

Charlotte Lennox: *The Lady's  
Museum and "Harriot &  
Sophia" Conti.*

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Dr. Karenza Sutton-Bennett ©

# Review: Representations of Education:

- **Trifler** → fondness for reading, brother tutors her (polite)
- **Harriot** → attending boarding school (amusement)
- **Sophia** → fondness for reading, Mr. Herbert tutors her (polite)
- **Dolly** → father educates his daughters (practical)



# Review: What is a Trifler?

## To Trifle (verb)

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- To act without weight or dignity; to act with levity
- To mock; to play the fool
- To indulge light amusement
- To be of no importance
- To make no importance

## Trifler (noun)

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- One who acts with levity; one who talks with folly
- A Dallier
- A Doodle
- A Fribbler
- Impertinent
- Simpleton
- Wanton

## Review: Sentimental Novel:

- High emotions leading to illness
- Suspense
- Misunderstandings
- Presumed death
- Financial strain



# Who is Sir Charles?

- The Darnleys rent out his house
- He is a member of the gentry, a Baronet:
  - “Among those who looking upon her as a conquest of no great difficulty formed the mortifying design of making a mistress of her, was Sir Charles Stanley, a young **baronet** of a large estate, a most agreeable person, and engaging address: his fine qualities made him the delight of all who knew him, and even envy itself allowed him to be a man of strictest honour and unblemished integrity.” (H&S 6).

# Key Term: Baronet

- Now, a titled order, the lowest that is hereditary, ranking next below a baron, having precedence of all orders of knighthood, except that of the Garter. **A baronet is a commoner**, the principle of the order being 'to give rank, precedence, and title without privilege.' (oed.com)



# Key Term: Gallantry

“Persons who connect the idea of virtue and goodness with such a character, would find it hard to conceive how a man who lives in a constant course of dissimulation with one part of his species, and who abuses the advantages he has received from nature and fortune in subduing chastity, and ensnaring innocence, can possibly deserve, and establish a reputation for honour! but such are the illusions of prejudice, and such the tyranny of custom, that he who is called a man of **gallantry** shall be at the same time esteemed a man of honour, though **gallantry** comprehends the worst kind of fraud, cruelty, and injustice.” (H&S 6)

**Gallantry** → Courtliness or devotion to the female sex, polite or courteous bearing or attention to ladies (oed.com)

# Gender Bias

- If a woman flirts or has a sexual indiscretion/out of wedlock her virtue and reputation is ruined
- BUT for a man: “... he who is called a man of gallantry, is at the same time **esteemed a man of honour**, through gallantry comprehends the **worst kind of fraud, cruelty and injustice.**”
- Rake → [*Racaille*, Fr. the low rabble; or *rekel*, Dutch, a worthless cur dog.] A loose, disorderly, vicious, wild, gay, thoughtless fellow; a man addicted to pleasure.



# Bridgerton

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQCCjhyaMFU>
- Daphne is compromised because she is alone with two men
- Whereas Anthony carries on several affairs and keeps his honour



# Is Sir Charles a Good Guy?

- He first courts Harriot with not intention of marrying her:
  - “He instantly saw something in [Sophia] looks and person which inspired him with more respect than he had been used to from Mrs. Darnley and Harriot; a dignity which she derived from innate virtue, and exalted understanding. Struck with that inexplicable charm in her countenance which made it impossible to look on her with indifference, he began to consider her with an attention which greatly disgusted Harriot, who could not conceive that where she was present any other object was worth notice” (H&S 8).



# Spectator?

- He buys Sophia a house (usually given to a mistress)
- He spies on the Darnleys:
  - “neither Mrs. Darnley nor Harriot now opposed this design, which soon came to the knowledge of Sir Charles, **who had bribed a servant** of the family to give him intelligence of everything that passed in.” (H&S 11)
- Spectator: A person who sees, or looks on at, some scene or occurrence; a beholder, onlooker, observer.

- He sneaks into Sophia's apartment and searches through her things
  - “While he was anxiously searching -for more of her papers, a little shagreen case fell from one of the shelves upon the ground. He took it up, and as everything that belonged to her excited his curiosity, he opened it immediately, and with equal surprise and pleasure, saw his own miniature in water colours, which was evidently the performance of Sophia herself.” (H&S 78)
- rummages through Sophia's personal belongings he find a picture of him that she painted
- It's proof that Sophia truly loves him and reason enough for him to ask for her hand in marriage



# Gifts

- “[Sir Charles] brought [Sophia] all the new books and pamphlets that came out which were worth her reading: he adopted the purity and delicacy of her sentiments, declared himself always of the side he espoused: he talked of virtue like a man who loved and practised it, and let all his good qualities in the fairest light: he presented Harriot from time to time with fashionable trifles, and sent Sophia books enough to furnish out a little library, consisting of the best authors, in English, French, and Italian, all elegantly bound, with proper cafes for their reception: he praised whatever he approved, and appeared to have great respect and consideration for Mr. Herbert, because he observed she loved and esteemed him.” (H&S 10)

# Marriage proposal?

- “when Sir Charles visits you next, Miss Sophia, he comes to offer you his hand; he has asked my consent as your guardian and your friend’ and I, presuming on my influence over you in both these characters have given it freely; and how indeed, having your interest and happiness sincerely at heart, could I do otherwise? **But if you think his former behaviour, in which however there were only suspicions against him, deserves to be resented, at a time when those suspicions are absolutely destroyed, you must go through with your heroism, and see him no more’ for the poet says.**” (H&S 68)



# Gaslighting?

- “S I R, Since it is impossible my marriage with Miss Sophia can ever take place, I with you would look upon all that passed between us upon that subject, as a dream: I dreamt indeed when I imagined there was a woman in the world capable of a sincere attachment; and I ought to be ashamed to own that upon so delusive a hope I was ready to a& in opposition to the general maxims of the world, and be pointed at as a filly romantic fellow. However, I beg you will assure the lady, that as I have no right to blame her conduct, so I have not the least resentment for it, and am so perfectly a: ease on this occasion, that I can with great sincerity congratulate her on her approaching happiness. I am, Sir, Your humble Servant,  
CHARLES STANLEY.” (H&S 73)

# Rumours & Misunderstandings

- Sir Charles is told a **rumour** that the local farmer's son has been matched with “a fine London lady that boards at the **parson's**” (H&S 81)

**Parson** → A vicar or any other beneficed member of the clergy of the Church of England; a chaplain, curate, or any Anglican clergyman; a minister or preacher of any Christian denomination, a clergyman. Sometimes with pejorative connotation.



# High Emotions

- “At the sight of his young rival **his heart throbbed as if it would leave his breast**: he hastily retreated behind the hedge, determined to watch his motions; for he imagined, and with reason, that he came there to meet his mistress; and who that mi- stress was, whether Sophia, or the curate's daughter, was the distracting doubt, which he now expected to have satisfied.”
- Resulting in Sir Charles leaving for Paris & contracting a “**violent fever**” (H&S 107)
  - **Sentimental hero trope, to be overtaken by emotion**

# Rumours

- “I am very well informed, that a match has been be proposed to[Sir Charles], and he has given so favourable an answer that it is expected the marriage will be concluded, as soon as he comes from Paris” (H&S 107)



- Sophia learns that Harriot is living in the house that Sir Charles had bought for Sophia:
  - “first thought that stuck the amazed Sophia was, that Sir Charles, either following the motions of his natural inconstancy, or in revenge of her supposed contempt of him, had married Harriot.” (H&S 96)
- BUT what she finds out from her sister is more troubling, that Lord L has purchased the house from Sir Charles

# Harriot's Immoral Decisions

- “Among those who looking upon [Harriot] as a conquest of no great difficulty formed the mortifying design of making a mistress of her, was Sir Charles Stanley, a young baronet of a large estate, a most agreeable person, and engaging address: his fine qualities made him the delight of all who knew him, and even envy itself allowed him to be a man of strictest honour and unblemished integrity” (H&S 6).



# Lord L

- “Without any preparation therefore, she introduced the name of **Lord L----**, a young nobleman who was just returned from his travels, and lavishing a thousand encomiums upon his person, and his elegant taste in dress, added, " That he was the best bred man in the world, and had entertained her, so agreeably one night at the play, when happening to come into a box where she was with a lady of her acquaintance, that they did not mind a word the players said, he was so diverting“ (H&S 9).

**N.B. Common convention to leave out the full name of a character to protect their identity**

# Harriot's Education as her Downfall?

- “Harriot received this invitation with joy; for such was the depravity of her mind, that she exulted in having an opportunity of **displaying the granduer of her dress, and equipage** to her sifter; to her who had made virtuous poverty her choice, and shewn that she despised riches, when they were to be purchased by guilt. The wretched fallen Harriot was proud ! **The diamonds that glittered in her hair, the gilt chariot, and the luxurious table**; these monuments of her disgrace contributed to keep up the insolence of a woman, who by the loss of her honour was lower than the meanest of her servants, who could boast of an uncorrupted virtue” (H&S 103)



# Harriot's Downfall

- “Harriot, during the time she lived with her mother, had been courted by a young tradesman in tolerable circumstances; and although she thought it great insolence for a person in business to pretend to her, yet, actuated by a true spirit of coquetry, while she despised the lover, she took pleasure in his addresses” (H&S 119).
- She is angry that Sophia is marrying a man of rank
- BUT her scandalous behaviour she had lost her advantage
- Sir Charles “procures” her a husband

# Discussion Questions:

- 1) Do you think Harriot's ending is justified?
- 2) How do you rate Sir Charles' overall character?