, but also the products of honest labour might be dignified and genteel enough to serve as heroines of fiction (Collyer 10). For Inchbald, similarly, the return to peasant pastoral redeems Hannah, restoring the Primrose to her natural setting. Although her upbringing and education as an only child were full of tenderness and delicacy, she has a small farmer's practical knowledge of animal husbandry and a resilient hardiness that thrives on fresh air and the company of livestock. By "herding solely with the brute creation", Hannah experiences a kind of pastoral redemption. She enters into that very rural society of "nature", in which fellow humans appear to have a minimal place. If we theorise what Inchbald describes so briefly, yet evocatively, the effect of herding with fellow-creatures and living according to the rhythms of the seasons and the agricultural year, we can see that Hannah inhabits what William Wordsworth would characterise as the "condition" in which "the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature". In the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth argues that such engagement as Hannah has with "[l]ow and rustic life" is ideal for producing a true poetry of the people, one in which authentic feelings and passions could be expressed in the most philosophical language, cleansed of artificiality:

[B]ecause such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; . . . such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men . . . (Wordsworth 597).

Inchbald prefigures the conditions of Wordsworth's poetry of humble and rustic life in fiction, anticipating one of the major aesthetic innovations of Romanticism.

So far, so Picturesque, we might say of Inchbald's novel. Yet the vivid pictorialism, and the picturing of a life lived in close proximity to pastoral and wild nature, are underwritten by the farmer's charitable generosity. Hannah's pastoral idyll, although it has roughened her hands and made her sunburnt, is a moment of human sympathy that all too quickly comes to an end with the death of her benefactor:

Had the good farmer, who made her the companion of his flocks and herds, lived till now, till now she might have been secure from the annoyance of human kind but, thrown once more upon society, she was unfit to sustain the conflict of decorum and depravity.---Her master, her patron, her preserver, was dead; and hardly as she had earned the pittance she received from him, she found, it surpassed all her power to obtain the like again (Inchbald 125).

Thus begins Hannah's downward spiral into crime and infamy, a trajectory that will end with the gallows. Once her protector, who required hard labour from his shepherd and cowherd, and paid her only the lowest of wages, has been removed from the scene, the full force of English society's lack of social sympathy is unleashed upon Hannah and her son. The very minimalism of the farmer's presence in the text renders his charity a gift to Hannah that can be freely accepted, a burden to be lightly borne. Hannah is never subjected to a sense of *obligation*. Inchbald appears to be returning, by means of the farmer's generosity of heart that entails nothing more in return from Hannah than her labour for a wage, to Sarah Fielding's critique of the *obligations* often self-interestedly imposed by those who dispensed charity in order to tyrannize over its recipients.

Sarah Fielding attacks “obligation” as the enemy of true charity. This is a preoccupation common to *David Simple* and *The Cry*. In *The Cry*, Portia denounces obligation, revealing in the process that the Cry, Fielding’s figure for hypocritical English society, resembles nothing so much as a pack of hounds “in full cry” who will hound to death anyone who deviates from pack behaviour:

The word *obligation* is very seldom in my thoughts, and consequently very seldom is it utter’d by my tongue; for I am satisfied, that whoever hath the word obligation continually in his mouth, hath the love of tyranny steadily fixt in his heart. . . . Portia could not have thrown amongst the *Cry* any bone so hard as a thought of hers wherein the two words *obligation* and *gratitude* were to be found. Yet it was a subject which set them a quarrelling amongst themselves, too much to suffer them to attempt giving any answer to *Portia* (Fielding and Collier 55-56).

Given to snarling as well as growling and fighting amongst themselves, the Cry cannot understand anything but rude self-interest. For them benevolence in-curs, if you will, obligations. True charity, by contrast, according to Fielding’s scheme must be offered without constraint. If gratitude for charitable acts is expected and exacted, a new form of tyranny is exercised. Charity, far from levelling inequalities or restoring to the poor their just portion of the common treasury, would in that instance be perverted into an exercise of domination.

As Inchbald’s Picturesque moments illustrate, the Picturesque’s bracketing off of narrative, of casuality, and of “all moral and sentimental reflection” – or charitable action – was a fragile affair. *Nature and Art* reveals how easily the park pales of Gilpin’s theory could be breached. The suppressed traces of violent economic forces and of moral hypocrisy were forever threatening to re-emerge in the picture. Amidst the violence of decay wrought by the Agricultural Revolution, the effects of commercial and territorial empire including the slave trade, and the intensification of admonitions to the poor to behave themselves within the rigours of the division of labour, Picturesque dishevelment could register a protest and point towards another structure of feeling not synonymous with Adam Smith’s. As Burney and Inchbald, perpetuating a movement headed by Sarah Fielding and other women writers at mid-century, demonstrated, the picturing of charitable acts could still register a protest against the injustice of economic inequality and its social consequences. Acts of material benevolence, like that of Inchbald’s farmer towards Hannah Primrose, could suggest an alternative to the dictates of political economy – that there remained something meaningful, even radical, in the concept of charity without obligation or constraint.

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