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Natural, Unnatural and Sarah Fielding

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In her first novel, The Adventures of David Simple (1744), Sarah Fielding (1710-68) depended largely on characters who are completely 'good-natured' or 'ill-natured', which resulted in simple polarization of characters, failing to provide complexity and gradation of characterization and to offer varieties of personalities. Most of the courses of events in society which often perplex and sometimes annoy and corner the protagonists are described as 'natural' and conventional, even though they are unreasonable, inhumane and absurd from a rational perspective. This paper examines the values of 'nature' in The Cry (1754). The writer declares that her purpose as an author is to represent 'human nature'; she is ready to launch an unfamiliar, even strange and new, device in offering her readers her observation on human nature. So, she assumes that the goal she pursues is to clarify human nature and for this purpose, she has freedom to step beyond natural every-day settings. She invites the readers to look up in the air with the help of vivid imagination, drawing an image of the castle in the air where her fable deploys. There she proposes to imagine her speakers in front of the allegorical mass of people who are anonymous, garrulous and morose critics and venomous fault-finders, and also Una, an ultimate reversal of the Cry as a candid and kind listener. Thus, the book consists of the scenes like a play and the settings resemble the legal court with testimonial utterances and the mass of people's presence. The unusual and unnatural device is justified as a means to reveal human psychology. In so doing, Fielding succeeds in depicting an engaging and somewhat antisocial figure, Cylinda, while the protagonist, Portia, is a thoroughly good and intellectual person.