Sympathetic Exchange, Sexual Attraction, and the Reinscription of National Identity: Burney's *Evelina* as Anglo-Scottish Integration Fantasy

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> The rashness and the misery of this ill-fated young man, engross all my thoughts. If, indeed, he is bent upon destroying himself, all efforts to save him will be fruitless. How much do I wish it were in my power to discover the nature of the malady which thus maddens him, and to offer or to procure alleviation to his sufferings! (Frances Burney, *Evelina* 186)

Hinging upon the need to diagnose in order to cure, the heroine's assertion of sympathy for the "ill-fated young man"—the Scottish poet Macartney—suggests that sentiment in Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778) has much to do with both personal and national history. Already a skilled reader of character by this point in the novel, Evelina acknowledges that "alleviation to his sufferings" relies on her knowing the "nature of the malady" (186). By reaching for the sentimental cause of a problem of character, Evelina is less the physician and more the historian: she seeks to validate her sudden emotional affinity for Macartney by learning about his past.

Seven letters further into the narrative, both Evelina and her eponymous novel's readers receive the sensational personal history of Mr. Macartney as a sort of reward for their sentimental engagement with him earlier in the novel. When the Scottish poet appears in *Evelina*, he tends to provoke associations of the national-political variety conspicuously absent elsewhere in the text. Initially under the command of volatile emotions, he is a dispossessed gentleman from Scotland whose chief occupations involve poetry, highway robbery, dueling, and melancholy. Published just thirty-three years after the outbreak of 1745's Jacobite Rising, *Evelina*'s awareness of the violence and dispossession associated with Scottish national history shows

in Macartney's personal history, also defined by violence and dispossession. Burney's first novel has one Scottish character, and it is this character that brings national history to bear on its plot, suggesting that Burney's already well-studied gender politics may also function to indirectly express a distinct position on the Union between Scotland and England. Evelina's interference with Macartney's masculinity presents a literary formula for the inclusion of Scotland as a lesser partner in the Union, but only after it has sentimentally reformed its national character.

Evelina is very much about reading, if not directly of printed texts, then of sentiment and character-as-text; the countenances and behaviors of men are read in the context of the manners and class distinctions of the late eighteenth century. *Evelina* is a novel of education, a young Englishwoman's social primer: "as she negotiates the confusing social world around her, the heroine must learn especially how to read, or interpret, the opposite sex" (Bray 1).[1] Evelina's adventures are both funny and alarming, and she obligingly acts as observer and interpreter of that which is wrong with contemporary male character: the Captain's oafish roughness, Willoughby's unprincipled exuberance, Merton's libertine license, Lovel's unmanly pettiness, and Smith's and Branghton's silly class pretentions. All of these men fail to be Lord Orville—*Evelina*'s Mr. Right—precisely on the level of feeling. Burney renders corrupt patriarchy colorful and humorous in a pantheon of foolish, and at times dangerous, suitors that can be avoided or even overcome by a heroine who recognizes their emotional misalignments.

Macartney is one of the few men in this novel who make a good first impression on Evelina. This does not mean that he is better-behaved than the other failed suitors. Macartney's oversupply of feeling is a problem that must be corrected by the end of the narrative, and this correction coincides with what I read as the contingent loss of his Scottish identity. Macartney's Scottishness turns out to be a misreading provided by a mother's desire to keep her son unaware in a way reminiscent of Villars' keeping some particulars from Evelina.[2] It is one of my contentions that the impoverished Macartney's taking on

of a Scottish identity only until he is reinstated as the son of an English baronet—far from being merely a device that serves the novel's marriage plot—is exemplary of how Anglo-Scottish relations during and leading up to the 1770s imprinted themselves on the sentimental structure of Burney's first novel. Macartney, though a penniless poet reviled for his Scottishness by the coarse Branghtons, is capable of evoking sympathy (and maybe sexual attraction) in Evelina through his display of anguished emotion. By the novel's conclusion, he has shed his Scottishness, his poetry, and his melancholy, becoming an English, almost bourgeois agent who delivers messages and money on Sir John Belmont's behalf. It is both the personal and the national history delivered by Macartney in the twentieth letter that is the gratification of Evelina's desire to "discover the nature of the malady which thus maddens him"; it is his integration into Belmont's *British* family at the novel's conclusion that is "the alleviation to his sufferings" (186).

Evelina as female reader plays an essential role in this national and sentimental transformation. The title character's highly sympathetic treatment of Macartney is a small-scale, Anglo-Scottish unification narrative in which her Englishwoman's agency corrects and reforms his unruly Scottish masculinity. In a poignantly symbolic and highly sexual sequence, Evelina forcibly takes possession of Macartney's pistols as she performs that benevolent, sensible, yet commanding feminine corrective over primitive masculinity that would come to be symbolic of British influence over colonized peoples in the century to come. While providing a "decidedly female perspective on early modern social crisis" (Zonitch 35), *Evelina* employs a sexual plot to narrativize the gradual enfranchisement of England's northern neighbors, so recently defeated, yet so important as partners in Continental warfare and colonial expansion.

Sympathetic Exchange and the Sexual Threat

Criticized by contemporaries for her "overuse of violent farce" (Bilger 197–98), Burney has nevertheless been reclaimed by

twentieth-century feminist critics, more likely to consider that she "gets us to go along with the joke so that we can learn from our objectifying laughter" (Bilger 216). Potentially disturbing scenes involving violence against women might also be accounted for as the kinds of highly physical, carnivalesque set-pieces common throughout the eighteenth-century novel, most notably in Henry Fielding. There is, nevertheless, a pervasive sense of sexual threat in sequences like Willoughby's make-believe highway robbery or the near-assault from which Evelina must be saved by prostitutes. Less theatrical threats, like Tom Branghton's proposal of a disastrous marriage, mean that *Evelina* is about how to avoid giving oneself away before reaching the perfect Lord Orville. Though the oppressive potentials of Evelina's male characters have been a major focus among feminist readings, only Barbara Zonitch has included Macartney among those that do violence to women (46). This is an unusual approach in that most critics have either deemed Macartney to be too minor a character to merit much discussion or have foregrounded his sympathetic links to the title heroine whose familial dispossession he shares.[3] Zonitch argues instead that Macartney's laying claim to Belmont's daughter after defeating him not only "retains the legacy of gender authority," but also "subject[s] her to the unwanted attentions of aggressive gentlemen" (46). Though Macartney is certainly more than just another "not-Orville," Zonitch's identification of the threat he poses is an essential corollary to any discussion that seeks to locate the Scottish poet as a sympathetic character. Though not an adventurer in the sense of Mr. Smith or Tom Branghton, both of whom would be marrying up if successful in engaging Evelina's affections, Macartney certainly stands to gain from marriage to either of Sir John Belmont's "daughters." There is thus an economic reality behind what I see as the very real sexual potential between Evelina and Macartney, which only disappears once the incest taboo has been invoked by contingency in the novel.

Evelina's and Macartney's convenient discovery of their sibling relation accomplishes two aims essential both to the novel's marriage plot and to its sense of Union: it activates

the incest taboo to benevolently remove Macartney from the field of suitors and allows him to exchange his rebelliously Scottish identity for an obediently British one. Macartney is sentimentally set apart from the other men in the novel, so much so that while the other masculine types have only ridiculous or insincere pretensions to Evelina's affections, Macartney's close encounters with the novel's heroine establish a sentimental bond that other characters mistake for romantic involvement. Orville is so concerned by this potential that it prompts him to mar his perfection by invoking masculine authority over Evelina. Patricia L. Hamilton writes,

> Orville knows the proper things to say and do, but his jealousy propels him to commit transgressions against good breeding. Viewed against a Lockean backdrop, Orville's inability to govern his passions by reason suggests he is slipping towards feminine irrationality. Mitigating this slippage is his marked increase in abruptness and insensitivity, traits that temporarily ally him with the gruff and excessively masculine Captain Mirvan. (433)

Whereas it is distinctly possible that Evelina might *want* her perfect gentleman to be a little jealous, Hamilton's reading makes clear that Orville is not alone but, in fact, exists in a continuum of rivalry with the Scottish poet until his newfound sibling status makes their romantic connection impossible. This has enormous bearing on the novel's articulation of female desire. If Erin Mackie is correct that Orville's "considerable value and substance derive precisely from the powerful feminine forces that find in them their complement and validation" (173), then perhaps Macartney is a third wheel who also complements and validates "powerful feminine forces"—though he does so differently, by providing those forces with a field on which to act.

While the other men express either lack of manners or lack of sympathy, Macartney is tormented precisely by his oversupply of both manners and feeling, though they are of the wrong variety. This is because Macartney's sense of honor and his emotional state are dictated by the aristocratic epistemology

that *Evelina* calls into question.[4] Remarking on his own folly in a letter to Evelina, Macartney writes, "You have awakened me to a sense of the false pride by which I have been actuated, —a pride which, while it scorned assistance from a friend, scrupled not to compel it from a stranger, though at the hazard of reducing that stranger to a situation as destitute as my own" (232). This admission clearly locates Evelina as the source of the correction in worldview—as the impetus toward "awakening" into a new, perhaps more bourgeois system of manners. "Macartney's participation in these residual modes of individualized absolutism, dueling and highway robbery, is admonished and corrected by another kind of absolute authority, that of the sensible subject as embodied in Evelina" (Mackie 164). It is Evelina's sensibility that occasions this correction, that makes her sensitive to Macartney's plight and active in pursuing its alleviation to the point of becoming an "angel" in the poet's eyes: "the hand of Providence [that] seemed to intervene between [him] and eternity" (Burney 231).

A close relationship between sexuality and sentiment defines the encounter in which Evelina sets Macartney on what the novel presents as the right track. The scene begins with Evelina noticing "the end of a pistol, which started from his pocket," a point which leads her to be "inexpressibly shocked" and causes her to tremble so fiercely that the chair shakes under her. Evelina then follows Macartney "up stairs, stepping very softly" to the landing from which she can observe the poet drop melodramatically to his knees and call out for forgiveness (183). Though Macartney's motive turns out to be highway robbery and not suicide as Evelina initially supposes, the poet's agitation, together with the sight of the pistols, triggers an involuntary emotional reaction in Evelina, who rushes up the stairs to witness Macartney's exaggerated emotional display. As in many late eighteenth-century novels, there seem to be competing notions of sympathy at play in *Evelina*. Many scenes rely on near-electric exchanges of emotion in keeping with David Hume's concept of sympathetic transfer: "a cheerful countenance infuses a sensible complacency and serenity into my mind; as an angry or sorrowful

one throws a sudden damp upon me" (53).[5]

Though Joe Bray sees Burney's first novel as handling sympathy imperfectly, he argues that she gravitates less towards Humean models and more towards Adam Smith-influenced "portrayals of the reading process" (28). Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) presents a distinctly cerebral and deliberative view of sympathy as a calculated process by which we analyze our impressions of a given situation rather than thoughtlessly reacting to what we encounter.

> The first question which we ask is, What has befallen you? Till this be answered, though we are uneasy both from the vague idea of his misfortune . . . yet our fellow-feeling is not very considerable. Sympathy, therefore, does not arise so much from the view of the passion, as from that of the situation which excites it. (Smith 7)

The novel's epistolary form appears to lend itself to a more Smithian contemplation of impressions that locates sympathy somewhere between the spectacle of suffering and the viewer's internalization and interrogation of that spectacle's particulars. Not only does Evelina as ideal reader react appropriately when party to a sentimental exchange, she also learns how to evaluate both her own emotions and the emotions visible in the men with whom she interacts. Initially overcome with emotion when she beholds Macartney's agitation, she soon returns to herself and calculates her next action: "recollecting that it was yet possible to prevent the fatal deed, all my faculties seemed to return, with the hope of saving him" (183). At this point, Evelina takes matters into her own hands. "In a moment, strength and courage seemed lent me as by inspiration: I started, and rushing precipitately into the room, just caught his arm, and then, overcome by my own fears, I fell down at his side, breathless and senseless" (183). Though the scene is seemingly straightforward, it is a bit hard to visualize Evelina running into the room, "just" catching Macartney's arm, and then fainting beside him.

The text goes on, "My recovery, however, was, I believe, almost instantaneous; . . . I arose, though with difficulty; he did

the same; the pistols, as I soon saw, were both on the floor" (183). When read against the grain, this is the narrator protesting too much against the possibility of a longer-than-"instantaneous" time spent on the floor. The struggle continues: Macartney first regains the pistols, causing Evelina to, "almost involuntarily, [take] hold of both his arms," which results in "The guilty pistols [falling] from his hands" (184). There is something transmitted in her touch that prevents him from keeping or using the masculine tools of self-destruction. The narrative goes on: "I again attempted to take the pistols, but, with a look half frantic, he again prevented me"—at this point, Evelina cries out that she intends to "awaken" Macartney "to worthier thoughts, and rescue [him] from perdition," a statement that causes Macartney to release his hold over the pistols and allow Evelina the opportunity to bear them away (184). Following her down the stairs, Macartney again tries to reclaim them, but in her own room Evelina has a firm grip:

> As I presently perceived that his eyes turned from me to the pistols, and that he seemed to intend regaining them, I exerted all my strength, and saying 'O for Heaven's sake forbear!' I rose and took them myself . . . he advanced towards me, and I, still guarding the pistols, retreated, saying 'No, no—you must not— must not have them!'" (185)

Beyond being the only scene in the novel in which Evelina uses physical force (made effective through her emotion-imbued touch), the struggle over the pistols provides a sexually charged spectacle of sympathetic exchange in which the outdated, violent, and masculine practices of dueling and highway robbery are done away with when the implements of their perpetration are forcibly confiscated by a woman.

If Evelina's pistol-removing intervention can be read as a kind of symbolic castration fantasy, then its place in Burney's novel implies that sentimental harmony can arrive only after the self-destructive, aristocratic phallus has been torn away. Reading the scene in such a way points to how gendered redemption lies in a violent rejection of the male, aristocratic epistemology that

has given rise to the problems in the novel. The scene forms a highly scripted tableau of near-consensual castration in which Macartney's reaction to the loss of the pistols is post-orgasmic: now unburdened, Macartney is elated, "'Wonderful!' cried he, with uplifted hands and eyes, 'most wonderful!'. . . he sprung hastily forward,—dropt on one knee,—caught hold of my gown, which he pressed to his lips" (185). To indulge my reading a bit further, Macartney is the character for whom a castration plot is most relevant; arriving in the novel by way of an Oedipal farce, Macartney's world is already one in which masculinity is won or lost by violence. In terms of genre, such a world is associated with the picaresque, a genre that tracks the adventures of unruly men with aristocratic aspirations and foregrounds the male license that so torments Evelina in Burney's novel.[6] Evelina's pistol-removing intervention cuts Macartney off from this outdated system, allowing him to enter into the new world of manners, free of the awkward moral weight associated with the pistols. Evelina changes Macartney's mind by touching his body in a sentimentally mandated intervention in which the impetus to action is a combination of Macartney's desire for correction and Evelina's desire to correct.

Macartney's Vanishing Scottishness

It is perhaps unsurprising that the language of castration turns up in scholarship focused on the literary and cultural integration of Scotland into an Anglo-centric Union with England. A major voice in the "invention of tradition" debate, Murray Pittock, has responded to a post-Union "Scottish patriotism of masquerade, a fancy-dress freedom which evoked the frisson of a defeated threat, a sign of Scottish virility which endorsed the process of Scotland's emasculation" (39).[7] There seems to be some kind of consensus regarding a shift in Scottish identity that took place in conjunction with Union: before the shift, Scots were authentic and masculine; after the shift, they were superficial, constructed, and if not feminized, then certainly somehow less masculine. Though such assessments certainly

lean towards the near-reactionary gender politics of associating lost authenticity with lost primordial manliness, it bears on my argument that lamenting the absorption of Scotland into an Anglo-centric Union can involve invoking manhood as that which has been lost or traded away. Part and parcel of the Scottish gentleman are his arms, and their removal—both in the sense of Jacobites stripped of their titles and Highlanders legally prevented from possessing weapons—was a powerful reminder that the late eighteenth-century Scotsman could go to war only as a member of the British military establishment. In Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814), iconic Highlander Evan Dhu explains that his people can and will no longer police the glens, for to foray with broadswords would be to invite disarmament at the hands of the nearest redcoats (102). It is perhaps eerie that Evelina should specifically disarm Macartney during a period notorious for Anglo-centric legal institutions such as the Disarming Act (1716) and the Proscription Act (1746), the latter of which was still in place at the time of *Evelina*'s publication.

I am not implying that *Evelina*, which purports to present the world as "what it appears to a girl of seventeen" (Burney, qtd. in Zonitch 35), is like the Waverley novels, which were written to participate in a political project whose goal was literarily facilitating Anglo-Scottish Union. Instead, I am arguing that this novel's treatment of sentimental and sexual exchanges between English and Scottish characters deploys concepts of gender, governance, and history for which the manly, unruly, and Scottish is forcibly brought into sentimental alignment with the feminine, obedient, and British. Insofar as novels about troubled families and corrupt patriarchies can be read as commentaries on national politics and systems of governance, the sentimental correction narrative that links Evelina and Macartney expresses a conception of Anglo-Scottish Union that reflects the unification-informed political climate of the late eighteenth century. When reading literary commentators on Celtic integration into Union—including Burney's contemporaries like Maria Edgeworth, Sydney Owenson, and Walter Scott along with earlier authors such as Jonathan Swift—Katie Trumpener argues that marriage plots

between characters symbolic of different national groups are, in fact, themselves symbolic of national unions (133–37, 142–48). Maureen M. Martin draws similar conclusions, citing a variety of texts ranging from the writings of James VI and I into the eighteenth and even nineteenth centuries, demonstrating that Anglo-Scottish relations were frequently articulated in sexual and marital terms. Martin notes the commonality of describing the Union as a marriage, even of using the language of rape when one partner-nation invades the other (18–19). In these characterizations, Scotland tended to be portrayed as the female, its otherwise iconic masculinity giving rise to what Martin calls a "dilemma": "who is the man in this 'marriage'?" (19). By way of an answer, Martin points to Britannia as a symbol of monolithic and Anglo-centric feminine authority that rules foreign peoples with strict benevolence. Britannia seems intimately linked to my articulation of Evelina's corrective power—the pistol-removing castration sequence arrives as part of the integration fantasy in which a female English agent creates a British man by removing his outdated and violent Scottish appendages.

Macartney's redemption from dueling and highway robbery is thus not only a correction of his initially anachronistic and undisciplined masculine type, it is also a rehearsal of how sanitized Scottishness can be integrated into British polity. Evelina's female agency, manifested as the desire to correct Macartney, brings this about in the novel, and the initial attraction between these half-siblings is the first step in the Anglo-Scottish romance of Union. To take this example further, Burney may be utilizing the legal and parliamentary notion of precedent so important to her conservative contemporary Edmund Burke. Though Burke's ideas were reviled by a host of political adversaries, J. G. A. Pocock maintains that his articulation of precedent accorded with a national fantasy widely believed in the eighteenth century and later. This way of thinking understands the present as teleologically guaranteed by the struggles of the past while clinging to a set of national values said to be timeless (126–31). Burke's argument in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) was that England's Glorious

Revolution was nothing like France's recent upheaval because in
England the goal was not the imposition of a new order but the
restoration of an ancient but temporarily suppressed or forgotten
system of essentially English rights, laws, and values.[8] Recall
that all of Evelina's problems derive from Sir John Belmont's
denied patrimony and that the sins of the same father have left
Macartney under the wrong impression as to his own identity.
Sir John Belmont is the corrupt patriarch who breaks the novel's
proper familial and sentimental system of relationships; he is
the deviation from precedent that the novel's characters must
overcome. Susan Greenfield draws attention to the specifically
legal solutions provided for the novel's conflicts; though
Evelina's countenance is so much like Caroline's as to evidence
their relationship, all this initially makes possible is that Evelina
"might literally repeat her mother's history with [Belmont]"
(42–43). Before Belmont can and, indeed, must own Evelina as his
daughter, the wet nurse must testify as to the changeling plot, and
the legal content of Caroline's letter must act as "a certificate of
birth and a replacement for the burnt marriage certificate" (43).
Aristocratic privilege is held to bourgeois legal conventions when
the novel refuses to accept Belmont's burning of his marriage
certificate, the one legal document arguably most important
to the legitimacy of an upper-class woman in the eighteenth
century. Macartney's and Evelina's discovery of their sibling
bond and the eventual reunion of Belmont's family at the end of
the novel thus symbolize a return to a preordained and perfect
state of things. In the historicity of *Evelina*'s present, the flawed
aristocratic values that initially motivate Macartney actually
appear to be perversions of the natural laws and values under
which the Scottish poet-turned-highwayman would have been a
nonthreatening member of a retired British family all along.

　　　The Scots, this fantasy informs us, have always had an
affinity for unified Britishness, but the corrupt patriarchy (first
of Stuart monarch and then of Jacobite Pretender) has obscured
this fellow-feeling under a harmful manly independence. The Scot
was, after all, an unstable identity: as Scottish dress and culture
grew popular in the late eighteenth century, even Englishmen

began to take on Highland "chieftain" personas (McCrone et al. 51). Highlander regiments, moreover, grew with large numbers of Irish, Welsh, and, especially, English recruits who sought better equipment and the romantic prestige of the Scot's warrior-image.[9] Kenneth Simpson considers the mutability of Scottishness on a literary register and describes a "post-Union crisis of identity": the Scot became a role-player, a character caught between the Enlightenment-derived ideals of the present and the nostalgically imagined identities of the "noble" past (9–10). For Simpson, Scottishness was a real identity, but it also became a set of character types; he reads James Boswell, for instance, as constantly in motion between these different roles (117). I apply Simpson's moniker for Boswell, "the chameleon Scot," to Macartney's multi-dimensional character: he is Macheath, the gentleman-highwayman; he is the penniless man of birth; he is the parricidal Jacobite; he is the overwrought man of feeling; and finally, he becomes his newfound English father's nearly bourgeois agent. I have been arguing that Macartney's movement from a web of outdated but romanticized identities to the docile messenger role he plays at the novel's conclusion is an Anglo-Scottish unification fantasy. Though it is a trivial detail, Burney's family grew out of the "MacBurneys," and the novelist's grandfather by that name was purportedly disinherited by a parent incensed at a disadvantageous marriage (Harman 2–3). Though there is no consensus over whether "MacBurney" was Irish or Scottish, there is a distinct sense of immediate family history that links *Evelina*'s author not only to the kind of patriarchal disjunction plot central to her first novel but also to those migrants who, like Macartney, sought a future in England after the Union but often had to give up or, at least, moderate their Celtic identities. As he is enfranchised into the Empire's ruling class through his marriage to Belmont's other "daughter," Macartney ceases to be Scottish—not only in the practical sense of having two English parents but also in the literary and symbolic sense of shedding a Scottishness keyed to gallant but outdated aristocratic practices unacceptable in modern Britain.

　　Burney's feminist project to reconfigure a corrupt

patriarchy is also a remaking of national character that disarms—
indeed castrates—violent Scottishness and subordinates it to
the harmony of Union. A consensual narrative in which an
Englishwoman first sympathizes with, tames, and thus redeems
a Scotsman provides a benevolent and fictional alternative to
unpleasant national traumas: the battle of Culloden and its brutal
aftermath, the Highland Clearances, and the ongoing socio-
economic realities of internal colonialism. In addition to modeling
the proper reading of gender, Evelina is thus also an ideal reader
of nationality, who looks to history to find "the nature of the
malady"—the cure for which is unification.

　　　　Evelina's task is not yet finished. Not only must she
correct Macartney, she must also pave the way for his acceptance
into society. Ever since William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1605),
there have been literary attempts to weigh in on whether or
not the Scottish character is capable of blending with the
English character in British society. Scott indirectly admits
his involvement in such a project when his introduction to the
Magnum Opus edition of *Waverley* praises Edgeworth's novels
for convincing English readers to accept the "foibles" of the
Irish ("General Preface" xii). Evelina, being a corrective force,
approaches this more directly by chastising those elements
within England that sought to resist Scottish participation in
British polity. This is visible in Evelina's condemnation of the
Branghtons for their lack of sympathy for, and cruel treatment of,
Macartney: "How much does my disgust for these people encrease
my pity for poor Mr. Macartney!" (193). Lack of sympathy for
the dispossessed Scots is a serious flaw in *Evelina* and actually
impels the heroine "to take every opportunity in [her] power,
to shew civility to this unhappy man, whose misfortunes, with
this family, only render him an object of scorn" (193). Just as
she does not condone the male, aristocratic license that leads to
violence against women, Evelina damns the coarse Branghtons for
violating a subjectivity that, though poor and seemingly foreign,
has every right to reform—that is, to cease being symbolically
Scottish and to become British.

　　　　The novel's investment in reforming Scottish character

and finding a place for it in British society correlates with a
contemporary southward movement of professional talent.
Six years after *Evelina*'s publication, in 1784, the Highland Society
of London was formed both to popularize Scottish heritage
and to effect economic improvements in the Highlands. Yet
Kenneth McNeil argues that such "improvement entailed not
only the preservation of traditional Highland ways, but their
total negation" (5). McNeil explains that the Highland Society's
nuanced but pro-imperial goals helped to establish Scotland's
discursive place in the British Empire:

> Yet the society's desire to improve the Highlands
> must also be seen in the context of eighteenth-
> century pro-Union Scottish writing as to the
> necessity and benefits of *self*-improvement to effect
> more fully the equal partnership between Scotland
> and England within Great Britain . . . thus the aims
> of the Highland Society to improve the Highlands
> was a natural outgrowth of the work of previous
> Scottish "gentlemen's 'improving' clubs" that sought
> to modernize not only Scottish agricultural practice
> but the Scottish character as well. (5–6)

If read in the context of *Evelina*, this is a perfect articulation of
what is at stake in Macartney's sentimental transformation into a
British agent. Though decades before Tobias Smollett had shown
Scots in the middling ranks of the British colonial establishment,
Evelina arrives on the cusp of a period in which "many Scotsmen
with professional qualifications, particularly doctors, engineers,
and teachers, were taking advantage of union with England to
pursue more lucrative career opportunities south of the border
than were available in Scotland" (McLaren 3). Beginning in
1780, a system of patronage-based employment targeted young
men from the middle and upper ranks of Scottish society, which
not only guaranteed Scottish parliamentary votes in support of
the central government but also paved the way for the Scot's
prominent role in overseas colonial administration (McLaren
7). Though such enfranchisements had already been called into
question earlier in the century by texts that highlighted the

danger and brutality of maritime and colonial service (Mackie 140), this literary visibility made possible Burney's redemption-narrative. The dangerous Scot becomes a docile British agent when the hardships he endures provoke the sympathetic intervention of the novel's female subject.

In *Evelina*, the political resonances of Anglo-Scottish unification find a vehicle in the sympathetic bond and sexual potential between its English title character and its Scottish poet. If, at the novel's conclusion, Orville is the perfect husband for Evelina, then the now-reformed Macartney is second-best, a fact proved by the contingent appearance of what might be called a "second Evelina," Belmont's other "daughter." By creating an extended family out of the reformed rake, the reformed Scot, the perfect gentleman, and the "two Evelinas," Burney's novel is driven by sexual and sentimental reform narratives that begin with confused patrimony and end in harmonious marriages. This means that though Macartney is at least temporarily an object of female desire, the fact that Evelina ultimately marries Orville clearly subjugates even the reformed Scot to the Grandisonian identity acted out by *Evelina*'s perfect gentleman. Macartney's enfranchisement is, like that of real Scots, only partial. Evelina's intervention saves him from the fate of the novel's other masculine types who are each forced to enact their outdated egotism elsewhere, yet it does not afford him with the potential to ever be Orville's equal. Within *Evelina*'s gender politics, which make specific masculine types and their corresponding genres redundant, Macartney's role is defined by its "second-bestness," its independence sacrificed for access to a smaller share in the spoils of Union.

NOTES

[1] Since the work of her biographers and editors in the nineteenth century, Burney scholarship has had something to say about conduct or courtesy books. Janice Farrar Thaddeus points to Joyce Hemlow's important place in the "first wave" of Burney scholars that discussed the influences of the conduct

book tradition while taking Burney "more seriously as a woman and as a woman writer" and by considering "the element of fear" (4). Though at times comical, *Evelina* is in many ways about misbehavior, social anxiety, and the judgment of character based precisely on questions of conduct.

[2] Susan Greenfield draws attention to Villars as a major force within the corrupt patriarchy that the novel indicts. She explains his seemingly supportive actions as motivated by "his own reasons," and "suggests he may harbor sexual feelings for his ward" (42). Though I do not intend to discuss Villars, I raise this point because *Evelina* is a novel in which information passed down from parent figures is frequently untrustworthy and biased. Villars, moreover, governs from afar, and this can be read as a political failure.

[3] One major reason to mention Macartney has been the incest taboo. In addition to Zonitch, Susan Greenfield explores Macartney's role in this aspect of the narrative. Following a different thematic lead, Erin Mackie has studied criminality in the novel, noting Macartney's close relationship with contemporary and earlier popular preoccupations with criminals especially of the highwayman variety (162–64).

[4] There seems to be a general critical consensus that *Evelina* has a major interest in doing away with an outdated, masculine, and cruel aristocratic way of knowing and acting— Bilger, Greenfield, Hamilton, Mackie, and Zonitch all make versions of such a claim.

[5] Instantaneous sympathetic transfer would likewise have been familiar from the work of Continental physiologists such as Pierre Cabanis, who "offers one of the century's best developed accounts of the relationship between sympathy and immediate sensation" and drew on Scottish Enlightenment theories to influence early medical writing about emotion (Hanley 187–89).

[6] Michael McKeon's foundational study of *The Origins of the English Novel* points to the picaresque romance as one of the literary genres that contributes to the early novel (96–100). By engaging with the picaresque while rejecting characters associated with it, Burney is commenting on a set of characters

and plotlines older than novels themselves. Indeed, Macartney before his transformation seems closer to Tobias Smollett's rollicking Roderick Random than he does to a modern gentleman.

[7] Hugh Trevor-Roper's well-known piece in Eric Hobsbawm's *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) sparked a debate that still endures in studies of the Celtic in British literature and elsewhere: is iconic Highland culture merely an English invention? The Pittock quotation originates in *From Tartan to Tartanry* (2010), a critical collection edited by Edinburgh's Ian Brown that is among the most recent voices in the Invention of Tradition debate. Though the quotation sounds dire, the articles in this book—Pittock's included—actually tend to reclaim some subversive political potential behind the Scottish customs formerly decried as inauthentic. That there is a debate over the very reality of Scottish identity lends itself to a reading of Macartney as temporarily taking on Scottishness until economic and political reasons demand he lay down his implied tartan.

[8] "The Revolution of 1688, [Burke] says, was conducted on the principle that there existed a body of ancient laws and liberties and an ancient constitution guaranteeing them and that all that was necessary in the conditions of that critical year was to reaffirm their existence…. Englishmen have always been concerned to establish their rights by appeal to their own past" (Pocock 128).

[9] Stuart Reid explains that from their inception in the early eighteenth century, Highland regiments never exclusively drew on Highland populations, which were some of the sparsest in Britain (7). Becoming a Royal Highlander was an opportunity for an Englishman or Lowland Scot to take on a romanticized identity not initially his own.

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