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### The True Pleasurable Philosopher: Some Influences on Frances Brooke's *History of Emily Montague*

A true pleasurable philosopher seeks his enjoyments where they are really to be found; not in the gratification of selfish pride, but of those affections which are born with us, and which are the only rational sources of enjoyment.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the happily married hero of Frances Brooke's 1769 epistolary novel, *The History of Emily Montague*, expresses his opinion of happiness in love, in a letter to his friend, a rake whose complete reform is imminent. In the context of a survey of sentimental novels, his language would be far from surprising. Brooke's hero, Colonel Ed. Rivers, seems typical in that he takes time along the way to deride the pride, vanity, and selfishness of the marriage market, and to insist that the pleasures of true affection are so vastly superior to the common endeavours of marital commerce that simple common sense should make this truth perfectly obvious. This much a general familiarity with the genre known as the "novel of sensibility" allows.

It must also be allowed that compartmentalizing literature often obscures critical perception. Generic criticism has tended to place the novels of Frances Brooke firmly in the Richardsonian school, almost as if this classification took care of everything there is to say. Brooke, however, wrote out of a tradition not exclusively Richardsonian, though thoroughly committed to the sensibility present in many of the novels produced by members of Richardson's circle. Certainly, she wrote *Emily Montague* at the crest of the sentimental tide: Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* had been published in the previous year, and Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* appeared less than two years later.

Brooke shared the increasingly widespread belief that feeling is somehow a means of attaining moral truth; the more intense the feeling, the more direct and reliable the emotionally perceived link between aesthetic and moral beauty. Brooke's own version of sensibil-

ity suggests that she developed it more or less independently, though drawing on common sources.

It is Brooke's use of antecedent sources, an amalgam of literary, religious, and philosophical traditions, which makes *Emily Montague* particularly interesting. Readers familiar with a representative sample of eighteenth century novels will find something familiar in the phrase and rhetorical pattern Rivers uses in the passage I have quoted as an epigraph. The contrast he draws — between the transitory pleasures of material wealth and social position, and the more solid pleasures of active benevolence and an easy conscience — is conventional enough. The appeal is to reason: the reader is invited to contrast the sensation of pleasure produced by the commission of a virtuous act with the pangs of a guilty conscience. This incentive to virtue, sometimes called "laudable Epicureanism," appears in the writings of many major figures. Pope, for example, places virtuous pleasure at the top of the scale of human joys: "Know then this truth (enough for Man to Know) / Virtue alone is Happiness Below."<sup>2</sup> Fielding addresses his readers on the same question:

I desire some of the Philosophers to grant, that there is in some (I believe in all) human Breasts a kind and benevolent Disposition which is gratified by contributing to the Happiness of others. That in this Gratification alone, as in Friendship, in parental and filial Affection, as indeed in general Philanthropy, there is a great and exquisite Delight. That if we will not call such a Disposition Love, we have no name for it.<sup>3</sup>

The delight produced by benevolence is proof that such social relationships are the proper end of man, that they are ethically beautiful and true.

But Brooke's version of this moral commonplace is subtly different. The corrective tone remains, and much of the language follows a predictable pattern. The class of behaviour Brooke's letter-writer censures here appears to be the same as that targeted by earlier ethical writers, who often criticized pampered pride and misplaced ambition. The phrase "where they are really to be found" is a direct appropriation of traditional phrasing in numerous texts that ask their readers to consider what goods are truly valuable. In Brooke's version, however, the *bonum* is entirely new — the gratification of the natural affections. The conceptual distance the phrase has travelled is dramatically indicated by the return to familiar language in the last few words. The emphasis of sentimental Epicureanism is on sensibility and the fulfilled emotional life. Self-approving joy is no longer to be found only with the exercise of practical morality; now it appears with the rational enjoyment of the natural affections. What once served as evidence of

the benefit of virtue, and as a compelling argument for traditional values, has now become almost an end in itself. Arguments that once served ethical writers such as the Cambridge Platonists, the Latitudinarian divines, Shaftesbury, Pope, and Fielding to demonstrate the identity of love and benevolence have been turned to serve a different variety of Love.

Throughout *Emily Montague*, Frances Brooke employs a variety of notions, phrases, moral commonplaces, and tags that once served earlier writers in their endeavour to stress the rational basis of ethical conduct. However, when Brooke enlists them, they undergo a kind of sea change: they can be found in still recognizable shapes performing similar services for the new regime of sensibility.

One of the most pervasive examples of this transmutation is Brooke's use of the Design Argument, which plays an important part in the novel. The idea that the world of nature can serve man as a second book of revelation is ubiquitous among the English writers with whose work Brooke was familiar; it receives cogent expression in Addison's famous Ode:

The Spacious Firmament on high,  
 With all the blue Etherial Sky,  
 And spangled Heav'ns, a Shining Frame,  
 Their great Original proclaim:  
 Th'unwearied Sun, from Day to Day,  
 Does his Creator's Power display,  
 And publishes to every Land  
 The Work of an Almighty Hand . . . .<sup>4</sup>

Burke's distinction between the appropriate responses to the sublime and the beautiful, in the hands of a skilled sentimentalist, brings about a marked shift in the polemical use of the Design Argument. Although from time to time Brooke's characters do acknowledge the divine origin of the landscapes they admire, the message they decode from God's hieroglyphic creation is not primarily pious. Instead, it is sentimentally optimistic about the human condition:

You say true, my dear Bell: heaven doubtless formed us to be happy, even in this world; and we obey its dictates in being so, when we can without encroaching on the happiness of others.

This lesson is, I think, plain from the book providence has spread before us: the whole universe smiles, the earth is clothed in lively colours, the animals are playful, the birds sing: in being chearful with innocence, we seem to conform with the order of nature, and the will of that beneficent Power to whom we owe our being. (IV, 49-50)

The physiotheological language is virtually unchanged in this rather conventional account of reading nature like a book. Brooke, however,

construes the text quite differently. If Brooke's letter-writer is being pious here, it is largely in her gratitude for the generous provision by the Divinity of a world so well-suited to humanity's emotional fulfillment and happiness. The awe and grandeur of creation have not been supplanted; only the human response has been altered.

Most of the novel is set in colonial Canada between the Fall of Quebec and the American Revolution, and features several vivid descriptions of wild, scenic wonders. The quasi-religious exaltation inspired by "bold, picturesque romantic nature" (I, 55) is at best an indirect tribute to the Almighty Hand of the Creator. It is, however, a *direct* tribute to the sensibility of the enraptured viewers (i.e., the characters or letter-writers).

Brooke's passages of description all seem calculated to expand this version of the Design Argument: the optimistic ideal of sensibility is embodied in the response of individual characters to the Canadian wilds. The tone is set by Brooke's consummately sensible hero, Col. Rivers:

The country is a very fine one: you can see here not only the *beautiful* which it has in common with Europe, but the *great sublime* to an amazing degree. . . . On approaching the coast of America, I felt a kind of religious veneration, on seeing rocks which almost touch'd the clouds, cover'd with tall groves of pines that seemed coeval with the world itself: to which veneration the solemn silence not a little contributed; from Cap Rosieres, up the river St. Lawrence, during a course of more than two hundred miles, there is not the least appearance of a human footstep; no objects meet the eye but mountains, woods, and numerous rivers, which seem to roll their waters in vain. (I, 7-8)

For Brooke, passages like this exist not simply to paint word-pictures in the manner of conventional travel literature, but to demonstrate Rivers's Burkean sensitivity to the noble heightening of emotion which the Great Sublime can produce.<sup>5</sup> But this emotion is not an end in itself. Like the earlier avatars of the Design Argument, Brooke's version has its own polemical import. Rivers becomes increasingly lucid; he never floats away in ecstatic rhapsodies. Natural beauty and harmony (even "wild harmony") all serve to emphasize the distance civilization has drifted from the ideal, natural state. Rivers continues:

It is impossible to behold a scene like this without lamenting the madness of mankind, who, more merciless than the fierce inhabitants of the howling wilderness, destroy millions of their own species in the wild contention for a little portion of that earth, the far greater part of which remains yet unpossessed, and courts the hand of labour for cultivation. (I, 7-8)

Nature is an ally of sensibility, because the Sensible Man and the Sensible Woman are the children of nature brought to the highest possible stage of development by the complete exercise of their emotional and moral faculties. The savage world of conquest and war lies outside the circle of sane, sympathetic, naturally humane endeavours; although he has been a soldier, Rivers prefers the gospel of nature, which here affords a lesson that humanity would do well to heed.

Brooke, then, superimposes a gentle polemic about human nature at its best over a complementary background of picturesque set-pieces describing the beauties and sublimities of the New World. When Rivers first leaves England, he expects to challenge the Canadian wilderness with the idea of transforming it somehow, of "civilizing" it by creating a home for the best of European culture. Curiously enough, with the exception of a few opportunities for sublime description, there is little evidence that Rivers spends very much time at all confronting the forest primeval. Indeed, although he has fine things to say about the Canadian wilderness, and about the possibilities for building a new culture there, his dream of an ideal life is something entirely outside the conventional oppositions of the ordered civilization of Europe and the exciting possibilities of the New World's wilderness. Instead, he wants to be, and succeeds in becoming, a gentleman farmer in love — a life that could be lived anywhere, if the emotional conditions were right.

The Canadian landscape, then, is almost accidental, and is certainly secondary to the emotional life. Brooke is no doubt the first novelist to use Canadian settings; whether this constitutes a genuine contribution to a national theme, however, is questionable. While the scenery of Canada does offer the proper stimulus to Brooke's elevated characters, for the purpose of the novel itself and its major themes the main action could arguably take place in any sublime landscape, as, for instance, that of Switzerland. Rivers is only fantasizing when he boasts of building a new world for the truly sensitive; when he achieves his longed-for union with Emily, these dreams become obsolete. The outdoor scenes are valuable, but it must be recognized that Brooke uses them almost exclusively as reference points to establish the sensibility of Emily, Arabella, and Rivers. Canada offers large doses of the sublime, appreciated fully by the right sort of people. But it is not an essential factor in any of their lives. The main characters delight in the sublime landscape while they seek other delights, but when they finally reach the consummation for which they ardently long, they are too busy cultivating sentimental gardens to miss the thrill of admiring the falls of Montmorenci. Landscape is properly subordinated to the central focus of the novel: not what the Canadian landscape can offer,

but the progress of love. The major counterpoint Brooke works to establish is internal. Significantly, after Rivers and Emily overcome all obstructions to their union, they leave the sublime regions of Canada to live a pastoral life in a more comfortably beautiful England.<sup>6</sup>

Although Brooke, in her account of the wildness of the Canadian lands, adopts some of the antitheses between civilization and "natural man" that we might expect of a writer familiar with the idea of the "noble savage," she is too intelligent to adopt popular primitivism wholesale. Certainly, her characters do observe that the Canadian savages *are* noble in many ways — they are free, dignified, honourable, courageous, truthful, and equal. In this, they conform to that ideal represented by Shaftesbury, who advised moralists to consider the exemplary qualities of inhabitants of foreign countries "for that simplicity of manners and innocence of behaviour which has often been known among mere savages, ere they were corrupted by our commerce, and, by sad example, instructed in all kinds of treachery and inhumanity."<sup>7</sup>

Nonetheless, Brooke's characters take exception to several conditions of the primitive state, especially the laborious constraints of the traditional life of Indian women. The strongest argument she musters against idealizing the savages is characteristic: although their lives are largely tranquil, they cannot be truly *happy*, because they are "insensitive to love" (I, 75). Brooke is at one with the primitivist criticism of unfeeling society, but the positive reference point of her criticism is different — she prefers the cultivated man of feeling to the "natural" primitive man.

For Brooke, the true desert wilderness is the insensitive human heart. Since there is no intractable forest in *Emily Montague*, Rivers must instead struggle with the difficulties inherent in projects intended to bring beauty and order out of chaos — his avowed intention in trying to "civilize" Canada. The chaos he encounters is double: first the scenic disorder of the rugged terrain; and then (more significantly) the fragmented superficiality of the social world of the old French colony and the British officers. The latter disorder is a kind of chaos of the heart; the letters of Brooke's young ladies depict a rather conventionally charming, giddy, flirtatious, transplanted city society, not wicked, but somehow empty. This society forms the background for a traditional comic pattern: its vocal approval of a loveless but socially desirable marriage nearly forced upon the heroine provides the comic opposition.<sup>8</sup>

The antithesis of the values of town society and those of the countryside is familiar enough, but Brooke again subtly shifts the emphasis. What is missing in the Quebec colony is not (as with Brooke's Augus-

tan predecessors) an operative ethical code, but natural human feeling. Here more than anywhere Rousseau's influence may be felt in the implicit criticism of a shallow society based on the overwhelming compulsion to elevate oneself above others. That is to say, the colony lacks precisely what Brooke considers necessary for real community: mutual consideration, true friendship, emotional sensitivity, feeling sympathy — in short, *sensibility*.

The model for the correction of this deficiency is to be found in Brooke's heroic dyad, Emily Montague and Colonel Ed. Rivers. Their love is based on the same mutual regard as true friendship, and it is heightened by the essential life, spirit, and animation of sensibility. Early in the novel, Emily's treatment of her first fiancé impresses Rivers. Her attentiveness and consideration he attributes to her "admirable understanding and . . . the natural softness of her soul, which gives her the strongest desire of pleasing" (I, 41). Sensibility, for Rivers, is not a passive acquiescence to overwhelming emotional experience. Instead, it combines a fully developed emotional and aesthetic life with both intellectual understanding and a vitally important ethical quality, the desire to please, which is the unselfish foundation of friendship.<sup>9</sup>

Through Rivers, Brooke preaches a kind of sentimental feminism that insists on the truth of marriage as found in the meeting of the whole woman with the whole man.<sup>10</sup> Love is more than the noblest form of intoxication — it is a "sweet consent of souls in unison," a "harmony of minds congenial to each other" (I, 124). It is this ideal that Brooke endeavours to inculcate as the message revealed by nature itself.

Brooke's encouragement of strong emotions (love, benevolence, compassion) in no way detracts from her active recommendation of the use of reason and common sense, a recommendation more often associated perhaps with the comedy and ethical satire of the preceding era. The affections, Rivers insists, are the true source of *rational* enjoyment. Although there is an abundance of hothouse dialogue in *Emily Montague*, there is very little swooning. That is, Brooke by no means devalues rationality itself, only cold, heartless, calculating rationality. Rivers and Emily Montague are not unconscious lovers; rather, they love each other more because they know exactly *why* they love.

The two main characters are more or less fixed quantities as the novel progresses through numerous difficulties toward the inevitably joyous conclusion. There is one character, however, who does change, the heroine of a parallel subplot, appropriately named Arabella Fermor. At the outset of the story, she combines the coquettishness of the

heroine of Pope's poem (Belle, in *the Rape of the Lock*) with more than a little of that author's caustic wit.

Still, despite her labours to affect a brittle artificiality which she imagines is winning, Arabella is quite susceptible to the natural beauty which so elevates Rivers. The reader is afforded a perception of this division in her character when she distinguishes between the overcivilized, artificial beauties of the English landscape and Canadian sublimity: "Bold, picturesque, romantic nature reigns here in all her wanton luxuriance, adorned by a thousand wild graces which mock the cultivated beauties of Europe" (I, 57). Arabella's letters teem with words such as "grotesque," "irregular," "astonishing," "regular confusions," "romantic," and all the vocabulary Nicolson has documented as essential to the devotee of sublime landscapes. At times, Arabella's rhapsodies are genuinely eloquent, but she appears to be worried that such elevation is inconsistent with the frivolous role she has undertaken, and so she often undercuts herself with a bathetic, deflating witticism at her own expense (II, 77).

Under the combined influence of her friends Emily and Rivers, and of the young Irish officer with whom she has somehow managed to fall in love, Arabella becomes less and less uncomfortable with her previously suppressed natural sensibility. She agrees vigorously with her friends in their opposition to everything heartless and insensitive, and her words to Emily reflect the heart of Brooke's polemic:

Half the world . . . have no souls; at least none but the vegetable and animal kind: to this species of beings, love and sentiment are entirely unnecessary; they were made to travel through life in a state of mind neither quite awake or asleep; and it is perfectly equal to them in what company they take the journey.

You and I, my dear, are something *awakened* . . . (III, 31)

What is the touchstone of the awakened imagination? It is the sublimity of the landscape. The book of nature now provides another message, one of sentimental rapture. Arabella censures the trivial French ladies for their failure to appreciate nature's treasures which proliferate nearby: "They have no idea of walking in the country, nor the least feeling of the lovely scene around them; there are many of them who never saw the falls of Montmorenci, though little more than an hour's drive from the town. They seem born without the smallest portion of curiosity, or any ideas of the pleasures of the imagination" (I, 101). Arabella's phrase may appear at first to refer to the aesthetic psychology of the imagination popularized by Addison. Like Aken-side, she has appropriated the phrase to define something more specialized: the function of the sensible imagination is to respond ecstatically to the perception of the sublime. Brooke develops the pleasures of



the imagination a bit farther along the lines earlier suggested by Akenside, who thrills at the presence of God in nature. For Brooke's characters, however, the presence of God seems almost secondary; the pleasures of the imagination are thrilling *per se*. Furthermore, such thrilling provides gratifying evidence of one's own elevation of character.

The lamentable inability to attain to his vital experience is even more pronounced in Emily's first, unworthy suitor, Sir George, a caricature of the bloodless and insipid English gentleman, complacent about his own worth, formally and mechanically polite in matters of courtship, and manifestly inferior to his fiancée. Rivers observes with horror that "his feelings are dull, nothing makes the least impression on him; he is as insensible to the various beauties of the charming country through which we travelled, as the very Canadian peasants themselves who inhabit it. I watched his eyes at some of the most beautiful prospects, and saw not the least gleam of pleasure there" (I, 105-106).

There can be no excuse for such unnatural behaviour. The willingness to be pleased and the sensitivity which allows humanity to be touched by beauty are missing — so much so that Sir George seems to have degenerated into a mere sleepwalker. His dullness is worse than mere aesthetic illiteracy or incompetence. He cannot possibly appreciate the higher forms of love, nor can he appreciate the real beauties of the awakened Emily, and so deserves to lose her, just as Rivers deserves success.

To supplement this negative portrait of a man without much feeling, Brooke offers her readers a clever adaptation of the myth of Prometheus. Traditionally, the Titan's gift of celestial fire is taken to represent the imparting of the arts, soul, grace, reason, or other forms of the divine image in humankind. Now, however, Rivers likens Sir George, in his insensible coolness to emotion, to "Prometheus's man of clay, before he stole the celestial fire to animate him" (I, 80). For Brooke, what the man of clay lacks is emotional fire, God's great blessing of sensibility. This point of view is emphasized a few pages later when Arabella wittily comments that she fears Sir George is not made "of combustible materials" (I, 96).

Brooke is very diligent in her effort to polarize her characters, to separate them into clearly-defined groups, the sensible and the insensible. Rivers is prepared to censure a hermit whom he encounters during his travels — but his disapprobation is not based on the traditional ethical opposition to withdrawal from the active life, as we might expect when we read these lines: "I came to him with a strong prejudice against him; I have no opinion of those who fly society; who

seek a state of all others the most contrary to our nature" (I, 161). This too appears to be familiar ground. Hermits are frequently introduced into literature as emblems of the abnegation of social responsibility; they function to point out the emptiness of the merely mechanical stoicism of so-called ethical retirement. Perhaps the most familiar instance is Fielding's masterful demonstration of the moral bankruptcy of the Man of the Hill in *Tom Jones*, who flies the evils of the world but sits idly by (though fully armed) while a desperate woman screams for help. Fielding's hero, rushing barehanded to her assistance, actively demonstrates the inherent flaw in pseudo-Stoical inaction.

In *Emily Montague*, the traditional aversion to the life of retirement takes a new form. Rivers, after all, proves to be untroubled by traditional social and ethical concerns. Rather, he shudders at the thought of any human being depriving himself voluntarily of "the joys of society." It goes against nature to cut oneself off forever from the pleasures of conversation and the free play of the affections (this is also Rivers's paramount objection to the French convents, in which are immured countless lovely young women, obviously intended for a richer, more fulfilling life). But when the hermit explains the cause of his retirement — a terrible accident that brought his beloved wife to death by drowning before his very eyes — all Rivers's doubts are allayed. The hermit is not dead to the world of emotion; he feasts on delicious sadness. Rivers tearfully takes his leave, grateful for the opportunity to share such a touching story. The importance of the transformation of the traditional hermit interlude is signalled by the omission of the traditional closure: Brooke makes no attempt to reintegrate the hermit into society.

Brooke's endeavour to forge a sentimental philosophy escalates as the novel progresses, both with pathetic tableaux like that of the hermit (mediated for the reader by the response of sensitive characters), and with didactic commentary in some of the letters. The keystone of this philosophy, naturally, is the primacy of the affections. Also important is Brooke's welcome insistence on the equality of women and men in matters of love and sensibility. Love must be based on mutual regard as well as mutual attraction, and is therefore an extension of friendship, and "equality is the soul of friendship" (II, 195).

Because so many men have unnaturally dulled their emotions — Sir George is the extreme case — women are generally superior in these matters. To offer her readers an exemplary couple, Brooke takes great pains to create a man whose emotional life is extraordinarily active, generous, kind, and sympathetic — so much so that he is scarcely recog-

nizable as a man according to the common eighteenth century definition (ranging between swaggering bravo and self-important gentleman). Rivers himself declares, "My heart has all the sensibility of woman" (II, 39). Lest the reader miss the point, Brooke provides other witnesses. Rivers's sister compliments him on "the most endearing of all qualities, that genuine tenderness of soul, that almost feminine sensibility, which, with all your firmness of mind and spirit, you possess beyond any man I ever yet met with" (II, 40). The message is repeated explicitly at least four times (II, 178; III, 121; IV, 67, 193). Furthermore, Brooke strives to establish that such traits as intellectual acuity, eloquence, strength of will, and fortitude are not sex-specific, for Emily possesses them all in good measure.

But it is sensibility that is most vital, so much so that it is called "that mental beauty which is the express image of the Deity" (III, 52). Here Brooke's thought effects its boldest transformation of earlier ideas. Renaissance humanists considered the image of God in human beings to be the spark of reason that allowed them to perceive and assent to revealed theological truth. Protestant divines variously named the indwelling divine image as grace, conscience, innate or connatural truth, or the disposition to benevolence. Brooke's version may not be as meticulously outlined in terms of dogma, but this much is clear: the desire of pleasing, the ability to please, the faculty of perceiving delicate beauties and feeling exquisite emotions — all of which constitute sensibility — have now received the divine seal of approval.

Brooke supports her philosophy with a consistent pattern of transforming earlier moral commonplaces. One of her letter-writers insists that moralists should endeavour to expand, not to contract, the human heart: "They should build their system on the passions and affections, the only foundations of the nobler virtues" (III, 47). Here a commonplace of Christian thought is practically turned upside down. Although it was often acknowledged that the passions are not bad in themselves, becoming dangerous only in extreme, uncontrolled forms, they were far from being reliable. Brooke's insistence on passion as a *source* of virtue, however, is entirely new with the sentimentalists.

Most moral psychologists posit an ideal state of human equilibrium, when all goes well. Many English divines drew upon the old Platonic saying, "Virtue is the health of the soul." Consider Benjamin Whichcote's aphorism:

There is a natural propension in every thing to return to its true state, if by violence it has been disturbed. Should it not be so in grace, in the divine life? Virtue is the healthy true state, the natural complexion of the soul. He that is vicious in his practice is diseased in his mind.<sup>11</sup>

In revising this popular commonplace, Brooke preserves most of the essential components, but — true to form — she makes certain alterations to elevate the status of the affections: “Vice may justly be called the fever of the soul, inaction its lethargy; passion, under the guidance of virtue, is its health” (III, 36). Brooke is so confident of the reliability of the affections that she has reduced virtue from a primary consideration to a secondary role; it is now simply moderation. Later in the novel, the commonplace is revised once again, this time to such an extent that the range of passion is self-enclosed, and practically self-justifying:

The tumult of desire is the fever of the soul; its health, that delicious tranquillity where the heart is gently moved, not violently agitated; that tranquillity which is only to be found where friendship is the basis of love, and where we are happy without injuring the object beloved; in other words, in a marriage of choice. (IV, 59)

Brooke’s intention here is certainly laudable. By altering the note of moderation (the healthy state is virtuous passion) to one of reciprocity (the healthy state is mutual regard), she has succeeded in making the older form new — I would like to make it clear I am not arguing that her transformations represent some kind of unilateral cultural “devolution” or decline.

Brooke pursues her convictions further when she follows Shaftesbury in using “enthusiasm” as a positive term. Many of her contemporaries (and she herself) still most often use the term in its negative sense, a usage that springs from the manifold distrust of religious “irrationality” stemming from an earlier period of religious and political unrest. But Brooke’s hero, Colonel Rivers, provides a straightforward declaration that equates enthusiasm with inspiration:

You ridicule my enthusiasm . . . without considering there is no exertion of the human mind, no effort of the understanding, imagination, or heart, without a spark of this divine fire.

Without enthusiasm, genius, virtue, pleasure, even love itself, languishes; all that refines, adorns, softens, exalts, ennobles life, has its source in this animating principle.

I glory in being an enthusiast in every thing; but in nothing so much as in my tenderness for this charming woman. (IV, 71)

The term has travelled some distance from the mistrust of psyche and emotion, through Shaftesbury’s elevation of emotional response to truth and beauty, to something apparently still more important to human life. It is characteristic of Brooke’s scheme of values that the praise of enthusiasm clearly proclaims that anything worth doing depends upon a kind of emotional commitment and integrity which, when fully engaged, generates a marked degree of excitement. Rivers

states his principles defiantly, with a strong sense of conviction. Brooke sees to it that the turn of events in her story proves him right. Although he expresses what was rapidly becoming a popular idea, the beliefs of the immediate past are still evident, at least in the language he employs. Therefore he assumes, almost self-consciously, a prophetic tone.

In Col. Rivers, Brooke offers her readers a fairly eloquent spokesman for her sentimental polemic. He is the true pleasurable philosopher, and from the dialogues with his counterpart Emily — herself no mean speaker — it is not surprising that a certain amount of recognizably philosophical language should appear. Brooke's use of familiar phrases, as we have seen, goes far beyond the usual definition of literary allusion. In fact, Brooke extends her sentimental polemic into a declaration of principle, and in using these phrases to do so, she has become involved in a process that could be called transvaluation.<sup>12</sup> Statements of a new philosophy grounded in familiar philosophical language are no doubt all the more easily accepted by the contemporary reader.

In Emily and Rivers together, Brooke offers a visible example of the new order. In their progression from sorrow to joy, she encourages her reader to respond sympathetically, from the heart. *The History of Emily Montague*, then, serves to outline an ideal sensibility in its epistolary dialogue, to exemplify it in its heroic dyad, and to encourage its readers to adopt its principles by actively stirring their sympathies. It is designed to be a pleasant setting for a pleasurable philosophy.

#### NOTES

1. Frances Brooke, *The History of Emily Montague* (London: J. Dodsley, 1759), IV, 74. Subsequent references will be included in the text. Readers interested in the range of Brooke's literary reference and allusion may examine the quotations in her journal, *The Old Maid*, and Mary Jane Edwards's edition of *Emily Montague*, (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1985). Edwards also provides background material on Brooke's political and religious activities during her years in Canada in two valuable articles: "Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague*: A Biographical Context," *English Studies in Canada*, 7, 2 (Summer, 1981), 171-82; and "Frances Brooke's Politics and *The History of Emily Montague*," in *Beginnings* (The Canadian Novel, Vol. II), ed. John Moss (Toronto: NC Press, 1980), 19-27.
2. Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man*, IV, 309-10. For a discussion of Pope's influence on Brooke, see Ann Messenger's chapter on Brooke and Pope, in *His and Hers: Essays in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 148-71.
3. Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (Middletown: Wesleyan U. P.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), VI, i, 270.
4. Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, August 23, 1712.

5. For a thorough account of the history of such responses to nature, see Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. P., 1959).
6. Canadian critics have long accorded *Emily Montague* the title of the "first Canadian novel"; see C.S. Blue, "Canada's First Novelist," *Canadian Magazine*, 58 (1921-22), 3-12; Desmond Pacey, "The First Canadian Novel," *The Dalhousie Review*, 26 (1946-47), 143-50; Carl Klinck's introduction to his edition (Toronto: New Canadian Library, 1969), xi.

Whether Brooke's use of Canadian settings constitutes a genuine contribution to a national theme, however, is questionable. In "Frances Brooke's Chequered Gardens," (*Canadian Literature*, 52 (Spring, 1972), 24-38), William H. New suggests that Brooke initially multiplies the differences between "romantic North America and ordered Augustan England," but moves eventually (through Arabella) to a recognition of Canada's intrinsic value as a "wilderness garden with its own pleasures," not at all dependent on such conventional oppositions. However, the change in Arabella does not depend upon her acceptance of the "irregular" (the Canadian landscape itself), but upon her acceptance of her own sensibility. She brings the distinction between the beautiful (usually ordered) and the sublime (which is irregular and astonishing) *with her* to Canada. New's otherwise valuable study overlooks Brooke's conscious use of the popular Burkean distinction (demonstrably useful to sensibility).

7. "Advice to an Author," *Characteristics*, ed. Stanley Grean (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 226-7. For commentary on Brooke's approach to the noble savage, see New, "Frances Brooke's Chequered Gardens," 31-2; and Ann Edwards Boutelle, "Frances Brooke's *Emily Montague* (1769): Canada and woman's rights," *Women's Studies*, 12 (1986): 12-13.
8. Brooke's novel, like many sentimental novels, follows the comic progression outlined by Northrop Frye, "from a society controlled by habit, ritual bondage, arbitrary law and the older characters to a society controlled by youth." *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton U. P., 1957), 169.
9. The question of influence in the matter of the ethical value of friendship is a complex one; the Augustans looked toward Aristotle (especially the *Nicomachean Ethics*), Cicero, and Horace. For later figures such as Brooke, these sources could well have been mediated by later authors such as Addison or Fielding.

A strong case could be made for the influence of Henry Fielding on Brooke. First, several of his favourite recurring polemical issues and concerns appear regularly in *Emily Montague*, including his distinction between the aristocracy of birth and the aristocracy of moral worth, everywhere apparent in his novels, and clearly articulated in his *Essay on Conversation* in terms which Brooke may well have borrowed: "The desire of pleasing on each side, in an intercourse enlivened by taste, and governed by delicacy and honour, calls forth all the graces of the person and understanding, all the amiable sentiments of the heart; it also gives good-breeding, ease, and a certain awakened manner, which is not to be acquired but in a mixed conversation." *Miscellanies* (Middletown: Wesleyan U. P., 1972), I, 124.

Fielding's influence may also be seen in Brooke's emphasis on the value of good example (especially by the privileged), the importance of moral education, the nature of human potential for good or evil, the duty and rewards of benevolence, and a degree of wry irony apparent in the letters of several characters. Finally, in a tale within a tale (a structural device itself characteristic of Fielding), Brooke names her two heroines Fanny and Sophia (the leading female characters of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*). The titular heroine of the novel itself, of course, has as her namesake the heroine of Fielding's most sentimental novel (Amelia, familiarly known as Emily).

10. Pacey noted this aspect of Brooke's thought as long ago as 1947; "The First Canadian Novel," 147-8. For more detailed studies, see W. H. New, "The Old Maid: Frances Brooke's Apprentice Feminism," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 2, 3 (1973): 9-12; Katherine M. Rogers, "Sensibility and Feminism: The Novels of Frances Brooke," *Genre*, 11 (Summer, 1978), 159-171; Ann Edwards Boutelle, "Frances Brooke's *Emily Montague* (1769): Canada and woman's rights"; the chapter on Brooke's Arabella in Ann Messenger's *His and Hers*, 148-71; and K.J.H. Berland, "A Tax on Old Maids and Bachelors: Frances Brooke's *Old Maid*," forthcoming in *Eighteenth Century Women and the Arts*, ed. Frederick Keener and Susan Lorsch (New York: Greenwood Press).
11. Benjamin Whichcote, *Moral and Religious Aphorisms*, No. 24; in G. R. Cragg, *The Cambridge Platonists* (London: Oxford U. P., 1968), 422.
12. The notion that the novel has emerged from a process of evolution is of course a critical commonplace. This evolution sometimes involves borrowing structures of thought and

reforming them radically to fit a new milieu, a process M.H. Abrams calls *transvaluation*; *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in American Literature* (New York: Norton, 1973).

The existence of such transvaluations of traditional moral commonplaces in Brooke's novel conforms with R. S. Crane's analysis of the evolution of sentimentalism out of Anglican Doctrine: a religious doctrine emphasizing the emotional value of sympathy and benevolence gradually alters the popular conception of the value of emotion. See Crane's "Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling'," *ELH*, 1 (1934): 205-30; reprinted in Crane's *The Idea of the Humanities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1, 188-213. Donald Greene's rebuttal, "Latitudinarianism and Sensibility: The Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling' Reconsidered," *MP*, 75 (1977), 159-83, has been answered by Frans de Bruyn's "Latitudinarianism and Its Importance as a Precursor of Sensibility," *JEGP*, 80 (1981), 349-368, whose survey of the influence of Latitudinarian writings tends to confirm Crane's original contentions.