Josephine Grieder

TRANSLATIONS OF FRENCH SENTIMENTAL PROSE FICTION IN LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND: THE HISTORY OF A LITERARY VOGUE

Introduction

Literary taste is an ephemeral commodity. How to anticipate it, how to capitalize on it once it declares itself, how to accommodate it as it develops, how to exit gracefully before it shifts object: these are dilemmas that perpetually confront the commercially-minded author and publisher. If the past may serve as a reference for the future, then the vogue of a certain type of literature is well worth examination; for someone, somehow, found some means of capturing the public's interest for that period of time.

At the same time, literary taste reflects more than clever commercial manipulation. It illuminates the very public to which it belongs: the readers' concerns, the conventions which they are willing to accept, and the deviations they are willing to tolerate. Particularly when the literature in question is fiction rather than nonfiction, sifting through the statistics of a literary vogue can reveal an uncommon glimpse of the society which took delight in such productions.

Translations of French sentimental prose fiction were just such a vogue in late eighteenth-century England. Their popularity is a particularly good example of literary taste for two reasons. First, the literature was not indigenous to England. That is, while British writers of the period were producing sentimental novels and might naturally expect to win recognition on their home ground, the translations depended for their popularity on a deliberate campaign to introduce their foreign authors to the English public and to publicize the quality - and the novelty - of the fiction becoming available. Superimposing a foreign literature on an already thriving indigenous genre and gaining the public's acceptance of it argue a shrewd knowledge of the literary marketplace; but the enthusiasm with which the public greeted the translations and continued to demand them during several decades indicates as well that something in this translated foreign fiction satisfied particular expectations or needs of the British public.

Second, the duration of the popularity of translations from the French can be

specifically defined, and its pattern of introduction, growing acceptance, enthusiastic demand, and decline can be demonstrated. From 1760 to 1764, translations began to infiltrate the British market, both in hardcover and in periodical form; the year 1765 marked the first definite interest in French sentimental fiction. For the two following decades translations gradually increased in number, until during the eighties and early nineties interest was at its height. Thereafter, although hardcover translations held their own, French fiction in the magazines all but disappeared from the scene. The beginning and the end, both identifiable, indicate that in fact translations of French sentimental fiction were not just a manifestation of international literary interest but a vogue peculiar to late eighteenth-century England.

That these translations formed a not inconsiderable part of the literature available to the English reading public is well known, thanks to the works of scholars like Ernest A. Baker, James R. Foster, Robert Mayo, J. M. S. Tompkins, and Walter Francis Wright.[1] Until now, this translated fiction has been considered with regard to its possible influence on English authors and the English literature of the period. This study is an attempt to approach the problem from a different point of view: to describe the literary milieu in which this foreign fiction was produced, to indicate the conditions which made such translations feasible and attractive, and to present the reactions of the British critics and public towards it. The bibliography of French sentimental authors and their works in English translation establishes in detail the scope of fiction available and clarifies references and information given in the first three chapters; the concluding index of English titles facilitates access to the bibliography.

At this point, several caveats may be in order. Because the focus of this study is the body of French sentimental literature which appeared in translation - its general characteristics and its reputation with its foreign audience - little attempt has been made

[1] See Ernest A. Baker, *History of the English Novel.* Vol. V, *The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance* (London: Witherby, 1934); James R. Foster, *History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in English* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1949); Robert Mayo, *The English Novel in the Magazines, 1740-1815* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1962); J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800* (1932; rpt Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961); Walter Francis Wright, *Sensibility in English Prose Fiction, 1760-1814: A Reinterpretation* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1937); and, in testimony to American interest, Herbert R. Brown, *The*

to analyze its literary merits (characterization, plot structure, style); these belong more properly to a history of literary development and have many times been described by both English and French literary historians. Much mention is made of certain authors, whereas the contents of their works are seemingly ignored; but what is of consequence is, I feel, not the individuality of any particular novel or story but the individuality of a French author or of fiction labelled "From the French" in the eyes of its contemporary readers and critics. Moreover, though it is tempting to speculate what the well-educated Englishman (or -woman) thought of these novels as he perused them in the original, the fact is that the vogue existed because of the mono-lingual British reader who was more than happy, as evidence will show, to accept the translations as a welcome addition to his literary fare.

This study, thus, is voluntarily circumscribed in intent. Perhaps it belongs as much to social or intellectual history as it does to the history of literature, for it is a commentary on the public which welcomed the translated fiction and on those who sponsored and encouraged its publication. As a study in comparative literature, it indicates at least that there are certain moments when the literary taste of two different nationalities coincides to a considerable degree.

Chapter One. The Source of the Translations

What was this French sentimental fiction that the English public read with such avidity? What conditions in France encouraged it? Who were the authors associated with it? A few generalizations will provide a perspective for the detailed study of its vogue in England.

The novels and tales published in France from 1760 to the 1790's can largely be categorized as sentimental fiction.[2] A precise definition of "sentimental" has always been

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Sentimental Novel in America, 1789-1860 (1940; rpt Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972).

[2] Studies of French sentimental fiction are numerous; among the most comprehensive are André Monglond, *Le Préromantisme français.* Vol. II, *Le Maître des âmes sensibles* (Grenoble: Arthaud, 1930); Daniel Mornet, *Le Romantisme en France* au *XVIII*^{e} *siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1912); Henri Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à La Révolution* (Paris: A. Colin, 1967); Servais Etienne, Le *Genre romanesque en France depuis l'apparition de La "Nouvelle Héloïse" jusqu'aux* ap*proches de la Révolution* (Paris: A. Colin, 1922); Pierre

elusive.[3] Roughly, it may be said that as its primary philosophical assumption, sentimentality held that the heart should take precedence over the head - in other words, that innate, spontaneous emotional impulse was a better guide to proper action than rational, detached analysis, although reason should subsequently be consulted. Following one's own inclinations - or, to use the contemporary and more accurate term, one's *sensibilité* - would necessarily produce the most desirable moral behavior: sincere piety; filial and parental affection; virtue and fidelity; recognition of the individual, no matter what his rank; benevolence extended to the less fortunate.[4] One or more of these elements are enough to qualify as sentimental very diverse sorts of fiction: stories of love and passion, oriental tales, historical romances, pastorals, and didactic novels.

Equally characteristic of sentimental fiction was its avowed purpose to educate the reader morally. "Le plus digne objet de la littérature," began Marmontel's *Essai sur les*

Trahard, *Les Maîtres de la sensibilité française.* 4 vols. (Paris: Boivin et cie, 1931-33); and F. C. Green, *French Novelists, Manners and Ideas from the Renaissance to the* Revo-*lution* (New York: Appleton, 1929).

[3] Those scholars cited in note 1 of the introduction and above comment in detail on the problem, as do I. H. Smith in "The Concept 'Sensibilité' and the Enlightenment," *AUMLA,* XXVII (May 1967), 5-17; Edith Birkhead in "Sentiment and Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Novel," *Essays and Studies,* II (1925),92-116; and Eric Erametsa in *A Study of the Word "Sentimental" and of Other Linguistic Characteristics of Eighteenth-Century Sentimentalism in England* (Helsinki, 1951). Further discussion of the subject may be found in works relating to the theater, such as Arthur Sherbo, *English Sentimental Drama* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957), and Ernest Birnbaum, *The Drama of Sensibility* (Boston: Ginn, 1915).

[4] Here is a contemporary definition of *sensibilité* and its effects: "La Sensibilité est le principe qui met toutes les passions en mouvement; mais qui, en les opposant les lines aux autres, en adoucit toujours les effets; et de ce choc à peu près égal, de cet équilibre entre tant de sentimens divers, naît la vertu. Que la Raison l'éclaire et la dirige, le grand homme est formé . . . Ami de l'humanité, parce qu'it sent qu'il est homme, il cherche à mettre plus d'égalité dans le bonheur de ses semblables; à déraciner des abus multiplies, et qui, tous introduits en faveur du puissant, ne tendoient qu'à opprimer le foible. II adoucit la rigueur des loix, proportionne les châtimens aux délits, voit que les crimes des petits ne naissent, Ie plus souvent, que de l'oppression et du malheur, et qu'en les rendant heureux, on les rendra aussi mains criminels: c'est ainsi qu'il remonte aux premieres causes des calamites publiques, pour en détruire plus sûrement les effets": Mistelet, *De la sensibilité, par rapport aux drames, aux romans, et à l'éducation* (Amsterdam et Paris, 1777), pp. 7-9. For further discussion of the aspects of *sensibilité* as manifested in literature, see below, chapter 3.

romans, "le seul même qui l'enoblisse et qui l'honore, c'est son utilité morale."[5] That this genre had by its very nature a considerable advantage over more rational forms of literary expression was often emphasized; for, since sentimental novels were concerned with *sensibilité* and its manifestations, they appealed to the reader's own emotions as well as to his intelligence and stimulated his moral awareness of others' sentiments and situations.[6] The most detailed apologist for this point of view, Romance de Mesmon, expressed it thus in his "De la lecture des romans: Fragment d'un manuscrit sur la sensibilité": "L'habitude de s'attendrir sur les malheurs imaginaires prépare le coeur à une veritable sensibilité; l'habitude de s'identifier avec l'homme de bien en action, nous accoutume enfin à trouver qu'alors nous remplissons notre place; nous nous mettons nous-mêmes sur la scène, et nous nous pénétrons de la situation de nos Héros."[7] And so by their presentation of diverse emotional situations, sentimental novels awakened the reader's moral sense and inspired him to emulate the worthy actions he read of. His moral betterment was thereby accomplished, as Mme de Staël envisioned it in her *Essai sur les fictions:* "Les fictions touchantes qui exercent l'ame à toutes les passions généreuses lui en donnent l'habitude, et lui font prendre à son insu un engagement avec elle-même, qu'elle aurait honte de rétracter, si une situation semblable lui devenait personnelle."[8]

This line of critical theorizing enhanced the novel's stature and dignity; for when

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[5] Jean-François Marmontel, *Essai sur les romans, considerés du côté moral,* first written in 1777 and collected in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Verdière, 1819), X, 287.

[6] Philippe van Tieghem emphasizes this new aspect of eighteenth-century criticism in *Petite Histoire des grandes doctrines littéraires en France,* 3rd ed. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1950): "Sans cet enthousiasme pour la vertu, point de leçon de vertu efficace. On ne conçoit pas la leçon morale sans l'attendrissement" (p. 117).

[7] G.-H. de Romance de Mesmon, "De la lecture des romans: Fragment d'un manuscrit sur la sensibilité," *Journal de Lecture, ou Choix périodique de Littérature et de Morale,* VI (1776),63. This essay was later printed in book form in 1785 and was prefaced by the glowing review from the *Journal des Savants* of 1778 which praised the author's "talent d'appercevoir et rendre sensible ce qui échappoit aux yeux ordinaires" (p. 6).

[8] *Essai sur les fictions,* first written in 1795 and collected in *Oeuvres de Mme la Baronne* de *Staël-Holstein,* I (Paris: Lefèvre, 1838), 143. A number of other critics took up the cudgels on behalf of the novel's morality, among them Gilles Boucher de la Richarderie in his *Lettre sur les romans, adressée à Mme la Marquise des Ayvelles* (Genève, 1762), and even the Marquis de Sade, in "Idée sur les romans," which prefaced *Les Crimes* de *l'amour,* I (Paris, An VIII [1800]). For a full discussion of late eighteenth-century criticism, see my article "The Novel as a Genre: Formal French Literary Theory, 1760-1800," *French Review,* XLIV (December 1972), 278-290.

teaching morality became the function of the novel, then fiction effectively displaced its two traditional rivals, philosophy and history. Moral philosophy might offer the reader truths, but coldly and repugnantly presented. The novel offered him - to use the expression which became a critical commonplace – “la morale mise en action”; and, as Mercier noted, a man who wouldn't read moral treatises "chérit le pinceau naïf et pur qui met it profit la sensibilité du coeur humain, pour lui enseigner ce que l'intérêt personnel et farouche repousse ordinairement."[9] History, though instructive, suffered from two defects. First, it was often forced to deal with immorality but prohibited by objectivity from criticizing it; therefore, its lessons could not profit the reader. Second, it had no application to the common reader, speaking as it did "A un très-petit nombre d'hommes, aux princes, aux généraux, aux gouvernans." But the novel? "Un roman," continued the same critic, "est plus à la portée de nous autres gens vulgaires; il doit être aussi plus intéressant pour nons; ce sont nos coeurs, nos passions, c'est nous-mêmes que nous y retrouvons." And if the novel was more relevant to people of all classes, then its moral lessons were more effective. "La morale usuelle y est mise en action; on nous fait connaître nos maladies, on nous montre les remèdes; il ne tient qu'à nous de les prendre, et de nous les appliquer."[10]

The success of sentimental fiction, and the critical acclaim which accompanied it, had been slowly prepared during the first half of the century.[11] Most of the French novels before 1760 were intellectual, stylish, and witty - and, often, licentious enough to justify the critics' charges of immorality and inevitably pernicious effects. Nevertheless, germs of sentimental philosophy could be discerned in an occasional work: the involved analysis of the nuances of sentiment in Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne* (1731-41); the confrontation between the innocent child of nature and worldly French society in Mme de Grffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* (1747); a noble's benevolence to a peasant couple in Duclos' *Les Confessions du comte de* *** (1742). The only consistent precursor of the

[9] Louis Sébastien Mercier, *De La littérature et des littérateurs* (Yverdon, 1778), p. 5

[10] *Décade Philosophique,* no. 45 (30 messidor An III [1795J), pp. 161-162. The same argument appeared earlier in the *Année Littéraire,* I (1782),29, less dramatically phrased.

[11] Besides those general works already cited, Paul van Tieghem studies this specific period in "Le Roman sentimental en Europe de Richardson à Rousseau (1740-61)," *Revue de la Littérature comparée,* XX (1940), 129-151, and Geoffrey Atkinson considers it in *The Sentimental Revolution: French Writers of 1690-1740,* ed. A. C. Keller (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965).

sentimentalists, however, was the abbé Prévost; for his heroes and heroines in *Le Doyen de Killerine* (173540), *Les Mémoires et avantures d'un homme de qualité* (1728-31), and *Le Philosophe anglais, ou histoire de M. Cleveland* (1731-39) suffered from the conflict between *sensibilité* and social convention long before such friction became a standard plot device.

A significant impetus to the genre's establishment came from across the channel, with the translations of the novels of Samuel Richardson.[12] Thanks to the efforts of Prévost, *Pamela, Clarissa,* and *Sir Charles Grandison* all appeared in French before 1760. In spite of the abbe's considerable abridging, the novels' presentation of a variety of social classes, of natural and unforced sentiment, and of scrupulously moral behavior found great favor with the French public. "Tout ce que Montaigne, Charron, La Roche-foucauld et Nicole ont mis en maximes, Richardson l'a mis en action," proclaimed a typically enthusiastic reader, Denis Diderot, in his *Éloge de Richardson.*[13] "[En lisant ses romans] j' étais devenu spectateur d'une multitude d'incidents, je sentais que j'avais acquis de l' expérience. . . . Le monde où nous vivons est le lieu de la scène; le fond de son drame est vrai; ses personnages ont toute la réalité possible; ses caractères sont pris du milieu de la société; ses incidents sont dans les moeurs de toutes les nations policées; les passions qu'il peint sont telles que je les éprouve en moi; . . . les traverses et les afflictions de ses personnages sont de la nature de celles qui me menaient sans cesse; il me montre le cours général des choses qui m'environnent" (pp. 30-31). As works of other English novelists became available in translation, French critics after 1760 continued to cite their portrayals of virtue in ordinary life as proof of the novel's utility - "des cours de morale pratique à l'usage de tous les états," as Bricaire de la Dixmérie said, in which "nul rang n'y est dédaigné."[14]

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[12] See Harold Wade Streeter, The Eighteenth-Century English Novel in French Translation: A Bibliographical Study (New York, 1936); Joseph Texte, Jean-Jacques Rousseau et les origines du cosmopolitanisme littéraire (Paris: Hachette, 1895); and F. C. Green, Literary Ideas in 18th-Century France and England, a Critical Survey (New York: Ungar, 1966), for various aspects of this question.

[13] *Éloge de Richardson* (originally published in the *Journal étranger*, janvier 1762), *Oeuvres esthétiques,* ed. P. Vernière (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1965), p. 29, hereafter cited in the text.

[14] Bricaire de la Dixmérie, "Discours sur l'origine, les progrès, et le genre des Romans" in *Toni et Clairette* (Paris, 1773), I, xxiv. And the French continued to read translated English fiction. In "Les Enseignements des bibliothèques privées (1750-1780)," *Revue*

While literature was accustoming the reading public to fictional demonstrations of morality and sentiment, the French themselves were beginning to take more and more interest in their own emotional reactions; and particularly after 1770, *sensibilité* became the social catchword of the day.[15] Not kindly, Mme Riccoboni reported to her friend David Garrick in 1772,"'Nous sommes actuellement dans une fureur de sensibilité, qui passe toute imagination; nos dames veulent pleurer, crier, étouffer aux spectacles. . . . Le sentiment est la folie du jour, on se l'est mis si fort en tête qu'il en reste bien peu dans e coeur."[16] Disapproving opinion was overwhelmed, however, by public enthusiasm for displays of sentiment. Benevolence, the most visible manifestation of *sensibilité,* motivated a multitude of charitable projects financed by both private and public means. Louis XVI and his queen contributed money to the poor in times of particular misery; hospitals and shelters for the indigent sprang up; multi-volume anthologies of anecdotes about benevolence poured forth.[17] Indeed, in 1783, Baculard d'Arnaud paid most effusive tribute "à la sensibilité, à cette compassion générale, devenue, si l'on peut le dire, de*mode* parmi nous, grâce à l'exemple de nos augustes Souverains, et à l'heureux enthousiasme qui porte tout Français it les imiter!"[18] A less *sensible* critic remarked, perhaps ironically, "Si notre siècle n'est pas celui ou il y a le plus de vertus, c'est du moins celui ou l'on fait le mieux les mettre au jour."[19]

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*d'Histoire Littéraire de la France,*XVII (juillet-septembre 1910), 449-496, Daniel Mornet ascertained that out of the ten novels most frequently possessed, five were translations from the English; and they ranked second through sixth in order of popularity.

[15] Two works which deal particularly with this social point of view are Daniel Mornet, *La Pensée française au XVIII^e^ siècle* (Paris: A. Colin, 1938), and Arthur J. Wilson, Jr., "Sensibility in France in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Word History," *French Quarterly,* XIII (January-June 1931), 35-46.

[16] Letter of 2 Janvier 1772 in The Private Correspondence of David Garrick with the most Celebrated Persons of his Time (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1832), II, 595.

[17] Statistics on the numerous charitable establishments can be found in Paul Lacroix, *XVIII^e^ Siècle, institutions, usages et costumes* (Paris: Didot frères, fils et cie, 1875). As to the anthologies, *Les Annales de la bienfaisance* (1773), *Anecdotes de La bienfaisance* (1777), and *Les Etrennes de la vertu* (1783) are typical titles; and the *Journal de Littérature, des Sciences et des Arts* proclaimed itself to be *au Profit de La Maison d'lnstitution des jeunes Orphelins militaires. Sous les Auspices du Roi et de La Reine, Protecteurs de cet Etablissement.*

[18] Délassemens de l'homme sensible, ou anecdotes diverses, IV (Paris, 1783), 239-240.

[19] Histoire de la république des lettres et arts en France: année 1783 (Amsterdam et Paris, 1785), p. 9.

Authors, buoyed by critical support and anxious to respond to an eager public, produced a steady stream of sentimental fiction during the last four decades of the century. Two names and two novels stand head and shoulders above the crowd: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761); Bernardin de St.-Pierre and *Paul et Virginie* (1788). To pair the writers thus is fitting, for the first, whose work met with immediate success, established language and content which were to be imitated by countless less talented sentimental writers; and the second, perhaps without knowing it, achieved a synthesis of sentimentality so perfect that no subsequent author approached, let alone equalled, it.[20]

Rousseau's epistolary novel tells of the virtuous Julie d'Etange, whose passion for her tutor St.-Preux leads to her dishonor and his banishment; who experiences, during her marriage ceremony, a total repentance which permits her to regard the past without shame and the future with confidence in her virtue; who creates for her family a rural, domestic utopia at Clarens which St.-Preux is invited to join; and who dies, secure in the knowledge of duty accomplished but apprehensive of a future in which her love for St.-Preux might revive. Of all the ideas which became commonplaces of sentimental fiction, three deserve particular mention because of the importance Rousseau gave them. First, *sensibilité*, which St.-Preux calls "un fatal présent du ciel," is constantly at war with reason and may cause one untold grief; but its possession is essential, for it remains, always, the mainspring of virtue. Second, sincere repentance like Julie's can erase all previous faults; one's virtue is not simply restored but reborn. Third, civilized, conventional society is the enemy of happiness, which can best be found by living modestly according to the dictates of nature. The eloquence of Rousseau's prose undoubtedly persuaded his audience to accept these concepts as successfully as it convinced them of the sincerity of the lovers' passion. .

The brevity and simplicity of *Paul et Virginie* indicate immediately how much the sentimental novel had developed since 176l. Two mothers, exiled from society to the Ile

[20] The major critical works all, of course, pay considerable attention to these two writers and their importance. For other useful information on Rousseau, see Daniel Mornet, "Introduction" to *La Nouvelle Héloïse,* ed. "Grands Ecrivains de France," Vol. I (Paris: Hachette, 1925), and Charles Dedeyan, *Jean Jacques Rousseau et la sensibilité littéraire à la fin du XVIII*e *siecle* (Paris: S.E.D.E.S., 1966); for a thorough historical and critical analysis of St.Pierre's work, see Pierre Trahard's introduction to his edition of *Paul et Virginie* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1964).

de France (Mauritius), raise their children together in perfect harmony with nature. At the very moment when their childish companionship becomes "unspoken love, Virginie is sent back to France and civilization, and Paul is left to comfort the mothers and bear the sadness of her absence. Virginie returns, but she is drowned in a storm before she can set foot on the island. Paul dies of a broken heart. It is an uncomplicated story which has much in common with *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, but the differences are instructive. Switzerland was a wild and majestic - but still European - setting for Rousseau; St.-Pierre chooses a remote, exotic, tropical isle. Julie and St.-Preux were educated people; Paul and Virginie, who grow up without any formal education, preserve thereby a moral superiority founded on innocence. In the first novel, Julie established a civilized society, albeit a pleasantly rural one, at Clarens; any society larger than the family, and civilization in general, is pernicious in the second. *La Nouvelle Héloïse* shows passion consummated but innocence regained; Virginie's opportune demise begs the question. But like his predecessor, St.-Pierre was a master of style; and the simplicity of plot and characterization was more than enhanced by rich and glowing prose.

The year 1761 saw not only the success of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* but also the enormous popularity of a slender collection of short stories: the *Contes moraux* of Jean-François Marmonte1.[21] The first dated in fact from 1758, when Marmontel was attempting to enliven the prosy pages of the *Mercure de France*, of which he was editor; he chose as his general formula a playful moral dilemma which could easily be resolved by a last-minute - and often artificial - appeal to sentiment. His titles often summarize the situations succinctly: "L'Amitié à l'épreuve" culminates with Blandford's generous surrender of his Indian fiancée to his best friend, for instance, and the heroine of "La Femme comme il y en a peu" recovers her ruined husband's fortune by clever domestic management. So successful were his *contes moraux* that they established a brand-new genre; a host of imitators followed in his footsteps, and *contes, romans, fictions, anecdotes,* and *histoires moraux* and *morales* proliferated.[22] Two other works, both

[21] Marmontel's *Mémoires,* ed. Maurice Tourneux (Paris: Librairie des bibliophiles, 1891) furnish his own account of his successful career; a modern study is S. Lenel, *Un Homme de lettres au XVIII*[e] *siècle: Marmontel* (Paris: Hachette, 1902). Michelle Buchanan has studied the *contes* separately in "Les *Contes moraux* de Marmontel," *French Review,* XLI (November 1967), 201-212.

[22] His most successful imitator was Bricaire de la Dixmérie, his successor on the *Mercure*, who produced his own *Contes moraux et philosophiques* in 1765; others

within the sentimental genre, gained Marmontel further celebrity. *Belisaire* (1767) thinly disguised its theories on good government, the education of princes, and religion with a novel-like structure. *Les Incas, ou la destruction de l'Empire du Pérou* (1777) provided its audience with more sentimental fare; for its earnest plea for religious tolerance was nicely balanced by the love story of the Spaniard Alonzo and Cora, the Peruvian Virgin of the Sun.

Scarcely less popular than Marmontel, but in a different genre, was François-Thomas de Baculard d'Arnaud, the acknowledged dean of the *larmoyant* and *sombre* school of sentimental fiction.[23] Through six volumes of *Les Épreuves du sentiment* (1772-79), four of *Les Nouvelles historiques* (1774-83), and twelve of *Délassemens de l'homme sensible* (1783-87), he harrowed his readers with tales of love betrayed, virtue tormented, and benevolence ignored - until a finale in which the evil-doer repented and reformed. He had his imitators, too; though frequently they wrote no more than one or two works, they faithfully copied and sometimes surpassed his melodramatic plots and declamatory style.[24] Most noteworthy among them and most prolific was no doubt Loaisel de Tréogate, whose works bore such enticing titles as *Les Soirées de mélancholie* (1777) and *Dolbreuse, ou l'homme du siècle ramene à la vérité par le sentiment et par la raison* (1771).[25]

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included Contant d'Orville and his *Romans moraux* (1768), *Contes moraux* by both Mme Uncy (1762-63) and Mme Le Prince de Beaumont (1774), and *Fictions morales* by Mercier as late as 1792. Marmontel himself published another series of *contes* between 1790 and 1793, but they were greeted with tolerance rather than enthusiasm-time was passing him by.

[23] D'Arnaud was responsible, in fact, for one of the earliest true sentimental novels: *Les Époux malheureux,* published in 1745, went through over sixty editions by 1785. The three principal sources on his life and works are Bertran de la Villehervé, *François-Thomas de Baculard d'Arnaud: son théâtre et ses théories dramatiques* (Paris: Champion, 1920); Charles Monselet, *Les Oubliés et les dédaignes* (Paris: Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, 1861), II, 157-172; and Derk lnklaar, *François-Thomas de Baculard d'Arnaud, ses imitateurs en Hollande et dans d'autres pays* (Gravenhage: De Nederlandsche Boek-en Steendrukkerij, 1925).

[24] For example, Nicolas Leonard, Lettres de deux amans, habitans de Lyon (1783), Claude Joseph Dorat, *Les Malheurs de l'inconstance* (1772), Constat de Rebècque, *Laure, ou Lettres de quelques femmes de Suisse* (1786), and Mme Daubenton, *Zélie dans le desert* (1786-87).

[25] Although little noticed by eighteenth-century French critics, he has received considerable attention from twentieth-century literary historians - Collet and Etienne in

Women novelists brought to sentimental fiction a more restrained and didactic manner. Highest esteem went to Mme Riccoboni, who began her celebrated career in 1758; she always, however, remained something of an anomaly, for although she involved her *sensible* heroines in the most delicate romantic situations, her tone stayed light and her attitude objective rather than self-indulgent.[26] Mme Le Prince de Beaumont was more typical of the feminine sentimentalists, for she preached without respite that virtue would be honored and benevolence recompensed.[27] Also typical and exceedingly successful was Mme de Genlis, who knew how to skillfully combine the morally piquant with a healthy dose of didacticism for the benefit of her readers, in works like *Adèle et Théodore, ou lettres sur l'éducation* (1782) and *Les Veillées du château* (1782).[28]

Below the names of celebrated authors and authoresses of the time stretched a vast list of professional and amateur writers who tried their hand at sentimental fiction and who occasionally had the good fortune to please the public with one or two novels. Gaspard de Beaurieu and *L'Élève de la nature* (1763); Mme Elie de Beaumont and *Lettres du marquis de Roselle* (1764); St.-Lambert and "Sara Th . . . " (1765); Dubois-Fontanelle and *Les Effets des passions* (1786) and *Naufrage et aventures de M. Pierre Viaud* (1768); Claude Joseph Dorat and *Les Sacrifices de l'amour* (1771) and *Les Malheurs de l'inconstance* (1772); Mme de Montolieu and *Caroline de Litchfield* (1786)-

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particular - who see in him an important precursor of romantic thought and style.

[26] Her most popular work, *Lettres de Milady Juliette Catesby* (1759), went through sixteen editions by 1785, proving that she did in fact appeal to a sentimental audience. The only full-length study of her is by Emily A. Crosby, *Une Romancière oubliée, Mme Riccoboni: sa vie, ses oeuvres, sa place dans la littérature anglaise et française du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Rieder et de, 1924).

[27] Witness the titles of some of her works: the early *Triomphe de La vente* (1748); *Mémoires de Madame la baronne de Batteville, ou la veuve parfaite* (1766); *La Nouvelle Clarice* (1767). In addition she found time for moral treatises like *Magasin des enfans, ou dialogues d'une sage gouvernante avec ses élèves de La première distinction*, which was printed nine times between 1758 and 1780.

[28] Mme de Genlis was also her own biographer: see her *Mémoires inédits de Mme La comtesse de Gentis.* 10 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1825); the most recent study of her life and works is that by Alice Laborde, *L'Oeuvre de Mme de Gentis* (Paris: Nizet, 1966). Other representative feminine sentimentalists were Fanny de Beauharnais, Mme de Souza, Mme de Montolieu, and Mme de Charrière.

all enjoyed brief periods of popularity. That so many writers should have considered sentimental fiction a genre worth trying at least once indicates the attraction that sentimental novels and stories held for the French reading public for nearly forty years.

It was inevitable, of course, that its attraction should wane. Responsibility for its demise may be laid to three factors, the first of which was, simply, its own degeneration. During the late 1770's, it began to lose the simplicity, sincerity, and straightforwardness which had generally characterized it, as authors realized that they stood in danger of boring their audience irretrievably if they did not offer something more stimulating. So they pushed sentimentalism to its limits: their plots grew more and more extravagant and the moral dilemmas more and more questionable; their characters vacillated wildly between hope and despair; their prose consisted of lamentations, entreaties, and exclamation marks. Such excessive sentimentality did succeed in holding the public's attention through the eighties and early nineties; but it represented a dead end to further development.

Other authors, more adventurous, tacitly accepted sentimentality but groped for newer approaches. Realism, a desire to describe social conditions as they were and not as the sentimentalists thought they should be presented, preoccupied some, like Restif de la Bretonne and Louvet de Couvrai.[29] Escapism, an impulse to retreat into a world still simpler and more pure than that of ordinary sentimental fiction, motivated others-hence chivalric tales, such as those compiled by Legrand d'Aussy, and pastorals like those of the Chevalier de Florian. Literary confusion was the inevitable result of these divergent efforts.[30]

But what doubtless killed sentimental fiction was the French Revolution itself. Novels and stories had been preaching for years that *sensibilité* would inspire good works, beneficial to all mankind; that following natural impulse would lead directly to

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[29] Although Louvet de Couvrai also produced the super-sentimental *Émilie de Varmont, ou Ie divorce nécessaire* (1791).

[30] A minor author like Jean Claude Gorjy well demonstrates both the exhaustion of sentimental fictional conventions and the new efforts at experimentation. In *Blançay* (1788), the bourgeois milieu is realistically described but the plot is encumbered by the usual near-rapes, lovers united, and fortunes restored. The hero of *St. Alme* (1790) is in love with Josephine; but tormented by jealousy on hearing of her marriage, he goes mad and rapes her, only to discover that she has, fortunately, become a widow. *Lidorie* (1790)

liberté, égalité, fraternité. So, indeed, it seemed during the first years of the Revolution. But as the political situation grew less and less certain and instances of terror and repression more and more frequent, the tenets of sentimentalism collapsed in the face of revolutionary reality and the need to maintain power. "N'aie de l'humanité que pour ta patrie," counseled one writer, *"Oublie que la Nature te fit homme et sensible."*[31] Literature could no longer continue to celebrate what so evidently did not exist: sentimental fiction truly perished when the world for which it had been created disappeared.

Chapter Three. Public Acceptance

To the booksellers and the translators must go considerable credit for anticipating and developing the vogue of translated French sentimental fiction; the statistics on publication prove their perspicacity. But this vogue testifies to more than commercial acumen: it is a reflection of that group which truly created and maintained it, the late eighteenth-century British reading public. What elements did this body of literature possess which made it attractive and congenial to the English? As a generalized portrait of the translated sentimental fiction will show, it was a genre whose very lack of national character made it extremely accessible to a foreign audience and whose content and subject matter could in general be applauded by even the most moral and traditional reader - provided he be, of course, a reader of sensibility. And what does its popularity say about its readers? It proves that in their literary preferences for sentimental authors - and here figures on publication, as well as English critics, will be called upon to bear witness - they were more like the French than they knew or, perhaps, might have cared to admit.

In considering French sentimental fiction as a genre, one cannot help but be struck by one element: its themes were deliberately universal, utilitarian, and conservative. It intended to teach man to behave more justly and humanely toward his fellows; and it did so not by appealing to any national code of ethics or values but by promoting that justice

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belongs to troubadour fiction; *Tablettes sentimentales du bon Pamphile* (1791) is an attempt at a pastoral.

[31] Quoted by Pierre Trahard, *La Sensibilité révolutionnaire* (1789-1794) (Paris: Boivin et cie, 1936), p. 91, who chronicles this evolution particularly in chapters 3 and 4.

and virtue which spring instinctively from sensibility.[32] Thus, French sentimental fiction was, by its very premises, supra-national in emphasis. Sensibility was a common denominator on both sides of the channel; and the human heart, free of social or moral prejudice, was to be the source of right and proper action.[33] At the same time, however, it believed that reason would hold to traditional and conservative institutions as long as they corresponded to the natural order and to the promptings of sensibility.

One universal doctrine preached continually by sentimental fiction was the rightness and the necessity of religious feeling. Religion was the natural product of the spirit of man who, in encountering the world around him, deduced by both instinct and reason the existence of a supreme being.[34] His vision of God was that of a merciful and understanding master who realized the frailties of His mortal creations; therefore, religion

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[32] Sensibility receives many accolades from the characters in sentimental fiction. The Count de B*** in Duclos' *The Pleasures of Retirement* (London, 1774) speaks of "a sentiment more penetrating than reason, nay even than wisdom herself. . . a sagacity of the heart, which is the measure of our sensibility" (1,252). "Ah! the rare present that heaven makes us," says the father in Marmontel's "The Samnite Marriages," *Moral Tales* (London, 1764), "when he gives us a sensible heart! It is the principle of all the virtues" (II, 63). Dolerval, the hero of Louvet de Couvrai's *Emily* de *Varmont* (London, 1798),

[33] The sentimental novelists did, of course, acknowledge that sensibility, in order to manifest itself justly, should be properly restrained. The principal theme of many of the novels is, in fact, as Mme de Genlis declares in the dedication to *Rash Vows* (London, 1799), to show "the dangerous consequences of excessive delicacy and extreme sensibility. . . [and that] without wisdom, and consequently without moderation, sensibility is only a fatal gift" (I, iii-iv). Other novels which lecture on the dangers of sensibility include Ducray-Duminil's *Alexis, or the Cottage in the Woods* (which the author in the untranslated preface claims to be a satire on sensibility), Mme de Charrière's *Letters Written from Lausanne,* Dubois-Fontanelle's *The Effects of the Passions,* Dorat's *The Fatal Effects of Inconstancy,* and "The History of M. de la Paliniere" in Mme de Genlis' *Tales of the Castle.*

[34] In Mme Le Prince de Beaumont's *The Triumph of Truth,* for example, the atheist M. de la Vilette compacts with his devout wife to bring up their child without religious instruction and finds himself convinced of the necessity, of an all governing will by his twelve-year-old's reasoning. Beaurieu's hero in *The Man of Nature* (London, 1773) similarly deduces a divinity from the intricate reciprocal relationships which he observes between animals and nature."It must be then, that this Supreme Will is a Being, infinitely powerful, infinitely wise - O great and omnipotent Being, the sun, myself, and all that exist, exist by thee alone! I acknowledge thy powers, thy wisdom, thy goodness: I thank thee, I adore thee!" (I, 247-248).

compassionately and indulgently comforted the erring and afflicted.[35] Needless to say, only Christianity (nonsectarian, it should be added) embodied these qualities; sentiment did not encourage cultist experimentation, let alone heresy.[36]

After love of God, sentimental literature promoted love of family. The duties of wife towards husband, father towards child, and child towards parent were inevitably fulfilled if each behaved as his heart commanded.[37] Inevitably, each did not; fiction demands conflicts, and conjugal waywardness, filial disobedience, or parental abuse frequently supplied them.[38] But family reconciliations, accompanied by the maximum display of repentant tears and joy, provided happy endings and reaffirmed the reader's conviction in the rightfulness of domestic harmony.[39]

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[35] Marmontel, in the controversial fifteenth chapter of *Belisarius* (London, 1767), insists on both points. "The triumph of religion," according to his hero, "is to administer consolation in the hour of adversity and to mingle in the cup of sorrow the sweets of calm delight" (p. 204); God must be a merciful being, since "From the hands of my Creator I came forth weak and feeble; he will be indulgent therefore; to him it is apparent that I have neither the madness nor the wickedness to offend him" (p. 207).

[36] The heroine of Lavallée's *Maria Cecilia; or Life and Adventures of the Daughter of Achmet III, Emperor of the Turks* (London, 1788), is a convert to Christianity who ascribes her perseverance in adversity to the "astonishing courage we derive from the Christian religion" (I, 75); likewise comforted by Christianity are Zelida, the converted pagan in D'Arnaud's *The History of Count Gleichen,* and the cast-away heroine of Mme Daubenton's *Zelia in the Desert.*

[37] Family affection is preached incessantly by Mme de Genlis in such works as *The Rival Mothers, Tales of the Castle,* and *Adelaide and Theodore;* by Marmontel in "The Error of a Good Father," "The School for Fathers," "The Good Mother," and "A Wife of Ten Thousand!"; and is also a prominent feature of Rousseau's *Eloisa,* Mme Daubenton's *Zelia in the Desert,* Mme de Charriere's *Letters Written from Lausanne,* and Mme D'Ormoy's "Amelia, a Novel."

[38] In Marmontel's "The Good Husband," "The Sylph Husband," and "The Happy divorce," the frivolous heroines are discontented with the conjugal state. Julia in D'Arnaud's "Julia or the Penitent Daughter," Rosetta in the same author's "The History of Rosetta," and Aspasia in Mme Benoit's *Aspasia; or the Dangers oj Vanity* desert their families to seek excitement in the world. Cecile's father in Mme de Genlis' *Adelaide and Theodore* forces his daughter to take the veil, as does Lucile's in Marmontel's "The Two Unfortunate Ladies"; and in the latter's "Lausus and Lydia" the tyrannical father is on the verge of putting his son to death for loving a charming but ineligible maiden.

[39] A favorite scene in sentimental fiction is the reunion between parent and child, separated by either accident or misfortune. Notable examples occur in *The Man of Nature,* where the hero instinctively recognizes the father he has never seen; D'Auvigny's

After love of God and family, sentimental literature inspired love of one's fellow man. This was no abstract concept. Metaphysical or ethical speculation was greatly disdained in these novels, and concrete, active philanthropy advocated with enthusiasm.[40] Benevolence might vary from the trivial *to* the grandiose-from a few pennies extended to a needy pauper to entire farms and villages rebuilt for starving peasants.[41] Charity was by no means, however, egalitarian in sentimental literature. Although it showed a genuine concern for the alleviation of the most extreme social evils, it aimed at maintaining the social status quo. Peasants profited from their masters' goodwill, but they were not encouraged to replace them.[42] Nor did sentimental literature preach a disinterested

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Memoirs of Madame Bameveldt; Mme Benoît's *Aspasia;* Mme de Genlis' "The History of the Duchess of C***," who is restored to her family after ten years of incarceration inflicted on her by a jealous husband; Lavallée's *Maria Cecilia,* where the daughter hastens from Turkey to rescue her father from a Parisian prison; and Gorjy's *Victorina,* in which not only the heroine but also her benefactress simultaneously rediscovers her long-lost parents.

[40] A quotation from Florian's *The Adventures of Numa Pompilius, Second King of Rome* (London, 1787) well summarizes this point of view. "Can you imagine that heaven has endowed you with talents and virtues for yourself alone? Do you think to please God by living only for yourself?" demands a Roman of Numa; "The Supreme Being considers vain speculations as of no value; he requires an active virtue. . . and can only regard those with favour, who are industrious in promoting the happiness of mankind" (II, 190). There is, in fact, a profoundly anti-philosophical current in the translated fiction. Julia in D'Arnaud's story is corrupted by the "pernicious discourses" of "Freethinkers and Libertines"; Elise in Mme Le Prince de Beaumont's "The True Point of Honour," *Moral Tales* (London, 1775), attributes her cousin's escapades to "what they call philosophy. . . . Ah! unhappy victim of these corrupters of the public, how much do I pity you!" (I, 156). Similar sentiments are expressed in the latter's *The New Clarissa,* in St.-Pierre's *Paul and Virginia* and *The Indian Cottage,* and in Mme de Genlis' *Tales of the Castle.*

[41] Among the more elaborate examples of active benevolence are the rural utopias described in Rousseau's *Eloisa* and Mme Le Prince de Beaumont's *The New Clarissa* and the ideal Christian society set up by Camira, Angélique, and the priest Maldonado among the Paraguyan natives in Florian's "Camira." Notably benevolent landlords include Sainville in Mme de Genlis' *Rash Vows,* Noirval and St. Ange in Constant de Rebècque's *Laura, or Letters from Switzerland,* Therese's father's friend in Leonard's *The Correspondence of Two Lovers,* Emilia in Mme de Souza's *Emilia and Alphonsus,* the Count in Marmontel's "The Scruple," and Arsaces in Montesquieu's "Arsaces and Ismenia."

[42] Rousseau is perhaps the least equivocal about the matter. In *Eloisa* (London, 1784) Julia says to St..Preux, "we do not converse with peasants, indeed, in the style of the

benevolence. Always associated with active philanthropy was an intense personal satisfaction at the sight of those persons whose condition one had helped to improve; and emotional scenes of gratitude were often used to excite similarly benevolent feelings in the bosom of the reader.[43]

Sentimental literature did not neglect lessons on the good life and how to live it. Simplicity and moderation were proper and natural, overly civilized luxury generally to be avoided.[44] These precepts provided another source of conflict necessary to the fiction. Perpetual dichotomies were set up: between the city, which depraves and corrupts, and the country, which calms and mends; between the peasant or farmer, who labors in

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courts; but we treat them with a grave and distant familiarity which, without raising anyone out of his station, teaches them to respect our's" (III, 233). And her old friend summarizes "Mrs. Wolmar's great maxim [which] is never to encourage anyone to change his condition, but to contribute all in her power to make everyone happy in his present station" (III, 234).

[43] "The pleasure of conferring happiness is so sweet, so alluring, that the heart which has once tasted it can never renounce the gratification. It affords to such a person the most sublime delight" (I, 115), asserts the Countess in Mme Le Prince de Beaumont's "The True Point of Honour." Typical of an emotional scene of gratitude is that in Carra's *Cecilia: or the Eastern Lovers* (London, 1773): "'May you live! live long! for you are worthy of it!'" cries an old man to his benefactor, while "At the same time the tears gushed from his eyes and streamed down his reverend cheeks, as from an inexhaustible source of pleasure; thus was I a second time paid for my bounty, with uxorious interest" (pp. 45-46). Other notable instances of gratitude include the "respect and obedience" of a grateful band of "ferocious savages" when the hero of Mme de Genlis' "The Slaves; or, the Benefit Repaid," *Tales of the Castle,* buys and reunites a black child with his mother; the anniversary celebration instituted by a village to commemorate the hero's saving the population from the Moors in Florian's "Pedro and Celestina"; and in D'Arnaud's *Sidney and Volsan* the Temple of Gratitude which the latter erects to the former and in which he and his family worship each day.

[44] The "primitive" societies - that is, those at the greatest distance from European influence - display the most natural and laudable organization: Marmontel's Incas and the family group in St.-Pierre's *Paul and Virginia.* An individual from such a society is invariably superior to civilized man and instructs him in honor and sentiment, like Zilia in Mme de Gralligny's *The Peruvian Letters,* Coraly in Marmontel's "Friendship Put to the Test," the pariah in St.-Pierre's *The Indian Cottage,* and Itanoko in Lavallée's *The Negro Equalled by Few Europeans.* Closer to home and therefore a more familiar figure in sentimental literature is, of course, the peasant, a virtuous primitive in his own right since, as St.-Preux says in *Eloisa,* "Neither their hearts nor understandings are formed by

accord with nature, and the noble, who exists by the toil or the ruin of others.[45] Those countryfolk were often, it is true, aristocrats or bourgeois who had retreated to the country because of straitened circumstances; but they invariably lived more justly and more righteously than their city counterparts.[46]

In sentimental literature, individual rights and freedoms, when pursued according to the dictates of nature and sensibility, were generally opposed to artificial social conventions and prejudices.[47] This principle often led to situations which out of context

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art; they have not learned to model themselves after the fashion, and are less the creatures of men than those of , nature" (III, 264).

[45] Many a virtuous heroine is ruined when she leaves the country for the city - the central lesson of Marmontel's "Lauretta" and D'Arnaud's "Julia" and "The History of Rosetta"; and many a hero is temporarily diverted from dissipation by a sojourn in the country, as in D'Arnaud's *Fanny, or the Happy Repentance* and *The Exiles* and Duclos' *The Confessions of the Count de B****. Moreover, when there is a villain in sentimental literature, he is inevitably a worldly-wise, coldly rational, city-dwelling aristocrat: Sir Thomas Ward in *Fanny;* Valville in Mme Elie de Beaumont's *The History of the Marquis de Roselle;* the Duke in Dorat's *The Fatal Effects of Inconstancy;* the Comte d'Olban (who eventually redeems himself) in Mme D'Ormoy's "Amelia"; and Lormon, who patterns himself on Lovelace, in Imbert's "Rosetta."

[46] Rank is treated somewhat ambivalently in sentimental fiction; but providing parents or spouses who, in spite of their country residence, are in fact gentlefolk upholds in a subtle manner a conservative attitude toward birth. The novel heroine who marries an apparently lower-class husband has not, it generally happens, done anything degrading: the heroine of *The New Clarissa* runs away with an undistinguished young man to escape from her angry father and marries him to preserve her virtuous reputation, after which it is revealed that her husband is an impoverished baron; Sara Th--- in St.-Lambert's "The History of Sara Th---," *Original Tales, Histories, Essays and Translations* (Edinburgh, 1785), marries out of esteem and shows "a proper degree of respect for salutary prejudices" (p. 32) by living in the country, but her husband is actually the son of a Scottish noble stripped of his title for having supported the Jacobite rebellion. D'Arnaud's Fanny and Julia, who marry aristocrats, are the daughters of gentlemen-the former, even, of an Oxford graduate.

[47] "Let us no longer hesitate to forsake a world whose very laws are an encouragement to vice," Mirbelle urges Mme de Syrce in Dorat's *Fatal Effects of Inconstancy,* 2nd ed. (London, 1777), "where the phantom Honour, upon a thousand cruelties and wrongs, erects its throne, levying rebellious war against the empire of Nature. Hers is the standard of her subjects. Hers are the laws of her creatures" (II, 186-187). This is, of course, the most customary justification of illicit love affairs, since marriage is frequently presented as nothing more than a social or economic arrangement between two otherwise incompatible people.

might have seemed immoral or aberrant: marriage unsanctified by the church; illegitimacy; bigamy; even incest.[48] But the reader was expected to understand and sympathize with - if not to emulate - the erring characters. Provided that in straying beyond the bounds of society's conventions, they remained within the bounds of nature's, their sensibility, always alive to natural impulse, guaranteed them an innocent purity and therefore the right to the reader's respect and esteem.[49]

Just as the basic assumptions made by French sentimental fiction concerning behavior and psychology went beyond any national character to some sort of universal generalizations about human virtue and morality, so too were its settings, chronology, and characters international in scope. Because it was neither satiric in intent nor particularly realistic in presentation, it wasted little time on analysis of specific milieux. Rather, it chose any historical period and any exotic locale that seemed to offer an appropriate setting for its moral preoccupations. Stories took place in various European countries, in the Near East, and in South America; they might be set in some vague classical epoch, in the never-never land of pastoralism, or in a definite but vaguely

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[48] Over and beyond the question of illicit affairs, marriage in the eyes of God and nature - if not of the church - is often claimed to excuse sincere and tender lovers; it appears in *Zelia in the Desert,* in *The Man of Nature,* in *Cecilia: or the Eastern Lovers,* in Mme Riccoboni's *The History of Christine of Swabia,* and in Marmontel's "Anette and Lubin" and "The Shepherdess of the Alps," the most popular of all his stories. An illegitimate child, the pardonable fruit of passion, is a feature of *Zelia,* Loaisel de Treogate's *Julius or the Natural Son,* Florian's "Claudine," Mlle Fauques' "The Triumph of Friendship," Gorjy's *Blansay,* and Mme de Genlis' *Rival Mothers,* whose hero has not one but two bastards. Bigamy is the theme of D'Arnaud's *The History of Count Gleichen,* and incest occurs in *Julius.*

[49] Heroines who go astray are often treated more kindly, thus, than strict morality might prescribe, and any of them might merit Dorat's tribute to Mme de Syrce: "The foibles of a well disposed mind bring on misfortune, give offence to prejudices, but do not always annihilate virtue. . . [and] the woman who yields is often more courageous than she who resists" (I, iii). A similar comment is made in Mme Daubenton's *Zelia* (London, 1789) to the unwedded but pregnant Nina: "Restore to yourself, my dear friend, that esteem which no mortal would refuse you, did they know, as I do, the purity of your heart" (I, 72). And even when an erring heroine does die, thereby appeasing propriety, she expires only after one or more volumes have been expended on her struggles: Camille in Mme de Genlis' *Rival Mothers* and Henrietta in Framery's *The Memoirs of the Marquis de St. Forlaix* suffer through four volumes; Constance dies in the third volume of Mme de Genlis' *Rash Vows;* "and the Marchioness de Syrce and Caliste in *Letters Written from Lausanne*

described medieval period.[50] Characters were by no means exclusively French; foreigners of every race and description peopled the fiction. If one foreign nation might be especially singled out in the translated stories, it was in fact the English-a circumstance that could scarcely have displeased the British readers, since their countrymen were always represented with the greatest respect, their history portrayed in glorious and brave colors, and their homeland described in admiring terms.[51]

Broadly stated, thus, these French sentimental novels and stories were as a body accessible and congenial to a British reader because of the universality of their precepts and the absence of a too-national literary character in subject matter and treatment. As they had pleased the French audience for whom they were written, so they pleased the British public for whom they were translated - a fact which suggests that literary taste, in this instance at least, was much the same on both sides of the channel. There is, indeed, further evidence for this contention. If one examines those authors most popular with the English public, both in magazine and in book form, and if one compares the comments made by both English and French critics concerning them, one becomes aware of a similarity of judgment not simply the product of chance but of genuinely congruent opinion.

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perish after one volume of tribulation.

[50] To cite as examples only the works of Florian: his *New Tales* are set in Africa, Savoy, India, South America, and Italy, and the three of his *Six Nouvelles* translated into English take place in Persia, Spain, and Greece; *Numa Pompilius* is a novel of Rome during the time of Romulus; *Estelle* is a pastoral; and *Consalvo of Cordova* describes the Moors' assault on Spain in the Middle Ages.

[51] Enlightened Englishmen and Englishwomen are prominent, for example, in *Eloisa*, *The New Clarissa,* "Sara Th---," Mme Riccoboni's *Letters from Lord Rivers, The History of Jenny Salisbury,* and *Letters from Juliet Lady Cates by,* Mme de Genlis' *Rash Vows,* Dorat's *The Fatal Effects of Inconstancy,* Dubois-Fontanelle's *Shipwreck and Adventures of Pierre Viaud,* and St..Pierre's *The Indian Cottage.* The fiction of D'Arnaud is particularly interesting in this respect. Out of sixteen novels and stories translated, English characters and settings figure in eight; in two cases, *Sidney and Volsan* and "The Rival Friends," an Englishman plays the magnanimous benefactor to the unfortunate foreigner. "The New Clementina" is admittedly modelled on Richardson and justified by D'Arnaud's effusive opinion concerning "The Character of Richardson" which the *Universal* included in the same issue. That the French sentimental authors admired, and deliberately used, the British in their fiction is undoubted; that English translators capitalized on their admiration when they chose works to present should not be unexpected.

When Rousseau's *Julie ou La nouvelle Héloïse* appeared in France in 1761, it won immediate popularity with the public; but seldom had a novel provoked such divided critical opinion. The story was immoral, said many. Julie was immodest and presumptuous; St.-Preux was too resigned a lover, Wolmar too complaisant a husband; the passion described in the first part was cheapened by the domestic arrangements in the following. Eleven years later the abbé Chaudon would still protest that "la fiction, l'exposition, le noeud, le denouement ne sont pas a l'abri d'une juste censure."[52] On the other hand, the expressive emotion found favor with all. "L'éloquence du coeur, le ton du sentiment, cette douce mélancholie qui n'est connue que dans la retraite, un goût exquis de la Nature physique et moral, un génie mâle et flexible qui sçait la contempler dans sa grandeur et la saisir dans ses détails" was what the *Année Littéraire* "ne peut refuser à M. Rousseau."[53] Praise and admiration eventually triumphed. "Malheur à celui qui ne sentirait que les défauts!" cried Palissot; "Malheur à celui que les beautés de détails, dont abonde ce charmant Ouvrage, ne transportent et n'affectent pas délicieusement, et qui ne s'attendrit pas pour les vertus dans les admirables peintures que l'Auteur en a su tracer!"[54]

In England *La Nouvelle Héloïse* was greeted with immediate attention; and even before William Kenrick translated it, the French original had been reviewed by the three major critical periodicals of the time.[55] The *Gentleman's Magazine-perhaps* the most respected of the journals, the one not given to noticing trifles and the one most addicted to generalized clichés - found that the work's subjects were "treated in a masterly manner, and the story which is simple is conducted with an air of truth and nature that is seldom to be met with in this kind of writting [sic]."[56] Comparing him to Richardson, the *Monthly*

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[52] Louis-Mayeul Chaudon, *Bibliothèque d'un homme de goût, ou avis sur les choix des meilleurs livres écrits en notre langue sur tous les genres de sciences et de littérature* (Avignon, 1772), II, 256.

[53] *L' Année Littéraire,* ed. Elie Fréron (1761), II, 313-314, hereafter cited as *AL*.

[54] *Les Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de notre littérature, depuis François I jusqu'à nos jours*, Vol. IV in *Oeuvres complettes de M. Palissot* (Liege et Paris, 1778), 331.

[55] James Warner has studied "Eighteenth.Century English Reactions to the *Nouvelle Héloïse"* in detail in *PMLA*, LII (September 1937), 803-819; see also his useful listings of editions in "A Bibliography of Eighteenth-Century English Editions of J. J. Rousseau, with Notes on the Early Diffusion of his Writings," *PQ,* XIII (July 1934), 225-247, and the supplement, "Addenda to the Bibliography of Eighteenth-Century Editions of J. J. Rousseau," *PQ,* XIX (July 1940), 237-243.

[56] *Gentleman's Magazine*, XXXI (January 1761), 34, hereafter cited as *Gentleman's.*

Review felt that Rousseau "seems not only to have happily imitated his manner, but to have excelled in purity of style."[57] The *Critical Review,* a little concerned about the Frenchman's previous philosophical speculations, decided that in the novel, "he, in some measure, lays the philosopher aside, and mixes in the chearful ways of men, paints with the most luxuriant imagination, and interests every passion with the most bewitching art."[58]

Just as *La Nouvelle Héloïse* enjoyed enormous popularity with the French audience, the appearance of *Eloisa; or a Series of Original Letters,* as Kenrick called his translation, in 1761 was the beginning of four decades of remarkable success with the English public. The *Monthly* and the *Critical* used their reviews of the translation as an excuse to publish several of the letters for the benefit of the public; the *London Magazine* did its own five-part translation of material it considered most instructive. Between 1761 and 1795, *Eloisa* went through ten editions. The novel, in the *Critical's* opinion, was not equal but superior to Richardson's *Clarissa*. To the "exquisitely delicate" Clarissa, "prudent, perhaps, to a degree of coldness," the reviewer opposed Julia, "full of sensibility," who swerves from the path of virtue but is "reclaimed by the horror of her crime, and her innate purity of sentiment." He found Rousseau's work "infinitely more sentimental, animated, refined, and elegant," for the French author "lays naked the heart at a single stroke."[59]

The slightly dubious morality of the novel which the French critics had perceived when it appeared did not begin to trouble the English until somewhat later in the century. In a review of a spurious sequel to *Eloisa* called *Letters of an Italian Nun and an English Gentleman* (1781), the *Gentleman's* commented that "the licentiousness of John James is indeed too apparent; but where is the art, the delicacy, the sensibility with which he instills his poison, and which makes us admire even while we detest him?"[60] Writing in *The Progress of Romance,* Clara Reeve was concerned about the novel's portrayal of passion: "It is a book that speaks to the heart, and engages that in its behalf, and when reflexion comes afterwards, and reason takes up the reins, we discover that it is

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[57] *Monthly Review or Literary Journal,* XXIII (December 1760), 492, hereafter cited as *Monthly.*
[58] *Critical Review; or, Annals of Literature,* XI (January 1761), 65, here after cited as *Critical.*
[59] *Critical,* XII (September 1761), 204-205.
[60] *Gentleman's,* UII (January 1783), 55.

dangerous and improper for those for whose use it is chiefly intended, for young persons." She was in the long run indulgent, however; if Rousseau had meant to exhibit the evils of gallantry, "he is to be commended; and if it produced effects he did not foresee, he ought to be excused."[61] As late as 1798, a critic for the *Analytical Review* would still choose to make his point about a current production by asserting that "the simplest narrative, as in the incomparable *Héloïse* of Rousseau, may be rendered exquisitely interesting, [when] embellished by the graces of sentiment and expression."[62]

It may be instructive to point out how the *Eloisa,* surely the most distinguished of the French sentimental novels, conforms to the generalizations set forth at the beginning of this chapter. The setting is Switzerland, a country whose aspects, alternately wild and tranquil, evoked the descriptions of nature which formed an essential part of the book's charm. The time is not precisely contemporary, for the action begins in the mid-1730's. As to the characters, Julie and St.-Preux are Swiss, Wolmar a Russian, and the benevolent and enlightened Lord Bomston an Englishman. Except *for* St.-Preux's critical and satirical letters from Paris, the focus of attention is the country and the simple and easy pleasures to be found there. All of the moral lessons typical of sentimental fiction as a genre appear, embodied in Julie: her sincere piety (which eventually converts her atheist husband), her tender maternal affection, the active benevolence which she practices as mistress of Clarens. And they demonstrate to the reader that Julie's trusting dependence on heart and sensibility as guides to virtue does indeed create a world of harmony and bliss. Nor did the utility of Julie's affair with St.-Preux, her dishonor and moral reinstatement, go unappreciated; as the *Critical Review* observed in 1761, it is a most "instructive lesson to the female world, who generally resign over to vice those of their own sex, who have once deviated from the paths of virtue, though earnest to redeem their

[61] *The Progress of Romance* (1785; rpt New York: Facsimile Text Society, 1930), II, 13-14, hereafter cited in the text.

[62] *Analytical Review; or, History of Literature, Domestic and Foreign,* XXVII (April 1798), 415, hereafter cited as *Analytical.* Rousseau's popularity with the English was such that he had the dubious honor of being credited after his death-with several sequels to *Eloisa:* the previously-mentioned *Letters of an Italian Nun,* which had two editions in 1781 and a reprint in 1784; and *Laura; or Original Letters,* which actually came from the German of F. A. C. Werthes, translated via a French version, but which was appended to the 1784 and 1795 editions of *Eloisa* and 'separately published by Lane in 1790.

errors."[63]

Although perhaps the most esteemed French author, Rousseau was not the most popular with the English reading public. That honor was reserved for Marmontel, whose entire output of fiction was continually translated and retranslated throughout the last four decades of the century. Publication in book form of his works testifies to their remarkable and consistent appeal for the British audience. Although a first, timid translation of his *contes,* called *Select Moral Tales,* had gone unnoticed in 1763, two complete English translations appeared simultaneously the next year: one, done by Charles Denis and Robert Lloyd, was published by Kearsley; the other, more favorably received by the critics, was presented anonymously by Becket and De Hondt and augmented by a third volume in 1766. Reissues of both of these versions during subsequent decades added up to seven editions before 1800.[64] In addition, Marmontel was judged suitable even for the children; Mrs. Mary Pilkington offered her translation of *Marmontel's Tales, Selected and Abridged, for the Instruction and Amusement of Youth* in 1799. *Belisarius* was likewise enthusiastically received: nine editions appeared between 1767 and 1800. Translations of *The Incas* and the *New Moral Tales* met with less success: the former had one edition in 1777, published in both England and Ireland, and another in 1797; the latter saw two editions and was the object of two different translations.

Marmontel furnishes perhaps the most noteworthy-and the most interesting example of the congruence of French and English sentimental taste during the latter part of the eighteenth century. First, general critical opinion of his talent, based principally on the *Contes moraux,* was almost identical on both sides of the channel. It found him occasionally witty and amusing but, all in all, discovered more to blame than to praise. The *Journal de Politique et de Littérature,* commenting on a new edition of the *Contes moraux* in 1776, reproached him for "Un style souvent affecté, qu'un Censeur austère pourroit appeller *jargon,* quelques situations intéressantes, peu d'imagination, et même de légérté, malgré les efforts de l'Auteur pour n'être pas pesant, plus de connoissances des

[63] *Critical,* XII (September 1761), 205.

[64] Paul Kaufman, in *Borrowings from the Bristol Library,* 1773-1784: *a Unique Record of Reading Vogues* (Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1960), records that Marmontel's *Tales,* in the Denis and Lloyd translation, was taken out seventy-nine times during those years-a figure in the Belles Lettres section surpassed only by Johnson's *Lives of the Poets, Tristram Shandy,* and the works of Swift and Fielding.

manières du monde que du coeur humain, et plus de soin à s'approprier le persiffiage, le papillotage de nos cercles, que de capacité pour la peinture des passions."[65] Twenty two years earlier, the *Critical* had said of the *Moral Tales,* "we cannot but be of the opinion, that the dialogue, in many of them, is tedious, and the sentiments spun out in such a manner, as to make them pall upon the reader's appetite"[66]; and the *Monthly* had found his descriptions of character “too general-undistinguished by those fine discriminations of mind, those peculiar colourings of passion and sentiment, that vary, more or less, in every individual."[67]

And both French and English critics ascribed these shortcomings to precisely the same reason: Marmontel had "deliberately." adapted his style and subject matter to suit contemporary French taste. The *Journal de Politique* declared, “Le sort au moins momentané de ce Recueil est décidé: on ne le mettra probablement jamais au rang des Ouvrages qui illustrent un siècle: mais il pourra être apprécié par la posterité comme un de ceux qui caracterisent le nôtre”[68] Chaudon said of him, "II a voulu écrire pour son siècle, et il a réussi."[69] This tendency was rather atypical in a translated sentimental writer; and the English found it not a subject of admiration but one of reproach. The *Critical* attributed "the author's light airy manner. . . [to] the prevailing taste of his countrymen."[70] As late as 1792, the reviewer for the *Analytical* ascribed Marmontel's "Gallantry and the *prettiness* of sentiment" to his being forced to draw his characters from a people interested in "a kind of refined *gentlemanly* sensuality, that rendered their taste vicious, and ever at war with nature"; and "unable to rise above his native atmosphere, he has faithfully delineated some prevailing passions modified by the national character."[71]

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[65] Journal de Politique et de Littérature, 25 Mars 1776, pp. 383-384.
[66] *Critical,* XVII (January 1764), 44.
[67] *Monthly,* XXX (January 1764), 59-60.
[68] Journal de Politique et de Littérature, 25 Mars 1776, p. 383.
[69] Louis-Mayeul Chaudon and Joseph Laporte, Nouvelle Bibliothèque d'un homme de goût, ou tableau de la littérature ancienne et moderne, étrangère et nationale (Paris, 1777), II, 262.
[70] *Critical,* XX (December 1765), 449.
[71] *Analytical,* XII (February 1792), 218-219. Opinions at home and abroad differed more widely on the merits of *Belisarius* and *The Incas.* The French were displeased by Marmontel's efforts to mix fiction and philosophy, for they felt in general that the former had been sacrificed to the latter. The English were profoundly impressed with both works

Second, though critics might censure the stories, the remarkable frequency with which they appeared in the English periodicals of the day testifies to the favor they found with British readers.[72] Out of 130 stories which the magazines published in the 1760's, thirty-two were by the French writer-almost twenty percent of the total appearances of fiction in the decade. During the 1770's his stories appeared seventeen times and during the 1780's only nine; but *New Moral Tales* in 1792 signaled a revival of interest, and stories from that collection, as well as from the earlier one, were printed thirty-one times during the nineties. All in all, twenty-eight of Marmontel's *contes* appeared eighty-nine times from 1760 to 1800.[73] Nor were these appearances simply reprints of the anthologized translations. A number were new versions (the *Lady's Magazine* in particular encouraged original efforts in the early eighties); and "L'Amitié à l'épreuve," known variously as "The Trial of Friendship" and "Friendship Put to the Test," came out in at least three different translations on seven different occasions.[74] These statistics suggest very strongly that Marmontel's stories which had, of course, been written specifically to enliven the *Mercure de France-pleased* and satisfied the British magazine-reading public in the same way that they had pleased and satisfied the; same audience in France.

A brief digression about a minor author may serve to reinforce this idea of similarity of sentimental literary taste. Among the if multitude of French authors who

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because of the patriotic and benevolent sentiments they contained. According to the *Gentleman's, Belisarius* was filled with "incidents the most natural and tender, sentiments the most elegant and sublime, and principles of government in the highest degree just, generous and heroic"; XXXVII (April 1767), 180. The *Monthly* felt that *The Incas* contained "such a variety of just and manly sentiments" that it must obtain "the warmest applause from every true lover of liberty and friend of mankind": LVIII (May 1778), 336.

[72] Marmontel's stories appeared first, in fact, in the magazines. The very first to be translated was "Anette and Lubin," which timidly appeared without Marmontel's name in, oddly enough, the *Gentleman's,* September 1761; subsequently Denis and Lloyd translated several of them in 1763 for the latter's *St. James's Magazine* before they gathered them between hard covers.

[73] It should be noted as well that Marmontel's name figured almost in. variably in the titles of translations-a further indication that the English were well acquainted with his reputation and talent, as was the flattering series of imitations begun in 1774 by the *St. James's Magazine* called "The English Marmontel, or the School of Sentiment."

[74] The most popular *conte,* however, was "La Bergère des Alpes," for in addition to seven periodical appearances, it was separately published five times.

followed in Marmontel's footsteps and capitalized on the success of the new genre was Bricaire de la Dixmérie, whose *Contes moraux et philosophiques* (1765), were, according to the *Bibliothèque d'un homme de goût,* "les plus lus" and "écrits agréablement et avec l'aménité que le sujet demande."[75] They did not resemble Marmontel's by accident; La Dixmérie wrote them for the *Mercure* after Marmontel had left the journal. Interestingly enough, the *Contes* were never translated in book form in England; hence, La Dixmérie received no critical attention and no recognition from the public. The magazines pillaged the French collection, however: five translations appeared in the 1760's, seven in the 1770's, eight in the 1780's, and two in the 1790's. Nine stories were printed a total of twenty-two times; yet his name appeared on only two, and only six appearances were even identified as "From the French" - a notable example of the ease with which French sentimental stories were assimilated into contemporary magazine fiction.

"One of the most pathetic and moral writers now in France; and in many essentials of this species of composition might be compared to the immortal author of *Clarissa":* thus wrote the *European Magazine* of Baculard d'Arnaud, whose success with the English public was in a way as remarkable as that of Marmonte1.[76] His fictional appearances-tentative during the 1760's, increasingly regular during the 1770's and 1780's-illustrate to some extent the pattern of the vogue of French sentimental fiction in Britain. A novel called *Fanny, or Injur'd Innocence* was published by Becket in 1766; the reviewers deprecated it, although the *Universal Magazine* excerpted it in July of that year. Nothing more by the French writer appeared until a booklength Dublin translation of "Sidney et Volsan" in 1772. The next year the *Universal* borrowed "The History of Rosetta" from John Murdoch's *Tears of Sensibility,* four translated stories extracted from D'Arnaud's *Épreuves du sentiment;* and interest was evidently keen enough by this point to encourage a series of translations from his voluminous *Épreuves* and *Nouvelles historiques.* Something brand-new by him, either a serialized story or a separately-published novel, appeared nearly every year from 1773 to 1788. And although no English

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[75] Chaudon, II, 263.

[76] *European Magazine and London Review,* IV (December 1783), 450, hereafter cited as *European;* for a more detailed examination of translations from this author, see my article, "The Prose Fiction of Baculard d'Arnaud in Late Eighteenth-Century England," *French Studies,* XVIII (April 1970), 1-18.

translation of any major story from his multi-volume *Délassemens de l'homme sensible* was ever done, the *Monthly* and the *European* both took the time to review and to praise the foreign work.[77] All in all, fourteen of his stories appeared serially twenty-six times from 1766 to 1800; and eight of his works were translated as booklength publications, two being adapted by the celebrated Clara Reeve and Sophia Lee.

As indicated in the previous chapter, D'Arnaud, of all the French sentimental writers presented to the British public, underwent the most careful scrutiny when translators mined his work for new material. Nevertheless, even after their judicious selection of the more subdued domestic and historical tales and their omissions and expurgations of excessively lugubrious or bathetic material, more than enough melancholy, sentiment, and morality remained in the translated fiction to impress upon British readers D'Arnaud's talent in this particular sphere. The French critics, exposed of course to the totality of his work and familiar with all its aspects, were vociferously pro or con regarding his virtues and defects.[78] The English critics, robbed of his extravagancies by the translators, were generally tepid. For instance, the *Monthly* found *Warbeck* "indeed a *pathetic* tale; and the Reader of sensibility will be instructed and entertained by it,"[79] whereas the *Critical* felt that "the whole is not very interesting."[80] The *Analytical* commented à propos of *The Exiles,* "This improbable tale is tolerably well

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[77] The *Universal,* his chief periodical purveyor, did, in fact, snip out a brief story and a footnote from the collection; entitled respectively "The New Clementina" and "The Character of Richardson," both were identified as by the "celebrated M. d'Arnaud" and printed in the December 1783 issue.

[78] 47. The *Année Littéraire,* always an enthusiastic partisan, praised without reservation his talent for exciting "cette douce sensibilité, expression du sentiment, qui arrache des larmes delicieuses aux coeurs les plus indifférens" - (1777), I, 216; he possessed that art by which "dans ses ouvrages le précepte, coule doucement dans les coeurs et s'y imprime par des exemples" - (1770), VIII, 290. Less partisan (and more rational) critics like those of the *Correspondance littéraire,* deplored his penchant for the *lugubre et larmoyant,* precisely those qualities which seldom traveled across the channel. "Pourquoi prendre à tâche d'attrister les coeurs tendres," they said, "[avec] le tableau de toutes les peines et de tous les malheurs qui peuvent affliger l'humanité?" - article dated 1773 in *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique de Grimm et Diderot,* VIII (Paris: Fume, 1830), 220-221, hereafter cited as *CL.*

[79] *Monthly,* LXXV (August 1786), 153.

[80] *Critical,* LX (November 1785), 395.

told, and comparatively speaking, has a little merit; but it is spun out to a tedious length; and raises curiosity rather than interest."[81] And the *Critical's* reviewer, after perusing *The History of Count Cleichen*, could only protest, "In short, this is a modern sentimental novel, plentifully adorned with ahs! and ohs! with little real pathos and less interest. Alice at last dies, in a fortunate moment, fortunate for Gleichen, for *the* reader, and supremely fortunate for the reviewer."[82] But to judge by the statistics concerning D'Arnaud's fictional appearances, public opinion heeded less the grumblings of the guardians of literary taste than the *European's* advice that his "elegant compositions are replete with sentiment and sensibility; and we recommend them to the perusal of those ladies who aim at mental improvement."[83]

During the last fifteen years of the century another French writer enjoyed considerable popularity in England: the Chevalier de Florian. His career in translation had begun inauspiciously. *Les Six Nouvelles* were published in France in 1784, but not until 1786, when Mr. Robinson translated his works and several identified stories appeared in *Tales, Romances, Apologues, Anecdotes, and Novels,* did his work come before the English public. Even then, the stories borrowed by the magazines, like "Bathmendi," "Celestine" (retitled "Alphonso and Marina"), and "Sophronime," were published anonymously. Six years later *the* situation had changed considerably. *New Tales,* published in 1792 "From the French of M. de Florian," provided the magazines with a useful source of short fiction; they printed all but one of *the* stories and identified each as Florian's. "Claudine" was even exposed in three different and original translations. *Consalvo of Cordova,* also successful, appeared twice in book form and as a three-year serial in *the Lady's Magazine.* Rediscovering, moreover, *Tales, Romances, etc.* during the 1790's, the periodicals reprinted and acknowledged all of Florian's compositions.

Florian's celebrity during the nineties was very likely due to the critical reception which had greeted two intervening works, *Numa Pompilius* and *Estelle.* The *English Review* and the *Monthly,* which reviewed the French original of *Numa,* noted its resemblance to Fenelon's *Telemachus* and were not displeased with the result. "The duties of princes, and of simple individuals, are painted in the most amiable colours," said the

[81] *Analytical,* IV (June 1789), 221.
[82] *Critical,* LXII (September 1786), 235-236.
[83] *European,* IV (December 1783), 450.

former;[84] the latter praised its "purity of sentiments, elegant simplicity in the expression of those sentiments, and many other good qualities, which render a moral romance instructive and entertaining."[85] *Estelle,* twice translated, pleased equally - as, in fact, it had pleased the French, who tended to identify Florian with this work rather than with the *Nouvelles* or *Numa.*[86] The author's "imagery is chosen with great topical propriety, and his narration is highly polished," declared the *Monthly*;[87] the *Analytical* thought it "full of beautiful pictures" and composed in a style "elegant and flowery";[88] and the *European* assured its readers that "those who delight to read pastorals, will find entertainment in the present performance."[89]

The tone of the English criticism adequately indicates how facile and inoffensive sentimental prose fiction became under the pen of Florian. French critics had not been unaware of this pallidness. The *Correspondance littéraire* accorded to *Numa* "de la douceur, de la grâce, de la facilité," but noted that the author "a beau chercher le ton épique, il retombe toujours dans celui de la romance et de l'eglogue." The same critic quoted with some approval the remark by Marie Antoinette - a reader scarcely noted for literary perception, for she was very fond of D'Arnaud - that " 'En lisant *Numa* . . . il m'a semble que je mangeais de la soupe au lait.' "[90] Nevertheless, his works found popularity with English readers, perhaps, as the *Gentleman's* suggested, because they felt sympathetic towards a French novelist of noble birth who, though the victim of misfortune during the Revolution, could retain his lightness and optimism. At least that magazine remarked that "Amidst the dark cloud in which France is now involved, where all whose curiosity is directed to what passes in that wretched country have their attention fixed on scenes of cruelty and tales of murder, it is some consolation to catch at every

[84] *English Review; or, An Abstract of English and Foreign Literature,* IX (February 1787), 135, hereafter cited as *English.*
[85] *Monthly,* LXXV (Appendix 1786), 513.
[86] N. L. M. Desessarts, writing in 1800, noted, "Le succès de ce charmant ouvrage fut prodigieux, et s'est toujours soutenu depuis": *Les Siècles littéraires de la France, ou nouveau dictionnaire historique, critique et bibliographique de tous les écrivains français, morts et vivans, jusqu'à la fin du XVIII*[e] *siècle* " (Paris: l'auteur, 1800), III, 8l.
[87] *Monthly,* n.s. XXV (February 1798), 213.
[88] *Analytical,* II (October 1788), 253.
[89] *European,* XXXIII (April 1798), 259.
[90] Article dated 1786, *CL,* XIII (Paris, 1831), 62.

passing ray which beams across the gloom from Genius and from Virtue."[91]

Used to indigenous lady novelists, the British public did not boggle about accepting the productions of celebrated French authoresses. The career of Mme Riccoboni might in fact be considered as important across the channel as on the continent. All of her works were translated into English; her continuation of Marivaux's *Marianne* became a standard part of the English version of that novel; and British critical opinion of her talent was generally high. "On the whole, this Lady is a lively, agreeable writer," said the *Monthly,* "and may rank with St. Aubin, and our famous Mrs. Haywood: perhaps, too, with Mrs. Lennox, and Mrs. ---, who translated the Letters of Ninon de L'Enclos."[92]

The History of the Marquis de Cressy had first been offered in 1759 - "unsuccessfully," according to the *Monthly* in a review of the second edition in 1765. *Letters from Juliet Lady Cates by,* translated by Frances Brooke, appeared in 1760. Admitting they might amuse "readers of a delicate, sentimental turn of mind," the *Monthly* continued that "they are too destitute, however, both of narrative or humour, to be very generally admired."[93] This critical assessment proved totally erroneous: the novel was a solid seller with the British public, going through four editions by 1764 and a sixth in 1780. Subsequently, English translations of her novels appeared almost simultaneously with the French originals every year from 1764 to 1767 and in 1772, 1778, 1781, and 1784; and the magazines picked up shorter fiction like "The Blindman" and "Ernestina." Critical notices were almost invariably favorable, and most included extensive quotation. Concerning Mme Riccoboni, the English and French critics were even more in accord than they had been about Marmontel. The French praised indefatigably her delicacy of sentiment, her naturalness of manner, and her moral perceptivity. Ease of style and "réflexions fines et justes," in the words of the *Correspondance littéraire*, were her hallmark;[94] and that journal, not given to extravagance, later commented that her novels" [ont transporté] nos jeunes femmes et nos gens du monde, sensibles à l'excès aux

[91] *Gentleman's,* LXII (December 1792), 1128.
[92] *Monthly,* XXXVIII (January 1768), 73. "Mrs. ---" was Elizabeth Griffith and "St. Aubin," Penelope Aubin; it is interesting to note that all of the English authoresses named had themselves done translations from the French.
[93] *Monthly,* XXII (June 1760), 52l.
[94] Article dated 1764, *CL,* III (Paris, 1829), 49l.

agrémens et aux détails pleins de grâce et de delicatesse."[95] The English critics seemed to have borrowed their neighbors' pen. The *Letters from Lord Rivers* "unfold, with delicacy, many of the finer feelings of the heart, are enriched with just sentiments and are written with no inconsiderable degree of elegance and animation," according to the *Monthly*.[96] The *Critical* found in the *Letters from Elizabeth-Sophia de Valière* "an almost uninterrupted profusion of generous sentiments";[97] indeed, the reviewer continued, "We are even of the opinion, that those who can peruse these letters with. out being greatly agitated by several passages must be void of sensibility."[98] English opinion, as well as French, easily concurred with Clara Reeve's judgment that Mme Riccoboni's "novels are first rate" (I, 132).

Equally esteemed by the British, but for slightly different reasons, was Mme de Genlis.[99] Translations were made of all her works and were warmly welcomed by the English audience. *Adelaide and Theodore* went through four editions between 1783 and 1796; the novel was serialized by both the *Universal* and the *Lady's,* and several of the interpolated stories found their way into other magazines. *Tales of the Castle* was a similar success: five editions between 1785 and 1798, as well as extracts in the periodicals. The later *Knights of the Swan* appeared in two different translations. Moreover, her shorter fiction was assembled in the flatteringly-titled *Beauties of Genlis* and by 1791 was enjoying a third edition.

A comparison of French and English criticism of Mme de Genlis' work reveals, interestingly enough, that her countrymen were somewhat more severe with her than the foreign observers. Some, like La Harpe, preferred the instruction rather than the amusement which she offered. To *Adele et Theodore* she gave "une forme de roman, et y

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[95] Article dated 1772, *CL,* VII (Paris, 1830), 428.
[96] *Monthly,* LIX (September 1778), 233-234.
[97] *Critical,* XXIV (July 1772), 63.
[98] *Ibid.,* p. 65. At least one English reviewer found this talent used reprehensibly, however. Assessing *The History of Miss Jenny Salisbury,* the *Critical* called it "a most incomparable bit of French cookery," full of "contemptible commonplace ingredients," but "so delicately seasoned" and "so disguised, that you eat away, and pronounce it to be excellent"; in his opinion, "this is an imposition of the most fatal tendency to youth, and that the more artfully it is managed, the more hurtful it is to genuine unsuspecting virtue": XVIII (October 1764), 313-314.
[99] Magdi Wahba discusses her reception in "Madame de Genlis in England," *Comparative Literature,* XIII (summer 1961), 221-238.

a même beaucoup d'épisodes qui ne manquent pas d'intérêt; mais j'avoue que je suis moins content de cette partie que de celle qui est purement didactique," he said; "Plusieurs de ces épisodes sont trop longs, ne tiennent pas assez à l'objet principal, occupent trop de place et sont trop détaillés, si on ne les donne que comme des exemples."[100] The *Correspondance littéraire* concurred about *Adèle et Théodore,* believing she had "souvent gâté l'effet des situations les plus touchantes par des traits d'une sensibilité factice ou par des exagérations également froides et romanesques."[101] However, Grimm was more gallant about *Les Veillées:* "Si sa touche manque de chaleur et d'énergie, elle a de l'élégance et de la simplicité, quelquefois même des traits de naturel et de verité, une sensibilité douce et touchante."[102]

Both her sensibility and her didacticism, however, delighted the English critics. Although some speculated nervously that *Adelaide and Theodore* might be a bit too French - "some of the descriptions of female manners in France," worried the *Monthly,* "will be thought by many to be, in a moral light, injudicious"[103] - they generally lauded, in the *Critical's* words, "the general strictness and purity of its precepts, and the exquisite delicacy with which the most important lessons are inculcated."[104] She had the happy ability to combine pedagogy with fictional embellishment and morality with ease and elegance of style. The *Gentleman's* found *Tales of the Castle* "replete with sound sense and excellent precepts";[105] the *European* approved her intentions "to inform the mind and

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[100] Jean-François La Harpe, *Correspondance littéraire, adressée à son altesse Mgr le grand-duc, aujourd'hui empereur de Russie, et à M. le comte Andre Sehowalow, Chambellan de I'imperatrice Catherine II,* depuis 1774 jusqu'a 1789, III (Paris: Migneret, 1801), 315.

[101] 70. Article dated 1782, *CL,* XI (Paris, 1830), 21.

[102] 71. Article dated 1784, *CL,* XII (Paris, 1830), 215.

[103] 72. *Monthly,* LXX (May 1784), 345. Mme de Genlis was the only prominent author besides Marmontel whose "Frenchness" gave pause to the critics, but they were not always in agreement whether it was good or bad. The *Critical,* in a generally favorable review, voiced an opinion similar to the *Monthly's* about *Adelaide and Theodore:* "we dare not recommend them [the stories] to an English family without the exact attention of a careful mother, who possesses both sensibility and judgment to adapt them to our own customs": LVI (October 1783),300; on the other hand, the *Gentleman's,* after perusing *Tales of the Castle,* found it "gay and pleasing, and *toute à la Françoise":* LX (February 1785),130.

[104] *Critical,* LVI (October 1783), 301.

[105] *Gentleman's,* LX (February 1785), 130.

improve the heart, by diverting and pleasing the imaginations."[106] Her works were "deserving public honours, on the score of public utility," declared Clara Reeve; "I had rather be the author of such books as these, than be reckoned the first wit of the Age" (11,99).[107]

The productions of Mme Le Prince de Beaumont, heavyhanded but morally impeccable, received little critical attention from the French, although Sabatier de Castres commended her ability "de placer l'érudition commune à propos, et de mettre en action, dans des fables ou des historiettes, des principes clairs et de sages leçons."[108] She is nevertheless entitled to a small niche in the translated literature of the period, for all of her major novels appeared in English, title pages almost always established her identity, and the principal critical journals of the time reviewed the majority of her works. Unlike Mesdames Riccoboni and de Genlis, however, she failed to win a significant reputation with the reading public, as two facts indicate: none of her novels ever had more than one edition, and none of her stories run by the *Lady's Magazine* was either acknowledged as hers or reprinted in any other journal.

It is difficult to attribute her lack of fame to anything other than a lack of talent-a deficiency which very likely the French critics were well aware of. She meant well, as the English realized, and her earnest moral instruction no doubt prompted the numerous translations of her works. The motivation for *The Triumph of Truth*, her best-received novel, was "so laudable, and in the execution, instruction and entertainment are so agreeably blended," according to the *Monthly,* "that it will, we doubt not, be very acceptable to the generality of readers."[109] But the reviewers cavilled at her general handling of stories and characters. Faced with *The Virtuous Widow,* the *Critical's* commentator "cannot help observing, that in all her works we scarcely meet with the character of a real man and woman, as they come from the hands of nature, with passions

[106] *European,* VII (January 1785), 42.
[107] Reaction to her later novels was less uniformly favorable. The *Analytical* approved *Rash Vows,* for instance, but the *Monthly* felt the sentiments "more forced, more unnatural; and the manners are more artificial": n.s. XXIX (August 1799), 467; and it found "tints of unnatural colouring" in *The Rival Mothers:* n.s. XXXVI (October 1801), 187.
[108] Sabatier de Castres, Les Trois Siècles de notre littérature, ou tableau de l'esprit de nos écrivains, depuis François I, jusqu'en 1772 (Amsterdam et Paris, 1772), III, no. 110.
[109] 78. *Monthly,* Lll (June 1775), 507.

to influence and reason to direct them. . . . Every feeling they have puts their frame in agitation, harrows up their souls, and for some time deprives them of the use of reason"; he concluded, in short, "we cannot recommend the perusal of such novels to persons of either sex who have the misfortune to be of a solitary cast, or to have weak nerves."[110] More significantly, they unanimously objected to sentiments which "more than border on fanaticism," as the *Analytical* said of the *Letters of Mme du Montier.*[111] Atypical of most of the French sentimental novels, in which religion was treated sincerely but undogmatically, her works consistently promoted Catholicism, and the critics condemned her militancy. "All the virtuous agents in this romance are strict Roman Catholics," observed the *Critical* of *The New Clarissa;* "we wish the authoress. . . had left us more room to applaud her moderation."[112]

The last notable French sentimental author to win the attention of the English public was of course Bernardin de St.-Pierre. The furor with which *Paul et Virginie* was received in France was duplicated, albeit on a lesser scale, in England. Under its two English titles of *Paul and Mary* and *Paul and Virginia,* it went through nine editions and a magazine appearance between 1789 and 1800; in addition, Edward Augustus Kendall edited it for children in his collection *The Beauties of St. Pierre*, published in 1797 and again in 1799. Though less celebrated, *The Indian Cottage* was reprinted three times from 1791 to 1800, as well as appearing once in a journal. Furthermore, all of St.-Pierre's productions bore his name.

Contemporary French admiration of *Paul et Virginie* can be summarized no better than by the judgment of the *Correspondance littéraire:* "quelques simples qu'en soient tous les incidens," the novel "attaché par une foule de tableaux neufs et intéressans, par les peintures les plus riches d'une nature presque inconnue, par les développemens de la passion la plus douce et la plus naturelle, par l'expression soutenue d'un sentiment vif et profond."[113] Contemporary British opinion, though considerably less effusive, ranged

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[110] *Critical,* XXI (June 1766), 438-439.
[111] *Analytical,* XXVI (July 1797), 77.
[112] *Critical,* XXVI (November 1768), 355. Similar objections were made by the *Critical* to the *Letters of Mme du Montier* and by the *Monthly* to *The Virtuous Widow* and *Letters from Emerance to Lucy.* Clara Reeve noted this tendency but excused her: her "writings are strongly tinctured with bigotry and enthusiasm, but she always means to support the cause of virtue" (II, 38).
[113] Article dated 1788, *CL*, XIV (Paris, 1831), 103. .

from the favorable to the enthusiastic. Objecting mildly to "too much of the costume of polished life" and "a little error" in the natural history, the *Critical* did grant the story charm; it "will be peculiarly pleasing to readers, where soothing melancholy leads them to be fond of pathetic catastrophes."[114] The *European* was considerably more animated in describing its effects on the reader: "Genuine strokes of nature awaken the tenderest and most refined sensibilities of the human heart in almost every page of this chaste and simple, but deeply affecting story; and dispose the mind to imbibe, with equal advantage and delight, the precepts of true wisdom and sound morality with which the work abounds."[115] They and the *Gentleman's* particularly applauded - and quoted - the children's benevolence to the escaped Negro slave. Helen Maria Williams's later translation received only brief notice; but "Miss W's [sic] talents and taste, as a translator, will, however, to say the least, suffer no disparagement from comparison," according to the *Analytical;*[116] and the *Monthly* felt that a new translation of "the present exquisite tale" was not superfluous, since "few tales will better bear a repetition."[117]

Rousseau, Marmontel, Baculard d'Amaud, Florian, Mesdames Riccoboni, de Genlis, and Le Prince de Beaumont, and St.-Pierre -these were the French sentimental authors best known to the English reading public through translations, both in book form and in serializations. That their popularity in England approached, if not equalled, that on the continent is made evident by the number of translations and reprints of their works; that the English critics' opinions corresponded in almost all instances with that of their continental counterparts suggests that critical standards were indeed very similar in the two countries. One further indication of the congruence of French and British sentimental literary taste in the late eighteenth century may be adduced: the reactions to three books which became bestsellers in both countries.

Mme de Grailigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, published in 1747, continued to charm her compatriots throughout the rest of the century. In the opinion of the *Nouvelle Bibliothèque d'un homme de goût,* it offered "tout ce que la tendresse a de plus vif, de plus doux et de plus touchant. C'est la nature embellie par le sentiment; c'est le sentiment

[114] *Critical,* LXIX (February 1790), 120.
[115] *European,* XVII (February 1790), 116.
[116] *Analytical,* XXIV (July 1796), 68.
[117] *Monthly,* n.s. XX (June 1796), 232.

lui-même qui s'exprime avec une élégante naiveté."[118] Although an early English translation had appeared in England in 1749, not until the later decades did Mme de Graffigny's novel come into its own in England. Six editions of the *Letters* in at least three different translations were welcomed by the British between 1760 and 1797, as well as complete reprints in two periodicals. The story was still affecting enough in 1774 to inspire a one-volume augmentation by R. Roberts; and the *Monthly* willingly reviewed her version, for "there is very considerable merit in the Peruvian letters; and we shall not, in any probability, ever have a better translation of them, than the present."[119]

Even though it did not like the work-definitely a minority opinion-the *Correspondance littéraire* could not refuse to acknowledge that Mme Elie de Beaumont's *Lettres* du *Marquis de Roselle* had "une sorte de succès; c'est qu'il est rempli de sentimens honnêtes et d'une sorte de morale à la portée de tout le monde; on y trouve même quelques sermons assez chauds."[120] The English critics and the English public were not so indifferent. "The sentiments are unaffectedly elegant, and its tendency unexceptionably moral," commended the *Critical;*[121] the *Monthly* hailed the authoress for treating "every circumstance and character with becoming delicacy and decorum."[122] More importantly, the *Critical* provided its readers with four pages of quotation, the *Monthly* with eight; and popular demand called forth two editions.

Mme de Montolieu's *Caroline de Litchfield*, though it excited little critical comment in France, was by no means ignored by the public: three editions in 1786, and others in 1787 and 1789. Nor did the translation go unheeded in England. Although ignorant of the authoress's name, the English audience bestowed its favor immediately, and the novel had two editions in 1786-87, one more in 1795, and long reviews, one of five pages in the *Critical.* The *Monthly* recommended "the work, as by far the most ingenious and pathetic of the kind, that hath been for many years' imported from the continent";[123] and the *Critical* welcomed "this pleasing author to our island. . . . It is her first visit; but we hope her reception will be sufficiently flattering to induce her again to

[118] IV, 48.
[119] *Monthly,* LI (August 1774), 162.
[120] Article dated 1764, *CL,* IV (Paris, 1829), 20-21.
[121] *Critical,* XIX (May 1765), 351.
[122] *Monthly,* XXXI (Appendix 1764), 516.
[123] *Monthly,* LXXVI (March 1787), 266.

appear in another form."[124]

To this point, it has been the contention that two facts indicate the degree of British acceptance of translations of French sentimental fiction: the critics' comments, in general favorable; and the number of appearances which the works made before the British public. But until now, these facts have been examined only with reference to well-known authors or to individual best sellers. Have they any relevance to that mass of anonymous or semi anonymous translations offered to the public by their earnest interpreters? They do indeed, to this extent: that the critics, though they frequently bewailed the "Frenchness" of the translations, reviewed them without discrimination and accorded to them proportionally at least as much space as they gave to English fiction; and that despite such conservative and patriotic grumbling, translations of ordinary foreign fiction continued to proliferate decade by decade.

Regarding the criticism, it is undeniable that, in spite of the fact that some commentators found the French novelists superior to the English in their delineation of character and sentiment, hostility and suspicion frequently greeted new translations. Many critics were inclined to believe that a translation, depicting as it did foreign and "too French" customs, would have little appeal for the British public.[125] They attacked what they considered to be frivolity. The *Monthly,* for example, found all but one of the stories in *Favourite Tales* "light and trifling; and *one* is of the *free and easy* kind. Productions like the present are extremely numerous on the continent, but we wish not to see them encouraged here. The *verbiage,* the frothiness of a Parisian *petit-maitre,* is in no way suitable to honest John Bull."[126]

Somewhat more seriously, the critics charged the translations with introducing an

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[124] *Critical,* LXII (September 1786), 203.

[125] Still, there were some who were disposed to be broad-minded about the issue. The anonymous *Louis de Boncoeur* was described thus by the *Monthly:* "The characters and manners being French, may appear extravagant to merely English readers; but even they will, on the whole, be considerably pleased with this performance; for it is superior to our common novels, both in its composition and tendency": n.s. XIX (March 1796), 453-454. The *Critical* advised that if the "proper allowances" were made for the foreign character of Gorjy's *Blansay,* it "will stand high in our catalogue of novels": LXIX (March 1790), 35.

[126] *Monthly,* LXXVIII (June 1788), 531. Similar objections were made to Masson de Morvillier's *Adelaide* and, more severely, to Louvet de Couvrai's *Life and Adventures of the Chevalier de Faublas* and *Emily de Varmont.*

immorality typically French to the British public. They became preoccupied by the possibility that overly-warm descriptions of passion and vice might so enthrall the reader that he would neglect the ultimate lesson that happiness comes through virtue alone. The *Critical's* discussion of Dorat's *Fatal Effects of Inconstancy* well exemplifies this attitude. "The galantries of the beau monde in France are so delineated [in this novel], as to make such descriptions improper for young people," said the reviewer; "the misfortunes of two sinners who still retain their love in the highest degree, incline us, on account of that love, to commiserate their condition; and we are less apt to be shocked at their crimes, than to wish they had escaped with impunity"; such sympathy with vice was not to be encouraged, and the critic "would sooner put into the hands of our sons and daughters Prior's loosest tale, than the soft, enchanting descriptions which are apt to be met with in the present performance."[127] It was feared also that sentiment, mishandled, might overstep considerably the bounds of propriety. For example, the *Analytical* would not recommend *Zelia in the Desert,* by Mme Daubenton, to its readers, "as we do not wish our fair countrywomen to imbibe such overstrained notions of love; the two extremes too frequently meet, and the grossest sensuality often lies concealed under double refined sentiments."[128]

And even when they made no objections to the morality, the English critics often protested against the "extravagance" of the stories, meaning by that an overabundance of sentiment, trivial emotion, and drama. The *"prettinesses,* the *sensibilities"* of Gorjy's *Louis and Nina* annoyed the *Monthly,* as they did the *Analytical;* "In these most *dismal* tales, sentimental to the very marrow," complained the latter, "the tender feelings are torn to tatters, and the shreds vaingloriously displayed. Sudden death, everlasting love,

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[127] *Critical,* XXXVIII (November 1774), 393. The reviewer preferred to Dorat's work *The Child of Nature, Improved by Chance,* a novel spuriously attributed to Helvetius, whose "pictures are drawn with a luxurious fancy, and prudery, it is probable, will condemn them; but they are too well intended on that account": XXXVIII (October 1774), 270. Amusingly enough, this novel was also issued with a lengthy title implying it was pornographic (see bibliography); whatever the reason for its popularity, Paul Kaufman records in *Borrowings from the Bristol Library* that it was the only other translation from the French in the library and in frequency of times borrowed it stood twenty-fifth in a list of 238 Belles Lettres titles.

[128] *Analytical,* IV (June 1789), 221. Framery's *Memoirs of the Marquis de St. Forlaix,* Charlotte Smith's translation of Prevost's *Manon Lescaut,* and Rutledge's *Julia* were censured for similar reasons.

methodical madness, bad weather, a breaking heart, putrid body, worn out night cap, etc. etc. Nothing but sentiment!"[129]

Nevertheless, although this hostility was indeed typical of one current of criticism, when weighed with general critical reaction it counterbalanced but did not overwhelm the favorable comments made about well-known authors and other anonymous translations. Moreover, several other aspects of late eighteenth-century criticism as a whole are worth noting. For instance, during those four decades of interest in translations from the French, no pattern of critical approval or disapproval of them is discernible. One finds praise and blame mixed as often during the 1760's as during the 1780's; and even the French Revolution provoked no outbursts against pernicious foreign literature, although the *Monthly's* reviews became unusually waspish during 1793 and 1794. To judge by the general tenor of the critics' remarks and the space accorded to them in the periodicals, the fact that French sentimental literature was entering in quantity on the British literary scene went almost unnoticed, and critics of literature treated the translations as a normal part of their profession. No outcries of "Another French novel!" or "Vitiation of native literature!" were heard; and if the critics were sometimes harsh towards a book for being too French, as often as not they were willing to accord more space to the reviews, with quotation, of foreign works than of indigenous ones.[130]

Critics' remarks, though instructive, are seldom definitive gauges of a genre's popularity: more significant are those statistics which detail printings and reprintings and thereby bear concrete witness to the public interest. When one examines the figures on publication and reprints of anonymous or semianonymous works only - in other words, figures excluding appearances of works by those major authors already discussed - it is clear that by themselves they reflect the pattern of curiosity and enthusiasm described

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[129] *Analytical,* IV (June 1789), 222. Condemned on the same ground were Dubois-Fontanelle's *The Effects of the Passions,* Beaurieu's *The Man of Nature,* and particularly the overly *sensible* hero of Loaisel de Treogate's *Julius or the Natural Son.*

[130] A portion of the *Monthly's* review of D'Auvigny's *Memoirs of Madame Barneveldt* is worth quoting for its rarity-and the date should be noted: "it may reasonably be expected that no book should be translated, which does not possess considerable intrinsic merit; yet it has happened that the depravity of public taste, or the defective judgment of individuals, has considerably augmented our native stock of indifferent performances, by importations of foreign works which seldom prove to be valuable acquisitions, even to the circulating libraries": n.s. XVIII (November 1795), 345. It should be mentioned that German literature was also being translated in quantity during. the same period.

previously in chapter 2. From 1760 to 1769, six novels and nine stories appeared; from 1770 to 1779, nineteen of the former and eighteen of the latter; from 1780 to 1789, twenty-seven and forty-six. Statistics for the nineties emphatically repeat that curious disparity between serial and hardcover publication noted before. The periodicals published only fifteen stories, all but three of them between 1790 and 1794. The booksellers produced thirty-five translations, with twenty-four appearing in the last six years. Notwithstanding the situation during the last decade, however, the figures for these works by minor writers prove that celebrated foreign authors were clearly not the only attraction which drew the British public to translated French stories; the genre of sentimental prose fiction had its own innate appeal.

The disappearance of translations from the magazines after 1795 suggests very strongly that in one area at least, the vogue of sentimental French fiction in England had come to an end; periodicals have always been obliged to be as topical and current as possible to attract readers successfully. The large number of hardcover translations during the nineties would seem to show, nevertheless, that novel readers - perhaps the patrons of the rapidly - growing circulating libraries-had not lost their appetite for sentimental fare, and it is worth noting that almost every booklength translation published during the 1790's came from fiction written before 1789 or during the Revolution's early years. Most were reprints of earlier successes, like Marmontel's *Moral Tales* and Rousseau's *Eloisa*, but even the original translations were drawn from older works. Miss Gunning took the *Memoirs of Madame Barneveldt* from a 1732 novel by D'Auvigny; Helen Maria Williams re-did *Paul et Virginie;* Senac de Meilhan's 1790 *Les Deux Cousins* became *The Cousins of Schiras;* Mme Le Prince de Beaumont's *Letters of Madame du Montier* dated from 1758; *Letters Written from Lausanne* came from Mme de Charriere's novel of 1788. The exceptions to this trend have their own interest. Three of Mme de Genlis' later works were translated, all more blatantly melodramatic than her earlier fiction. Two novels about the Revolution appeared, Gorjy's *Sentimental Tablets of the Good Pamphile*, originally written in 1791, and Fievée's *Suzette's Dowry*, written in 1798; both recounted the tribulations of virtue during the debacle, a sentimental subject sentimentally treated by both.[131]

[131] For instance, in *Sentimental Tablets* (London, 1795), the young peasant who dismays his parents by going off with the revolutionaries finally repents such a mad step and returns home: he gives as the reasons for his foolish departure "disgust I felt at my

The eventual fate of translated French fiction was ultimately linked at the turn of the century with the fortunes of indigenous sentimental literature which, though it by no means disappeared at once from the market-place, was gradually declining in popularity.[132] That the genre should finally begin to lose its appeal is scarcely surprising; after thirty-five years the reading public had become only too fam,iliar with sentimental themes and situations. Moreover, the satirists were finding it a good target for lampooning; writers like William Beckford in *Modern Novel Writing* (1796), Mary Charlton in *Rosella, or Modern Occurrences* (1799), and Maria Edgeworth in *Angelina* (1801) mocked both the stylistic excesses of sentimentality and the delusions it offered the reader.[133]

More important, a new challenger for public favor had entered the literary scene: the Gothic novel. In 1794 the *Analytical* offered a rather lengthy but instructive explanation for the shift in popular taste. Observing that "the too frequent reiteration of similar impressions" dulls the mind, the commentator found that it becomes "necessary, in order to preserve the same degree of irritation, to be continually increasing the stimulating force." Fiction follows this principle. So that authors "may keep pace with the progress of fastidiousness in taste, [novels] must gradually ascend from the most simple exhibition of natural sentiments and passions, through every stage of splendid ornament, and wild extravagance." Deriving from this principle the explanation for "the present daily increasing rage for novels addressed to the strong passions of wonder and terrour," he speculated that "the class of readers, for whom this kind of entertainment is provided,

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condition in life" and "writings which I read with avidity, [and which] finished my seduction" (p. 120). The heroine of *Suzette's Dowry* (London, 1799) is also a young peasant who, thanks to a generous noblewoman, marries a bourgeois who makes a fortune during the Revolution; her new wealth permits her to rescue her benefactress from distress; but, she confesses, "ah! if ever I am at liberty to follow my own inclinations, it is in mediocrity I shall seek, not happiness, there is none for me, but tranquillity and self-enjoyment" (p. 175).

[132] Two modern scholars discuss this particular problem: Winfield Rogers in "The Reaction against Melodramatic Sentimentality in the English Novel, 1796-1830," *PMLA*, XLIX (March 1934), 98-122: and W. F. Gallaway, who dates the reaction even earlier, in "The Conservative Attitude toward Fiction, 1770-1830," *PMLA*, LV (December 1940), 42-59. Both, however, as the titles of their articles indicate, show that sentimental literature did indeed endure into the 1800's.

[133] Perhaps Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) should also be added, for the first draft, *Elinor and Marianne*, was written about 1795.

as if no longer capable of deriving pleasure from the gentle and tender sympathies of the heart, require to have their curiosity excited by artificial concealments, their astonishment kept awake by a perpetual succession of wonderful incidents, and their very blood congealed with chilling horrors."[134]

The Gothic novel was, in fact, the very legitimate heir to the established traditions of sentimental fiction. The hero (or heroine) whose delicate sensibility already inclined him to tremble and to suffer more keenly than others; settings which, though they were to become progressively more gloomy and more menacing, were at a distance, either in time or in space, from common, civilized locales; the insistence that virtue, seeking only to live obediently according to the precepts of nature, would be continually persecuted by unnatural or malevolent forces-these were absorbed with no difficulty by the writers of Gothic romance, who simply added to them more mystery, more terror, and more wonderment.[135]

Sentimental fiction did not, thus, disappear; it was absorbed into a developing genre which offered more excitement and more novelty to the eager British audience. Yet translations from the French had played their own role in the development of British literature. Though they had no great significant influence on any notable English novelist, they did at least prepare the English public for further developments, at the same time that they interested and entertained it with their pictures of sensibility and benevolence. In doing so, translated French sentimental prose fiction contributed to a continuum of literary development which was to be sustained more effectively, in a way, across the channel than in the country which had produced it.

Source: *Translations of French Sentimental Prose Fiction in Late Eighteenth-Century England: The History of a Literary Vogue*, 1975, p. vii-ix (Introduction), p. 3-15 (Chapter 1), p. 43-78 (Chapter 3)

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[134] *Analytical,* XX (Appendix 1794), 489.

[135] Tompkins, Foster, and Baker all thus see French sentimental translations as important contributors to this genre in England; the first cites in particular D'Arnaud, Mme de Genlis, and Framery. In addition, Miss Tompkins indicates that certain ideas in French sentimental fiction may also be found in novels of social protest, such as those by Godwin and Holcroft.