# THE POPULAR FICTION OF THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY COMMERCIAL CIRCULATING LIBRARIES

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This thesis is an analysis of the fictions which were among the most popular of the eighteenth century. An index of the most popular stories was compiled by comparing all the extant commercial library catalogues from 1739-1801. The catalogues were used in the absence of comprehensive edition figures for the period; the libraries are the best measure of the popularity of the fictions, standing at the centre of the trade in popular fiction: commissioning, producing, and supplying books to the literate elite.

A selection of 127 fictions were read, and the plot elements were anlaysed by a computer programme which exposed the similarities between the stories and suggested that some elements in the fictions were stock characters such as veteran soldiers, banditti or mystery relations. There were stock scenes too, such as deathbed scenes, macabre scenes, and adventure scenes.

Certain attitudes seem to be held in common by all the fictions of the survey. Although some of them portrayed realistic city scenes, not one treated the countryside in a realistic fashion: not one described the new farming methods and practices which were transforming the face of the landscape. Not one showed any rural worker, except as a contented peasant or cottager. Not one showed any rural middle-class entrepreneurs or experimental landlords. This surprising absence from the fictions could be an indication of the sense of guilt felt by the literate elite at the deterioration of the lifestyle of their working-class rural dependents.

Another interesting attitude results from the sexual double-standard prevalent in the fictions. The sexual exploitation of working-class women produces titillating scenes when the upper-class heroine is forced into wage work and automatically becomes legitimate sexual prey to upper-class men. All the working heroines in this survey are either sexually assaulted or seduced.

The thesis analyses briefly the inter-connections between the fictions and suggests that of 127 stories, 34 are closely related as sequels, piracies, satires or borrowed characters and scenes. In the light of these inter-connections, and the common attitudes and subjects, the thesis suggests that the popular fiction can be read as an index to the consciousness of the literate elite of the eighteenth-century.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The fictional world open to the reader of the eighteenth century is unmapped as yet by students of the period. Literary critics have tended to look at individual works of especial merit and have not examined the huge body of popular fiction to which the main works belong. Consequently the traditions and conventions of fiction writing in the eighteenth century have been ignored, and their coherent world is still unexplored. The emphasis upon the individual works of major writers means that the elements in their stories, and sometimes entire story-lines, are seen as individual inventions. Yet the major writers of the period were frequently behaving in the same way as the minor writers, adopting each other's elements, symbols, and motifs, and developing other authors' stories or characters. The sexual hero-villain is not an invention of Richardson with Lovelace; the features of Lovelace - his sophistication, sexuality, high-breeding, and wealth - are all characteristics of the conventional eighteenth-century villain. Similarly, Tom Jones is the Picaro hero of the old Picaro tales developed to a more subtle and endearing character, but still a recognisable son of the family. The entire 'gothic' genre which some scholars treat as an eighteenth-century invention, is the re-working of themes popular throughout the century and which appeared often in Novellas and Romances.

By studying the fictions as a group, reading many stories and comparing their content, the modern reader can begin to see them as did the reader of the eighteenth century. Readers then would not have dreamed of limiting themselves to less than half-a-dozen authors when new and exciting stories were coming off the presses and into

the libraries every day. They read and enjoyed the fictions we now regard as classics, but they read them in the context of all the other entertaining books; and saw them as part of the fictional scene and not as isolated giants.

It is only when this fictional scene is studied as a whole that it becomes clear that authors and readers shared an imaginary world with its own geography, population, morals, manners, dangers, and pleasures. Aspects of this world change in time, but it is overall a stable world with features inherited from the Romances of the previous century, and even mythic elements contributed by ancient Greek or Latin writers.

This world was constructed mainly by authors who came from the small elite class of eighteenth-century Britain, and it is interesting to see that just as they would have shared a fairly uniform view of the real world, they also shared a view of a coherent fictional world. This imaginary world offers the reader a fictionalised reflection of eighteenth-century Europe, the East, the New World, and Britain, as well as a fictionalised ancient world and a fantasy world. The fictional world sometimes seems to be a direct reflection of the real world: accounts of corruption, or educational or didactic material seem firmly rooted in the eighteenth-century reality, as far as one can know two hundred years later. But there are fascinating areas where the fictional world differs significantly from the real world and some where it is in direct contradiction.

The fictions correspond closely with reality in those stories where authors intended to show society in its true colours. Thus the scene-setting accounts of the New World read at times more like a real traveller's journal of Canada or America than a fiction. The authors were conscious that they were writing for an audience

who knew little or nothing of the New World, and conscientiously tried to tell readers of the beauties and promise of the new lands while proceeding with a wholly fictional story.

In the tiny minority of stories which include episodes set in the Americas the authors wrote vivid but accurate descriptions. But when the setting is the East, Europe, or Britain the writers enjoyed varying degrees of artistic licence. Some of the closest to reality are the accounts produced by the magical observers: the invisible devils, the magical guinea, the atom, or the lapdog of the eighteenth-century fictional world. The bias in these stories is to the worst aspects of human behaviour, and they correspond very closely with historical accounts of eighteenth-century reality when they deal with areas which are known to have been corrupt. Many of them include scenes set at local or general elections and show voters and candidates in the worst possible light. The candidates are portrayed as greedy ambitious men seeking a profit through political power, and the electors as greedy fools selling their birth-right of a vote for drink, food, and a cash bribe. When the fictional world is used in this way to expose the real world the picture seems to be accurate.

Another favourite butt is the corrupt behaviour of officers of the law and the aggressive behaviour of lawyers. One cannot know whether the nightmarish individual scenes of corruption in political and civic life are exaggerated, but historians generally would confirm the fictional world's picture of the corrupt behaviour of men in public life. Other eighteenth-century vices exposed - and perhaps exaggerated - in the fictional world are also confirmed by historians: the passion for gaming, the heavy drinking and gluttony, the sexual exploitation of working-class women, and the violence even of polite life.

Some of the stories are set on the smaller stage of the home and the restricted domestic circle, and many of these have the unmistakeable ring of observed, not imagined, detail. Even when they are didactic in tone and lecture readers about household management or display the exemplary home, the accurate observation of language, personal relationships, and emotions suggests that the authors were drawing on their own experiences for their fictions. The fictional world is close to their reality.

Once again the authors were using the fictional world as an educational device. In the vivid description of corruption the authors were trying to draw the readers' attention to the need for reform in public life. In the exaggerated portrait of private evils the authors were working to reform manners and behaviour in the domestic circle. Mrs Haywood in The Wife taught almost wholly by negative example, showing the ills of gluttony, of too much display of affection, of too much vanity, or being rude to one's husband's relations.*[1] Other domestic stories include positive examples: fictions which exaggerate the rewards and pleasures of remarkably good behaviour.

At one point, when dealing with ideas, the fictional world overlapped the real eighteenth-century world. The education debate over the correct training of young children was reproduced faithfully in the fictional world by Rousseau in Emile; and by Richardson in Pamela in Her Exalted Condition. Both authors stated their case and argued their theory using a fictitious child as an example. The results served both as a contribution to the contemporary education debate in the real world of the eighteenth century, and as part of the fictional world where the fictions also belong.

But it is where the real and the fictional worlds diverged that some of the most interesting conflicts appear. One reason for the differences between the historical account and the fictional version of the eighteenth-century world is that authors were influenced by the tradition of the previous fictions in prose, plays, and poems. For example these convey an overwhelming impression that only the leisure time of an elite of a society is the raw material of fiction. Almost all the stories of this survey (92.9%) are set in the world of the elite, and none of them takes place in a work environment. In this bias they follow earlier literature which dealt exclusively with the doings of knights, princes, and kings. The eighteenth-century fictions almost never feature anyone socially lower than a wealthy metropolitan merchant. The adventures and perils of knight-errantry of the Romances were not replaced in the eighteenth-century fictions with the adventures of trade or industry. The convention that wage work is not the material of fictions was inherited from the Romances and survives today.

The eighteenth-century authors were also influenced by the literary conventions of scenery, architecture, and class structures. The wild and desolate scenery and the impenetrable forests of the Romances were transplanted by eighteenth-century authors to accounts of contemporary English adventures. Thus in persuasive, realistic stories of eighteenth-century England the authors depicted unknown and uninhabited valleys in Wales (Ophelia), and lost communities in the Derbyshire Peaks (John Buncle). The gothic architecture of gloomy castles and secret passages seems more plausible when authors set their stories in Europe, or in ancient times; but even stories set in eighteenth-century England boast of totally isolated castles and farmhouses.

The pastoral scenes of the Romances and the Greek and Latin myths were transposed wholesale into pictures of eighteenth-century rural England. This causes an interesting discrepancy between the history of the agricultural revolution and the fictional pictures of the countryside. From 1650 the feudal-style village life of Britain had been changing as a result of the increasing number of enclosures which destroyed the open field system of sharing land, and with it the traditional relationship of landlord and peasant or tenant-farmer. In place of the old ways of farming, a new relationship was developing based on maximising crop yields by experimental farming methods, and increasing profits by using a seasonal, landless, work-force on high-rent farms.*[2]

None of these developments appears in the fictional world where the prevailing picture of the countryside is that of the pastoral Romances. The only acknowledgement of new farming methods comes in stories describing colonial or foreign life-styles. The England of the fictions is still feudal 'merrie Englande'.

This particular blind spot may have been created by the guilt felt by the members of the literate elite as they watched the deterioration of social harmony between the classes. Relations between the owners and the workers of the land may never have been wholly peaceful, but it seems certain that the change in farming practices increased rural tension as it attacked the living styles and standards of the workers. The explosion of their discontent into sporadic violence was a recognised feature of eighteenth-century life and the fear of mob violence and the consciousness of their own responsibility for the stimulus of hardship seems to have been present in the minds of the literate elite.

Since fiction was read as an escape from some of the uncomfortable realities of life, the fictional rural society is set consequently in the unstinted and unimproved fruitfulness of the pastoral world where Nature provides all, and workers are not pressured by hunger into new social and work relationships. In the fictional world all rural workers are the peasants of the Romances: feudal, content, and grateful. The house servants of the fictional world also come from this class and when they appear at all, share the characteristics of the feudal faithful retainer. The cheeky personal servants of the hero or heroine are a development of this style of worker who, in a manner reminiscent of Shakespearian servant-clowns, are full of back-chat and impertinence but devotedly loyal to the young master or mistress.

Not only are the conflicts of eighteenth-century England missing but the classes involved in that conflict are absent from the fictional world. The dissatisfied landless labourers, the bread rioters, the Captain Swing rioters are missing; so too is the class they blamed for their distress - the nouveau-riche tenant farmers, the grain-hoarding middlemen, the cheating bakers and millers, and the corn factors.*[3] The fictional world ignores the changes taking place in farming and production methods in the real world, and is thus enabled to ignore dissatisfied labourers, and the growing class of middlemen. Equally, none of the members of the elite in the fictional world is seen to be working hard for money, or running land as a profitable business. Not only are the new class of profit-conscious middlemen missing, but nor are there established aristocratic landlords working for profit. Ownership of land is seen primarily as a social position, not as a money-earning job. Consequently the worst vice of a landlord is to neglect his social duties; there is

no suggestion that a landlord might deliberately exploit his workers for financial gain. The sins of the elite are sins of omission rather than commission. Even a local squire who leaves his villagers to starve in rags is excused by his victims who suggest that he may not have known of their pitiful condition in Millenium Hall, and only a slight reference is made to his profit from their plight. The worst thing a member of the elite can do in the fictional world is to neglect his duty.

This is the crime of Columella whose romantic longings lead him to live in the country but not to join in the rural social life and accept his responsibilities and obligations. Columella was written as an example of the serious consequences of a member of the elite refusing to shoulder his obligations.

As it is only the failure of the landlord to assume his responsibilities which is shown as the problem, the class structure which gives one man power over so many is never criticised or even questioned in the fictional world. Even the most unfanciful stories - such as those of Defoe - do not challenge the basic inequalities of the society, although they may expose the consequences of some injustices. As Diana Spearman confirms:

> ... the power of the aristocracy would make wicked or silly peers and landowners a worthwhile target, both for the moralist and the satirist, and this is exactly what we find in novels: criticism of those who fell below the standard their responsibilities demand - no attack on institutions.*[4]

This absence of rural conflict and of the classes involved in the conflict is in interesting contrast to the oral fictions of the period which were accessible - unlike the written fictions - to illiterate people. A study of the chap-books and ballads to be read aloud or sung indicates that the wrong-doing and punishment of

exploiting landlords and middlemen was a central theme in the eighteenth-century working-class oral culture. The written fictions, which were read only by the literate, and therefore the upper class, show a picture of rural peace. In the fictions open to the illiterate working-class audience the conflict, and an imaginary satisfactory resolution of the conflict (such as a middleman buried by his own ploughshares) was a popular theme.*[5]

The book fictions of the eighteenth century solely represent the interests and the fantasies of the elite, and they do this without any constraint of style, nor any attempt to appeal to an imagined popular taste.

In the years before the eighteenth century the fantasies of authors were contained and controlled by the rigid discipline of the style of their medium, whether prose or poetry, and the equally rigid conventions of content which excluded not only mundane and prosaic events but even domestic and realistic stories. But in the book fictions of the eighteenth century for the first time an author could let ideas and fantasies flow onto the page without anxieties about conventions of style and content. With this liberating opportunity it is not surprising that there was an explosion of Shandy-like rambling tales. The writers took full advantage of the sudden liberation from conventions and none of Fielding's interest in the new rules of the Comic Epic in Prose*[6] could reconstruct the bounds of tightly-disciplined writing. The book fictions of the eighteenth century are not novels in the shape, style and content as expected and enforced by the nineteenth century - that form was not yet established - and in the fruitful chaos the author was able to pour out feelings, anxieties, obsessions, and passions in whichever form came most readily to hand, regardless of style or even length.

Richardson's prolix letters were imitated by many, as was Sterne's light whimsy. It is true to say that every innovative author of this period spawned a host of imitations as writers experimented. Since there were no rules the author could write as he or she pleased, and since there was no concern for any conventions of writing the author was able to let ideas flow without restraint.

The eighteenth-century book fictions are thus unique since the fantasies of the authors were free from the stylistic restrictions of the past; they also give a unique insight into the fantasies of the class which exclusively wrote and read them.

The explosion of book fictions came at a time when fiction reading was still restricted to the wealthy and leisured: readers and authors came from a single stratum of society. This hegemonic group was not only closely linked with bonds of material and political interest, but also inter-related through bonds of friendship and marriage. There was an 'extraordinary homogeneity of English elite society'.*[7] Further, the group was numerically small,*[8] visiting one central metropolis of London and a handful of fashionable resorts, and living in similar family residences in the country houses. The group shared the same duties and responsibilities in the counties, attended the same parliament and Court, generally worshipped in the same way, and faced the same problems. In this unique period the Quality were a well-knit group in monopoly control of the literature both as readers and writers at a time when the style of fiction, and consequently the fantasies of the authors, had been recently liberated.*[9] To the literary historian they bequeathed a marvellous legacy of fiction which accurately represents the fantasies of one class, and one class alone. Their monopoly position both as producers and consumers of fiction means that even stories calculated to appeal

to the audience carry the motifs of the upper-class fantasy since the audience was exclusively upper class.

Prose fiction is the major source of fantasy material for the reader and the major expression of fantasies by the author of the eighteenth century; but both poetry and plays held a significant place in the imaginative life of the period. Although the decline of the London theatre, and the absence of major provincial theatres in the early years of the century meant that live theatre was not a central feature in the imaginative life of the Quality, the reading of plays at home was a popular pastime as indicated by the stocks of plays kept by even the smallest provincial librarians. It may be that the hobby of play-reading as a social event developed from the story-teller's circle of the oral tradition, and encouraged the development of circles reading fiction aloud as well. The popularity of plays for reading is perhaps further indicated by the authors of The Cry who wrote their prose fiction in imitation of a play structure with scenes, acts and characters, as well as the widespread convention of a Dramatis Personae at the front of a book.

Poetry also was popular with the eighteenth-century readers and poetry too is included in many prose fictions, sometimes as a poetic creation by one of the characters with a significance in the story, or sometimes as incidental ornament.

The major disadvantage of using either poetry or plays as an index of the consciousness and tastes of the readers is that the more rigid conventions of both forms control content and treatment. Unlike prose fictions, neither plays nor poems can successfully ramble on, including whatever material strikes the author as interesting at the time of writing. And the eighteenth-century dreamers, the less talented and indifferently-educated readers who

hovered on the edge of writing their own fantasies, opted for the ostensibly easier style of prose.*[10]

The ideal material for analysing the consciousness of the elite is the prose fiction which they read in such quantity. On the production side more and more amateurs were tempted to try their hand at transforming their fantasies into print, and brought their dreams almost untouched to the reader. Even the professional writers came from the same elite class, and though their writing may have been a little more self-conscious and deliberate, their attempts to appeal to a public meant they carefully included the favourite fantasies of their elite audience. They were prepared and able, as in the example of Mrs Haywood, to revolutionise style and content to appeal to an audience as tastes changed and more coherent story lines with more sentimental and serious scenes became more popular than comic ramblings.

The audience themselves controlled the production of the fictions by their enthusiastic response to some elements and their rejection of others; these attitudes must have been carefully noted by the professional writers and may have been expressed - albeit unconsciously - by the amateur writers. Readers and authors thus collaborated to produce the fictions which pleased them. In writing to please their audience the authors of the eighteenth century in no way patronised the readers, since readers came from the same elite class as authors. The authors wrote to please their own class. Their friends, their critics, their readers, and families were all people of similar background. The authors wrote to please themselves, and the readers responded with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

> Obviously it was not genius or talent but the likes and dislikes of the majority of uncritical readers that dictated what sort of novel was wanted.*[11]

Other scholars have noted the social significance of the fictions but the importance of this survey is that generalisations about the content of fictions are based on a quantitative survey of circulating library catalogues of the eighteenth century which ensured that it was the popular fictions - those preferred by the eighteenth-century readers - which were studied. The extant catalogues of the eighteenth-century circulating libraries were consulted and an index compiled of all the titles stocked by the libraries.

At the start of this study a total of 28 catalogues was known to be available to scholars. Hilda M Hamlyn knew of 11 catalogues in 1947*[12], and Paul Kaufman described a total of 25 catalogues in 1965*[13] and 1967*[14]. However this total needs correction. I believe that Paul Kaufman included two catalogues which were the catalogues of libraries for sale, not catalogues designed for borrowers to hire books.

I believe this is the case with the catalogue of Ann Ireland now at Cambridge University Library. The catalogue lists the contents of a library which was to be sold on 17 July 1789, 'at the shop of Ann Ireland, opposite the Assembly Rooms, Leicester'. Inside the cover of this catalogue is an advertisement for Ann Ireland's own apparently thriving commercial circulating library which specialised in light reading, novels, plays and histories. 'Just published. A catalogues of the circulating library consisting of upwards of 2,000 volumes.' This would seem to suggest that the enterprising Ms Ireland was acting as an auctioneer for the sale of a private library while at the same time continuing her trade as a librarian. It is worth noting that this was not an unusual practice. Most commercial librarians also worked as booksellers, auctioneers,

shopkeepers, or publishers.

A similar error may have been made by Kaufman over the catalogue of James Sanders now at the Central Library, Derby. The catalogue is not a library catalogue but a Sale Catalogue dated 1771 'for books at the shop of James Sanders, Bookseller in Derby'.

With these two reductions the total then stood at 26 London, English provincial, and Scottish library catalogues surviving from the eighteenth century. Four complete catalogues have subsequently been found in the British Library, bringing the total to 30, and during the course of this research a further eight were located so the total now stands at 38. Fragments of one catalogue found at the British Library in 1982 have not been included, since unfortunately only four pages of a library said to have included six thousand volumes have survived; a very unrepresentative sample. The library was run by James Meuros or Meurose in Kilmarnock ca 1760.

Extant Commercial Library Circulating Catalogues*[15]

| | |
|---|---|
| John Allen, Hereford, ca 1800 | (Hereford K) |
| Alexander Angus, Aberdeen, 1765 | (Aberdeen K) |
| William Bathoe, London, 1757 | (BL K H) |
| John Bell, London, ca 1774 | (C) |
| John Bell, London, 1778 | (BL K H) |
| Alexander Brown, Aberdeen, ca 1795 | (Aberdeen K) |
| James Corkhill, Whitehaven, 1793 | (Carlisle K) |
| Samuel Fancourt, Salisbury, 1739 | (BL ESTC) |
| Samuel Fancourt, London, 1746-48 | (BL K H) |
| William Frederick, Bath, (sold) 1776? | (Bod. H) |
| Thomas Gibbon, Bath, ca 1800 | (Bod. K) |
| William Gray, Edinburgh, 1772 | (Bod. K) |
| Harrad, Stamford, 1790 | (BL ESTC) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Samuel Hazard, Bath, 1789 | (Bath K) |
| Joseph Heath jnr, Nottingham, ca 1748 | (BL ESTC) |
| M Heavisides, Darlington, 1790 | (BL K H) |
| Thomas Hookham, London, 1783 | (C H) |
| Thomas Hookham, London, 1794 | (Bod. K H) |
| William Lane, London, 1798-1801 (K, H: 1796) | (Bod. K H) |
| John Lowe, Birmingham, 1796-98 (K: 1796) | (Birmingham K H) |
| Thomas Lownds (sic) London, 1755 | (C K) |
| Thomas Lowndes, London, 1766 | (BL) |
| Thomas Lucas, Birmingham, ca 1787 | (Birmingham K H) |
| William Marriott, Derby, 1795-96 (K: 1796) | (Derby K) |
| R Nicoll, Dundee, ca 1782 | (Dundee K) |
| John Noble, London, 1755 | (Birmingham) |
| John Noble, London, 1766 (K, H: 1767) | (Bod. K H) |
| Samuel Noble, London, 1780 | (Bod) |
| Francis Noble, London, 1790 | (Bod) |
| Palmer and Merrick, Oxford, 1789 | (Bod) |
| William Rusher, Bunbury, 1801 | (C) |
| R Sands, Newcastle, 1801 | (Bod. K H) |
| James Sibbald, Edinburgh, 1781-86 | (National Library Scotland, Edinburgh K) |
| James Sibbald, Edinburgh, ca 1800 | (Edinburgh Central, K) |
| S Silver, Margate, 1787 | (Margate K H) |
| Robert Taylor, Berwick on Tweed, 1771 | (Bod) |
| Ann Yearsley, Bristol, 1793 | (BL ESTC) |

One catalogue included in this list is a sale catalogue for the stock of the commercial circulating library of William Frederick of Bath. Kaufman dates the library at 1774, but it seems more probable that the library was offered for sale on the death of Mr Frederick, and was bought and re-opened by his assistant. The re-opening was advertised in the Bath Chronicle of August 19, 1776, and I would therefore suggest that the sale catalogue was published sometime during that year.

> Orange Grove, Bath, August 19, 1776.
> A Tucker, Executrix and successor to the
> late Mr Frederick, very respectfully
> solicits a continuance of her late Master's
> Customers and at the same time takes the
> liberty to inform them, that the
> Circulating Library will be re-opened on
> Monday next....*[16]

Using the circulating library catalogues as an index of popularity can be justified by the central role that the libraries played in the demand and supply of books, especially of fiction. As a starting point, the united taste and judgement of 32 commercial librarians whose livelihood depended on their awareness of the public taste must be an interesting guide, as Kaufman says:

> Booksellers continuing in business under
> whatever name do not survive for half a
> century or more (as many of them did)
> without knowing their business.*[17]

But a more cautionary note from Kaufman, that a catalogue shows only what was stocked - it does not show what was borrowed, needs not to be taken too seriously. Since librarians were businessmen working an ephemeral market, they knew only too well that the turn-over of their fiction stocks was bound to be rapid. Indeed it is possible that the rapid senescence of fictions limited the size of a fiction library, since a fiction library could not be built up and added to over the years but, with a few honourable exceptions,

would have been scrapped at the end of each season. A library catalogue encapsulates for that year, and for that year only, what the fashionable reader would be reading for amusement. The libraries are therefore an index to the rapid changes in popularity of different titles, and a title which survives and maintains its popularity throughout the century would have worked for its place in the catalogues. No librarian could have afforded the space on his shelves for multiple copies of unwanted fiction, and no fashionable librarian would have risked the dowdy appearance of an unfashionable list of unwanted fiction in his catalogue.

It is no disadvantage that this survey has been forced to rely on the extant commercial circulating library catalogues for evidence as to which books were more popular with eighteenth-century readers. The circulating library catalogues are the only reliable index of popularity extending through the eighteenth century. It is also appropriate that a survey of this nature, looking at the minor fiction of the eighteenth century, should turn for evidence to the very institutions on which the readers relied. Contemporary accounts of the bad habit of fiction reading make it clear that anxious parents and critics believed that the commercial circulating libraries were the pre-eminent suppliers of fictions. By 1775 the circulating libraries were recognised as the 'evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge'.*[18] Modern literary historians link the development and growth of the novel with the growth of the circulating libraries.*[19] *[20]

It was inevitable that the circulating libraries would achieve a position as the major suppliers of ephemeral fiction, given the extremely high prices charged for books. New books were a luxury commodity for most of the century and while this priced fictions far beyond the reach of the working-class reader, it also made it unlikely

that even the wealthy reader would want to pay more than 10s.0d a volume*[21] for an ephemeral story which would not bear a second reading and certainly had no place in the family library. The total disappearance of so many books of minor fiction, leaving not even a record of their full titles, would seem to confirm this view that the ephemeral literature did not get into private libraries since readers did not buy and keep, but rented and returned their light reading. Once returned to the librarians the books would be either read to pieces or sold as waste, disappearing forever.

But libraries were not only suppliers of books to the reader; they were themselves consumers and had a significant impact on the edition sizes by placing large orders for popular titles. The publishing house of the Noble brothers claimed that 40 per cent of an edition of fiction was bought by the librarians.*[22] A survey of fiction depending on edition figures alone (supposing these to be available, which they are not) would hopelessly undervalue the impact of a book if it estimated the number of readers by the number of copies sold. Of a print run of a thousand, four hundred books might go to the circulating libraries, each one loaned out hundreds of times and an analysis of popular fictions of the period has to recognise the importance of the libraries.

It is a modern mistake to speak of librarians and publishers as if they were separate businesses. Nearly all the London, and some provincial, librarians were publishers; the man who chose which manuscripts he would publish was the same man who chose books to stock the library. The individual taste of the librarians (one of the unknown factors of this survey) is no more of a problem than the unknown individual tastes of the publisher. In any case they were often the same man. Some publisher-librarians may have produced

books solely to stock their libraries*[23], a recognition that readers of ephemeral fiction would hire but not buy the books.

The library stands at the centre of the eighteenth-century book trade; as a consumer of fiction buying nearly half an edition run, as a supplier of fiction to the readers who chose to hire rather than buy ephemeral fiction, and as a publisher-library business with no distinction between the two wings of the business. Both played a part in the production and supply of books but the sale of fictional books may have been the less important feature.

The extant catalogues supplied some 4,000 fictional titles. The following list shows, in order of popularity with the librarians, the titles which appeared in more than half the 38 catalogues.

They are placed in order of their popularity in the commercial circulating library catalogues, and then in alphabetical order. Those marked with an asterisk (*) were included in the survey on which this thesis is based. The remaining fictions of the survey which appeared in fewer than 17 library catalogues are listed in order of popularity and alphabetically. I have indicated that a book was published anonymously only in the cases where an author withheld his or her name. In the case of titles where I could not establish an author I quoted title alone. Where I could find no information as to date, I have shown the title with the earliest catalogue date in brackets (ecd) to indicate the first appearance of the title in the available catalogues. All books were published in London unless otherwise indicated. Subsequent references to the books of the survey will use an abbreviated title.

35 Libraries

*Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, The Life and Exploits of Don Quixote, 1605-1615, (trs, Thomas Shelton, 1612-20).

32 Libraries

*Henry Fielding, The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his friend Mr Abraham Adams, 1742.

*Samuel Richardson, Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady, 1747-48.

*Samuel Richardson, Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded, 1741.

*Alain Réné Le Sage, The History and Adventures of Gil Blas of Santillane, 1715-1735 (trs. Tobias Smollet 1749).

31 Libraries

*Francois Fénèlon, The Adventures of Telemachus, 1699-1700, (trs I Littlebury, 1699-1700).

*Henry Fielding, The History of Tom Jones; A Foundling, 1749.

*Samuel Richardson, The History of Sir Charles Grandison, 1754.

*Tobias Smollett, The Adventures of Roderick Random, 1748-49.

30 Libraries

*Tobias Smollett, The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle, 1751.

28 Libraries

*Antoine Galland, Arabian Nights Entertainments: consisting of One Thousand and One Stories, 1705-08,(trs 1713).

Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux, The Life of Marianne; or, the Adventures of the Countess of ***, 1736-42, (trs. M Collyer,

*Tobias Smollett, The Adventures of Count Fathom, 1753.

27 Libraries

*Henry Brooke, The Fool of Quality: or, The History of Henry Earl of Moreland, 1764-70.

*Daniel Defoe, The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner, written by himself, 1719.

*Henry Fielding, Amelia, 1751.

*Eliza Haywood, The History of Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy, 1753.

26 Libraries

Anon, Lavinia Rawlins, 1755.

*Francis Coventry, The History of Pompey the Little; or, the Life and Adventures of a Lap-Dog, 1751.

*Mme de Gomez, La Belle Assemblée, 1722-31, (trs. Eliza Haywood 1724-34).

*Chev. de Fieux de Mouhy, The Fortunate Country Maid, 1740, (trs 1740).

*John Shebbeare, Lydia; or, Filial Piety, A Novel, 1755.

25 Libraries

*Oliver Goldsmith, The Vicar of Wakefield, 1766.

*Thomas Simon Gueullette, Chinese Tales; or, the Adventures of the Mandarin Fum-Hoam, 1723, (trs 1725).

*Eliza Haywood, The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless, 1751.

*Samuel Johnson, Rasselas, The Prince of Abissinia, 1759.

Charlotte Lennox, The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella, 1752.

*Jean Jacques Rousseau, Eloise; or A Series of Original Letters, 1761. (Julie, or the New Eloise, Edinburgh 1773).

*Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, 1759-67.

24 Libraries

*Sarah Fielding, The Adventures of David Simple, 1744-53.

Eleonore Guichard, The Bracelet; or, The Fortunate Discovery, 1759.

*John Hawkesworth, The History of Almoran and Hamet, 1761.

*John Shebbeare, The Marriage Act, 1754, (Matrimony, 1766).

*Frances Sheridan, (Anon), The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph, 1761-67.

23 Libraries

*Anon, The Temple Beau; or, The Town Coquets, 1754.

*Aphra Behn, The Novels of Aphra Behn, 1696.

Gautier de C. de la Calprenède, Cleopatra, 1647-1658.

William Dodd, The Sisters; or, Caroline and Lucy Sanson, 1754.

*Eliza Haywood, (Anon), The Invisible Spy, 1755.

*Charles Johnstone, (By an Adept), Chrysal; or, the Adventures of a *Guinea, 1760-65.

*Charlotte Lennox, The Life of Harriot Stuart, 1750.

*Mary de la Riviere Manly, (Anon), The Secret Memoirs of Several Persons of Quality and Both Sexes from the New Atlantis an island in the Mediterranean, 1709-10.

*Tobias Smollett, The Expedition of Humphry Clinker, 1771.

22 Libraries

Anon, Charlotte Summers, 1749.

*Anon, Injured Innocence; or, Virtue in Distress, 1769.

*Antoine F. Prévost d'Exiles, The History of a Fair Greek, 1741 (trs 1755).

Harry Herald and Sir Edward Haunch, (ecd, 1755).

*Eliza Haywood, The Fruitless Enquiry After Happiness, 1727.

*Henry Mackenzie, The Man of Feeling, 1771.

*P L Saumery, The Devil Turn'd Hermit; or, The Adventures of Astaroth Banish'd from Hell, 1741.

*Tobias Smollett, The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves, 1760-61.

*Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, 1765.

21 Libraries

Anon, Tom Jones The Foundling, in his Married State, 1749.

M. le Prince Beaumont, The New Clarissa, 1768.

*Giovanni Boccaccio, The Decameron, 1353, (trs. 1620).

*Frances Brooke (Anon), The History of Lady Julia Mandeville, 1763.

Mary Davys, Amoranda; or, the Reformed Coquet, 1724.

*Daniel Defoe, The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, 1721.

*Antoine F. Prévost d'Exiles, The Dean of Coleraine, 1742-43, (trs 1742).

*William Guthrie, The Friends, 1754.

*John Hill, The Adventures of Mr George Edward, A Creole, 1751.

John Hill, The History of Mr Loveill, 1750.

*John Kidgell, The Card, 1755.

*Peter Longueville, (Edward Dorrington), The English Hermit; or, the Life and Surprising Adventures of Philip Quarl, 1727.

*Robert Paltock, The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins a Cornish Man, 1751.

True Merit, True Happiness, (ecd, 1757).

John Trusler, William Ramble, (ecd, 1755).

20 Libraries

Anon, Bampfield-Moore-Carew, 1745.

Anon, The Brothers; or, Treachery Punished, 1730.

Anon, Fanny Seymour, (ecd, 1755).

Anon, Indiana Danby, 1765.

Anon, Sophia Shakespear, 1753.

Agnes Bennett, Anna; or, the Welsh Heiress, 1785.

William Chaigneau, The History of Jack Connor, 1752.

Mary Collyer, The Letters from Felicity to Charlotte, 1744-49.

Gautier de C. de la Calprenède, Cassandra, 1647-58.

*Samuel Croxall (editor), A Select Collection of Novels, 1720-21.

*Sarah Fielding, The History of Ophelia, 1760.

Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux, Pharsamond; or, the Knight Errant, 1749.

*Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, Persian Letters, 1721, (trs 1722

Samuel Richardson, Pamela in her Exalted Condition, 1742.

*Miss Smythies, (Anon), The Stage Coach, 1753.

19 Libraries

Anon, Clio, 1752.

Anon, The Memoirs of Harriot and Charlotte Meanwell, 1740.

Anon, The Supposed Daughter, 1773.

Anon, The Adventures of a Valet, written by himself, 1752.

Elié de Beaumont, A Young Lady of Distinction, 1754.

Bubbled Knights, (ecd, 1765).

John Cleland, The Man of Honour; the History of Harry Waters Esq, 1771.

Mary Davys, The Accomplished Rake; or, the Modern Fine Gentleman, 1727.

*Sarah Fielding and Jane Collier, (Anon), The Cry, a New Dramatic Fable, 1754.

William Goodall, Captain Greenland, 1752.

Susannah Gunning, Family Pictures, 1764.

*Eliza Haywood, The Fortunate Foundlings, 1744.

The History of Jenny Salisbury, (ecd, 1766).

*Charles Johnson (sic), (Anon), The Reverie; or, a flight to the Paradise of Fools, 1762.

*Edward Kimber, (Anon), The Life and Adventures of James Ramble, Esq, 1755, (1770).

*Jean François Marmontel, Belisarius, 1763.

*Jean François Marmontel, Moral Tales, 1763-65.

*Sarah Scott, The History of Sir George Ellison, 1765-66.

*Tobias Smollett, The History and Adventures of an Atom, 1749 for 1769.

The Virtuous Criminal; or, a history of Lord Stanley, (ecd, 1766).

François Marie Arouet de Voltaire, Zadig, 1749.

18 Libraries

James Annesley, Memoirs of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman, 1743

Anon, The Apparition; or, the Female Cavalier, (ecd, 1757).

Anon, The Memoirs of a Coquet; or, the history of Miss Harriot Airy, by the author of Emily Willis, 1765.

Anon, (Le Sage) The Devil on Crutches, 1755.

Anon, The Impetuous Lovers; or, the guiltless parricide, (ecd, 1765).

*Anon, Leonora; or, Characters Drawn from Real Life, 1745.

Anon, The Parasite, (ecd, 1766).

*Anon, The School for Wives, 1763.

John Barclay, Argenis, 1621.

Philip Benet, The Beau Philosopher, 1736.

*Frances Brooke, (Anon), The History of Emily Montague, 1769.

Frances Burney, Cecilia; or, the Memoirs of an Heiress, 1782.

*Daniel Defoe, The Fortunate Mistress; or, A history of the Life and Vast Variety of Fortunes of Mademoiselle de Beleau, Afterwards Call'd The Countess de Winteselsheim, in Germany. Being the person known by the Name of the Lady Roxana, in the time of King Charles II, 1724.

*Richard Graves, The Spiritual Quixote; or, the Summer Ramble of Mr Geoffrey Wildgoose, 1773.

*William Guthrie, (Anon), The Mother; or, the Happy Distress, 1759.

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, The Sorrows of Werther, 1774 (trs 1779).

*John Hughes of Dubois, (trs), The Letters of Abelard and Eloise, to which is prefixed a particular account of their lives amours and misfortunes, 1713.

The Adventures of Jerry Buck, (ecd, 1755).

Mrs Harvey, The Memoirs of Fidelis and Harriot, Dublin, 1753.

Eliza Haywood, Life's Progress through the Passions, 1748.

*Henry Mackenzie, The Man of the World, 1773.

Margaret and Susannah Minifie, The Picture, 1766.

The Relapse, (ecd, 1781).

The Rival Mother; or, the Countess of Salens, (ecd, 1755).

*Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emile, 1762, (trs. William Kenrick, Emilius and Sophia; or a new system of education, 1762-63).

*Paul Scarron, Scarron's Novels, 1660 (trs 1665).

Sarah Scott, (Anon), A Journey through Every Stage of Life, 1754.

*Claudine A G Tencin, The Siege of Calais by Edward of England, 1740.

The Test of Friendship, (ecd. 1774).

Mrs A Woodfin, Sally Sable, 1758.

17 Libraries

Anon, The Life and Opinions of Bertram Monfichet, by himself, 1761.

Anon, Eliza; or, The Northern Heiress, 1793.

Anon, The History of Jasper Banks, commonly called the handsome man, 1754.

*Anon, Memoirs of the Marchioness of Pompadour written by herself,1753.

*Anon, The Mock-Monarchs; or, the Benefits of High Blood, 1754.

Anon, The History of Miss Polly Willis, an orphan, (ecd, 1755).

Anon, The History of Miss Pitborough, 1767.

Anon, The Sedan, 1757.

*Anon, The History of Valentine and Orson, 1475-1489.

*Lucius Apuleius, The Loves of Cupid and Psyche, AD 153, (trs. 1566).

Frances Burney, Evelina; or, a Young Woman's Entrance into the World, 1778.

The Conflict; or, the history of Sophia Fanbrooke, (ecd, 1772).

*Daniel Defoe, The History and Remarkable Life of the truly Honourable Colonel Jacque commonly called Colonel Jack, 1723.

Female Falsehood; or, the life of a French nobleman, (ecd, 1755).

Henry Fielding, The Works, with the Life of the Author, 1762-71.

The Fortunate Orphan; or, the Contess of Marlowe, (ecd, 1748).

Frederick the Forsaken, (ecd, 1766).

C F Gellert, The Remarkable History of the Swedish Countess of G-., 1746.

Richard Griffith, Triumvirate, or ABC., 1764.

Eliza Haywood, The Busy Body; or, successful spy, 1742.

Henry Dumont and Charlotte Evelyn, (ecd, 1757).

Jilts; or, Female Fortune Hunters, (ecd, 1757).

*Thomas Leland, Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, 1762.

*Longus, The Pastoral Amours of Daphnis and Chloe, 200-300 AD, (trs. James Craggs, 1719).

*Sir George Lyttleton, Letters from a Persian to his friend in Ispahan, 1735.

*Margaret and Susannah Minifie, The Cottage; a Novel: In a series of letters, 1769.

The Loves of Myrtil, son of Adonis, (ecd, 1772).

*Chevalier de Fieux de Mouhy, (trs) Female Banishment; or, the Woman Hater, 1759.

The New Amusements of the Spaw, (ecd, 1765).

The New Robinson Crusoe; or, Richard Davis Crusoe, (ecd, 1757).

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Persiles and Sigismunda; A Celebrated Novel, 1617. (trs 1619).

*Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels, 1726.

William Toldervy, Two Orphans, 1750.

Other fictions read for this survey were:

16 Libraries

Anon, The Memoirs of Ninon de l'Enclos, 1776.

Anon, The Memoirs of a Woman of Honour, 1768.

Henry Brooke, Juliet Grenville; or, the History of the Human Heart, 1773.

John Cleland, The Memoirs of a Coxcomb; or, the history of Sir William Delamere, 1751.

Antoine F. Prévost d'Exiles, The Adventures of a Man of Quality, 1728, (trs. 1738).

Sarah Fielding, Familiar Letters between the Principal Characters in David Simple and some others, 1747.

Oliver Goldsmith, The Citizen of the World; or, Letters from a Chinese Philosopher, Residing in London to his Friends in the East, 1762.

Richard Griffith, Something New, 1762.

Heliodorus, The Adventures of Theagenes and Chariclea ca 400 AD. (trs 1736

Charlotte Lennox, (trs) Madame de Maintenon's Memoirs, 1753.

Charlotte Lennox, Sophia, 1762.

Henry Mackenzie, Julia de Roubigné, 1777.

Samuel Pratt, (Courtney Melmoth), The Pupil of Pleasure, 1776.

Samuel Pratt, Emma Corbett; or, The Miseries of Civil War, 1780.

François Rabelais, The Works of Rabelais; or the lives of Garguntua and Pantagruel, written in French 1553 (trs Mr Ozell 1737).

Bernard J Saurin, Mirza and Fatima, an Indian Tale, 1754.

Benjamin Victor, The Widow of the Wood, 1755.

15 Libraries

Herbert Lawrence, The Life and Adventures of Common Sense, 1769.

Thomas Mozeen, Young Scarron, 1752.

Clara Reeve, The Champion of Virtue; or, The Old English Baron, 1777.

Laurence Sterne, A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Mr Yorick, 1768.

14 Libraries

Daniel Defoe, The History of the Devil, 1726.

Richard Graves, (Anon) Columella; or, The Distressed Anchoret, 1779.

Eliza Haywood, (Mira), The Wife, 1756.

Sarah Scott and Elizabeth Montague, A Description of Millenium Hall, and the country Adjacent, 1762.

Charlotte Smith, Ethelinde; or, the Recluse of the Lake, 1789.

Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire, Candidus; or, the Optimist, 1759, (trs Candid; or, All for the Best, 1759).

13 Libraries

Elizabeth Bonhote, The Rambles of Frankly, 1772-76.

Sarah Fielding, The Histories of Cleopatra and Octavia, 1758.

Eliza Haywood, (Anon), Anti-Pamela; or, Feigned Innocence Detected; in a series of Syrena's Adventures, 1741.

Sophia Lee, The Recess; or, a Tale of Other Times, 1783-85.

John Langhorne, Solyman and Almena, 1762.

12 Libraries

Jonathan Swift, A Tale of a Tub, 1710.

11 Libraries

Anon, The Fair Adultress, 1744.

10 Libraries

Thomas Amory, The Life and Opinions of John Buncle, Esq, 1756, Vol II, 1766.

Anon, (probably William Combe), The Second Journal to Eliza; hitherto Unknown Letters Supposed to have been written by Yorick and Eliza, 1779.

9 Libraries

William Combe, The Devil Upon Two Sticks in England: being a continuation of Le Diable Boiteux of Le Sage, 1790.

7 Libraries

Thomas Cogan, John Buncle Junior, gentleman, 1776-78.

As this list indicates, some problems had to be faced even at this early stage. A number of books were hard to locate, and some I could not find in the major libraries to which I had access. The multiple copies owned by the eighteenth-century libraries may have been pulped or sold as scrap paper once they had outlived their popularity, or they may have been read to pieces. Librarians seem to be very conscious of the destructive habits of readers. It is possible that some books have disappeared for ever.

Another problem arose from my use of the eighteenth-century catalogues as the source for this list. The librarians were uninterested in accurate or detailed catalogues and generally listed only the short version of the title, and almost never gave the author's name. The marrying of author with title as they appear in this list is the result of prolonged work with eighteenth-century bibliographies*[24], even so I could trace no record of 21 titles.

Yet another problem was the use which eighteenth-century authors made of each other's titles. Three fictions were published in the century under the title of Sisters, but fortunately most librarians show Dr Dodd's sub-title or pre-date the other two Sisters stories.

Included in the list are some titles which claim to be biographies or auto-biographies and I have followed the practice of the eighteenth-century librarians by including them in the fiction categories. The distinction between fictional writing and historial writing is a modern one, and in many of the catalogues there is no separate section for the factual account of past events. They are included among the fictions. Indeed the eighteenth-century histories were often part-fictions including passages of pure fabrication which were enjoyed by readers like Eleanor Tilney:

> I am fond of history - and am very well contented to take the false with the true. In the principal facts they have sources of intelligence in former histories and records which may be as much depended on, I conclude, as anything which does not actually pass under one's own observation; and as for the little embellishments you speak of, they are embellishments and I like them as such. If a speech be well drawn up, I read it with pleasure, by whomever it may be made - and probably which much greater, if the production of Mr Hume and Mr Robertson, than if the genuine words of Caractacus, Agricola, or Alfred the Great.*[25]

The generic title 'History' in the catalogues was understood by contemporaries to include works of pure fiction, and many fictions had the word 'history' in their title to mean 'A story of ...' or 'A tale of ...'. This survey of eighteenth-century fiction therefore includes fictions which present themselves as memoirs (four), as biographies (two), and one account of the life of Belisarius.

Since librarians persistently catalogued these seven borderline cases as fictions, even when they had the option of a category for history or biography, I have followed their example for this survey.

Also included in this survey of fictions of the eighteenth century are nine fictions which were published before 1700. They are included because of the terms of this survey, which was designed to discover not the most popular books written in the eighteenth century but what fictions were most popular with the eighteenth-century readers. And because, according to the evidence of the extant circulating library catalogues, a number of very early fictions including Greek and Latin myths and old Romances retained their popularity in the eighteenth-century circulating libraries. The surviving popularity of Don Quixote, 1605, which spawned so many imitations needs no explanation. But the survival of the bawdy and erotic The Decameron for three hundred years can perhaps be explained by a look at the elements included in the stories. As the survey of most popular elements indicates, The Decameron includes many features which eighteenth-century readers enjoyed: a vitriolic attack on the laxity of the Roman Catholic church, bawdy humour, plus some sentimental scenes, love stories, and a pastoral commune setting. The fact that 7.1% of this list of fictions popular in the eighteenth-century circulating libraries pre-dates the eighteenth century may come as a surprise, but in this instance, as in the inclusion of pseudo-historical books, I tried to reflect the tastes and opinions of the eighteenth-century readers as shown by the library catalogues.

Once the list had been compiled, the final stages of this survey remained. I read a selection of the available stories, concentrating on the most popular. I prepared a selection of elements which seemed to me especially interesting either because of their historical significance, like changing religious attitudes,

or because of their significance in the fictions as they constantly recurred. I noted also the chief characteristics of the main protagonists, the hero, heroine and villain, adding to them all as elements forced themselves on my notice by their repeated appearance in the fictions. At the end of the survey I had collected 129 elements, many of which contained multiple-choice attitudes; for example, the element of religious opinion included six options. Excluding the multiple choice answers the survey totalled 16,383 elements, an amount of data which one computer programmer called 'non-trivial'! The data was then studied in two principal ways. In the first series of programmes a comparison of all the fictions was made, based on the elements which they had in common. A number of charts and diagrams were produced to show which fictions were similar to each other. This part of the survey worked well and different methods confirmed each other, and also confirmed my impression that there were a number of clear types of story in the eighteenth century: the fictions of consciousness including stories of consciousness set in exotic and gothic backgrounds, a Picaro group, three groups written as stories on a thread - one bawdy, one sentimental, and one erotic,- and the histories which attempted to convince the reader of their historical exactness.

The second part of the computer survey compared all the elements with each other to discover what were the most popular elements and which elements tended to appear together. A similar scan of the elements of the hero, heroine, and villain characters showed what were typical patterns of behaviour.

The findings of this part of the computer survey are the basis for this thesis. My description of the fictional world of the eighteenth century is based on the results from a computer-aided quantitative survey of the elements in 127 books most popular with the circulating library reader. I was pleased to discover that the survey revealed a coherent background of manners and morals which controlled and judged the behaviour of the fictional protagonists, and a coherent material world with borders, geographic features, social relations, dangers and pleasures. The 127 fictions, a small but I believe significant sample, serve as a window through which the reader can look to see the fantasy world of the day-dreamers of two hundred years ago.

# CHAPTER II

## THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY COMMERCIAL CIRCULATING LIBRARIES

The size and style of the commercial circulating libraries varied enormously from town to town. The large London libraries made a point of making the reading rooms as attractive as possible, and often showed the reading room as the illustration on their identifying sticker in the library book.*[1] Even some of the smaller provincial libraries made an effort to provide agreeable surroundings for borrowers to browse at the open shelves or sit down to read newspapers. At the other end of the scale in the very small libraries in smaller towns the books for hire might be tucked away in the corner of a general shop, as nearly all the provincial librarians also worked as shop-keepers, offering for sale a wide range of goods which they advertised in the library catalogues: stationery, millinery, haberdashery, patent medicines, perfumes, tobacco, tea, and snuff.

Most of the librarians regularly issued catalogues, although some of the smaller libraries may have asked their subscribers to amend and update the old ones by hand, or merely issued annual supplements like James Sibbald in Edinburgh. It is perhaps surprising that of the 1,000 commercial circulating libraries said to have been operating in Britain by 1800*[2] so few catalogues have survived. Perhaps they were read to pieces, or may have met the fate of other trade papers: recycled by publishers or sold as waste paper.

Subscribers were asked to order a choice of books using the reference numbers given in the catalogue, and to order a wide choice to avoid disappointment. But it is clear that it would be very difficult, and in some catalogues quite impossible, to find a

specific book. The classification is uncertain; books are listed in approximate alphabetical order by title, in groups according to size, and only very occasionally under the author's name. To find The History of Miss Polly Willis one would have to check all the categories of fiction: histories, lives, adventures, novels, romances, the miscellaneous section, and the 'new additions to the library' section under two size headings: quarto and octavo. The book could appear under H: History..., M: Miss..., P: Polly, or W: Willis. The many books published under alternative titles could be found under either title, and many books were published in later editions with a slightly different title, such as John Shebbeare, The Marriage Act, 1754, which was published in 1766 under the title of Matrimony.

It seems likely that wealthy or influential patrons ordered books by title and left the librarian to try to locate them. Eighteenth-century accounts of libraries suggest that this was common practice.*[3] Since the new and therefore most desirable books would not appear in the annual catalogue, the catalogues probably were used mainly by country borrowers for browsing and choosing.

## 1 TERMS AND CONDITIONS*[4]

The disparity of prices and terms for different libraries in London, England, and Scotland throughout the century can be explained partly by the general variation in prices which was a feature of the eighteenth-century economic life until improved roads and the new canal system brought isolated markets into competition with each other, and standardised the prices of most commodities.

Librarians faced different local circumstances in each town, and also aimed at different types of subscriber. All except the very smallest were priced beyond the reach of working-class people, but there is wide variation inside the high prices which cannot be explained solely by the rising costs of publishing and printing.

It seems to me that the libraries' charges are best understood when one considers their location, specialisation, and size, as well as the date. Scottish, English provincial, and London libraries faced very different influences and markets. For example the enormous variation of prices in London can be understood only if the libraries are seen in their context as part of the fashionable seasonal scene. In the 1790s a subscriber at Hookham's library was paying 6 times more than at Francis Noble's library, and double the subscription of William Lane's library which was twice the size. However Lane's library with its large stock of light fiction had a less refined reputation than Hookham's; and Francis Noble was less fashionable. The top people went to Hookham's not simply to borrow books but to visit part of the fashionable circuit. Libraries in provincial large towns, fashionable resorts, or spas could also charge a higher subscription fee. Libraries in smaller towns were forced to keep the prices low enough to appeal to the poorer but literate people.

There were individual influences on the price of a subscription, but throughout the period prices in all areas generally rose. They may have levelled off in the mid 1790s.

## 1.1 Specialisation

In London, the large numbers of readers made it possible for libraries to specialise. Thus libraries which offered books in French or Italian were able to charge far higher prices than their English-only competitors. Hookham in 1766 offered an unlimited

number of English or French books delivered free to subscribers prepared to pay 2 guineas a year. By 1792 Hookham had established a separate foreign language library of 9,433 volumes of European languages, mainly French and Italian, which charged a standard rate of 3 guineas a year.

Libraries which specialised in serious and improving works, and operated as reading clubs could also charge higher prices. The Dissenting minister Samuel Fancourt failed in his first attempt to set up a library of a mixture of light and serious works in Salisbury, but succeeded in London in establishing a library which concentrated only on serious works and was used as a venue for educational societies. Mr Fancourt doubled his subscription when he moved from Salisbury to London, from 10s.6d. a year to a guinea a year plus a shilling a quarter for access to a stock of 5,000 volumes: an indication both of the higher prices current in the capital city, and the extra he could charge as a specialist librarian aimed at the serious section of the readership market.

## 1.2 The Tier-System

London libraries seem to have been the first to launch the scheme of two, or even three-tier borrowing rates. In 1755 John Noble charged higher subscription rates to borrowers from the suburbs than to his city customers: 14s.6d. a year for the suburbans, and 10s.6d. a year for city dwellers with quarterly rates to match.

Two years later in 1757 William Bathoe took the tier-system a stage farther offering a deluxe service to subscribers who chose to pay a guinea annually instead of 10s.6d. They were given the chance to borrow books before their official date of publication. In 1783 Hookham subscribers could pay the basic rate of 12s.0d. a year for a maximum of 3 books, one of which could be a new book; or they

could pay 2 guineas for a maximum of 12 books. Nine years later in his 1794 catalogue, Hookham was charging 2 guineas a year for 8 books, and 3 guineas for 12, and he was trying to extend his trade outside the city. Country subscribers were able to pay the same prices for double the number of books. By 1798 Lane's library had followed suit with a three-tier system which offered London borrowers 4 books for 1 guinea, 10 for 2 guineas, and 18 for 3 guineas. For the same subscriptions country borrowers could have 8, 12, and 24 volumes.

In the surviving Scottish catalogues the first indication of a tier-system is in the 1781 Edinburgh catalogue of James Sibbald whose annual subscribers could pay half a guinea or a guinea for access to 1 or 4 books. Mr Nicoll of Dundee in 1782 also allowed his half-guinea subscribers 1 book, and 4 books for a top rate of 12s.0d. annually. Alexander Brown in Aberdeen in 1795 ran the biggest Scottish library represented in the extant catalogues with three classes of subscription: 10s.6d., 15s.0d., and £1.00, where borrowers could take 1, 2, or 3 books. By 1800 in Edinburgh Mr Sibbald had increased his charges to 12s.0d., 1 guinea, or 2 guineas for access to 2, 4, or 8 books; but the cheap-rate subscribers were not allowed any new or scientific works.

In the English provincial libraries the first record of a tier-system is in the library of Palmer and Merrick in Oxford in 1789. All subscribers could borrow 4 books but those who chose to pay a guinea a year instead of 16s.0d. could have first sight of the new works - quite an advantage in a town some way from London, and yet intellectually competitive. The same needs of the fashionable readers may have encouraged John Lowe of Birmingham in 1796 to charge a guinea a year for first sight of new books, and access to 4 books; while the 16s.0d. a year subscribers had to wait their turn for new publications, and were then able to borrow only 2 books at a time.

William Marriott in Derby probably over-estimated his market completely. It is hard to imagine that Derby in 1795 could have supported such an expensive establishment as he had in mind. His inaugural catalogue promised his subscribers that the library would consist of 2,000 volumes: 'a collection of most valuable and esteemed publications on every general and entertaining subject'. An elegant reading room was to be used by subscribers who were on their honour to return books promptly as the genteel Mr Marriott did not propose to stoop to fining his subscribers. The catalogue promised that 600 books would be bought at the request of the subscribers who were invited to nominate their chosen books. But even if Mr Marriott honoured his promise and bought the 600 books his library would still not have reached the promised total of 2,000 books, but would have been some 800 volumes short. For this service the readers of Derby were to be charged a guinea a year for 3 books and 1½ guineas a year for 8 books.

1.3 New Books

The importance of books as status symbols among the literate elite is shown by the high priority given to the circulation of new books. Two English provincial libraries and a London library offered a more expensive subscription for the sole privilege of seeing a new book on, or before, its day of publication. Ten of the 15 London libraries limited their borrowers to only 1 new book each, and it had to be returned within the week, sometimes as quickly as within 48 hours. Hookham allowed his subscribers only 2 days with a new book, while John and Samuel Noble allowed 3 days. No London, English provincial, or Scottish library allowed a subscriber to keep a new book longer than 6 days. There are only two exceptions to this rule: the slow readers of Hereford were allowed 10 days to read a new

book in 1800, while Mr Sands of Newcastle turned speed-reading into a science with his estimates of permissible time. A reader with a new octavo had to return it within 4 days, a reader with a new quarto had to return it within 8 days, while someone soldiering through a new folio had 12 days to finish and return the book!

## 1.4 Damaged Books

All librarians shared the problems of damage or loss of books, and most of them ruled that readers should buy a book lost or damaged. Some librarians were so accustomed to this problem that they listed a price in the catalogue which it would cost readers to buy the volume, and compensate the librarian.

> If a book is lost, or wrote in, or a leaf torn or damaged, that book, or if it belongs to a set of books, that set is to be paid for at the price marked in the Catalogue. - IT IS INTREATED THAT THE BOOKS BE KEPT CLEAN EVEN ON THE OUTSIDE AND PARTICULARLY THAT NONE OF THE LEAVES BE FOLDED DOWN IN THE CORNERS, AS IT NOT ONLY OFFENDS THE EYE BUT IS VERY DETRIMENTAL TO THE BOOKS.*[5]

It seems likely, though none of the librarians advertises such a service, that subscribers could choose to buy a book which they had especially enjoyed. Country subscribers particularly might have found it easier and cheaper to buy ex-library books from the local library than to order new ones from a London publisher. In London the librarian was often the publisher, and the two wings of the business must have complemented each other in this and many other ways.

## 1.5 London Terms

A borrower looking for the cheapest possible subscription at a London library would have found that the price varied between half a guinea and 12s.0d. for most of the century. In 1790 2 of the 3 extant catalogues (Hookham and Lane) show a higher price. Lane's lowest subscription is a guinea and Hookham's is 2 guineas.

The range of London prices represents the different types of reader catered for by the librarians, and the different services the libraries could offer. The widest gulf in the terms of the extant catalogues is shown in the 1790s when a subscriber could pay half a guinea at Francis Noble's library or 3 guineas at Hookham's or Lane's.

The poorer casual reader was specifically mentioned in the catalogues of only two London libraries: Samuel Noble's and Lane's, where a non-subscriber could negotiate daily terms per individual book. Other libraries may have offered a similar service to the poorer reader but they did not advertise it in their catalogues, and it seems likely that in their quest for a fashionable clientele they would have actively discouraged poor readers from using the premises.

The wide choice of subscriptions in London reflects the wide range of different types of libraries, but some libraries did compete for the same section of the market and could act together to raise their prices. In 1767 seven London librarians announced a rise of 1s.0d. on quarterly terms and 1s.6d. on their year's subscriptions, taking their charges from 10s.6d. a year to 12s.0d. a year. The deluxe specialist librarians did not join with them. The price-setters were: T Lowndes, Francis Noble, John Noble, William Bathoe, T Vernor and J Chator, Thomas Jones, and William Cooke and they jointly promised improved quality of service and more volumes available. I found that advertisement of their rise in price pasted in the fly-sheet of the second edition of Eliza Haywood, The Fruitless Enquiry, published by T Lowndes in 1767.*[6] Other librarian-publishers probably used their publications to advertise the rise as well.

## 1.6 Scottish Terms

Prices at Scottish libraries in the eighteenth century never reached the 3 guinea mark of the London libraries, according to the extant catalogues. The most expensive and ambitious librarian seems to have been James Sibbald whose library in the capital Edinburgh charged a guinea a year in the 1780s and a top-tier charge of 2 guineas a year in 1800.

Prices in Scotland may have been determined partly by the size of the library which was offered to the subscriber. Thus Sibbald's library of 5,500 volumes could charge a guinea a year in 1781, and Aberdeen's Alexander Brown could charge £1.00 a year to his top-tier subscribers in 1795 and offer them a library of 6,000 volumes. Earlier, in the same town of Aberdeen, Alexander Angus had charged only 10s.0d. a year which may be explained by the smaller size of his library which stocked 1,157 volumes. William Gray in Edinburgh in 1772 advertised only quarterly prices of only 3s.0d. (ie 12s.0d. per annum) for a library of 1,800 volumes; and Mr Nicoll of Dundee charged only 10s.6d. a year for his library of 1,222 volumes as late as 1782.

The high standards of literacy and education among all classes in Scotland may have paradoxically restricted the market for the commercial librarians. Almost every Scottish village or town was endowed with, or had developed its own community library lending serious works to readers and students at a minimal charge, or even free. There is unfortunately no place in this survey for an analysis of the literature offered in such community libraries but the books tended to be educational and serious works. It seems likely that this easy availability of reading material would satisfy many of the Scottish readers. Only the minority who specifically wanted to read

fiction, especially light or even scandalous works, would take the trouble and bear the expense of joining a commercial circulating library.

The influence of such readers may be traced in the tendency of Scottish commercial libraries to stock comic or scandalous material feeding an appetite for light fiction equalled only by London readers. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter VI. Mr Sibbald's diverse stocks of plays to read, and water-colours for artists to copy, may also have been in response to the competition of the community libraries.

1.7 English Provinces' Terms

Libraries in the English provinces also seem to have shown a pattern of smaller libraries setting their subscriptions at a much cheaper rate than the larger libraries which were generally sited in the bigger towns. The two exceptions to this rule were William Marriott whose ambitious plans for his library in Derby have been described, and Ann Yearsley, the milkmaid poet who ran a tiny library of 263 volumes in Hotwells, Bristol, in 1793. The outrageous price of £1 a year suggests that Miss Yearsley was cashing-in on her celebrity status as a poet, rather than charging a fair price for borrowers.

The large English provincial libraries seem to have been comparable in price to London and Scottish libraries. Libraries of more than 2,000 volumes offered a minimum price in the 1780s of 12s.0d. pa (Lucas, Birmingham), 16s.0d. pa in the 1790s (Lowe, Birmingham), while two librarians in the 1800s charged a slightly lower price of 12s.0d. and 15s.0d. respectively (Allen, Hereford; Sands, Newcastle). Despite the fact that subscribers were, unlike this survey, unable to make a survey of provincial libraries outside

London prices were surprisingly uniform. The top-tier prices in this limited sample never rose above £1.10s. a year in the 1780s at Samuel Hazard's library in the fashionable spa of Bath.

The smaller libraries of fewer than 2,000 volumes generally seem to have charged by the week or even per book, with no subscription fee. Robert Taylor's library of 864 volumes in Berwick on Tweed charged 2s.6d. a quarter in 1771, and M Heavisides charged 3s.0d. a quarter for subscribers to his 466 volume library in Darlington in 1790. The other three small librarians whose terms are clear, charged respectively 2d. a week, or per book, (Harrad, Stamford, 1790) 2d. for four days, (Rusher, Bunbury, 1801) or 1d. a book (Corkhill, Whitehaven, 1790).

Unlike the London libraries which could draw on a much larger group of readers, and make their libraries exclusive to the wealthy and fashionable, the provincial libraries were forced to encourage poorer readers to borrow books. Small libraries depended heavily on the pennies of poorer borrowers, and even larger English provincial libraries advertised cheap rates per volume for non-subscribers. Of those whose terms are clear, only the large library of Samuel Hazard in the prosperous and seasonal town of Bath in 1789, the expensive library of Palmer and Merrick in prosperous Oxford in 1789, and the extortionate Miss Yearsley in Bristol in 1793 did not offer cheap terms of a few pence a volume for a few days.

Librarians in the English provinces faced varying circumstances in each town. Some towns were more prosperous than others, some enjoyed a seasonal trade. Some librarians might enjoy a monopoly position in the town while others might face competition from London libraries sending their books into the country, from rival provincial commercial librarians, or even from subscription libraries which

enjoyed a reputation for being serious, but often stocked popular fiction.*[7] I know of only one instance where a town was so well supplied with libraries, and their trade divided so satisfactorily, that they organised themselves jointly into setting prices. That wasthe seasonally prosperous town of Bath where in 1789 six librarians, William Taylor, William Meyler, Samuel Hazard, Joseph Barratt, James Marshall and Edward Russell, raised the annual subscription to 15s.0d because of 'the increasing number of NEW PUBLICATIONS, the present expensive mode of printing and the ... advanced price of Newspapers'.*[8]

## 2 THE STOCKS OF THE COMMERCIAL CIRCULATING LIBRARIES

### 2.1 Fiction

Fiction seems to have been the most important single class in all of the extant library catalogues. Different libraries placed more or less emphasis on their fiction stocks but in none was the fiction section smaller than 10% of the total stock. The smallest libraries, those in the English provinces, stocked proportionately the most fiction. Three of the English provincial libraries of fewer than 2,000 volumes were nearly all fiction, 2 were 30% fiction, and 3 were 70%, 40%, and 10% respectively. There is only one small London library of fewer than 2,000 volumes in this survey and it stocked 20% fiction. English provincial libraries larger than 2,000 volumes tended to stock 10% to 30% fiction, with 2 libraries of 40% and 50%. London libraries of more than 2,000 volumes stocked 10% fiction with two exceptions which stocked 20% fiction.

An anonymous commentator advising the prospective librarian on how to start a business in 1797 supports this picture of a smaller library concentrating almost wholly on fiction. His recipe for a

successful library is surprising only in that it excludes any crafts or physic:

> 60 volumes of history, 60 divinity,
> 30 lives, 20 voyages, 20 travels,
> 30 poetry, 20 plays, 1,050 novels,
> 130 romances, 10 anecdotes, 40 tales,
> 30 arts and sciences, total 1,500.*[9]

These figures confirm Hamlyn's view:

> the larger eighteenth-century libraries carried much solid reading matter on all subjects as well as a section of novels chiefly transitory; the smaller libraries may well have had little else but novels.*[10]

Hamlyn's view of larger libraries carrying 'solid reading matter' is supported by Kaufman, who also implied that the larger libraries were committed to more serious material. This view may be incorrect. It is based on a study of the <u>proportion</u> of the fiction titles in the total stock, and ignores the actual number of fiction titles available to the reader.

Consequently, although the larger libraries carried a proportionately smaller stock of fiction the actual number of titles they offered to the reader was far greater than the smaller libraries. A reader in the English provinces might borrow from a library which concentrated almost wholly on fiction and be offered a choice of only 83 titles. A London reader might borrow from a library which seems to concentrate on non-fiction categories and yet have a choice of 6,660 fiction titles. The apparently 'serious' large libraries actually stocked a far wider choice of fiction than the apparently 'entertaining' smaller libraries. To study the proportion of the fiction in the total stock is to conceal the large number of fictions stocked by a large library. The ephemeral nature of the fictions, the rapid changes in fashion, and the slower but significant changes

in taste, meant that only a very few fictions retained their popularity throughout the century and their place on the library shelves. The demand for novelty meant that most of a fiction library would have to be changed annually. Unlike the section of the library devoted to history, art, or science, a library of fiction could not be built-up over the years. There was a natural tendency for a growing, successful library to contain a growing number of serious works which were increased annually, while the stock of fiction was changed annually but stayed more or less the same size. Thus the proportion of fiction to serious works would actually diminish as a new serious work added to the library, while a new work of fiction replaced a previous one. In this way the librarian's concentration on buying and maintaining a fiction stock is concealed. It appears to the historian working on relative proportions that the librarian was carefully building up a serious library and neglecting his fiction stock; but he may in fact have been changing his fiction stock every season and merely adding the odd volume to his serious stock. When one also considers that new fictions would have been bought in multiple copies (Lane advertised 25 copies of a new title in his 1798-1801 catalogue) it becomes apparent that the maintenance of a good stock of fashionable fiction would have been the librarian's chief expense.

A further limit was placed on the librarian who had to promote the respectable family image of his business. He would have had to limit his fiction stocks to those books which could give no offence. He was advised by one commentator in 1797 to 'exclude every book of profane, immoral, or indelicate nature'*[11]; while another writer in 1766 condemned the entire category of fiction: 'A very numerous class

in which too many noxious and libertine doctrines are apt to be either encouraged or executed'.*[12]

It is clear that a librarian trying to build up the fiction section of his library would have been hampered by the restricted supply of his stock, by the unsuitable nature of some of the material which was available, and by the ephemeral nature of the stock which had to be renewed regularly.

One solution to the range of problems facing the librarian trying to maintain a good stock of fiction would have been to hire his entire library annually. William Lane offered this facility and advertised in one of his fictions that a Margate library was stocked by him.*[13] To rent a complete library from one of the London publisher-librarians might have solved the problems of the provincial librarian faced with choosing and obtaining enough copies of fashionable books, and being forced to change them regularly.

If librarians had enjoyed unlimited resources and unlimited access to unlimited numbers of books then the proportions of their stocks would be more meaningful to the historian. However it is clear that the supply of all new books was extremely restricted throughout the century. It has been said there was an 'absolute shortage' of new books until the middle of the century.*[14]

This was partly caused by small print runs: the usual size for a first edition is said to have been only 500 copies.*[15] The total print-run for even the most popular books was on average only 4,000 copies.*[16] One historian estimates that throughout the century there were never more than 9,000 titles printed annually.*[17] The relative scarcity of the books is further suggested by the high prices paid for individual books until about 1770.*[18]

One should perhaps see books as luxury commodities which commanded a high price and enjoyed scarcity value while producers and distributors adjusted to the growing market. Other luxuries at this time experienced a boom in demand and then expanded production between the 1750s and the 1780s*[19] This would support what has been said about the production of books.

If it is correct that by 1800 there were about 1,000 commercial circulating libraries in England*[20], and one may safely assume that many of them were in operation before that date, then there cannot have been enough copies of popular books in circulation to satisfy the needs of all the commercial librarians as well as the buying public. The Noble brothers' print-run seems to have been larger than the average, with 1,000 copies for the first edition of a fiction, and they claimed that 400 of these were taken by circulating libraries.*[21]

Although it may seem extraordinary to us in these days of mass production of books, it looks as if librarians, especially provincial librarians, would simply not have been able to get hold of new and fashionable books. If the supply of all types of books worried librarians they must have been frantic trying to obtain copies of the latest fashionable fiction - well aware that it would be in demand for only a few months.

But there may have been a production boom in the 1770s. According to Lawrence Stone:

> the change in the content of novels coincided with a change in quantity. There was an explosion of novels published in the late eighteenth century, stimulated by a reduction in book costs made possible by cheaper paper and larger sales.*[22]

Any boom in fiction production in the later 1770s should be reflected in the size of fiction sections of the London libraries catalogues. These large libraries would experience fewer problems with production and supply since they operated as publisher-library businesses and thus did not have to wait for deliveries unlike their provincial colleagues. It may be that the frivolous nature of the London readers imposed fewer constraints of good taste than did the provincial readers. It might be expected, therefore, that if there were a boom in the production of fiction this would be reflected in the London catalogues.

It does appear that before the 1770s no fiction stock in a London library exceeded the 1,000 mark, while after that date only one library (the small new library of Samuel Noble, 1780) had noticeably fewer than 1,000 fiction titles. Two (Noble and Lane) stocked 6,660 and 4,144 fiction titles each. The average size of the 7 extant London catalogues in the last 30 years of the century was 11,598 with an average fiction stock of 2,319 titles.

The 7 extant catalogues which pre-dated 1770 carried fiction stocks ranging from 446 to 830 titles. The average size of the pre-1770s London library was 5,108 and the average fiction stock was 591.

Extant catalogues from the English provinces and Scotland cannot be compared in this way because the individual constaints on librarians varied too much from town to town to make generalisations and the calculation of averages a possibility.

It is interesting to note that the extant London catalogues support the thesis of a boom in production in the late 1770s. But it seems surprising that the publisher-librarians should have been so slow to increase production if they were aware of a demand.

The answer may lie not only in problems of physical production of the books, but in the troubles publishers may have encountered finding suitable new books to print. Until the House of Lords decision in 1774 to limit copyright to 21 years*[23] publishers could not freely republish the fictional classics, so these may have been hard to obtain in sufficient number to satisfy the readers.

Even new works may have posed problems. If the copyright was owned by another publishing house the rival library-publisher may have had to wait his turn for copies of the new best-seller. But even his own authors may not have satisfied the demand. As this study suggests the minor authors were strongly influenced by previous writers, and in the first half of the century the major writers were still in the process of developing their craft. Until the new forms of fiction was established the minor writers did not scramble into print. The boom of writing, as well as the boom of production in the late 1770s, was a response to the experiments in fictional writing which had been in progress since the decline of the Romances. In the early years of the century there was no mass production of light, entertaining, readable fiction by a large body of amateur writers. Mass creation by a large body of authors was possible only when the amateurs had a collection of models, characters, and stories to copy and adapt.

2.2 Non-Fiction Stocks

There were very many other classes in the libraries. Some were books to teach or advise on domestic or home-based skills like gardening, cookery, housewifery, painting, embroidery, physic or husbandry. Some sections were clearly designed to aid the literate social climber into better society, like the conduct books.

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Other sections were educational, concentrating on the humanities including politics, history, philosophy, law, and divinity. Many libraries included sections on science or technology known as 'mechanic arts'; or travel. Even the smallest libraries maintained a good stock of plays. Several libraries stocked foreign books, generally fiction in European languages, especially French.

The established libraries clearly tried to offer a survey of contemporary thought and philosophy as well as much lighter material. The content is not unlike The Monthly Review or other journals, and perhaps reflects the varied and wide interests of the average reader before the increasing complexity of specific disciplines had closed specialist areas to the general reader. But the varied content also shows how a provincial library would try to attract all the readers of the town by a policy of something to interest everyone. Only the London libraries could afford to specialise.

Although the contemporary commentators condemned fiction for its erotic nature and corrupting tendency, other sections of the library offered readers suggestive titles under the camouflage of law, history, or even divinity. Librarians may have believed that young or impressionable readers would not have bothered to scan the catalogue's dry sections of divinity or law, and felt safe in offering stories about sensational divorces or exotic heathen sexual practices such as: Alexander, History of Women; Cookson, Thoughts on Polygamy from Scripture, Reason, and Common Sense; Trials for Adultery, or a new and complete collection of the most remarkable ones, from the time of Henry VIII to the present period; Warning piece against the crime of murder, or an account of many extraordinary and most providential discoveries of secret murders.

# CHAPTER III

## READING AND THE READERSHIP

### 1 READING

The pleasure of reading remains important today, but with the variety of leisure occupations distracting and competing for our attention we can only imagine how intensely important books must have been to people who had no such alternatives. In the absence of television and radio reading fiction was a family activity; people sat together in the evening reading as a family in the way that people sit together to watch television. In the absence of radio, fiction could be used as a background noise to provide distraction for workers performing repetitive and boring tasks to the accompaniment of a reader telling them a story. Fiction was important to the critics and students of writing who discussed and criticised experiments in fiction and new works as they were published. Lastly, but very significantly, fiction was important for its novelty value as a mark of the fashionable reader who was up-to-date with the very latest book.

The tradition of oral story-telling was a very important one in the early years of the eighteenth century when literacy was only newly-acquired by the middle classes. The surviving importance of the tradition made its mark in the shape of the fictions themselves (which continued to be written in a shape suitable for reading aloud), in the content of the fictions (which often take the narrational voice of a storyteller), and in the use readers made of the fictions (reading them aloud at home and sometimes at work).

The favourite shape of the fictions was the centralised plot with many threads of stories progressing simultaneously, each chapter containing a coherent story. A chapter could be read in total isolation from the rest of the book as a new character arrived, told his life history, and disappeared. The chapter as a self-contained unit remained popular for most of this period even while the many plots of the Romance form were being pruned down to produce a more linear plot. In Fielding's centralised, one-plot story Amelia the chapter is still a complete fictional unit and the end of a chapter marks a definite break in the story which the reader can use as a pause for reflection:

> Perhaps the critical reader may have the same doubt with Miss Matthews; and lest he should, we will here make a gap in our history, to give him an opportunity of accurately considering....*[1]

Indeed, Fielding suggests that entire chapters can be excised:

> we will ... therefore place this scene in a chapter by itself, which we desire all our readers who do not love, or who perhaps do not know the pleasure of tenderness, to pass over, since they may do this without any prejudice to the thread of the narrative...*[2]

In such a centralised story as Tom Jones, which many critics describe as a modern novel, the influence of the chapter as a complete unit can still be seen. The use of chapter headings was originally to provide the reader with a synopsis of the story contained in the chapter. Fielding and other authors later developed this synopsis to provide an ironic or joking commentary on the action contained in the chapters.

In the case of the Novellas the chapter-size story clearly led an independent life. They were originally written as short complete units and their later development into stories on a thread merely

added a continuous link from the one story to another, but did not destroy the coherent shape of each section. The size of each section in the stories on a thread might vary, but each tended to be an individual story which could be read separately.

The framework structure of some Novellas is another clue to the continued importance of oral story telling in the eighteenth century. A number of the stories are introduced by a fictional setting in which one character proposes to tell a story. This setting is often supposed to be a journey and the characters plan to while away the time by telling stories. Often it is a commune of leisured young people who plan to amuse themselves with telling stories to each other. The popularity of such an introduction to fictions is worth noting as it indicates that readers accepted the convention of one person narrating a lengthy history, even if it were not an everyday occurrence.

Although the narration of fictional tales among the middle and upper classes may have died out with the advance of literacy it may have been replaced with a habit of reading fiction aloud in reading circles.

Richardson's stories were enjoyed in this way even as he was writing them, as his family and friends sat with him in the evening to hear what he had written during the day and comment on the progress of the story.*[3] Once the books were published they were still popular material for a reading circle:

> To read Clarissa Harlowe (especially as was commonly done, to read it aloud) was so prolonged an experience of that mood as to leave an indelible impression.*[4]

Even in the nineteenth century it seems that it was accepted that one way to while away an evening was in listening to a reader, as Jane Austen illustrates:

> Mr Bennet was glad to take his guest into the drawing-room again, and when tea was over, glad to invite him to read aloud to the ladies.*[5]

It seems likely that the large number of playscripts stocked by the commercial circulating libraries were enjoyed not only by individual readers, but by families or groups of friends who wanted to read plays together.

In working-class environments oral story-telling may have lingered on, but may have been replaced with reading aloud. The few Sunday school pupils who mastered the art of reading sufficiently well to handle books with confidence may have read to their illiterate families and friends*[6], though I would suggest that the shortage of books and their high price made the reading of new fictions a rarity. However:

> the good people of Slough, ... gathered at the village Smithy to hear Pamela read aloud, and at last went off in a group to ring the church bells in honour of her marriage*[7]

A more likely setting for the reading circle would be the literate and reasonably well-paid city workers employed in workshops who clubbed together to pay a reader to entertain them while they worked. In the seventeenth century the elite hand-loom weavers:

> were of such a trade as allowed them time enough to read or talk of holy Things ... and as they stand in their loom they can set a Book before them, or edifie one another.*[8]

This practice would have been inherited not only from the tradition of oral story-telling, but also from the monastic tradition of a reader to keep the mind busy and informed during quiet tasks. Indeed, as recently as the present century in a Dundee jute mill, the Eagle Mill in the 1930s, one girl was paid by her colleages to read to them from the magazine True Romance as they worked.*[9]

In all these ways it can be seen that the enjoyment of fiction was not the isolated private pleasure which reading is today. In the absence of so many other diversions the pleasure of reading was of supreme importance and it was a pleasure which could be shared. Even if people did not read in a circle they probably discussed books far more than the average modern reader.

A well-read individual could be fairly sure of having a common background of reading with another literate person, so the pleasure of discussing books and comparing reactions was not limited by the difference of their experience.

Contemporary letters often have reference to fictions as the correspondents were sure that each other would know the books. The satire of Northanger Abbey depends for its effect on a common knowledge of the minor fiction, and the characters enjoy reading sessions: 'they were still resolute in meeting in defiance of wet and dirt, and shut themselves up, to read novels together'.*[10]

Mr Tilney was to have read aloud to his sister:

> 'I remember that you undertook to read it aloud to me, and that when I was called away to answer a note, instead of waiting for me, you took the volume into the Hermitage Walk, and I was obliged to stay until you had finished it.'*[11]

In modern times reading has become a solitary, silent occupation with discussions of the book's content or style taking place only in academic settings; but in the eighteenth century reading was a social occupation.

It was also an elitist occupation. For the cultural elite, the frequenters of the literary salons of the blue-stockings, fiction was a central part of contemporary culture. Magazines might condemn much of the fictions for poor quality, but most of

them continued to review all of the newly-published fictions for all of the century. The division between a popular and an elitist literature had not then been made. All fictions were considered to be part of the culture of literate people, some were praised, some condemned, but a cultured reader would know something of all of them.

Consequently, cultured readers must have been under increasing pressure to read all of the new productions. To gain a swift synopsis of the plot the reviews could be read, or the shortened versions of the stories published in the magazines. Informative chapter-headings helped not only the public reader, but also the fashionable critic who could scan a book and discover the main lines of the story.

The fictions were important not only to the learned elite, but also to the fashionable set. To be in fashion meant to be up-to-date not only with the latest styles in decor, furniture or clothing, but also to be familiar with the latest styles and trends in fiction. It was this pressure on the commercial circulating libraries which made them limit the supply of new books to one per reader, to be returned within a few days, often within 24 hours. The readers who wanted to borrow a book for as short a time as 24 hours could not have been wanting it to sit down and read from cover to cover. The alleged pleasure of eighteenth-century fictions, to savour the sentiment and developing stories, simply could not be done in 24 hours if any time were to be left for sleeping, meals, and social occupations. The readers who demanded access to new books so fervently that librarians had to order multiple copies of new books, were probably skimming through the pages to get a rough idea of the style and the story in order to appear fashionable at social gatherings. For such readers the synopsis of the plot in the chapter headings would have

been invaluable and it may be that Fielding was teasing people who tried to use his works in this way with his ironic and unclear chapter headings: for example, 'A very long chapter, containing a very great incident', and then, next, 'By comparing which with the former, the reader may possibly correct some abuse which he hath formerly been guilty of in the application of the word Love.'*[12] Little help here for those wanting to know the rough outlines of a story to bluff their way through a conversation!

Because fiction was so important as an object of fashion, its ephemeral or even worthless nature did not matter to the fashionable reader. The condemnation of ephemeral works, 'that set of trifling performances, whose names we presume are most of them already devoted to oblivion'*[13] would not have weighed heavily with readers who only needed to know the fictions during their brief spell of fashionable appeal, and cared nothing for them when they were out of fashion. Consequently, I would argue that fiction was borrowed, not bought; and that the stocks of the libraries had to be renewed with rapid, and expensive regularity.

## 2 READERSHIP

Before the spread of literacy to the working classes in the nineteenth century, the potential readers for any sort of book were always likely to be members of the upper classes. Working-class illiteracy, and the demands of a working life meant that reading would have been an unusual pleasure for the majority of the labouring men and women of the eighteenth century. 'Even if the labourer could read, incessant physical labour left him with no leisure for reading'.*[1]

Some of the commercial circulating libraries did try to attract a poorer class of reader with weekly or daily subscriptions or a fee for the individual volume, and these were generally libraries which were scraping a living in the small English provincial towns or in Scotland. They simply could not depend on the local squires and the few successful tradesmen, but had to cheapen their terms to attract the literate but poorer reader.

## 2.1 Working-Class Literacy

Working-class literacy in the years before the eighteenth century was never widespread, but the disruption of society during the Civil War seems to have closed many small schools which never re-opened, further restricting formal education to the elite.*[2] The growing gulf between the labouring classes and the Quality, and the increasing sense of class conflict*[3], meant that propertied people who were in control of working-class education came to feel that an ignorant and unlettered working class was preferable to an educated and possibly radical one.

A survey of Oxford parishes of 1738 shows that 70% had no school at all, a survey of Yorkshire in 1743 shows 42% of parishes without any sort of school.*[4] These figures support the suggestion that a quarter of all the parishes of the country were without the most basic of schools, and that half of them had no endowed school.*[5]

Schools varied in style from the small village dame school where an ill-educated woman attempted to teach the village children skills they would need for their work and sometimes the alphabet, through a range of schools like day-schools, charity schools, grammar schools, academies for dissenters who thus avoided the Church of England dominated syllabi (and incidentally concentrated on science and technology), and preparatory schools for university candidates.

In the better charity schools and grammar schools ambitious head masters tried to shed their poor pupils for a more socially exclusive entry. Grammar and preparatory schools allowed endowment schemes to lapse, or bent the rules to benefit the sons of wealthy or noble parents; places for poor boys were gradually left vacant.

Schools specifically for poor children, the charity schools, and the small village schools were left unsupervised by any authority. Some probably operated as little more than a child-minding service for working parents, some may have made genuine attempts to teach the children literacy as well as manual skills but 'the great majority were dreadful'.*[6]

The emphasis in the education of working-class children was firmly on manual skills and only a tiny minority would have been taught to read. An even smaller group would have progressed to learning to write. It seems likely that even this poor standard declined through the century as the increasing demands for child labour in developing industries meant that few parents would pay a penny a week fees in preference to sending the child into wage work. A survey of parish registers to see how many couples could sign their name on their wedding day in the last half of the eighteenth century shows that two-thirds of the men and half of the women were able to sign their name.*[7] But even this may overstate their real ability. As we know from today's illiterates it is possible to learn how to sign a name without knowing the alphabet or being able to read. It seems possible that all rural labourers were illiterate for most of the eighteenth century.*[8]

Only the elite workers, the artisans in towns, seem likely to have been able to read and write. They had a contemporary reputation of independent, even radical thinking, and are said to have used

coffee houses as informal newspaper and pamphlet libraries where they shared newspapers and political broadsheets.*[9]

The Methodist leader John Wesley advised his flock to improve themselves by learning to read, and to study improving books. He recommended one of the fictions of this survey: The Fool of Quality, a pious story of the education of a young aristocrat who learns Christian standards and morality when he is abducted from his uncaring wealthy parents and brought up decently by his abductor. However it seems likely that the tiny minority of working people who could read would not be interested in fiction published in book form. The radical artisans would be reading for their own education and political interest, and would thus be unlikely to enjoy fanciful stories featuring noblemen and their lady-loves.

The class bias of the fictions may have been unpopular with all working-class readers. A study of chap-book fiction and ballads popular in the eighteenth century indicates a strain of radicalism very unlike the myths of feudalism and benevolent paternalism which are found in the book fictions. In the fictions known to have been popular with the eighteenth-century working-class people, the motif of engrossing landlords or profiteering middlemen meeting untimely ends is a popular and recurring one.*[10] The book fictions' fantasy of the wealthy but generous landlord could have offended working people who felt exploited, and the popular element of simplicity and love of Nature might have failed to strike a chord with workers whose livelihood depended on soil and climate.

If the content of book fiction was unattractive to labouring men and women, the text, layout, and price of a book would have been a further discouragement. The layout and text size of a book would have seemed odd to people accustomed to the large black Gothic

text of chapbooks and ballads. For people with reading difficulties, trying to identify letters and words with eyes strained after a long day's work and with only flickering rushlight candles or firelight as illumination the close text and tiny letters of most of the eighteenth-century books would have been unattractive.

Books were in any case hard to obtain outside the main cities because of the small print runs and problems of distribution until mid-century.*[11] From 1750 onwards prices for books rose steadily and would have been beyond the means of a labourer, artisan, or even lower middle-class reader. A new book could cost as much as 10s. from 1775 onwards.*[12] As an analysis of the terms of commercial circulating libraries suggests, only the smaller libraries bothered to try to attract the poorer readers' custom. Even so, a penny a night or even a week would have been prohibitive for a working person who wanted to read regularly.

A brief examination of the wages and conditions of the labourers and paupers of the eighteenth century shows that no workers could have bought books, and only a tiny elite of workers would have been able to borrow, even at the rate of a penny per volume. The majority of the unskilled labourers in full-time rural work earned around a shilling a day for most of the century though wages rose slightly in the final decade.*[13] Workers in towns who would have been literate included shopmen and school ushers who were paid 4s. to 8s. a week with their keep.*[14] These men could have afforded a cheap-rate library subscription, but could use a library only if a combination of most unlikely circumstances prevailed. They would have to live near a library offering cheap rates, they would have to be prepared to sacrifice the extra money which could otherwise be saved or spent on other luxuries, they would need flexible working hours to permit

them to go out to the library to borrow and return books during the library's opening hours, they needed enough leisure to enable them to read a volume in the short time permitted by the librarian, and they would need adequate lighting for their reading, and adequate energy after the day's work.

> Wages were simply too mean, and schooling too uncertain for any rapid development of a large reading public among the working classes.*[15]

The only group of such potential working-class readers could possibly have been house servants who enjoyed a higher standard of living than many other workers. A liveried servant had his food, lodging, and clothing provided free, and had long periods of idle time waiting for his master's orders. The servants' hall would be provided with adequate lighting, and most servants would have been taught how to read. The servants may not even have had to join a circulating library or visit it to enjoy access to the library stocks. Samuel Pratt (himself a Bath librarian) wrote of a character in Family Secrets*[16] who orders a librarian to include in her learned selection some fictional trash ostensibly for the servants - a state of affairs permitted, or even encouraged by the librarians by the large number of volumes permitted to the individual subscriber.

Certainly there was a strong contemporary belief in the corrupting influence of fiction upon servants, and thus criticism of circulating libraries for providing working people with unrealistic fantasies. Much of the anxiety about Richardson's Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded, was based on the fear that servant girls would follow Pamela's example, while the valet in The Pupil of Pleasure, and the cobbler of The Mock Monarchs show in two highly popular examples the consequences, comic and tragic, of servants reading fictions which could be understood only by their betters.

Some self-employed urban artisans may have earned more than employees and possibly could arrange their working hours to enable them to read. But in the unsettled and difficult years of 1760-1800 employment was not guaranteed even for skilled craftsmen, and terms and conditions of employment often deteriorated.*[17] Even those historians who argue that a boom in consumer prosperity was the cause of the expansion of the industrial revolution recognise that the consumer demand came only from the elite, the middle and upper classes of society.*[18] The increasingly wealthy, increasingly numerous, elite demanded more and more goods; and it seems likely that the demand for books was similar to the demand for other luxuries.

The supply of books - like that of other consumer luxuries - was increased in the second half of the eighteenth century. The 1774 Copyright Act freed the book pirates from any legal restrictions and made cheap editions of popular older books possible.*[19] Although the official publishers were charging more and more, especially for deluxe editions*[20], the book pirates and the remainder business of James Lackington*[21] were selling books for 1s. or 6d. a volume - still out of the reach of the labouring poor, but a good buy for the middle and upper classes. The improvements in production and distribution primarily benefited the 'expanded middle-class audience'.*[22]

## 2.2 Middle and Upper-Class Readers

The middle-class audience expanded in two ways. The social mobility of the successful artisans, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs and traders meant that they moved from their labouring-class background into a middle-class position, so the actual numbers of the middling sort grew, swelled by the social mobility of the successful workers.

In addition to this, a larger reading audience was created because more middle-class people learned to read, the class became more literate. The dissenting academies became more influential from 1700 onwards and increasing numbers of middle-class parents wanted their children to have a formal education. As trading, retailing, industry, and even farming, grew more complex, successful working people needed to be able to read and write instructions and orders. The social ambitions of successful tradesmen meant that they and their families tried to be in fashion - and that included reading the fashionable new books. Elocution lessons taken by aspiring tradesmen to rid them of their working-class accents introduced them to the fiction classics since elocution lessons used the more important fictions as texts.*[23] All of these elements, plus the extended periods of leisure time facing the wives and daughters of a successful man who were no longer required to help run the family business, meant that the new recruits to the middle classes and the established middling sort were likely to adopt the habit of reading fiction as they adopted so many other upper-class pursuits.

But it seems unlikely that the habit spread to the working classes of the eighteenth century. The claim that workers were being spoiled by circulating library fiction was made by critics who condemned both the fiction and the suppliers. The myth survives to mislead modern historians who claim, I think wrongly, that 'the circulating library dates from the early years of the eighteenth century and testifies to the spread of the habit of reading to a lower class in society'.*[24]

# CHAPTER IV

## WOMEN WRITERS AND READERS

Alongside the myth of a working-class membership of the eighteenth-century commercial circulating library was another belief: that women were the main readers and authors of the fiction of the circulating libraries. This belief had serious consequences on the content and criticism of the fiction; but I would argue that, just like the belief in a working-class readership, this is a myth promoted by the eighteenth-century enemies of fiction who implied that it was a favourite entertainment for the ill-educated and vulgar, and that its effect on them was detrimental.

### 1 WOMEN WRITERS

There was a strong contemporary belief that women were the main authors of the eighteenth-century novels: 'that branch of the business is now engrossed by female authors...'*[1], and this belief has survived to our times: 'most novels after 1760 seem to have been written by women'.*[2] Another modern critic claims that of 190 epistolary novels published from 1780 to 1790, 48 were by women authors, and more anonymously 'by a lady'.*[3]

It does seem likely that women who had the talent and desire to write would turn to prose fiction. The creation of poetry demands a discipline and an obedience to certain structural rules which would have been a severe test of the talents of women with limited educational backgrounds. But the structure of prose fiction was still undefined and the variety of styles current among the minor fiction must have encouraged women writers to think they could risk their own experiments in print.*[4]

Writing prose fiction was preferable to trying to tackle the only other prose source and expression of imaginative life in the eighteenth century - the theatre. The London stage in the early years of the eighteenth century was notoriously rough and bawdy and no educated and consequently middle or upper-class woman was likely willingly to risk her reputation by association. The increasing respectability of the theatre towards the close of the century would have made it more acceptable, but not any easier, for a woman to have her work performed. The technical problems of stagecraft would not encourage the experimenting amateur beginner, and a provincial woman writer would not have seen many plays, far less developed any familiarity with the problems of theatrical production.

But prose fiction could be written and sold without leaving the safety of home. It could be planned and written in secret and fitted around the Quality woman's domestic duties, as shown notably by Jane Austen and Frances Burney. It could be written in simple language, something women felt competent to handle. From 1740 onwards the content could be well within their experience: the details of domestic life, the duties of a wife, daughter or mother, the unkindness or love of friends and relations, and the whole detail of relationships. The epistolary mode, popular in many fictions, encouraged women who were experienced correspondents: 'many women found themselves ... dependent on the art of writing to hold their families together'.*[5] The more exotic and unrealistic plots could be dreamed up readily, fed by exotic fictions devoured in private with little attention to probability or realism, and even less to historical or even geographic accuracy.

But however well fiction suited women authors the eighteenth-century belief which has survived to influence modern critics, that women produced most of the fictions, may be the result of a little male prejudice by the reviewers, and misleading advertising by the publishers.

It is possible that the publishers believed that new works of fiction by young women authors were more attractive to readers than those written by men. To promote their new books they may have incorrectly advertised them as the works of a 'young lady'. This was the suggestion made by a reviewer in The London Magazine in 1773 who alleged that the Noble brothers were publishing novels which they claimed were written by a 'young lady' when they were in fact the ill-paid productions of Grub Street hacks. The Nobles indignantly denied this charge, but it is an accusation worth remembering when one is trying to estimate the proportion of women authors.

That this proportion was exaggerated by the critics and by professional male authors seems likely. Smollett's claim that fiction was 'wholly engrossed' by women has the familiar ring of the professional male craftsman seeing himself threatened by cheap, and possibly unskilled, female amateurs. The predominantly male critics were quick to detect the hands of ill-educated school-girls in the what they saw as floods of new works.

This survey however suggests that women authors are not predominant in the list of popular fiction. Of 127 stories only 32 are written by women, including two written anonymously by 'a young lady' and two anonymous stories with female translators: 25.2% of the survey. The total number of female authors represented is even smaller. Only 15 women authors appear in this survey, and it is interesting to see that the majority of them are not the amateur,

provincial lady writers of the myth. At least ten are professional, skilled writers working not for pin-money but for their livelihood. The success of two of them at tailoring their work for the market can be shown by the fact that Eliza Haywood is the most popular author of all the men and women writers in the survey with seven works in the 'top 200' fictions list. Next most popular is Smollett, and joint third are Defoe and Sarah Fielding with five works each.

Haywood's popularity was a result of her ability to change the tone and style of her books to please different types of reader and to follow, if not to lead, the changing tastes of the public. The Wife is a didactic conduct-book, catalogued as fiction by the eighteenth-century librarians, which uses a collection of fictitious situations to show young women how best to deal with married life. It is dogmatically moral and adopts a highly conventional and respectable tone. Wives are recommended to be good managers, neat, respectable, reserved but not prudish, forgiving, and agreeable to their husbands.

> But politeness in speech and carriage is not the only complaisance I would recommend to the practice of a wife towards a husband; - when once they are come to live together a thousand little incidents, impossible to be enumerated, will every day, almost every hour, present her with opportunities of shewing the readiness to oblige him, - none of which she should on any account let slip.*[6]

This delicate nicety comes from the same pen which wrote the scandalous, bawdy, outrageous Anti-Pamela! Mocking like Fielding the ambitions of Pamela, and satirising just as coarsely as Fielding the ambitions of another pretty maid-servant, the contrast is startling.

Eliza Haywood's changing tone in this survey indicates her commitment to tailoring her substantial output of fictions precisely to the requirements of the market. From The Fruitless Enquiry, (1727): ten exotic and erotic tales linked by one adventure love-story, through the erotic and bawdy Anti-Pamela, (1741), Haywood developed her story-telling skills and refined her approach and material. The Fortunate Foundlings, (1744), still bears the marks of the conventional Romance, with two orphans making their way around Europe; but her next fiction, Betsy Thoughtless, (1751), is a realistic, domestic, tightly-written, coherent story about the emotional development of a young girl who outgrows her silliness and lightness of character to become worthy of the love of a good man. Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy, (1753) is an equally exciting story, but with a looser construction which includes two major sub-plots and many sidelines to the main plot which is the courtship and marriage of two very sensible young people. The pinnacle of Haywood's respectability was reached with The Wife (1756), as she consciously and deliberately cashed-in on the demand for didactic fictions. But any question of this being an unconscious, spontaneous development by the author is dismissed by her last fiction of this survey The Invisible Spy, (1759), which represents Haywood's quite correct calculation that the market for bawdy exposée-style writing was not yet exhausted.

Haywood's career and her predominant position among the popular writers of the eighteenth century challenges the assumption made by contemporary and modern critics that the art of fiction writing was dominated by amateur women, writing for their own satisfaction rather than profit. The less popular fictions of the period which did not leave a substantial trace of their passing in the catalogues

may indeed have been the day-dreams of anonymous provincial housewives. But it is worth noting that the most successful author, according to the stocks of the extant circulating library catalogues, was a professional woman writer who made her living by judging and satisfying the market for fiction.

## 2 WOMEN READERS

The precise composition of this market is an open question. I have suggested that the high cost of both buying and borrowing books makes it unlikely that many working people would have read fiction regularly. Working-class illiteracy and the more serious interests of the few literate artisans further strengthens the suggestion that only the middle and upper-class readers would have been interested in reading fiction.

But whether the readers were mainly ladies or gentlemen is a question shadowed with the prejudices of contemporary critics and modern historians, who unanimously claim that reading fiction was an especially female hobby.

One cannot know which sex was buying books in the eighteenth century and unfortunately only one commercial circulating library subscription list has survived: that of the library run by C H Marshall at Bath 1793-99.*[7] It is possible that not all women signed themselves as Miss or Mrs, so some of the initials and surnames may indicate women; and it is also possible that the father of a family may have joined solely for the benefit of his wife and daughters. In these ways the women's use of the circulating library might be concealed. However, identifiably female names comprise only a third of the list of Marshall's subscribers. Female membership of the subscription libraries, which were in any case specialising in a different sort

of stock, is even less. Seven subscription libraries had fewer than 10% of women readers, only two had more: 11% and 20% respectively.*[8]

This is not to deny that women of the upper and middle-class may have been avid readers:

> of all the causes which have injured the health of women the principal has been the prodigious multiplication of romances within the last century.... A young girl, instead of running about and playing, reads, perpetually reads; and at twenty becomes full of vapours, instead of being qualified for the duties of a good wife or nurse.*[9]

Modern historians suggest that the increased leisure of women of the upper and middle-classes would have made them likely to seek a time-consuming absorbing hobby. 'Hence the length of the novel (for the readers had only too much time on their hands)'.*[10]

The ladies of the landed gentry were being squeezed out of their traditional roles of manager and housekeeper by the increasing numbers of professional managers, and the increasing numbers of upper house-servants. The manual chores of housekeeping came to be seen as something a lady should delegate to servants, and direct from a distance. The squire's lady was thus banished from the still room and the laundry room in the house, and from the farm where dairy and brewing were supervised by the squire's man of business.

The middle-class wife also had more leisure time on her hands as her husband's social rise banished her from her place as a working partner in their business. The successful trader did not permit his wife to serve behind a counter in one of his shops, and the ambitious farmer wanted to see his wife dressed in silk in the drawing room rather than supervising the pigs or cows. The over-whelming criticism by eighteenth-century writers of the social

mobility of the middle classes returns again and again to the new leisure of the middle-class woman in the country and in the town.*[11]

The education commonly open to women of both upper and middle classes would have equipped them to read. They were literate, but would hardly have acquired the intellectual training necessary for serious study; nor were their intellectual appetites stimulated by their early education.

> Women of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries still received no education worthy of the name. This was true even of those who came from cultured families.*[12]

Some historians believe that the standard of education for the elite girls was high until the schools widened their appeal in an attempt to attract girls from the middle classes. The classical discipline of the old schools was replaced by less rigorous training throughout the seventeenth century:

> this masculine, literary education for noble and gentle women was replaced by the traditional feminine accomplishments and graces needed to catch a husband, such as music, singing, dancing, needlework and embroidery, and no more than the basic elements of reading and writing in English and also French.*[13]

The ladies of the eighteenth century were likely by inclination, opportunity, and ability, to take up the reading of fiction as their major hobby. 'The increased wealth, leisure, and refinement of the middle class had turned the women into readers.'*[14]

However it would be a mistake to deduce that, since the women of the elite seem likely to have been readers of fiction, they were therefore the only readers of fiction. Despite the assumptions of contemporary critics and modern historians I would think it likely that men of the Quality also read and enjoyed fiction. The substantial cost of joining a circulating library may have been

borne by the male head of the household who thus had access to fiction if he chose to read it. The impact which many books made on first publication suggests that a man who wished to be in fashion would have felt obliged to take the precaution of at least scanning the volumes in case the topic of the new fiction came up in polite conversation. Some fictions were seen to be important works, and educated men may have read them and recognised their significance and the contribution they made to the emerging forms of fiction. If the habit of the family reading circle was still an important one, the head of the household may have chosen and read fiction to his wives and daughters. The existence of even the most critical and grudging reviews and references to fiction in the serious magazines shows that men were aware of the style and content of contemporary fiction - even if they never admitted enjoying it. The convention of referring to the reader with a male pronoun is maintained in many fictions of this survey.

All this is speculation, suggesting that men may have felt obliged to read fiction as part of their social, professional, or family duties; but I would go farther and suggest that men were enthusiastic readers of fiction and that one can see the impact of their taste on the fiction stocked by the circulating librarians.

In the subscription libraries of the period, which were dominated by male readers who chose the stock of the library, fiction still retained a presence, and many of the fictions popular with commercial circulating libraries were important also in the subscription libraries.*[15] If men despised and ignored fiction, then it should be absent from the subscription libraries where the tastes of male readers were directly served. It may be that the tastes of male readers can be traced also in the stocks of the commercial circulating libraries.

An analysis of the stocks shows that a taste for 'low' humour, for scatological and bawdy humour remained consistently important throughout the early years of the eighteenth century. As the graphs analysing the contents of the libraries show, scatological and bawdy comic fictions were an important ingredient of most of the libraries in all of the areas. Certainly London and Scottish readers show more of a taste for 'low' comedy than do the English Provinces, but overall the enjoyment of vulgar comedy is clear.*[16]

This in itself does not prove the existence of a coarse-minded male audience. It is not unreasonable to assert that the ladies of the eighteenth century enjoyed a good belly laugh at vulgar jokes, and relished bawdy references to female genitalia and sexual intercourse. It is not unreasonable, and yet it does not seem likely. Surely the reader who enjoyed the moralism and piety of The Fool of Quality, or Pamela in Her Exalted Condition, was not the same person as the reader who enjoyed Rabelais. The reader who took sexual intercourse and marital infidelity as evidence of high passion, and as an extremely serious if not tragic activity, would not relish the scenes in The Decameron where monks are repeatedly caught with their pants down. The attitude to women in such comic stories is so rough and so overtly sexually exploitative that one simply cannot imagine the lady reader, increasingly accustomed to the idolisation of the heroine, understanding or enjoying the joke.

If contemporary critics and modern historians are correct in their claim that silly girls and sillier women lapped up the sentimental love-stories of the eighteenth-century fiction, then the bawdy and violent tales must have appealed to a totally different audience. While this section of the audience could have been thigh-slapping indelicate women, it is hard to imagine a bawdy female

audience large enough to make a major impact on the stocks of the commercial circulating libraries.

This is a hard point to prove; but perhaps this is because the claim that men were readers of fiction, and left the mark of their taste in the contents of the commercial circulating libraries, is to fly in the face of a generally-held but equally unproven belief.

Why the male readership should have been concealed by contemporary observers and thus hidden from later historians can only be because of the surviving sense of the triviality of fiction, and the belief that educated men have better, more worthwhile books to read, and busy men no time for such unprofitable labour. One contemporary observer, at least, believed that men read fiction. Jane Austen's Catherine Morland is corrected by Henry Tilney:

> 'But I really thought before, young men despised novels amazingly'.
>
> 'It is <u>amazingly</u>; it may well suggest <u>amazement</u> if they do - for they read nearly as many as women. I myself have read hundred and hundreds. Do not imagine that you can cope with me in a knowledge of Julias and Lousias. ... Consider how many years I have had the start of you. I had entered on my studies at Oxford while you were a good little girl working your sampler at home!'*[17]

# CHAPTER V

## THE DIDACTIC TONE

The prevalent belief that fiction was read primarily by women and by the working class - people who had little experience of the world and no training in critical reading - meant that fiction was seen as a moral danger to these readers. It was feared that their inability to distinguish between the fictional and the real world would corrupt them, turning women into posturing fools and inflating the workers with ideas above their station. The detrimental effects of fictions were thus seen as two-fold as early as 1692:

> not at all convenient for the vulgar, because they give 'em extravagant ideas of practice, and before they have judgement to bypass their Fancies, generally make 'em think themselves some King or Queen or other... for the women, no less than Queens or Empresses will serve 'em, the Inconveniences of which are felt afterwards oftentimes sooner observ'd than remedy'd.*[1]

One anonymous commentator writing in 1797 thought that young readers could be trusted with carefully selected fictions, but that working-class readers should have access only to history or factual works:

> exclude every book of profane, immoral or indelicate nature; when proper books are put into the hands of young persons, let reflection be joined to reading, and knowledge must and will follow.
>
> The humbler walks of life require much culture; for this purpose I would recommend to their perusal books of authenticity in preference to those of entertainment only.*[2]

The theme of workers seized with Romantic frenzy as a result of fiction reading is the subject of <u>The Mock Monarchs</u> when a cobbler sets off on a campaign to win back his inheritance - the kingdom

of Scotland. Even more popular was the theme of the danger of fiction to the morals of women. Charlotte Lennox, The Female Quixote*[3] adapted the idea of Cervantes' Quixote for a heroine in contemporary England. The wealthy, beautiful heroine loses touch with the real world and lives her life as though the fictional world of the Romances were reality. Other fictions use the female quixote theme for sub-plots in 15 fictions of this survey, (11.8%).

In the sub-plots the authors emphasise the threat to the morals of young women of excessive fiction reading:

> All the pleasure I had was in reading Romances, so that by the time I was fifteen, my Head was full of nothing but Love.*[4]

> she ... will probably, by dint of reading plays and romances, fancy herself the heroine of a novel and find one of her father's clerks for the hero.*[5]

Young women might have their heads turned by excessive indulgence in fiction but they might also have their passions aroused. This related fear is demonstrated in some of the warning stories of the survey, most notably by one of the stories in Atlantis where a seduction is accomplished by exposing the victim to a library of fiction.

> The Duke had left Orders she should not be controul'd in anything: Whole Nights were wasted by her in that Gallery; she had too well inform'd herself of the speculative Joys of Love. There are Books dangerous to the Community of Mankind; abominable for Virgins, and destructive to Youth; such as explain the Mysteries of Nature, the congregated Pleasures of Venus, the full Delights of mutual Lovers, and which rather ought to pass the Fire than the Press. The Duke had laid in her way such as made no mention of Vertue or Hymen, but only advanced native, generous and undissembled Love. She was become so great a Proficient, that nothing of the Theory was a stranger to her.*[6]

As the belief in the potency of fictional characters to influence readers' behaviour gained ground, the debate about mixed characters, who were both good and bad, became more acrimonious. Smollett's defence:

> Let me not therefore be condemned for having chosen my principal character from the purlieus of treachery and fraud when I declare my purpose is to set him up as a beacon for the unexperienced and unwary...*[7]

was rejected only thirteen years later:

> so much indelicacy are mixed in with these gentleman's entertaining talents that I cannot recommend them as much as I should wish: no Authors want more to have their work corrected to render them truly valuable.*[8]

As the catalogues indicate, 'corrected' versions of the classics were available for sensitive readers. The 'Beauties of' Fielding, Sterne, or Smollett selected the sensitive and delicate passages and omitted the bawdy and suggestive ones.

Critics not only disliked suggestive and indelicate passages in fiction, but went further and felt that fiction should positively inspire the reader to be good. Johnson condemns Shakespeare for lacking a moral lesson:

> He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but his precepts and his axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is he always careful to shew in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent on time and place.*[9]

In response to these feelings about the moral and educational obligations of fiction the eighteenth-century authors produced stories which were designed to teach the reader. The educational content of the stories ranges through an entire spectrum. At one end are the stories in which fiction is used as a convenient vehicle for moral or educational content, in the middle are the stories in which the excitement and action of the narrative is equalled in importance by the author's lessons, and at the far end are those stories which pay only lip-service to the concept of educating the reader - perhaps prefacing the story with the declaration that the author hoped to encourage morality - and then producing a story which is undiluted entertainment with no moral overtones at all.

Only a very few stories are so remote from eighteenth-century society, so exotic in setting, so melodramatic in action, that the determined auto-didact could learn nothing from them. The marvellous fantasies of Arabian Nights, or the erotic, bawdy and entertaining tales of The Decameron, or La Belle Assemblée were clearly designed to offer the reader nothing but entertainment. However, these stories are in the minority: only 22 stories (17.3%) restrict themselves to providing entertainment only. All the remaining 105 (82.6%) offer the reader a direct or indirect lesson in morality, by precept and example, a thesis outlined and exemplified, or educational asides on a variety of subjects.

Most of the stories teach by means of a concealed lesson. A quarter of the survey's stories (33, 25.9%) demonstrate in the course of the fiction that there is a certain lifestyle, setting, and behaviour which is correct. Without any overt declaration of morality or principle the stories exemplify in a thousand subtle and

even unconscious ways the standards of behaviour which should be met. Characters in the stories who fail to measure up are not necessarily condemned as villains, but they are shown to be behaving in an improper way. Characters who do toe the line of this unspecified but very clear code are shown to be worthy members of the elite. The importance of good manners is stressed because they are a part of a total moral behaviour:

> Manners and morals were regulated because it is through the minutiae of conduct that the enemy of mankind finds his way into the soul.*[10]

In this sense all the elements which are noted in this survey have a didactic function in that, appearing as they do in many of the stories, they combine to form a world-view which communicates a clear impression of what was considered desirable in even the most trivial areas of behaviour and taste. For example, didactic material on the details of housekeeping is available in most of the realistic and domestic stories. Richard Graves tells the reader the best time for servants to clean out a room:

> The truth was, that Mrs Betty having been kept up later than usual, and being more solicitous about her own housewifery, than the health of her master's guests, had been mopping both parlours at seven o'clock in the morning, which oughtto have been done by five, or, if possible, on the preceding night.*[11]

Even the most apparently neutral elements, like a preference for the country rather than town life as the heroine's residence, is linked with and based on the belief that town life is morally suspect, that good people do not need the sophisticated amusements of the town and that country living is morally superior.*[12]

This is the most trivial level of didactic writing but the combination of prejudices builds up a persuasive picture to demonstrate to the reader the proper way to feel and behave: 'manners and morals are all but synonymous'.*[13]

The second most popular didactic style is that which uses the chief protagonists as role-models to exmplify a code of behaviour. The hero or heroine, placed in the most appalling crisis, shows the reader how a true lady or gentleman copes with such stress. In 25 stories (19.6%) the hero or heroine exemplify a properly behaved man or woman responding to pressure. This type of didactic writing is clearly popular in stories where the setting and circumstance can have no application to the eighteenth-century reader's lifestyle. No-one could read The Recess to learn the correct behaviour in the family or social circles of eighteenth-century polite society. The domestic detail of The Recess with two sisters incarcerated from birth in an underground cavern has no application to any reality of any time (least of all the Elizabethan period, the alleged setting!) but the behaviour of the two sisters, their loves, disappointments and griefs, can be read as an example of good womanly behaviour. In defeat they are resigned yet hopeful, in victory they are forgiving. They are loving and loyal to their husbands and fiercely protective of their children. Without any pretensions as a major didactic story The Recess nonetheless teaches attitudes which are based on sound moral principles.

Equally interesting are those stories which aim to teach by negative example, and it is in these 24 stories (18.8%) that the eighteenth-century authors can enjoy some luscious or bawdy descriptions of sin, or some shocking description of evil behaviour

while maintaining the defence that the story is told for a didactic purpose to warn readers of the perils of sin. As has been noted this is the excuse for Ferdinand Count Fathom, the melodramatic villain whose vibrant wickedness is so much more interesting than the pallid virtue of his victims including the hero and heroine.

Samuel Pratt wrote the Pupil of Pleasure to show by example the horrific consequences which could come about by following the precepts of Lord Chesterfield:

> In the course of this historical illustration - this biographical commentary on the text of Chesterfield - ample scope has been allowed for the display of various characters and particularly such as more immediately promoted the main design of the work which is to shew the aggravated evils in Society arising from the practice of such perniciously-pleasing precepts.*[14]

If the author's intentions were sincere one can only pity him for his hero Philip Sedley becomes so fascinating to the reader, and the victims so peripheral, that the reader is on the edge of the seat hoping for the villain's success. His seduction of Harriet, the vain and foolish woman, is thoroughly enjoyable and his cruelty in refusing to go to her deathbed is his only genuinely repellent characteristic. His forcible seduction of his old love Fanny is made less shocking for the reader by the ambiguity of the writing. One cannot help wondering whether it was a rape, or whether the imprecise description conceals a half-willing consent by the drooping invalid. By the time he faces her husband's sword and comes to a well-merited end the reader is safely on the side of virtue out of sympathy with the suffering of the victims. The ambiguity of Pratt's hero's attractions were apparent even to himself:

> ...'the hero of this history, equally celebrated, dazzling, and diabolic al...'*[15]

Other stories teaching by negative example are the eleven observer stories when the Invisible Spy, the roving Devils, the Chinese inspectors and the inanimate spies all uncover vices which are painted, with relish, in the darkest colours.

The smallest group of didactic stories are those which primarily aim to illustrate a thesis or educate the reader in specific topics. Twenty-three stories (18.1%) use fiction as a vehicle to convey the author's opinions about contemporary theories, or debates or to express the author's concern about social ills. The predominantly theoretical stories include Rousseau's thesis on education Emile, in which a fictional boy is used to examplify Rousseau's ideas on child care. The story is a vehicle for the examination and illustration of Rousseau's ideas of education for the growing child and young man.

Pamela in Her Exalted Condition is an example of how a thesis can form one section of a story which otherwise progresses as a conventional fictional narrative. In the context of writing to her friends about the progress of her marriage and baby boy, Pamela takes issue with Locke on a number of points and a substantial part of Pamela in Her Exalted Condition is devoted to a critical reading of Locke's treatise on education. Oddly, since both stories concern the rearing of children, Rousseau's is far more vividly imagined and characterised than Richardson's. Rousseau makes a smooth transition from introducing Emile as an illustration of his theory, to developing his character as a fictional person in his own right. Baby B. in Pamela II is supposed to be a real child from the time of his fictional birth, yet this fertile fictional situation brings

nothing more emotionally stimulating or entertaining than a critical reading of Locke's work. Pamela's personality and the personality of her child are obscured in this section of the story. They come alive elsewhere, but the section on education is offered to the reader unsweetened by any maternal by-play. The contrast with Rousseau's dry introduction of Emile and the emergence of Emile's personality is an interesting one.

Emile is an example of a fictionalised thesis, Pamela in Her Exalted Condition an example of a thesis offered as an educational aside to the main progress of the narrative, John Buncle Esq is an example of multiple ideas and theories offered 'on a thread' in the same way that some eighteenth-century stories offered sentimental or bawdy scenes on a thread. In the context of a fictional story, and with some effective fictional scenes, the author presents a variety of ideas and philosophic and theological debates. John Buncle leaves home because of a passionate disagreement with his father over the Athanasian creed. In his amazing journeys interspersed with eight marriages, Mr Buncle researches and discusses Hebrew, the classification of shells, works on algebra with a lady who proves to be his intellectual superior, experiments with optics and other natural sciences, discovers unknown areas of England, meets a doctor who is forced to steal cadavers for medical research, and discusses appropriate life-styles for women with a Protestant nun. To the modern reader the didactic tone and amount of information is overwhelming:

> My opinion on your question is, that the Biblical Hebrew was the language of Paradise, and continued to be spoken by all men down to, and at the time of Moses writing the pentateuch, and long after. Abraham, tho' bred in Chaldea, could converse freely with the Egyptians, the Sodomites, and the King of Gerar; nor do we find, that any variety of speech interrupted the commerce of his son Isaac, with the several nations around, or that it ever stopt Jacob in his travels.*[16]

A sequel to this encyclopedia of information was written by another author. Buncle Junior contents himself with a reformist position in politics, religious tolerance, a call for universal male suffrage, a lecture on improving agriculture, and a claim that women should not be formally educated as they are best suited to softer skills. A sad decline from his father who believed that women were innately superior, and even visited a commune of women where the male members had died out.

The majority of these stories which aim to teach the reader about social ills or about theories treat these topics in the context of a fictional story, sometimes as an aside or digression from the main story, sometimes as a discussion of major importance in the story.

Emma Corbett; or, the Miseries of Civil War shows only a passing interest in the American War of Independence. The book combines a morally acceptable didactic tone with the enjoyable entertainment of undiluted fiction. The title implies that a serious statement about the war can be expected by the reader, but the initial disagreement about the morality of the conflict is swiftly concluded and the real action of the story, the courage and martyrdom of Emma, can be relished. The political debate occupies no more than a few lines:

> ... 'I secretly detest every principle which began, and every motive which continues, this assassination of America *[17]

> ... you are about to engage in a cruel cause - a cause to which I object both as a patriot and as a parent. The vigour with which you have sought to obtain an authority to go forth amongst your countrymen, against your countrymen, bears in it something shocking to my nature.

> ... Perceiving how obstinately you were bent to aid this fallacious plot against the rights of nature and mankind, I thought to let you go blindly on to blacken yet more the catalogue of British oppressors.'*[18]

> 'You imagine America is aggrieved, while I look upon her as the aggressor.'*[19]

Politics is often a popular topic for didactic comment. Launcelot Greaves and the Citizen of the World both visit towns where elections are being rigged. The sensitivity of many heroes to abuses of official power provides an opening for authors to show some of the ills of corruption in society:

> In the election of Magistrates the people seem to exceed all bounds; the merits of a candidate are often measured by the numbers of his treats: his constituents assemble, eat upon him, and lend their applause, not to his integrity or sense,but to the quantities of his beef and brandy.*[20]

> An election-hall seems to be a theatre where every passion is seen without disguise; a school where fools may readily become worse and where philosophers may gather wisdom.*[21]

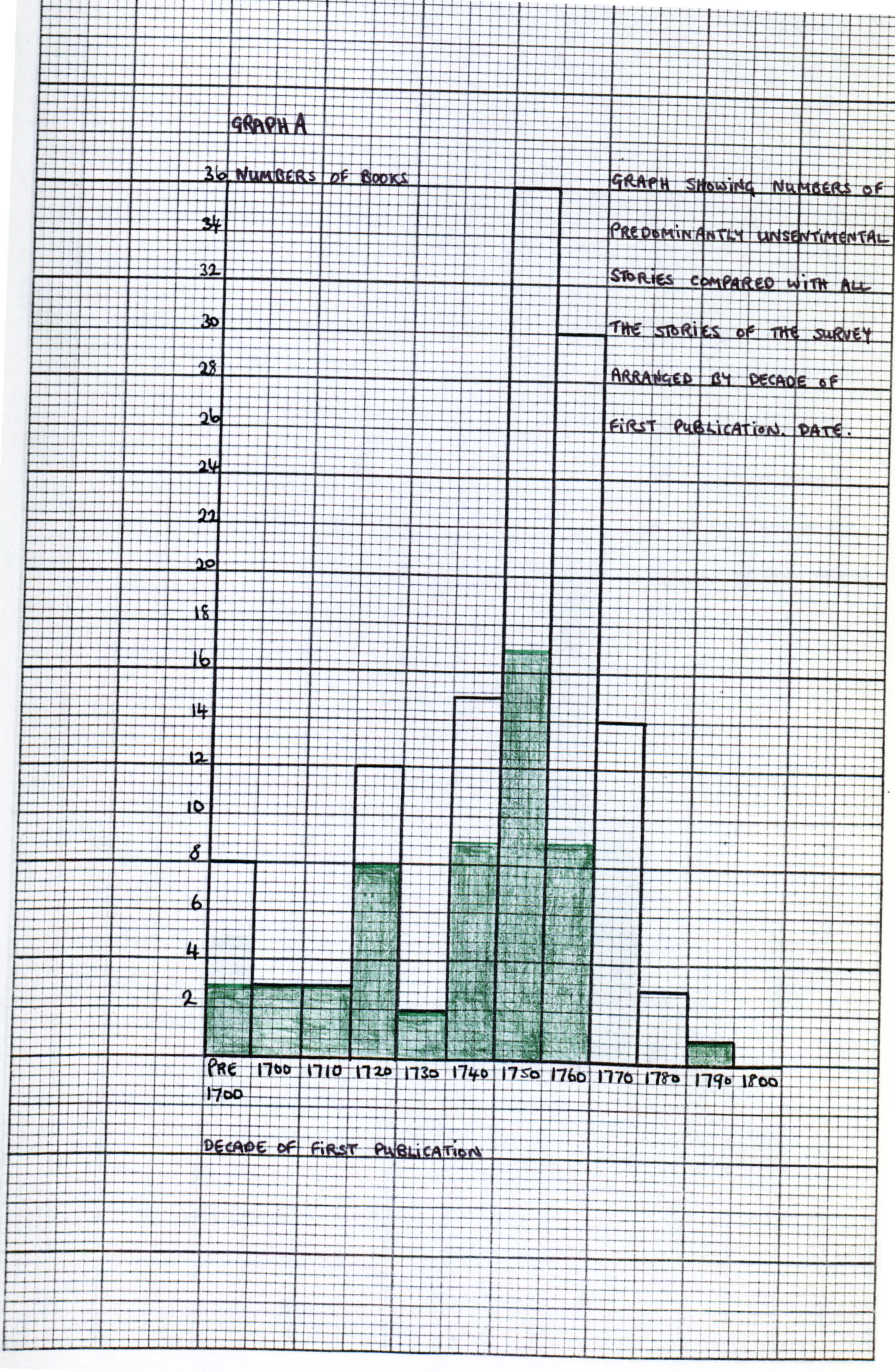
The rambling progress of the observer stories is best adapted for a series of comments about political abuses, but even more coherent centralised stories include asides which are didactic about topics.

The range of modes used by authors to introduce their pet Hobby-Horses was therefore immense: from the theory as the central fact and reason for the fiction, to the theory as an aside.

The great Hobby-Horsical author was of course Sterne, whose 'educational' asides satirised the introduction of extraneous material into a story and set a new satirical pattern. As he demonstrated, stories can at times seem to disappear under the author's enthusiasm to convey information:

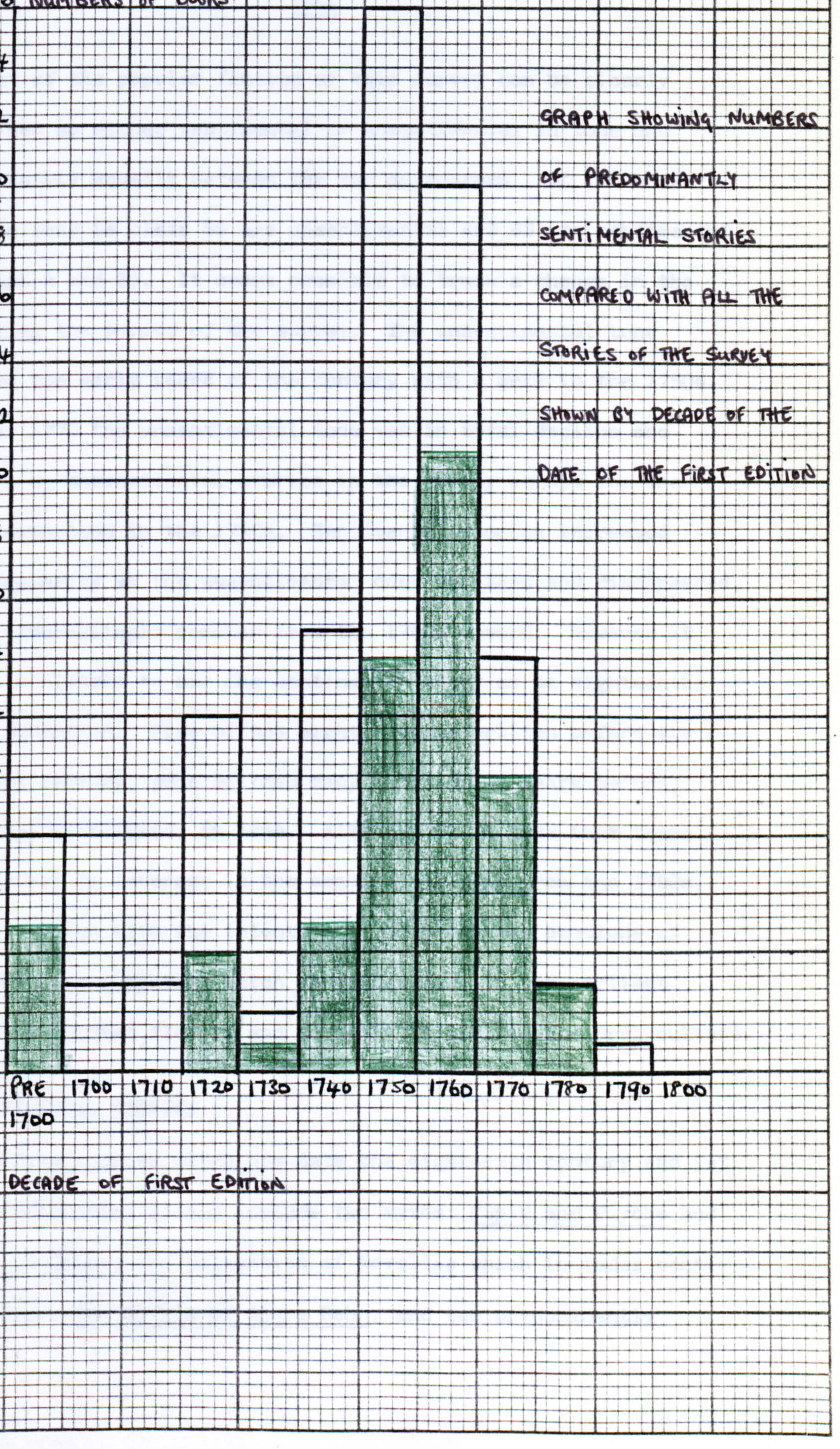
> What a lucky chapter of chances has this turned out! for it has saved me the trouble of writing one express, and in truth I have enough already on my hands without it. Have not I promised the world a chapter of knots? Two chapters upon the right and the wrong end of a woman? A chapter upon whiskers? A chapter upon wishes? - A chapter of noses? - No, I have done that - a chapter upon my Uncle Toby's modesty? To say nothing of a chapter upon Chapters, which I will finish before I sleep - by my great-grandfather's whiskers I shall never get half of 'em through this year.*[22]

GRAPH A




GRAPH SHOWING NUMBERS OF PREDOMINANTLY UNSENTIMENTAL STORIES COMPARED WITH ALL THE STORIES OF THE SURVEY ARRANGED BY DECADE OF FIRST PUBLICATION DATE.

GRAPH B




GRAPH SHOWING NUMBERS OF PREDOMINANTLY SENTIMENTAL STORIES COMPARED WITH ALL THE STORIES OF THE SURVEY SHOWN BY DECADE OF THE DATE OF THE FIRST EDITION

# CHAPTER VI

## TONE

Most of the popular fiction of this survey can be clearly categorised as either sentimental or unsentimental in tone and divides fairly equally between the two approaches. Of 118 books where the tone is clear 55 are unsentimental and 63 are sentimental (see graph A and B). It seems possible to trace a change in the tone during the period of the survey. The unsentimental tone dominated the early years of the century with a peak in the 1750s. But after 1770 the unsentimental tone was in total decline and there are no unsentimental stories in the survey except for one archaic exception in the 1790s. Sentimental stories increased their popularity as the unsentimental ones declined and disappeared, becoming increasingly popular from the 1760s onward. However it would be a mistake to see the sentimental story as an eighteenth-century invention. Five of the eight stories written before the eighteenth century, some of them many hundreds of years before, are clearly sentimental in tone. Although it is true that there was a revival in interest in the sentimental tone from the 1750s; fictions written with the intention of touching the emotions of the reader have a history which stretches back to the earliest examples of written fiction and probably beyond, to the oral culture.

### 1 SENTIMENTAL STORIES

The five stories which pre-date the eighteenth century and yet contain sentimental scenes include two myths: Cupid and Psyche and Daphnis and Chloe; one collection of Novellas which includes sentimental tales, The Novels of Aphra Behn, and two predominantly

sentimental Romances: Heliodorus, Theagenes and Chariclea and Cervantes, Persiles and Sigismunda.

These old sentimental stories rely for their effect on the dramatic. Extraordinary effects part the lovers and leave them sorrowing, and equally extraordinary events unite them again. Cupid and Pysche are parted by the magic rules of gods, while Daphnis and Chloe are threatened with separation when Daphnis is found to be not a goat-herd but a nobleman. Persiles and Sigismunda seem likely to die and leave the other one sorrowing; Chariclea is actually burned at the stake and Theagenes sentenced to execution without permanent ill effect. In Mrs Behn's collection, dramatic deaths conclude all but one of the five prose stories.

The reader is bombarded with appeals to tears in these older stories. The Romances and Mrs Behn's Novellas speed from one dramatic and tragic scene to another without a chance to draw breath. As soon as one tragedy is escaped another threatens and the reader has scarcely dried the tears from one emotional catastrophe before another succeeds. Sigismunda-Auristella's decision to part before they are separated by death seems quite reasonable:

> This has not made me alter my sentiments, for I am still the same; but I tremble to think that Death may overtake me, amidst the Dangers to which I am frequently exposed... Auristella could not pronounce these Words without shedddding some Tears, which contradicted all she had been saying; and to hide them from Periander, she turned herself to the other Side of the Bed; which she could not do so readily, but he perceived them flow; the Sight of which together with what he had just heard, seized his Heart so violently, that he fell down, lifeless, by the side of this afflicted Lover; who turning again immediately, upon the Noise of his Fall, and viewing his Eyes that seemed to be half closed in Death gently drew her hand over his Face; and wiped away the Tears, which, without his being sensible of it, ran streaming down his Cheeks.*[1]

The collapse of both men and women into tears and their total physical collapse as a result of grief is a common event in the older Romances, and is a symptom of the sincerity of hero and heroine rather than a lack of courage. Among the other overwheming hazards which face the couples of the Romances of Persiles and Sigismunda or Theagenes and Chariclea the prospect of dying of grief is never far away.

Daphnis and Chloe, a far less lachrymose story, can be called sentimental because of its tender attitude and tone towards the two young lovers. Its popularity with the eighteenth-century reader, despite erotic scenes of sexual activity, can be easily understood. The scenes of pastoral beauty and the importance of Nature, the capture by brigands and the rescue by an enterprising and brave hero, the discovery of an unknown but noble father for both the young people, and their materially successful marriage were all stock elements popular in the eighteenth century. It is noticeable that the book was not widely stocked by English provincial librarians and this may have been because of the scenes of love-making. It may have been these very passages, coupled with the tender sentimental story which made the book such a success with the more sophisticated London readers and the more reckless Scots.

Another feature of the traditional older stories which was seized on by the eighteenth-century authors and readers was the paranoiac sense of persecution by a cruel world. In Oroonoko this persecution takes direct material form when the Royal Prince is driven to rebellion and defeated. As a punishment he is chopped into pieces until he dies; a more direct statement of the cruelty of the world towards the hero can hardly be imagined. In other older fictions Psyche's troubles come about because of the wilful envy

and spite of her older sisters, a witch tries to separate Persiles and Sigismunda, and Theagenes and Chariclea face a world full of savage tribalism and adverse elemental forces.

This sense of the hero or heroine battling against a mass of opposing and even vindictive elements was an important feature of the sentimental stories and became a stock feature in the later eighteenth-century stories.

Perhaps the principal difference between sentimental stories which precede the eighteenth century and those which were written during the century is the extent to which the hero or heroine is responsible for their problems, and their responses to the crises. Although the persecution by the external world remains a central theme of the sentimental stories, the eighteenth-century fictions tended to link the persecution with some flaw in the hero or heroine which they learn to control or correct as a result of their painful experiences. While the punishment for these minor flaws is out of all proportion to their seriousness, the later sentimental stories use the world's persecution in a positive way: it gives the hero or heroine an opportunity for self-improvement, for maturity, and for learning.

The tragedy of Clarissa draws so much energy from so many sources that it would be insensitive to pin down one central theme, but the error which Lovelace makes - first in believing that Clarissa will freely yield to him, and then that they can be happy after a rape - is the major source of the unhappiness of the story. Clarissa's mistake is to trust an acknowledged rake and her power to control him and herself. She understands her motives and secret feelings increasingly well before her rape and triumphant death.

Betsy Thoughtless is a less tragic, but still very serious, story in which the folly of a young girl loses her a good and true man. The spite of her foster-sister is a disproportionate punishment for Betsy's light behaviour, and the consequences of the spite are far-reaching. Betsy has to see her faithful suitor married to another. Her lack of judgement leads her into a bad marriage with a cruel and neglectful husband. She learns through very bitter experience how valuable was the lover she lost through her own folly, and she does not win him back until she has learned through suffering that her behaviour was wrong.

Sidney Biddulph also makes a near-fatal mistake in choosing the wrong man for her husband. She learns through a maze of painful betrayal and extreme poverty that the man of her first choice was the right one for her, and her obedience to her mother and her suspicion of him was ill-founded on prejudice and stubbornness. David Simple is guilty of nothing worse than culpable naivety which leads to the downfall of all his family and friends. He learns through his suffering how to judge true friends from false. The husband in The School for Wives jeopardises his wife's love for him and even her honour by his failure to detect his false friend's vicious nature, and his stubborn refusal to listen to his wife's gentle complaints. The rakish hero-villain of Injured Innocence rapes and abandons the heroine before her suffering, and his own unhappy marriage, teach him of the treasure he has nearly lost, and the falseness of his wicked friend's bad advice.

In the eighteenth-century stories the problems are generally complex. Motives are mixed and though a few villains remain inexplicably committed to evil, the majority of the trouble-makers have logical motives for their spiteful activities. The hero and

heroine develop and mature in the course of the story and their world reflects the increasing complexity of personalities by becoming an increasingly complex, and interesting, ficitional creation. In the old sentimental stories heroes and heroines of untarnished virtue face villains and even inanimate obstacles of total malignance. In the eighteenth-century stories the heroes and heroines become more rounded personalities; their problems often flow from their own mistakes and the spite of the world - though still a major feature - fastens on features of their characters which can be seen by the reader as flaws. Indeed, in some stories, there is no need of a villain at all. The complexity of the relationships and the problems the hero and heroine encounter in developing and maturing are enough to create the emotional tension of the story. In stories such as Sidney Biddulph, or Ethelinde the malice of the world disturbs and distresses the heroines but the major problems result from their own actions or from their circumstances as they tumble into poverty. The villain is not an essential element of the eighteenth-century sentimental story.

As the stories of the eighteenth century become more complex and the events more closely related to the characters' personalities, the sufferings of the hero and heroine are more stoically borne.

For Pamela, as Mr B as a bachelor persists in misreading the situation as she defends her virtue, and as Mr B as a husband persists in giving her cause for unease, the solution to the problem is to endure and try to behave as well as she can in the circumstances. For the heroines of the older sentimental stories the attacks of the world often seem to leave no option but collapse, and they regularly do so. For the heroines of the eighteenth-century fictions there is a new virtue to be found in the courageous endurance of

cruel misconstructions, and malicious persecution. For example, Ethelinde suffers what seems to be a period of serious depression without complaint and without confiding in anyone:

> The depression of Ethelinde's mind grew hourly greater; and her health proportionately suffered. Deprived of every thing that could render life desireable; and doubting whether she ever should be restored to those friends, without whom it would ever be a burthen; compelled to affect a tranquility she could not feel or be exposed to reproaches for pride, coldness and affectation; she had no respite but in sleep; which, though often broken and disturbed, yet afforded her sometimes more pleasing images than her waking hours presented; and she now never beheld the dawn of the day without regretting its return, and entering reluctantly on a scene of painful dissimulation and continual internal uneasiness.*[2]

The emotional tension is thus heightened as the reader actually starts waiting for the heroine to break down as the pressures upon her become more and more intolerable. Part of the emotional impact of Clarissa's collapse and death lies in the fact that from the time of her brother's first attack with unacceptable proposals, the reader has waited for her to succumb to the appalling pressures. By prolonging the agony the later sentimental stories gained an increase of tension and drama which the older ones had lacked.

Suffering in the eighteenth-century sentimental stories becomes an experience from which positive effects can result. The sufferer can learn to tolerate and bear pain without excessive complaint, the sufferer may learn strength of character from enduring pain. The sufferer may learn how the pain was a consequence of an earlier error, and learn to avoid such behaviour in future.

This positive attitude to suffering marks the development in the fictional world of the Latitudinarian idea that an individual could obtain redemption not only through Grace, but also through his

or her own efforts and behaviour.*[3] Another symptom of this increasingly popular attitude was the development of the whole tone of sensibility.

Since redemption could be won by effort it concentrated the mind of the individual on his or her own spiritual state. Individuals were naturally interested also in the spiritual state of others and in comparing signs of spirituality. In public a person could demonstrate that he or she was in a a state of spiritual grace by showing sensibility and sensitivity towards spiritual things, 'sensibility now becomes not only the root of all virtue but virtue itself ... the hallmark of the elect'.*[4] It may be that anyone with any pretensions to refinement would have felt certain social as well as spiritual needs to adopt postures and a tone of sensibility, In fictions the tone of sensibility is a further refinement of the elite pleasure of reading. This survey suggests the dominance of upper-class ideas and attitudes in the fictions which indicates that the enjoyment of fiction was an elite pleasure. The enjoyment of sentimental fiction was a further narrowing of the elite circle to those people who were literate and highly sensitive. Only those who could respond or pretend to respond to sentimental elements could lay a claim to the higher consciousness of a person of sensitivity. Not only could they read - which identified them as one of the leisured and educated elite - but they responded emotionally and sensitively to what they read, and this further identified them as a person of sensibility in the top circle of the elite.

The elements and themes to which the sensitive reader responded can be identified. A study of the sentimental stories suggests the recurrence of certain attitudes and elements which the stories all tended to use, and these are discussed in the chapter on stock elements.

Their repeated use in sentimental fictions throughout the period may have developed an automatic response in the reader who was conditioned to respond emotionally to scenes of genteel poverty or scenes of inspiring Nature. Readers and authors who demonstrated to the world their sensitivity by their enjoyment in producing or consuming such books may have formed into a clique of self-aware sensitive people. Indeed, the mockery of a sentimental reader becomes a popular element in more robust fictions. Although Ethelinde is itself a sentimental fiction, a minor character is used to mock the sentimental reader. Clarinthia is certain she and Ethelinde will be loving friends because they both have such delightful names.*[5] Charlotte Smith seems in no doubt of the existence of a self-conscious elite group of readers who shared a taste for sentimental fiction, who exhibited their sensibility by their choice of reading and their response to their books, and who recognised each other, and recognised suitable authors by an entire set of attitudes and by the use of certain key words. What is implied by Smith's minor mockery of Clarinthia, or Graves's satire of Columella, is the existence of a certain group of readers who shared a taste for the sentimental fiction.

## 2 SENTIMENTAL AND UNSENTIMENTAL STORIES

Despite the appeal of the sentimental story there must have been a large group of readers - perhaps the majority - who enjoyed both sentimental and unsentimental stories and never limited themselves to one particular tone of fiction. Their tastes were served by the many authors who continued to write stories with a combination of sentimental and unsentimental tones and elements.

For example, Fielding's stories all include bawdy and realistic scenes as well as scenes of tenderness and sensibility, although his final work Amelia, 1751, is predominantly sentimental in tone. Equally, Smollett tended to write stories which specialised in a bawdy or even scatological humour but where the tone is abruptly spiritualised in the scenes of courtship between the hero and heroine. The romping whores of low life afford a total contrast to the delicacy and sensibility of the Smollett heroines.

Perhaps the central author in this area where tones of the fictions overlap is the complex writer Sterne. His whimsy is sometimes expressed in scenes of the most tender sensibility and sometimes scenes which are comically suggestive. 'Pray, my Dear, ... have you not forgot to wind the clock?'*[6] is a double-entendre of bawdy comedy certain to appeal to a reader whose mind was on earthly things and ready to see a double meaning where one was intended. But it is interesting to see that such a mixture of comic bawdy innuendo with sentimental passages is criticised in 1779 in the Letters from Yorick to Eliza, the supposed piracy on Sterne's characters.*[7]

The surviving popularity of works of mixed tone - both sentimental and unsentimental - indicates that a large body of readers continued to enjoy comic and sentimental scenes in the same book for most of the century. It is tempting to speculate that the increased production of fictions led to greater specialisation so that readers could choose a selection of fictions which precisely suited their taste in sentiment or comedy. Some tastes became increasingly ethereal and it may be that even the middle ground was influenced by the fashion for sentiment. Unsentimental - and especially vulgar-comical books were abandoned by the majority of readers. Perhaps these books became absorbed into a sub-culture

of bawdy and erotic fiction for the specialist reader.

But this is only speculation about a later development. In the eighteenth century the middle group of readers was firmly occupied with books which combined both the sentimental and unsentimental tones, and on either side were the specialist readers who preferred one tone or another.

## 3 UNSENTIMENTAL STORIES

The unsentimental stories of this survey share a generally cool tone and a reluctance to directly involve the reader with the protagonists. Although the characters face trials and adventures which would, in the hands of another author, have been transformed into tests of virtue which would have had readers hunting for the handkerchiefs, the unsentimental story-tellers speed quickly over emotional scenes to get on with the action, or move on to comic scenes.

Early versions of stories on a thread are generally unsentimental. Later authors interested in sentimentality used the form of scenes on a thread to link one sentimental scene after another; but in the earlier stories - like the Devil stories or other magical observer stories - the succession of the scenes on the thread distances the reader from the characters displayed. However exciting or potentially involving the adventures spotted by the 'devils' or by the other 'spies', the speed of the transition of one scene after another prevents the reader from being too deeply involved and thus stops the reader becoming emotionally moved by the scene. Many of the stories on a thread were designed not to move the reader to tears but to shock and sometimes to offend. The negative example of people behaving badly in the stories was used by the authors and thus there

are few examples of behaviour which the reader can applaud or use as inspiration. Throughout the observer stories a distance is maintained between the reader and the action and the reader is encouraged to sit back and be amused, or even be outraged, but not to believe in the characters and share their griefs.

This aspect of the thread shape had its effect on the letters from Eastern observers who sometimes get the most hair-raising news from their homes in the East. Despite the stories of heroism and savagery, of revolts in the harem, and ruin, the reader is not swept into the action nor greatly involved with the protagonists. The dislocation between the Eastern tragedies and the mundane reporting of British daily life is so great that the reader cannot suddenly be moved to tears by disasters in the East when the Eastern traveller himself takes the news so calmly and continues with his tour.

> Every account I receive from the East seems
> to come loaded with some new affliction.
> My wife and daughter were taken from me,
> and yet I sustained the loss with intrepidity;
> my son is made a slave among barbarians,
> which was the only blow that could have
> reached my heart.*[8]

Eastern stories generally do not involve the reader in a major emotional response. Their appeal lies in their exotic and exciting adventures, not in the rounded nature of the characters. Many of the characters never become more than an outline in the story and so the reader never feels any compulsion to weep with them, despite the sometimes extraordinary straits in which they find themselves.

In a surprising way the reverse is true for the Histories. In these the character of the main protagonist is so clearly revealed to the reader, with the defects so realistically drawn, that it is hard for the reader to be emotionally involved because there is almost a hint of dislike. The reader knows almost too much about

Moll Flanders to weep when she suffers a reverse. The reader has a strong sense that Moll will look after herself, and a strong suspicion that Moll's reverses affect her very little. Even when she is in genuine distress it is so very apparent that she is there as a direct and measurable result of her own actions, and is so likely to recover by a criminal or immoral act, that the reader is as likely to be sorry for her victim as for Moll herself.

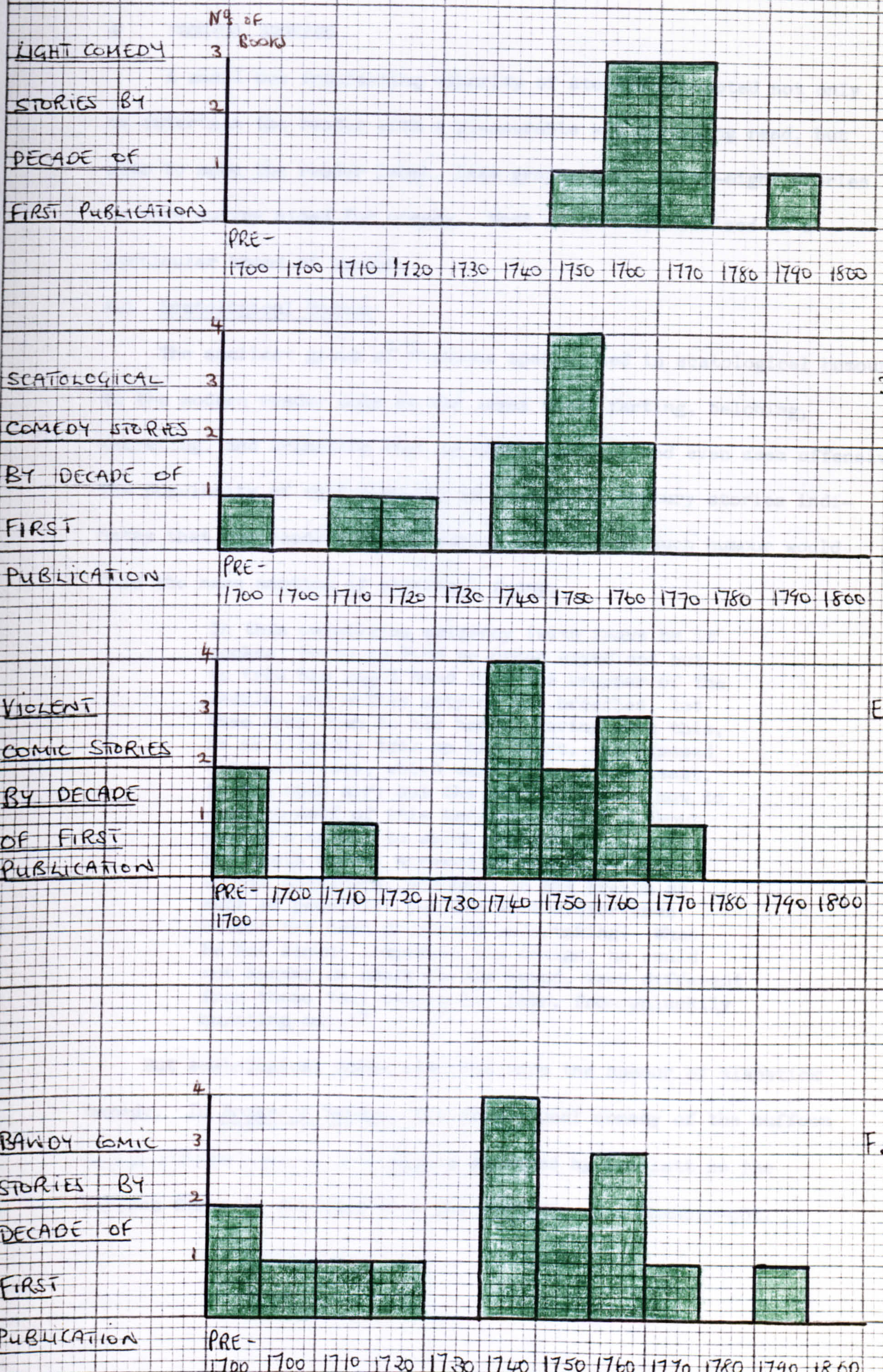
The three royal mistresses, L'Enclos, de Pompadour, and de Maintenon similarly fail to involve the reader in their ups and downs because they too are so clearly in control of events. When de Pompadour complains of the gossip which surrounds her platonic relationship with the King the reader's sympathy is wholly suspended by the reader's scepticism, in the way that Mme de Maintenon's complaints about gossip about her private life leave the reader intrigued, but unconvinced. The autobiographies are offered to the reader as 'Histories' and such persuasive fictions are generally cool in tone. The mock autobiographies of Crusoe, of Gulliver, of Philip Quarl and of Peter Wilkins attempt to persuade the reader with a wealth of factual detail, but do not attempt to deeply involve the reader in an account of the emotional life of the characters. The tone of all the Histories in this survey is cool and unemotional overall, although there are occasional warmer human touches.

The other major group of stories where the style prohibits the author from trying to involve the reader emotionally are the comical stories. It takes a master of fiction like Cervantes or Fielding to produce a comical hero like Don Quixote or Joseph Andrews with whom the reader sympathises and even identifies. Most of the eighteenth-century authors very wisely avoided such ambiguities,

or at the most only attempted to expand a comic character by giving him a serious or sentimental ending. This was the course adopted by Richard Graves in The Spiritual Quixote. The story is high comedy throughout and becomes a little more serious only at the end when the hero comes to his senses, apologises to his mother who had been disturbed and distressed by his lunacy, and marries the lady of his choice. The ending is only lightly sentimental; the body of the story is high comedy. The Methodists are held up to unremitting ridicule, the quixotry of the enthusiastic youth is continually leading him into comic errors, and the idiocy of his slow-witted follower adds an element of buffonery.

For comic fiction to strike the reader as funny there has to be an emotional distance between the characters - often the victims - and the reader. Even if the reader is sympathetic for most of the story this accord has to be broken when a comic incident takes place to enable the reader to laugh at the hero's pain. This is the balance which makes Don Quixote a sad figure but which makes his adventures, in which he is often hurt and always confused, seem to be comic. The reader's sympathy has to be suspended for the duration of the comic scene, which means that the reader's involvement with the character has also to be suspended.

Despite the increased popularity of sentimental stories in the later years of the eighteenth century the unsentimental stories remained important. This is because they were the natural tone of three major fictional families: Histories, some early Novellas, and comic Picaro tales. When modern critics emphasise the importance of stories of sensibility in the eighteenth century they perhaps forget the surviving and significant appeal of unsentimental or even comical stories, which was the tone used by three of the major fictional families.


LIGHT COMEDY STORIES BY DECADE OF FIRST PUBLICATION
No. OF BOOKS
1
2
3
PRE-1700
1700
1710
1720
1730
1740
1750
1760
1770
1780
1790
1800
C.
SCATOLOGICAL COMEDY STORIES BY DECADE OF FIRST PUBLICATION
4
D.
VIOLENT COMIC STORIES BY DECADE OF FIRST PUBLICATION
E.
BAWDY COMIC STORIES BY DECADE OF FIRST PUBLICATION
F.

## 4 COMICAL STORIES

A small but interesting minority of stories attempted not only to entertain the reader with a pleasurable and diverting read, but also to make the reader laugh. (see graphs C-F) Forty-eight stories in this survey aimed for comedy. Most of them specialised in a particular brand of humour.

### 4.1 Scatological Humour

The smallest group of fictions specialised in scatological humour. To the modern reader most of the jokes about farting, belching, excreting, and urinating fail as comic incident and even seem offensive. The popularity of such elements in eighteenth-century stories indicates that the readers of the period who enjoyed such humour would find the mere mention of excrement funny.

> In this perplexing exigency (with leave be it spoken) he could find no other expedient but to take his right hand from the crupper of the saddle, and softly untying his breeches, let them drop down to his heels; having done this, he as silently took up his shirt, and exposed his posteriors, which were none of the least, to the open air: but the main point was how to ease himself of this terrible burden without making a noise; to which purpose he clutched his teeth close, screwed up his face, shrunk up his shoulders, and held in his breath as much as possible: yet see what misfortunes attend the best projected undertaking! When he had almost compassed his design, he could not hinder an obstreperous sound, very different from those that caused his fear, from unluckily bursting out.*[9]

But scatological jokes also fit into the humour of slapstick comedy. In Roderick Random the traditional comedy of the buffoon is enhanced by Smollett as the hapless Strap is drenched with the contents of a chamber-pot.

> When we came to Mr Cringer's door, Strap, to give me an instance of his politeness, ran to the knocker, which he employed so loud and so long that he alarmed the whole street; and a window opening in the second story of the next house, a chamber-pot was discharged upon him so successfully that the poor barber was wet to the skin, while I, being luckily at some distance, escaped the unsavoury deluge.*[10]

Smollett is writing in the tradition of the scatological joke which maintained a small but significant popularity until the 1760s (see graph D). A study of the dates when books with scatological humour were published shows that a fairly steady number were published and well-received in the early years of the eighteenth century. They seem to have attained a peak of popularity in the 1750s when four stories, including Smollett's Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle, were published. The other two popular scatological comedy fictions published at that decade were Pompey the Little and The Temple Beau.

In the story of the lapdog the author uses references to excreting to destroy the pretensions of Pompey's owners. The beauty whose complexion is praised for its paleness and clarity owes her looks to taking an enema every morning, administered by her protesting maid:

> 'but let the 'pothecary, 'added she', come and mix up his nastiness himself an he will, for deuce fetch me if I'll wait on her ladyship's backside in this manner. If she will have her clysters, let the clyster-pipe doctor come and minister them himself, and not put me to her filthy offices.'*[11]

The use of an animal hero permitted Coventry to use far more scatological humour than if he had been using a devil or inanimate object. For Pompey himself is not immune to a little absent-mindedness which leads to an accident:

> They were seated on two Books which their Mistress had left open in her study; to wit, Mopsa on Nelson's Festivals, and Pompey on Baker's Chronicles; when alas - how little things often determine the greatest Matters! Pompey, in the Earnestness of his Debate, did something on the Leaves of that sage Historian, very unworthy of his Character, and improper to be mentioned in explicit Terms.*[12]

If the modern reader finds the popularity of jokes about excrement surprising, jokes about menstruation seem even less likely to appeal to the mythical young lady reader who is supposed to have dominated the fiction market. In The Temple Beau the pregnancy of the heroine is discovered by the fact that her linen has not been stained by menstruation:

> Smart as he tost the Linen about, had observ'd one Shift of a very high Colour, and he ask'd in a sneering way, "If that did not belong to Lucretia?" Dame Waters answer'd him in a short Manner, "No, truly Sir, Mrs Lucretia is the neatest Lady in London, not a Speck have I seen on her Linen these three months."*[13]

This style of humour is in decline in the later years. In the 1760s scatological humour is used only in the riotously vulgar The Mock Monarchs, and again by Smollett in his anonymous attack on the Hanoverians when he employed all his coarseness and vulgarity to attack the Whig elite in an outrageous passage of an outrageous book.

The scene is an Eastern palace where the King is suffering a collection of atoms who are tickling his big toe. To ease the tickle he kicks the chief minister:

> he performed the exercise with such uncommon vehemence, that first his slipper, and then his toe nail flew off, after having made a small breach in the perineum of Fika-Kaka.... the pleasure which the Cuboy felt from the application of the Dairo's toe-nail was succeeded by a kind of tension or stiffness, which began to grow troublesome just as he reached his own palace, where the Bonzas were assembled to offer up their diurnal incense.

> Instinct, on this occasion, performed what could hardly have been expected from the most extraordinary talents. At sight of a grizzled beard belonging to one of those venerable doctors, he was struck with the idea of a powerful assuager; and taking him into his cabinet proposed that he should make oral application to the part affected. The proposal was embraced without hesitation, and the effect even transcended the hope of the Cuboy.... such a delectable titillation ensued that Fika-Kaka was quite in raptures.*[14]

The changing tastes of the eighteenth century had their greatest impact on scatological humour which disappeared from the pages of popular fiction altogether by 1770. This survey of popular fiction does not indicate that any books used such humour after The Atom in 1769.

What is interesting about graph D is that it indicates that comedy about human faeces, menstruation, or even fellatio, was permissible in main-stream literature until the second half of the eighteenth century, and that scenes of this sort were to be found in some of the most popular books of the period.

## 4.2 Violent Humour

The comedy of slapstick also plays a part in the amusement eighteenth-century authors drew from violent humour, scenes in which characters suffered major injury or threat of injury. Again to the modern reader some of the scenes may seem humourless or even appear offensive, but the injuries are like injuries to cartoon characters in our culture: they are funny because they parody severe damage, they are funny because the characters bounce back. Generally the violence takes place in the context of fist-fights and free-for-alls, and is thus part of the low-life comedy. Serious fights between gentlemen are never shown as comic or even potentially comic; violence is funny only when it is the lower orders who are battling it out.

This class discrimination in violent humour is also important because the reader can enjoy the spectacle of violence only if the reader's sympathies are disengaged from the fighters. Even if the reader generally empathises with the characters while they are involved in fist-fighting the reader has to be emotionally disengaged, otherwise the fight would seem serious and the threat of danger too painful for comedy. This is shown especially clearly in the injuries which are suffered by Don Quixote or by Joseph Andrews. While the reader is intensely involved in the heroes' sufferings elsewhere in the story, during the scenes where violence is shown as comic the reader has to feel sufficiently remote from the heroes to see the joke.

The graph (graph E) showing the use of violent comic scenes in fictions according to the decade of their first edition shows that the comedy of violence was not an eighteenth-century invention. Violence is shown as funny in both Don Quixote and The Decameron but no English authors in the survey wrote comic scenes of violence before 1740. The only example of comic violence in this survey before that date is the Spanish picaro story of Gil Blas. Although English authors were writing stories with scenes of scatological and bawdy humour, no author made a feature of comic violence until the publi-cation of the thread story of The Devil Turned Hermit, 1741. Fielding's comic treatment of violence, following the style of Don Quixote, set a new pattern in Joseph Andrews in 1742. Smollett, that most contradictory of eighteenth-century authors, contributed Roderick Random in 1748 which treats violence comically at one level; but at another level paints the horrific scene of the violence of maritime war which appeals to the reader's sympathies and conscience.

The hero Roderick works against all the odds as a ship's surgeon in unhealthy tropical waters where the imcompetence of the captain places the ship's company in continual danger. Roderick's defiance of the captain leads to his legalised torture. The naval scenes, based on Smollett's experience at sea, are gripping and tensely written. The reader is genuinely moved and involved with Roderick's dangers and distresses. Yet once Roderick is on dry land Smollett again becomes the bawdy, vulgar, rough comedian.

In the 1750s only two violent books were published which achieved major popularity with the circulating libraries: Rabelais' shockingly bawdy Gargantua and Pantagruel, and Smollett's Peregrine Pickle. In the 1760s three new books included scenes of violent comedy: Sir Launcelot Greaves, The Reverie, and the low comedy of The Mock Monarchs. By 1773 only one story included scenes of comic violence, and those seem calm in tone compared with the preceding comic massacres. The Spiritual Quixote included scenes where sense is knocked into the head of the young hero, but there are no epic battles like those which Cervantes or Fielding offered the reader earlier in the century. And that, in 1773, is the last appearance of violent comedy in this survey of popular eighteenth-century fiction.

Again one may speculate where the tradition of slapstick violence went after it became unacceptable in the mainstream fictions. Like scatological humour it may have been adopted into pornography, and it seems very likely it continued to be used as comedy in working-class fiction: in the ballads, chap-books, and story-tellers' tales. It was squeezed out of the popular book fiction not only because it was unacceptable to the increasingly refined tastes of readers, but because violent humour was always linked with working-class characters.

As fiction developed later in the century it concentrated more on the adventures of increasingly noble characters. The buffoonery of vulgar servants was dropped from the fictions, the heroes and heroines themselves became increasingly refined and no longer mixed, like Tom Jones, with low company where they might find themselves caught up in fights. Violent comedy was always a speciality of working-class characters, and these were less and less visible in the later fictions.

4.3 Bawdy Humour

The most popular style of humour and the most tenacious was bawdy humour: jokes about human sexuality. Bawdy humour was central to one type of Novella story and this type of Novella, incorporated into a thread story with a 'Devil' figure, was popular as late as 1790. This late reproduction of the Devil motif was a piracy of a much earlier idea but the popularity of this fiction even so late in the century cannot be denied.

The tradition of bawdy humour in both Novella stories or in Picaro stories accounts for the bawdy comedy in most of these 16 stories. The Picaro stereotype bachelor travelling around seeking adventure was a natural form to encourage bawdy writing, and eight of these stories can be seen as broadly conforming to the Picaro model. The other half are, roughly speaking, Novellas, often written as short stories on a thread, like the Devil stories, or set in a framework like The Temple Beau. Two stories, written when the style of bawdy writing was in decline, Tristram Shandy, and A Sentimental Journey, can be said to have taken the style of bawdy comedy to a new plane. Sterne's bawdiness does not rely on the cuckolding of husbands or the cheating of whores for its comedy; his writing was to develop double-entendre to an art form, as in the continuous pun

on the length of a man's Nose.*[15] It is a matter of regret for lovers of bawdy humour that the eighteenth-century readers seem to have preferred the sentimental aspects of Sterne's work to his subtle bawdiness. Consequently Sterne's sentimental style was copied and pirated and his bawdy comedy neglected.

Bawdy comedy was the most popular comic mode in eighteenth-century fiction and, as I have suggested, this could be because it was a feature of more than one of the traditional prose fiction families. It reached a peak in this survey in the 1740s - the same decade as violent fiction - and declined steadily thereafter, reappearing only with the archaic piracy The Devil Upon Two Sticks in England. (see graph F)

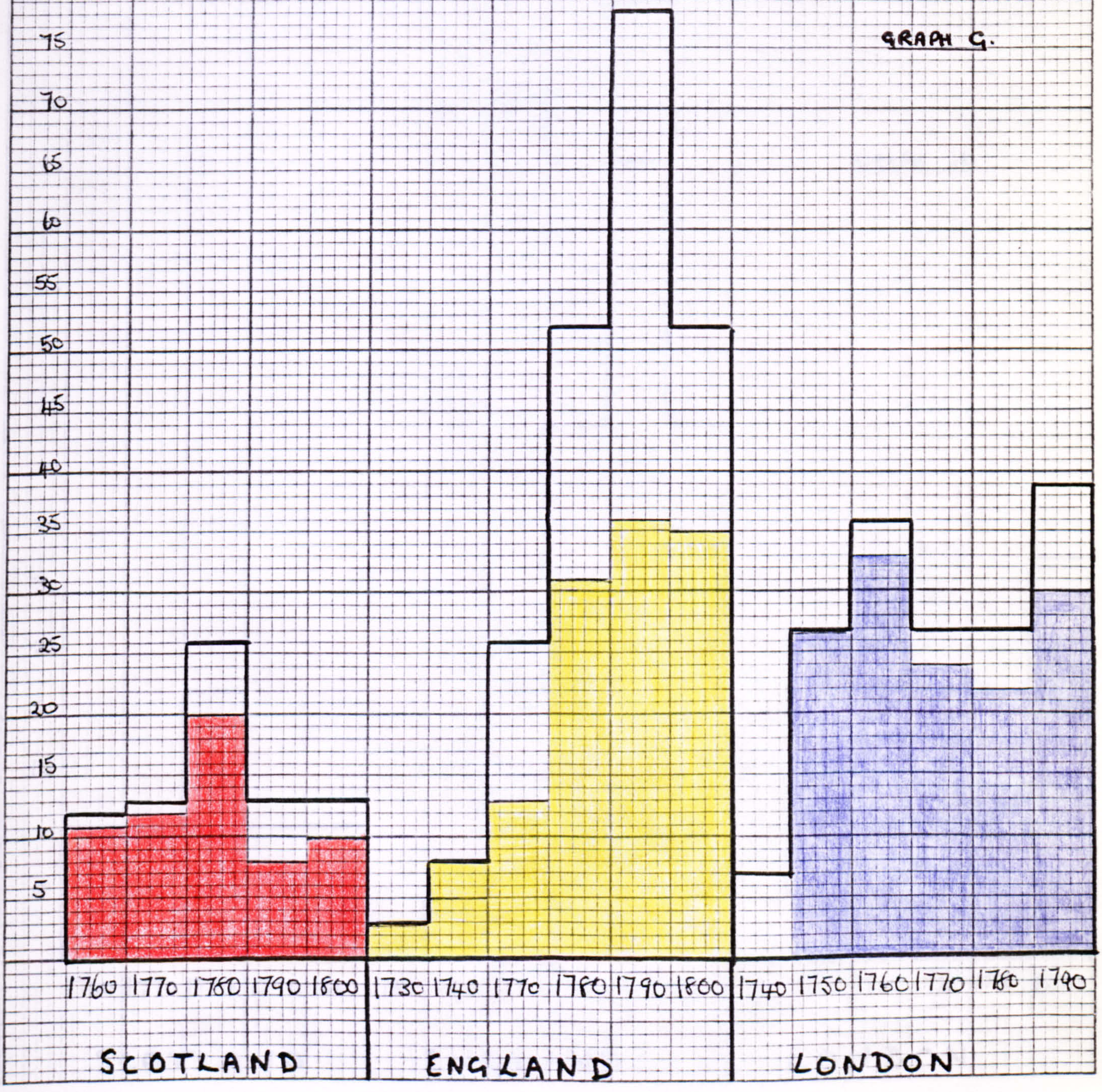
Looking at all three comic styles it is interesting to see that in this survey no comic works were published in the 1730s, but that the 1740s were good years for comic stories. The peak for both violent and bawdy fiction came in this decade. Scatological humour perhaps took a little longer to be accepted and reached a small peak in the 1750s, declining in the 1760s and then disappearing totally. In such a small sample, individual fluctuations - such as the apparent increase of popularity of violent comic stories in the 1760s - may not be highly significant. But what probably is meaningful, in the comparison of these graphs, is the decline of all comic forms from the 1760s onwards.

## 5 COMEDY IN DIFFERENT AREAS

Using the catalogues of the commercial circulating libraries it is possible to consider three separate areas of Britain: Scotland, the English Provinces, and London. Although the limitations of the sample means that small variations may be exaggerated, it seems safe

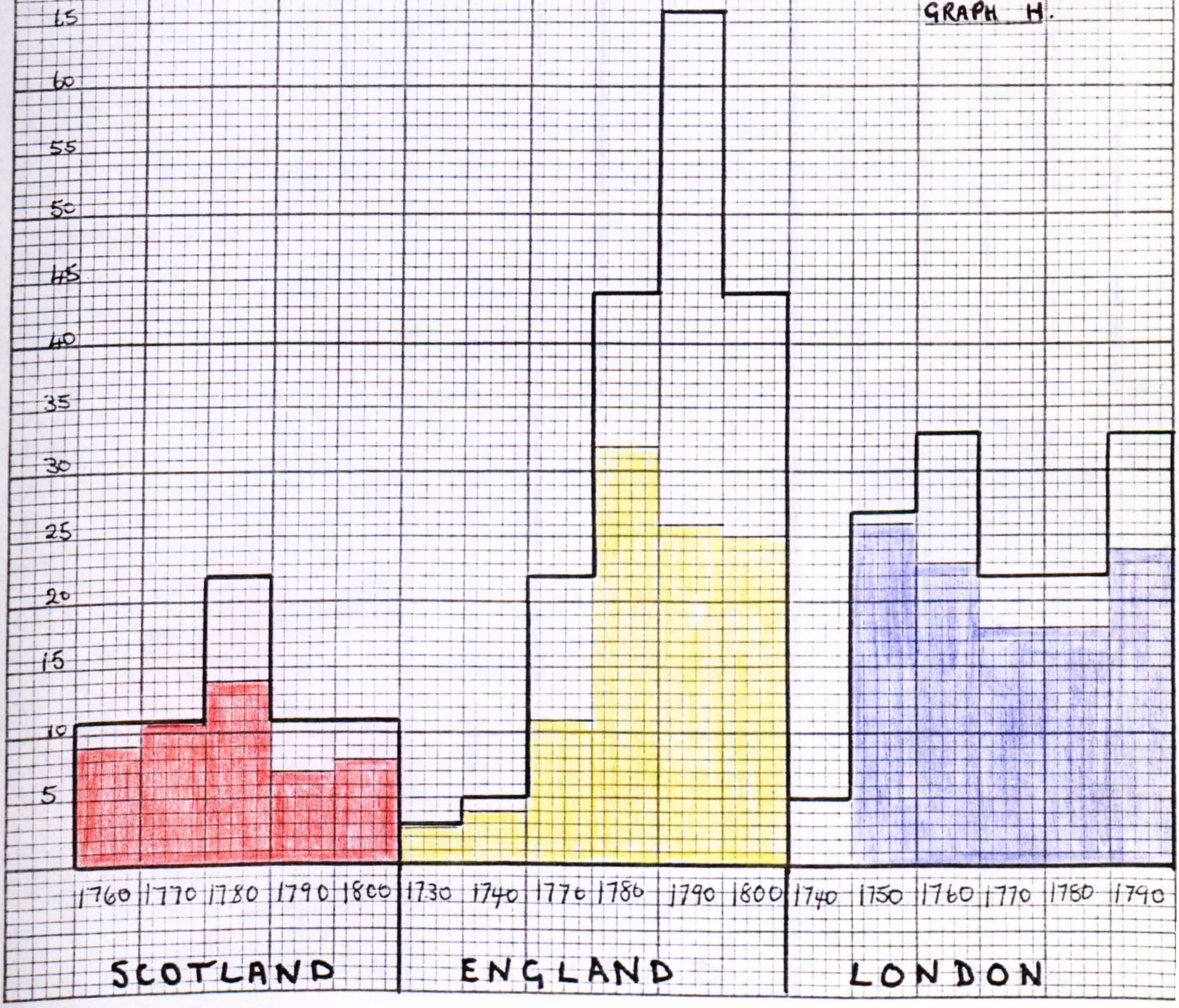
GRAPH TO SHOW NUMBERS OF VIOLENT COMIC BOOKS COMPARED WITH THE NUMBERS WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN STOCKED BY THE LIBRARY IN EACH DECADE AND AREA.

GRAPH G.



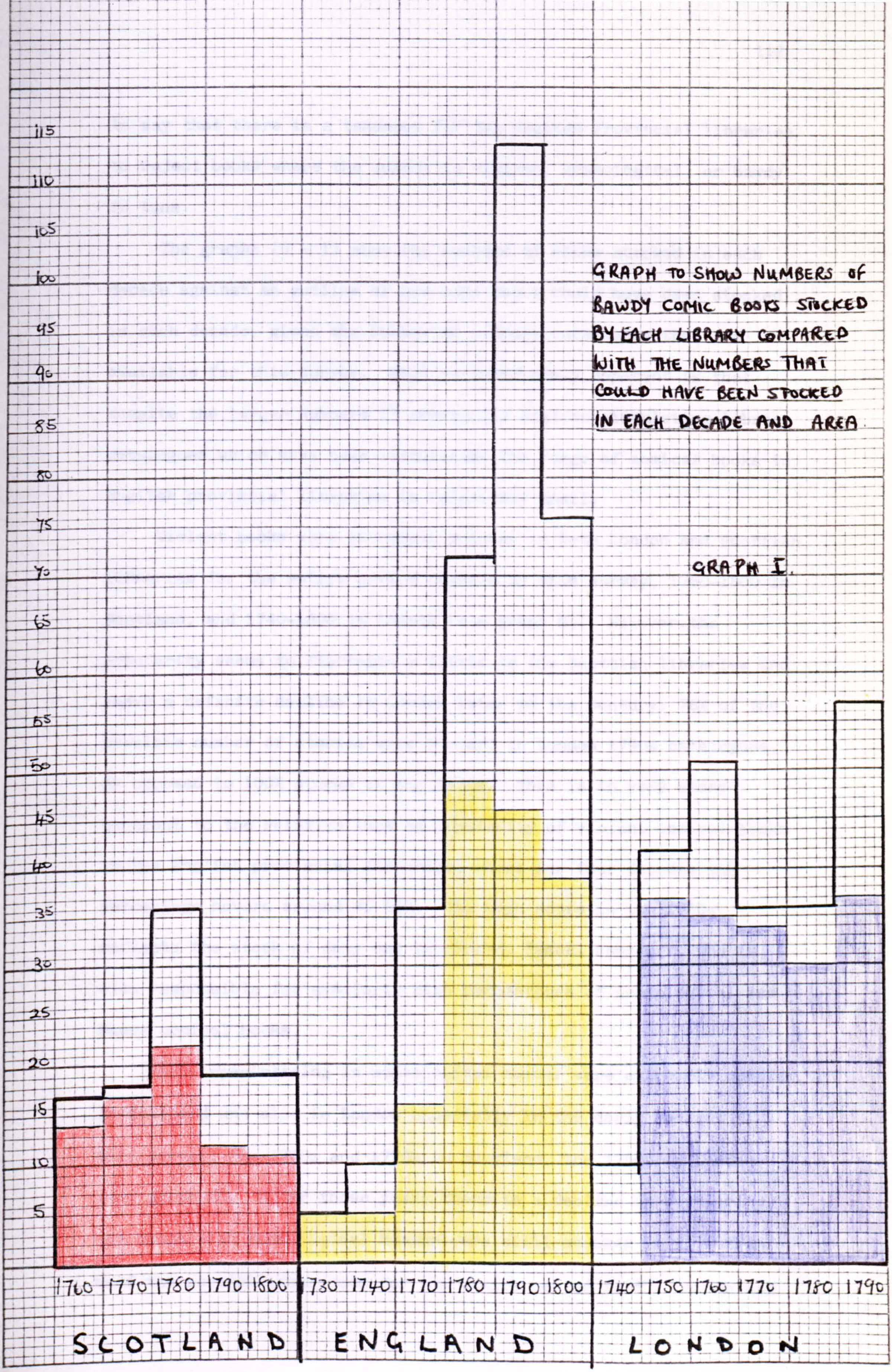
GRAPH TO SHOW NUMBERS OF SCATOLOGICAL COMIC BOOKS, COMPARED WITH THE NUMBERS WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN STOCKED BY THE LIBRARIES IN EACH DECADE AND AREA.

GRAPH H.



GRAPH TO SHOW NUMBERS OF BAWDY COMIC BOOKS STOCKED BY EACH LIBRARY COMPARED WITH THE NUMBERS THAT COULD HAVE BEEN STOCKED IN EACH DECADE AND AREA.

GRAPH I.



to say that there is a tendency for the English Provincial libraries to reject books where the comedy is violent, scatological, or bawdy in tone.

The graphs (G - I) show the numbers of books stocked in each decade against an outline of how many books could have been stocked in each decade, given the number of library catalogues that are available for this survey. What is immediately apparent is that despite the larger numbers of provincial English circulating library catalogues which have been circulated, the range of comical books in English provincial libraries is relatively small.

Violent books were extremely popular in both London and Scottish libraries for the entire period covered by this survey, 1760-1800 in Scotland, and 1740-1800 in London (see graph G). However, the popularity seems to fluctuate a little in the Scottish libraries and shows a definite decline in London later in the century: 76% of the possible number of stories were stocked in London 1790s catalogues, as opposed to 100% stocks in the 1750s. This is in very sharp contrast to the relative lack of popularity of violent comical books in the English provincial libraries, where for four decades the percentage hovers around 40-60%. The high score in the 1730s reflects the stock of only one librarian, Samuel Fancourt, who is also responsible for similarly high percentages of scatological and bawdy comical books.

Books specialising in scatological humour were extremely popular in Scotland and also in London especially in the early decades of this survey: the 1760s and 1770s in Scotland, the 1750s in London (see graph H). After those years there is a decline in popularity, but books with scatological humour were still stocked in more than half the possible instances for the entire period in the London and

Scottish libraries. Once again the exceptions are the English provincial libraries which drop below the 50% mark in the 1790s. In that decade the libraries stocked only 39% of the available scatological comic books, and in no other decade (except for the 1730s with Mr Fancourt) do English libraries ever stock more than 80%.

But least popular of all for the English provincial libraries were books specialising in bawdy humour making a comedy out of sexual practices and morals (see graph I). Excepting Mr Fancourt again, in only one decade - the 1780s - do the English provincial libraries stock more than 50% of the available bawdy humour stories. Otherwise, from 1740 to 1800 only 40% or 50% of the available stories were stocked by the librarians. Interestingly, London and Scotland show a rather different pattern from each other in this example of bawdy humour. Scottish librarians chose to stock a high proportion of bawdy stories for the first two decades of the survey, the 1760s and 1770s, but the proportion declines sharply thereafter until in the 1800s when 57% of the available bawdy titles are stocked. London librarians show a slight decline but the proportion of available titles stocked remains high. The most important years for bawdy stories in London libraries are the 1770s, but even in the 1790s 65% of the available bawdy stories were available for readers.

It is important to bear in mind two contradictory facts. The small size of the sample on which these figures are based makes them rather tentative and their usefulness limited. However this is a survey of the most popular stories. A librarian who decided not to stock some of these comic stories would be rejecting fictions which were part of the popular contemporary culture, discussed in the salons and reviewed in the magazines. Although the conclusions must be tentative, the recurring pattern of rejection of comic books by

the English provincial librarians is strong enough to encourage some speculation.

The rejection may be a response to the moralistic demands of reviewers, and possibly readers. Librarians in small English towns depended on the lesser nobility, squireachy, and bourgeois families for custom. These are not the readers who would have demanded sophisticated or scandalous fictions. Perhaps the ambitious womenfolk of the squires and nobles demanded stories of refinement, the rising middle-class women might have consulted fictions which were in effect conduct books, and the respectable tradesman and farmers would not have wanted scandalous and erotic fictions in their homes. However accurate this picture of bourgeois respectability, the secret of success for the provincial librarian must have been to keep as many customers satisfied as possible with as little financial outlay as possible on new books. The formula would have meant that the librarian simply would not have had the resources to buy fashionable new scandalous books which only a tiny minority of his subscribers would read. Every fiction in the collection would have to earn its way, and so the best books to stock would be those which could go into the home of every possible subscriber in the town.

It is easy to see that this situation was quite unlike the prospects of the London libraries. Operating in the centre of culture, the London librarians could afford to specialise to appeal to different sections of the market of potential readers. Thus we see that Mr Fancourt's second library in 1746-48 specialises in serious works only and stocks no comic books at all, in sharp contrast to Mr Bathoe in 1757, John Noble 1755, and Mr Lowndes 1755, who between them stock almost every available title of violent, bawdy, and scatological comic books. These three librarians were appealing

to a more sophisticated, perhaps more cynical, fashionable audience. The readers may have cared less for the properties and morality of the fictions, but cared a lot more about keeping up-to-date with the latest scandalous stories.

Certainly those scandalous comic stories which rely for their effect on the readers correctly identifying the caricatures of leading members of society would have meant far more to the fashionable London circle than to the provincial squire or tradesman. Part of the appeal of The Atom or Atlantis and the many Atlantis sequels must have been spotting leading figures of the day, or even one's friends, crudely and scandalously attacked. All three types of humour were popular with London readers, and none shows a major decline in London libraries during the period of the survey.

But this explanation for the popularity of the fashionable scandalous fictions can have little or no application to the Scottish librarians. The fashionable elite in Edinburgh in the later years of the eighteenth century was a very small one, and there was no large elite in Aberdeen or Dundee. One would have expected Scottish libraries to follow the same sort of patterns as English provincial libraries: rejecting scandalous comical books on the grounds of bourgeois decency. Indeed, one might have expected a stronger moral rejection of improper fiction given the greater influence of Calvinistic morality north of the border.

I would suggest that in the case of the Scottish libraries the repressive moral climate created a reaction. Any subscriber who went so far as actually to join a library might have felt that he or she was so morally compromised already that reading scandalous material was only a little addition to the weight of moral guilt.

Since reading fiction at all was a suspect occupation, and joining a library even worse, the reader may have felt a sense of reckless pleasure in reading the naughtiest books the library could offer.

This attitude on the part of the readers would quickly influence librarians who would identify a potential market. Equally influential may have been the competition facing commercial librarians from the widespread free libraries of Scotland. The high standard of education even for working people in Scotland, and the interest in maintaining that standard, meant that most towns and even villages had some sort of local library. In most cases this had been given to the readers by a local gentleman, or the local clergyman had bequeathed his private library to the parish with a sum set aside for its maintenance.*[16] Serious Scottish readers could therefore satisfy their taste for reading in free and convenient neighbourhood libraries. In the face of this competition the commercial librarians had to offer a different service: they specialised in scandalous and light fiction.

This is not to suggest that large and well-stocked libraries such as William Sibbald's Edinburgh library were on the borderline of supplying pornography to the furtive reader. Mr Sibbald's library was aimed at the leisured reader who wanted to mix entertainment with education. Consequently, his library contained a wide range of fictions, including improving and didactic stories as well as a choice of more scandalous stories. As a further attraction he also offered water-colour views for aspiring painters to copy, plays to act or read, music and songs, and foreign fictions. I would think that his catalogue, which clearly shows the emphasis placed on the polite arts as well as on reading, indicates that Mr Sibbald's competition with the free libraries prompted an unusual diversification.

The change of heart of one librarian has done much to make this survey of scandalous comic stories rather difficult to interpret. Mr Fancourt is solely responsible for the 100% popularity of scandalous comic stories in the English provinces in the 1730s, and the 100% rejection of such stories in London in the 1740s. When looking at these graphs one has to bear in mind the restricted numbers of the sample and, for those two decades and locations, the dominance of Mr Fancourt. His 1739 library in Salisbury included all of the comic stories noted in this survey, but it failed and Mr Fancourt moved to London. His new library in Crane Court aimed exclusively at a serious audience and stocked none of the most popular 100 titles, and none of thé comical fictions. This time Mr Fancourt correctly judged the market and made enough money to survive for ten years in the competitive world of the metropolitan libraries.*[17]

# CHAPTER VII

## FAMILY, SHAPE AND AUTHORIAL VOICE OF THE FICTIONS

To try to classify and categorise the fictions of the eighteenth century I have made a distinction between the family of the book - whether Romance, History, Picaro, or Novella - and its shape - whether multiple plot, centralised plot, or one plot. This is, in many cases, an artificial distinction since the family often dictates the shape of the fiction. Histories always have a single plot, while most Romances tend to have a number of plots. However, in other stories the relationship between the family and the shape of the story is unreliable, and to measure the popularity of one is not automatically to know the popularity of the other. Consequently this chapter is an analysis of the family, an analysis of the shape, an analysis of the authorial voice of the fictions, and an analysis of the computer groupings.

The anarchy of family, shape, and voice in the eighteenth century came about because authors and readers inherited a wealth of prose forms from earlier centuries and they reproduced these exactly or modified them at will. Other authors made bold and innovative experiments and some of these, like Sterne's butterfly progress or Cervantes' developed hero of Don Quixote, set new conventions. Other innovations, like Sarah Fielding's experiment with fiction written as a playscript, died an unmourned death after brief success.

The modern popular novel is generally written in third person narrative with one central plot and a few characters who are all closely related to the action of the main plot. Because of this dominance the modern reader tends to assume that all fictions should be written in this way, and that fictions which do not conform are

somehow inferior: less interesting, verbose, or incompetently written. It is hard to appreciate that the eighteenth-century reader had no such pre-conceptions about the proper size, shape, or voice of a fiction, and accepted enthusiastically a wide variety throughout this period. Indeed readers did not instantly prefer the evolving shape of the novel but continued to read the one-plot stories alongside the traditional multiple-plot stories. The shape which critics now call 'the novel' was used by Fielding as he wrote his Romances, by Cervantes in his anti-Romance, by Defoe and all the writers of 'histories'; by Smollett with his version of Picaro, and by all the minor, forgotten writers who found that their Novellas kept their structure of one main plot with a few characters but grew and grew in size.

> There is hardly a function peculiar to other literary genres which (the novel) has not partially at least, absorbed. The epic, history, tragedy, comedy, satire, - all have contributed to feed this insatiable growing organism.*[1]

To look at a novel is indeed to see a shape which has evolved. Just as a scientist could not predict the evolution of a bird from a reptile, no one could predict the evolution and later dominance of the novel from the very many shapes of prose fiction in the eighteenth century. But when the literary critic or scientist has the evolved form, the novel or the bird, in the hand then it is possible to look back and see from whence the structure came.

The major models for the authors of the eighteenth century were Romance, Picaro, Novella, and History, and all of the fictions of this survey fall easily or can be justifiably squeezed into these categories. As the library catalogues indicate, the category of 'novels' included all types of prose fictions, sometimes distinct from Histories and Romances, sometimes not. No librarian offers a

useful narrow definition of a novel. Contemporary critics seem to suggest that at the start of the century the word 'novel' was used interchangeably for 'Novella' while by the end of the century it was used as a broad term to describe all forms of prose fiction. As such it takes a precise definition no farther forward.

Those stories which the modern literary critic could now define as 'novels' were almost invariably described by the authors in the title as 'The history of ...', and the family of fictional Histories accords very closely with our modern expectations of a novel. But Histories were written like this long before the word 'novel' came into use, and long before literary critics expect to see 'the novel'. The word 'History' defines far more precisely the type of eighteenth-century fiction under discussion, and it has the added merit of being the term used by authors and readers. So when we use the word 'History' we are all using the same term to describe the same thing.

In contrast, when modern critics, or the late eighteenth-century readers, or the early eighteenth-century readers, use the word 'novel' they mean three different things. In order to escape this unhelpful confusion I do not use the word 'novel' to describe or define eighteenth-century fictions at all.

## 1 FAMILY

### 1.1 Novella

The most popular family in this survey is the Novella, which is used in 39 stories of this survey (30.7%) of the survey. The importance of this almost-forgotten family was a result of its flexibility. The Novellas could be published on their own as separate short fictions, or they could be collected and published as a collection. They could be incorporated into the framework of a story, or introduced by a story-teller to a group of listeners.

Perhaps the most popular modification in the eighteenth century was to string them together with the thread of an observer to provide the link.

The traditional content of the Novella stories is love and sexuality, treated in a melodramatic passionate style, or treated lightly with bawdy humour. The melodramas are often set in archaic Mediterranean scenes with much use of convents and monasteries as places of refuge or incarceration for passionate lovers. Duels and death despatch the heroes, while heroines are walled-up, murdered, or condemned forever to the tyranny of a loveless marriage. Scenes of shocking horror use ingredients like decaying corpses, or hidden skeletons, with lavish profusion as death and sexual passion seem inextricably mixed.

The lighter approach to sexuality in the Novellas features an unending war not only between the sexes, but also between the sexually active - the passionate and hot-blooded young - and the sexually inactive - the dried-up duennas and impotent husbands. The stories are also generally set in the Mediterranean countries and exploit to the full the convention of the secluded women let out only for Mass under the eye of a strict duenna. The tricks and treacheries employed by the amorous wives and daughters is the comedy of the Novellas, with hair-breadth escapes down secret stairs and out of bedroom windows providing the adventure.

### 1.1.1 Framework Setting

A number of Novellas could be collected and incorporated into a framework which provides a coherent setting for various characters to contribute their story. An example of such a framework setting is Haywood's The Fruitless Inquiry in which the mother of a missing son has to find a happy woman to make a shirt for her absent boy

before he can be restored magically to her. Thinking she has been set an easy task, she visits eight women friends but finds their appearance of happiness is a facade.

Each has a dreadful, secret tragedy hanging over her life. One woman has married her daughter's rapist, another is continually raped by her husband's valet who is blackmailing her to keep the secret, another woman forced into adultery by a jealous husband finds she has become a nymphomaniac. The eight stories make up the body of the book, but at the end the son returns home with a rescued bride and an adventure of his own to tell.

The framework story which sets a series of unconnected stories in the context of one general story was a popular one which remained important until late in the eighteenth century. The stories of Juliet Grenville's pensioners are set into the main narrative in a framework style, and in Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy characters appear to tell their story in the framework of the larger narrative. But this is not always a clearly defined shape: at one extreme it develops into the more centralised novel shape, and at the other it looks like a thread story. The story of Pompey the Little is partly a framework story, since the structure is that of a series of stories set in the narration of Pompey's life, but the style is very reminiscent of the thread stories in which otherwise unconnected scenes are joined together by the observation of one person.

### 1.1.2 Stories on a Thread

The Novellas could be added together by the presence of a narrator or an observer of the different scenes and strung out almost indefinitely for the prolonged pleasure of the reader. The narrator, observing and commenting, plays little direct part in the action.

As has been suggested, the stories are often didactic with the observer discovering secret vices and follies and commenting unfavourably on the society which permits bad behaviour, and the people who indulge in it.

Stories on a thread were developed in the latter half of the century as a vehicle for sentimental scenes and stories as well as, or instead of, the scenes of scandal.

It is clear that A Sentimental Journey sparked a host of imitations but few of these became popular quickly enough to be included in this survey; one may be The Rambles of Frankly, in which another clergyman provides the thread as he wanders the streets of London enjoying sentimental and benevolent adventures.

Most of the stories on a thread are scandalous scenes linked by a narrating voice which was either cynical and misanthropic, or naive and outraged, by the scenes of vice. The Devil on Two Sticks, and The Devil Turned Hermit, have the best of both voices: pirating from Le Sage, Le Diable Boiteux, the structure of a world-weary devil showing a naive man that the society is corrupt. Each scene is swiftly drawn and the reader is left no time to become involved with the characters in their brief appearances. The overall effect is of one clearly-imagined scene succeeding another with no pause for thought or emotion.

The other major thread style which was also used as a didactic story to expose the corruption of the society was the travelling Eastern observer. Montesquieu set the pattern of the Eastern gentleman travelling for pleasure around Europe and writing home with his impressions, generally uncomplimentary, of eighteenth-century European society. Interspersed with the criticisms of political and social life of contemporary Europe are exciting tales of revolutions

back at home in the East. This mixture of serious critical social comment and Eastern melodrama was so popular that it appears in three different stories in this survey: the original Persian Letters, Letters from a Persian, and Citizen of the World.

### 1.1.3 Storytellers' Tales

Another version of the thread story is the Chaucerian structure of storytelling within a story. In The Decameron, or La Belle Assemblée the characters promise to amuse each other with tales and histories. The story-tellers themselves rarely come to life as individuals but the stories they tell are often lively and dynamic cameos. In The Decameron after the intriguing introduction set in plague-struck Florence the stories told by the young people become the main part of the book, introduced only casually by the information that one or another of the young ladies is Queen for the day and has instructed a story-teller to begin the story. In La Belle Assemblée the pattern is similar with only a little more attention to the loves and courtships of the narrators interspersing their tales.

This shape was adapted for the exotic midnight story-telling sessions of the East as women entertained murdering Sultans with their lives at stake. But it was also popular in realistic domestic fictions. It found its way even into the centralised plots of Fielding when a stage-coach party whiles away the journey by telling stories in Joseph Andrews. A stage-coach journey is the setting for the stories of Mr Manley and his fellow travellers in The Stage Coach, and the otherwise centralised story of Columella is prefaced by a rambling introduction which explains that the story is told by a gentleman on a stage coach journey to illustrate the moral precept of responsibility to social position.

The motif of travelling people amusing themselves by telling fictional tales, and the similar structure of leisured young people taking it in turns to tell stories, is a minor one but its popularity from earliest times throughout the eighteenth century is interesting and supports my suggestion that story-telling sessions were succeeded among the literate by reading sessions. The story-tellers tales describe the tradition, and were ideal for the new reading circle.

### 1.1.4 Collections

The appeal of short fictional tales was so well established that collections of Novellas without any unifying thread or theme were highly popular in the commercial circulating libraries, and four such collections appear in this survey.

Three of the collections are the republished stories of authors: The Novels of Aphra Behn, Scarron, Comical Romances, and Marmontel, Moral Tales. These collections probably reflect the popularity of the well-known authors. One collection, The Select Collection of Novels, edited by Samuel Croxall, endeavours to cash-in on the popularity of established authors with reprints of older stories. As the library catalogues show, the popularity of the collections remained high throughout the century, but is is noticeable that the stories themselves were written some time before their successful republication. This may suggest that authors wrote such separate, short scandalous stories less and less throughout the century.

If this is so, it may be because readers preferred more extended works, and liked to read the Novella story in the context of a larger fiction. Novellas set in larger works could be more flexible in tone: sentimental and serious for some scenes, bawdy, violent, or humorous for others. A collection generally tends to be

all of one style, and it may be that the separate Novella story was identified with a bawdy or erotic tone which gradually (although very slowly) lost ground throughout the century.

Whatever the reason for the decline in this very minor area of the collected Novellas, the Novellas in their extended setting obviously filled a major need for the eighteenth-century readers. While modern readers may find the slight characterisation and the continuing change of scenes repetitive and wearying, the eighteenth-century reader obviously enjoyed this mode. The mode was not only popular in this form but undoubtedly had an effect on other forms of fiction in the eighteenth century, speeding the pace of the traditional Romances and Histories.

1.2 Romances

The second most popular family of fictions is the Romance which was used in 37 fictions (29.1% of the total survey). At one end of the spectrum the family shades into History-type stories such as Fielding's works, or into Picaro-type stories such as Smollett's tales of the road. The term Romance covers - as one would expect from a traditional label - a variety of examples. Indeed some of the oldest Romances seem to the modern reader to be clear examples of the 'novel'. Daphnis and Chloe for example is a fourth century pastoral Romance which tells of the loves of the goatherdsboy and shepherdess succinctly and vividly with no extraneous material or asides. Cupid and Psyche from the first century AD follows the same simple pattern with linear narration of one set of related events, clear characterisation, and no extra adventures or histories. Modern critics would have no hesitation in categorising such stories as 'novels' except for the fact that they pre-date by some 1,600 years the official birth of the 'Novel'!

The type of Romance the critics have in mind when they oppose their concept of the 'novel' to their concept of the 'Romance' are the Romances with rambling loosely connected structures with many extraneous characters and events interrupting the central story for long and regular intervals. The book concludes only when all the stories have reached their conclusions and the hero and heroine can marry and settle in a wealthy position.

Persiles and Sigismunda is an example of such a fiction. It opens with the shipwreck of the two main characters on an island. They are on a pilgrimage to Rome and are engaged to be married. However there are three rivals to Sigismunda's hand, and two young women fall in love with Persiles. The conflicting claims all have to be sorted out by the rivals falling in love elsewhere or dying tragically, before the pair can be married. The action is further complicated by the arrival of characters who have no direct part to play in the journey or the courtship but are met along the way and tell their histories. If one makes the artificial distinction of seeing the story of Persiles and Sigismunda as the main story, then there are 24 additional stories! But of course, this is to look for a centralised novel in a multi-themed Romance. The eighteenth-century reader would not have been impatient for the conclusion of the story of Persiles and Sigismunda, nor even for progress of their story, but would have enjoyed each separate incident as it occurred.

One interesting development of the Romance family is its early association with the East. Although the classical Romances were set in Arcady with Mediterranean overtones, and some were set in the wild country of post-Roman Europe, the fantasy tradition of the Romances was naturally suited to Eastern countries with their own national brand of exotica and magic.

The appearance of fairies and genii in such stories as Mirza and Fatima or Almoran and Hamet and the loose structure of these fictions shows their relationship to the tradition of the Romance. Solyman and Almena, especially, exploits the loose structure to insert didactic material about the value of the British constitution into a story broadly based on a love affair between an Eastern noble and his thrice-kidnapped bride. Theagenes and Chariclea shows a direct link between the Mediterranean and Eastern setting when the journey and adventures of the pair take them from the Mediterranean into Ethiopia, a country which is inhabited by negroes but organised like an Eastern oligarchy.

As the computer grouping of the stories suggests, the elements and construction of the later gothic stories shows their relationship to the Eastern Romances. In The Castle of Otranto, The Recess, Longsword, or The Old English Baron the speed of the action is erratic - in true Romance style - with previous histories and explanations interrupting the progress of the story. Events can stop altogether while one character recalls his own history, although in these later gothic stories the history which is told is almost always an explanation or addition to the central story.

The importance of the supernatural follows the Romance pattern too, with warning ghosts and prophetic dreams in the tradition both of Romance and Eastern Romance stories. The eighteenth-century need for realism which explained away the supernatural as a psychological manifestation was only starting to develop in these popular stories. Eastern Romances, traditional Romances, and many gothic stories were free from the limitations of laws of nature.

The Romance family does not have a monopoly over Eastern or exotic settings, and the complex relationship between the families is shown by the importance of the Novella family in the East which is equal to the importance of the Romance family in this setting. This may be a direct result of the popularity of the Arabian Nights. This enormously popular work used the story-teller introduction to link a collection of Novella-type stories. The introduction is the story of the murderous appetites of the Sultan who plans to murder a wife daily. The Vizier's daughter cleverly tells such entertaining stories that he cannot bear to have her executed without knowing the end of the story. The stories, like small Novellas in the story-teller framework, are told with one-sentence introductions to set the scene of the Sultana entertaining her husband, and keeping her head for another night.

Chinese Tales clearly comes into this category of Eastern story-teller Novella, and Female Banishment is an interesting combination of the Eastern Romance and the Eastern story-teller Novella. This misogynist Sultan's temper has been soured by an unhappy love affair and by the murderous intentions of his mother. The story follows a Romance shape as it tells of the quarrel and the battle in which he defeats his mother, but then adopts a Novella story-teller shape as he interviews women prisoners before executing them. A succession of women tell their tales and are executed and the Novella story-telling section is concluded by the appearance of the beautiful Urgoline and her moving story of attempted rape. The remaining story is a Romance-type adventure of the courtship of Urgoline.

While the Romance was adapted to the Eastern and even the gothic setting it was simultaneously challenged and altered. The earliest challenge of this survey came from Cervantes with Don Quixote. However, it is important to note that the Cervantes challenge was to the content of the Romances and not to the shape. Don Quixote satirises and exposes the magic incidents and unrealistic love scenes of the Romances, but it does not challenge the shape of the Romances. Don Quixote reproduces the central story of one man and his adventures and meetings on his travels. The story pauses in traditional Romance fashion as chance-met travellers tell their histories and then disappear.

But it was the personality of Don Quixote which proved revolutionary. Because of Cervantes' need to make the picture of a man obsessed credible to the reader, he had to develop and dwell on the character of Don Quixote. This enforced attention to the hero developed Don Quixote far beyond the brief and stereotyped outlines of the conventional hero of either the Romance or Picaro or Novella families, and set a new model for prose fiction. It is the attention to the hero and vivid detail which converts Don Quixote from a Romance of endlessly passing faces into a work which approaches the centralised novel.

That this was a new development was recognised by contemporary readers and writers who reacted to Don Quixote with an enthusiasm unmatched by their response to any other fiction. Innumerable authors borrowed the Cervantes style of emphasising the chief protagonist and developing his personality. With this knowledge of what could be done with detailed and vivid characterisation Fielding wrote his own version of the Romances. Like Cervantes he retained the large size of the Romance, like him too he kept the traditional style of

the Romance division of the fiction into scenes, each one written in its own chapter with a descriptive chapter heading and own separate story. But never is the attention of the reader wholly diverted from the central character, and in Fielding's last fiction, Amelia, there is no extraneous material at all. Every word of the fiction combines to expand or explain Amelia's situation. The size, the wide scope of the Romances, is still present but the diffuse approach has changed. In Fielding's fictions the tension and excitement of the main story means that no other stories can be readily introduced used, and dismissed. The central plot remains central and the reader is really interested only in the progress of the main action and the large number of characters connected with the main plot.

Other authors retained the bulk of the Romance family for different reasons. Johnson's comment that no-one could read Richardson for the action of the story because you would hang yourself for impatience*[2], was not necessarily a comment on Richardson's prolix style of writing. The length of Richardson's works impress only a modern reader; Johnson would have been familiar with equally large Romances. Johnson's comments refer to the new style of writing in which the action of the main story is delayed, not for other action, but for thought and analysis. The traditional Romances were large works but bulged with events and rapidly succeeding characters. The bulk of Richardson's works is composed of reflections on events, analysis of character, and moral commentary.

More than half of this survey is composed of stories which contain material additional to the main plot - either as centralised stories based closely on one plot but with additional material, or as multiple-plot, multiple-theme stories. Altogether there are 68 stories (53.5% of the survey) of either centralised shape or

multiple-plot shape. Any belief in the emergence and importance of the English novel in the eighteenth century has to take into account the surviving popularity of fictions which retained the additional material for all of the century. Extra material could include educational digressions or asides, specimens of poetry to heighten the emotional tension, or the inclusion of scenes designed to inspire sentiment. Henry Mackenzie's apology confidently justified the additional material because of its sentimental effect:

> The reader will pardon the digression I have made: I would not willingly lead him out of his way, except into some path where his feelings may be expanded and his heart improved.*[3]

1.3 Histories

The third most popular family of this survey are the Histories, and 33 stories (25.9% of the total survey) belong to this family. The critics in search of the early novel have found it most often and most persuasively in the Histories of the eighteenth century. The Histories satisfy the criteria of the critics since they are extended pieces of prose concerning a relatively small group of people involved in limited and inter-related action showing clearly defined and well-developed characteristics.

The Histories were forced to confine themselves to the limit of one set of adventures and one set of people because tradition dictated that Histories should be realistic, factual, or fictional biographies. The discipline of maintaining the pretence that the fiction is the memoir of a real person meant that only life-like adventures and people were introduced into the story. Although the Histories were often lengthy pieces of writing they did not include extraneous passages and scenes but limited themselves to whatever the character might plausibly think, do, and say.

The detail of the fictional biographies, and the convention that they tell a complete life from the early years until retirement or death, meant that the Histories were written at length, generally more than 100,000 words, and yet despite this the authors confined the action to the central character.

Whether the works were or were not fictional seems to be more of a modern pre-occupation than an eighteenth-century concern. The commercial circulating librarians tended to catalogue such books as fictions but also included them as 'Lives', Travels and Voyages' or other categories. The catalogues were not designed as literary definitions but their organisation does suggest that librarians did not care whether a piece of writing was factual or fictional. Their main interest seems to have been in the subject-matter. Consequently, accounts of fictional journeys are generally included in 'Travels and Voyages' alongside real-life travels, and real journeys sometimes appear in fiction categories. 'History' sections include not only factual History books but also fictional Histories and fictional auto-biographies. It is possible that the concern by the authors to produce realistic and convincing biographies is a reflection not of their intent to deceive, but more of the convention of including fictional scenes in otherwise factual Histories, fictionalising Histories, and using fictions as a vehicle for historical or moral truths.

That 'History' could be used synonymously with fiction is made clear by the introduction to The Pupil of Pleasure when Samuel Pratt calls his work a 'History' and a 'Biography': 'In the course of this historical illustration - this biographical commentary ...'*[4] he says, while acknowledging that the work is a fiction and that he is the author.

## 1.4 Picaro Tales

The borderlines between Romance, Picaro, and History are difficult for modern critics, principally because the eighteenth-century authors and their predecessors cared nothing for the definitions which critics now make. Broadly speaking the Picaro story is the life of the road, dealing with a fantasy working-class culture and a fantasy criminal culture. The story follows directly the adventures of the chief protagonist and, like a History, concentrates mainly on the one chief character and his erratic progress on his journey and through his life. However, some Picaro characters attract friends and companions and these very often tell their stories like a Romance. Clearly Tom Jones, Joseph Andrews, Roderick Random, and Peregrine Pickle draw heavily on the tradition of bawdy, violent, and comic journeying. The end of the journey or story is the home-coming of the hero to wealth, land, and marriage. Gil Blas is a clear example of the Picaro form in Le Sage's fiction of 1716. Gil Blas tells his own story from his early years. Leaving home to seek his fortune he is captured by brigands and then manages to escape, behaving with unusual heroism. He goes into service, and his ups and downs as first he robs, and then is robbed by a succession of masters makes light and enjoyable reading. It is part of the style of the story that the reader is never deeply or emotionally involved with the likeable rogue and the only tragic scene - the death of his wife and his loneliness - seems a little incongruous. The fiction cheers up quickly with a second marriage and a respectable retirement for the plausible rogue.

While Smollett's heroes never behave in quite such an immoral or criminal fashion they clearly belong to the same style of fiction as the cheerful adventurer. Random (1748) and Pickle (1751) rove

about falling into one scrape after another, seeking sexual pleasure and money before a love marriage and a wealthy and respectable middle age in classic Picaro style. Humphry Clinker (1771) and Sir Launcelot Greaves (1773) share some features of the Picaro family. There are scenes of travel and bawdy mishaps in both, but Smollett seems to be working towards more centralised plots and carefully drawn characters. The hero is still the main feature in Sir Launcelot Greaves, but in Humphry Clinker the characters of other people are becoming clearer. The simple caricature features of the participants are becoming more sophisticated. Aunt Tabitha and her peculiar beau are both caricatures, but the characters of Humphry Clinker and his maidservant-love are more sympathetically portrayed. Lydia remains the rather stereotyped juvenile female role of the Picaro fictions but even she has an impact as a real person; and the crusty benefactor, Matt Bramble with his gout and his heart of gold, is a splendid picture which set a model of the secret philanthropist for other writers.

## 2 SHAPE

Analysis of the shape of eighteenth-century fictions creates the usual problems of definition, and the inclusion or exclusion of the borderline cases. In broad terms I have defined all the stories in this survey as either one-plot stories, centralised plots with one main plot but with important additional material, or multiple-plot stories with many themes and stories in the one work.

As can be seen clearly, the most popular of these three shapes in this survey is the one-plot shape of 60 cases (47.2%) of the total survey. Centralised plots are much less popular with 38 cases (29.9%) and multiple plots less popular again with 30 cases (23.6%) (see Graphs A - C).

Nos of Books
20
15
A. 10
5
ONE-PLOT STORIES
PRE-1700
1700
1710
1720
1730
1740
1750
1760
1770
1780
Nos of Books
15
10
B. 5
CENTRALISED STORIES
PRE-1700
1700
1710
1720
1730
1740
1750
1760
1770
1780
Nos of Books
15
10
C. 5
MULTIPLE-PLOT STORIES
PRE-1700
1700
1710
1720
1730
1740
1750
1760
1770
1780
1790

The popularity of the centralised and multiple-plot stories is analysed in more detail in graphs D - G.

2.1 One Plot Stories (Graph A)

The one-plot shape is the most popular of this survey, not because of the evolution and instant popularity of the novel as some modern critics would suggest, but because many of the traditional families of fiction writing used that shape. The single episode of a Novella (and occasionally Novellas were published separately) is clearly a one-plot structure, while many Romances are basically one-plot structures with additional material kept to a minimum and little distraction from the progress of the one important story. Picaro stories also often take a one-plot shape following the life of the hero with the extra adventures and extra material kept to a minimum and the reader's attention focussed solely on the hero.

The Histories always used this structure since the biographical or auto-biographical narration meant that events were seen solely in relation to the main character. The commitment to a realistic portrayal of one person's experience encouraged the authors to confine themselves to a linear narration with little extra material. Some authors experimented with the one-plot shape and it is possible to trace a progression in their work as extra material was excluded and the development of the work becomes more and more linear. Both Fielding and Smollett show some signs of a deliberate progression away from centralised but rambling fictions towards tighter writing, fewer characters, and one predominant story. However, as the graphs show, the centralised or multiple stories retained their popularity and a steady presence throughout the century.

2.2 Centralised-Plot Stories (Graph B)

Centralised-plot stories served as a half-way stage for some authors who made a progression from multiple plots to linear one-plot stories. They could concentrate on the adventures of the principal characters and yet still retain some of the features of a multiple-plot story with enjoyable extra material. But it would be wrong to see the eighteenth-century authors as trying to evolve towards a single-plot shape for their fictions and yet failing to confine themselves to a linear progression. Haywood's transition from multiple plots to one-plot shapes and back to multiple plots indicates that there was no belief that the one-plot shape was the shape of the future. For some authors the centralised stories represented an experimental phase, but for others it was a pleasing, useful shape in its own right.

This survey is probably too small to support any conclusions from the peak of popularity in the 1750s, but it is interesting to note that 8 of the 15 centralised stories published in the 1750s are double-headers: stories which feature two main and sometimes contrasting protagonists.

2.3 Multiple Stories (Graph C)

While the concentration of authors of Picaro stories and Histories on the adventures of the central character tended to centralise their stories, Romances could ramble on to become multiple-plot stories. All the versions of the collected or strung-together Novellas were, of course, multiple-plot stories. Most popular are the observer stories which maintained a steady presence throughout the period with a dramatic peak of popularity in the 1760s. This fashion for observer stories owed much to the continuous popularity of Eastern travellers in the style of Montesquieu, and the ubiquitous

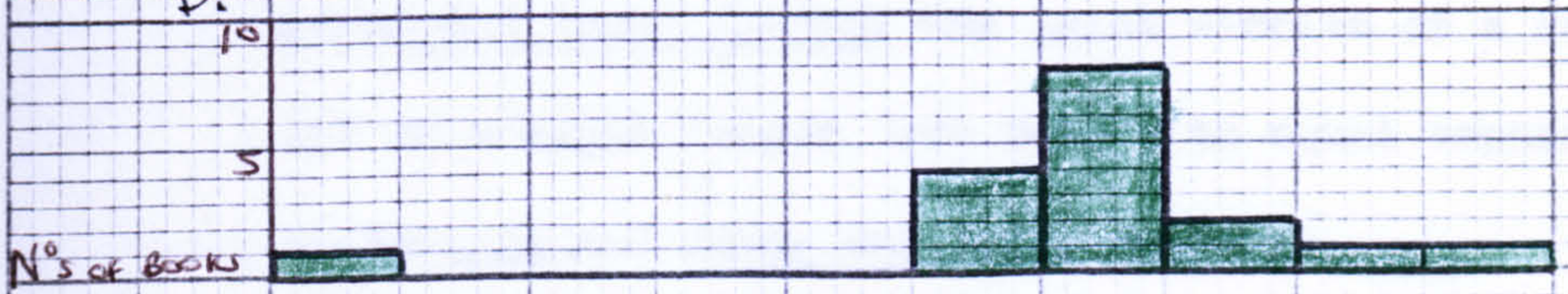
Devil stories whose popularity can, perhaps, be traced back beyond written fiction to the oral tradition of ghost stories and possession by wandering devils. However, five of the stories in the 1760s peak were a new version of this shape of story with the stories told by inanimate objects such as the Atom or the Guinea; or the observer narrator is a day-dreaming mortal as in The Reverie, or Something New. The popularity of articulate objects owed something to the theories about transubstantiation which were satirised by Smollett in The Atom, and the popularity of the day-dreams of a whimsical author may have been a response to the enormous popularity of the whimsical narrator in the Shandean style. Laurence Sterne's two twittering narrators are included in this group although I recognise that both Mr Shandy and Mr Yorick are laws unto themselves and impossible to categorise.

2.4 Double-Headed Stories (Graph D)

The popularity of the double-headed stories seems to be a sudden but short-lived development in the middle years of the century. Of course a minority development in a restricted survey is difficult to measure with any accuracy but this limited survey seems to indicate the minor but interesting popularity of stories with two heroines, or two male protagonists where the villain and the hero are treated with equal emphasis and used as a mirror and contrast to each other.

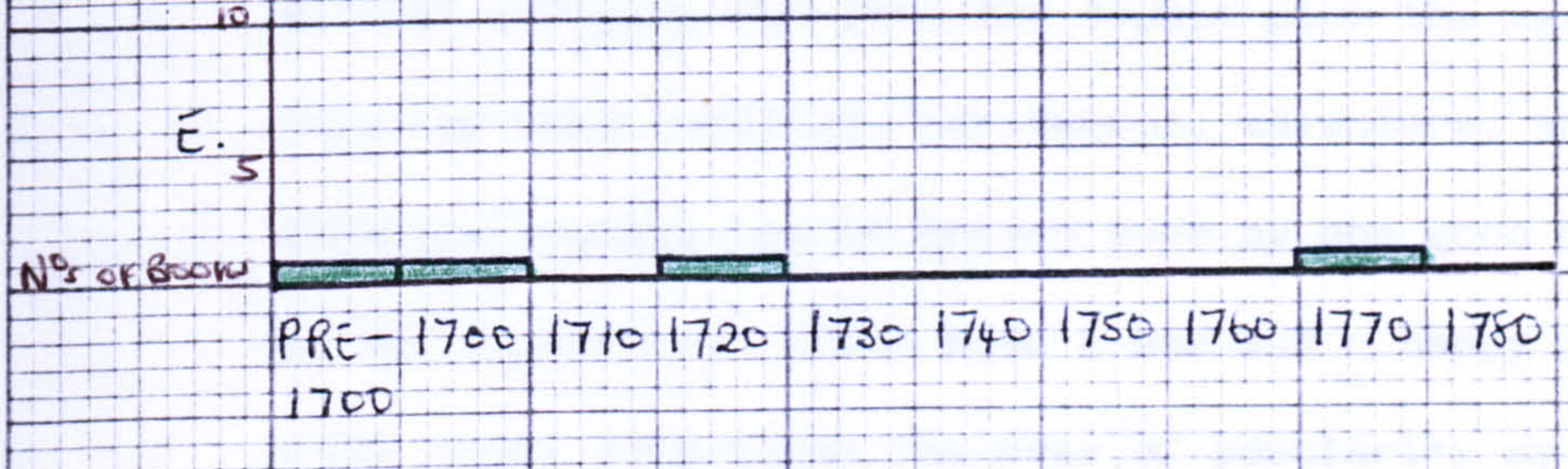
The use of two heroines meant that the author could touch the reader's sensibilities with the death of one and yet still enjoy a happy ending with the survival of the other. A case of killing one's heroine and having her! Such a form is used in The Castle of Otranto, The Recess, and David Simple. The contrast between the behaviour of two young women is a major part of the stories of The Vicar of Wakefield, and Sir Charles Grandison.

D.



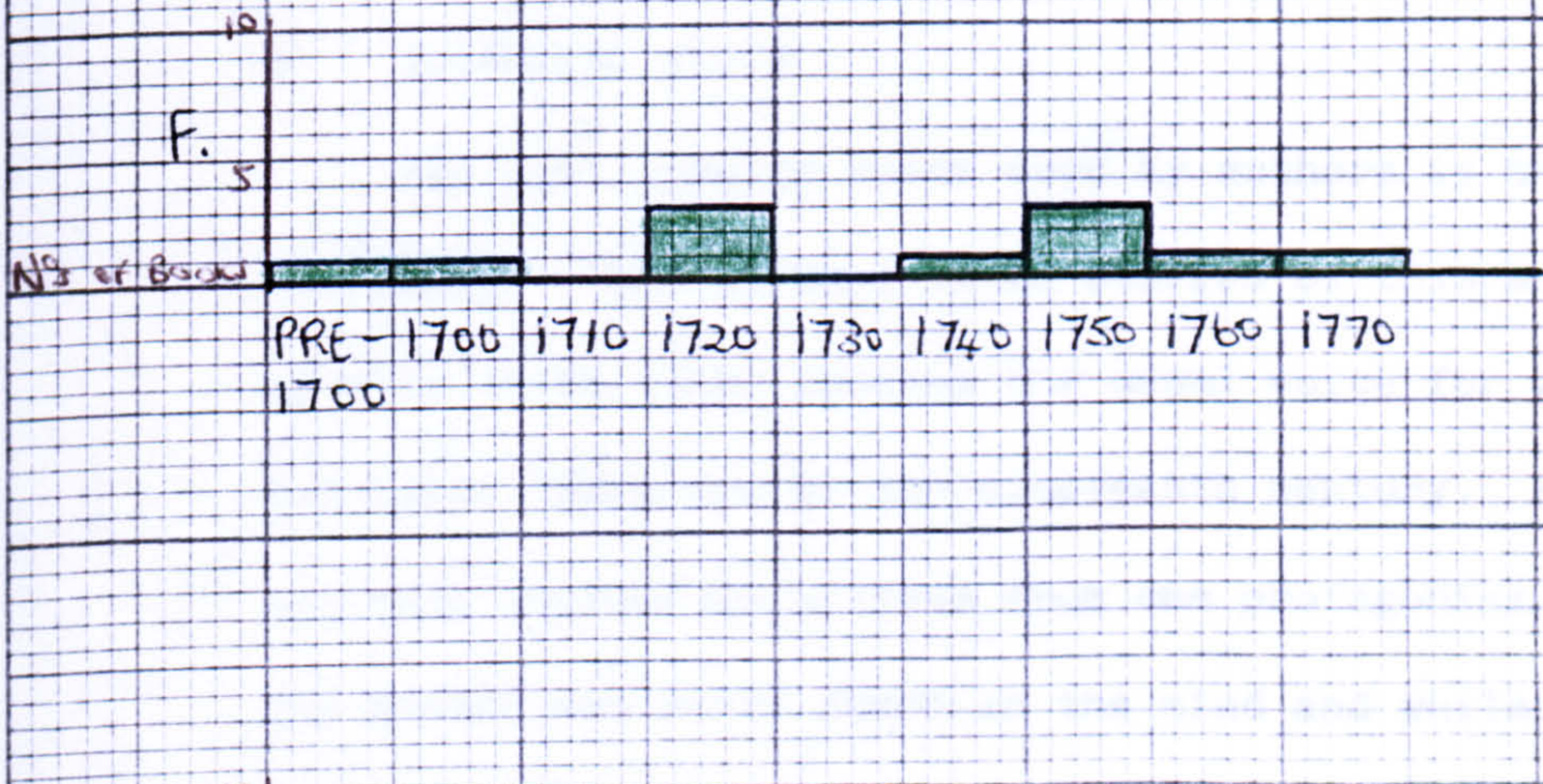

DOUBLE-HEADED STORIES

E.



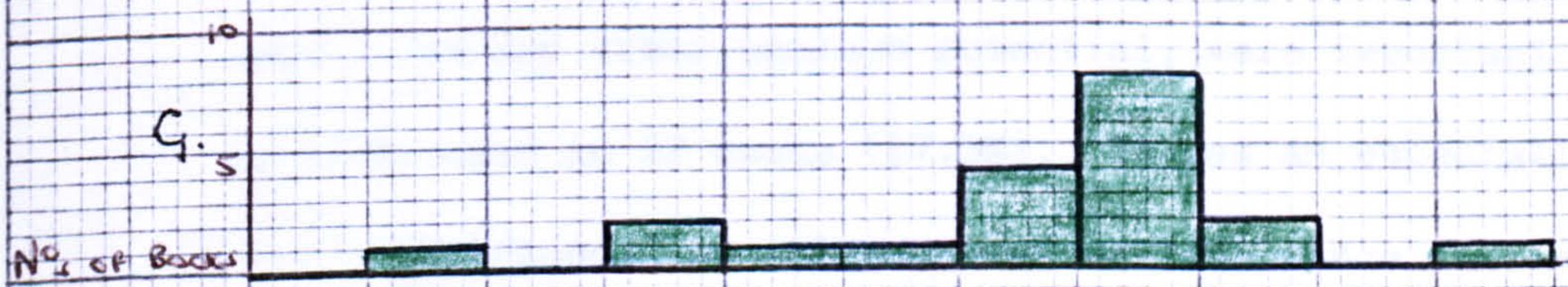

COLLECTIONS

F.




STORYTELLERS' TALES AND FRAMEWORK STORIES

G.




OBSERVER STORIES

The contrast of the hero with the villain despite the similarities in their upbringing is part of the appeal of Ferdinand Count Fathom; the joint stories of a brother and sister, and an engaged couple, are told with equal emphasis in The Fortunate Foundlings and Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy.

The stories of two generations provide a double-headed plot in The Man of the World, and provide much of the interest in The Mother; or, The Happy Distress.

There are obvious benefits for authors in the double-headed shape. Without straying far from the double plot the reader can be offered twice as much conflict, excitement, adventure, and sentiment. The didactic message can be driven home by one good and one bad person, or the authors can offer both a sad and a happy ending in one story. Given these advantages the peak of popularity as the shape was adopted and exploited is not surprising, but the apparent infrequency of use after the 1750s is surprising.

## 3 AUTHORIAL VOICE

The most popular voice used by authors is that of third person narrative. This is used in 52 stories of this survey (49.9%). It is this which later becomes the usual voice for works of fiction in the later years and in the nineteenth century. But Richardson's letters, supposedly written from one protagonist to another while the action was still fresh in the mind and while confusions could be exploited for their maximum potential, were important for a short period, used in 22 cases (17.3%). It was an especially useful voice for inexperienced or ill-educated writers since the language could be simple and plain. Indeed, the more the letters sounded as if they were written by amateurs the better. The production of a letter-style fiction is a simple one requiring only that the author bears in mind

which character is supposed to be writing at any given time; the discipline of writing one letter in one character, and then another in another persona, helped the authors develop the characterisation of the protagonists. Another and most important advantage for the less competent author was the spurious excitement given to even the most trivial of confusions by the second-by-second reporting, and by breaking off the letter at the most crucial moments. Very dull revelations could be prolonged for a surprising length of time and made to seem quite exciting by the reporting of one piece of news all around the correspondents. Even Richardson, the pioneer of this voice, seems to the modern reader rather to overdo it when in Sir Charles Grandison the letter of one character is retold by another, and the whole scene reported to yet a third party. Without this method at least two stages of the unfolding story would have been lost.

> No more effective form could have been found for the tale of sensibility, because whereas human fears, hopes, excitements often appear baseless in retrospect, and not worth recounting, they appear of great import if recorded while the mind is still agitated.*[5]

The prolongation of sensation by this means is especially apparent in Emma Corbett when the death of the husband of Emma, and the fatal illness of Emma herself, is related to her father at home by her faithful lover. The news of illness, death, Emma's pregnancy, and fatal illness is spread over three letters with passages broken up as the distracted correspondent rushes to experience another tragic scene before reporting it. There is something very Sterne-like about the style of the letters which suggests the grief of the situation by short, hysterical sentences and pauses.

Yet do not despair. I may be deceived.
We have long experienced the healing hand!
remember this, and be still.

But oh, consider my misery; I am upon the
spot. I am a spectator of the scene - I
am behind the awful curtain. EMMA IS POISONED!
Henry is in the direst parchings of a fever,
into which grief, tenderness, and terror, have
conspired to throw him.

In continuation
The fate of Emma will be slower than the fate
of Henry, - for Henry, alas is NO MORE. He
yielded his last breath about eleven o'clock
this night.
He died in the arms of Emma.
Emma is this moment on the bed, clasping the
breathless body.

In continuation
Her reasons yet to live cannot any longer be
concealed from you, my venerable afflicted!
Your daughter would live to be the parent of
that LITTLE ONE with which Henry has left her -
SHE IS WITH CHILD.
The poison will not, I hope -
And yet it is possible that -
- the case is new.

All that art could do in medicine has been
attempted.
It is in vain -
- Corbett, SHE MUST DIE.
You will lose your daughter,
Her malady is gradual, but sure. - I DARE NOT
FLATTER YOU.*[6]

For readers who were not impatient to get on with the story and who were anxious to relish the pathos of each scene, the letter mode enabled them to relive each occurrence with the added pleasure of a new person's view.

First person narrative in the form of memoirs was adopted by writers of pseudo-histories who thus added credibility to their accounts. A favourite device (which may have convinced nobody but added to the flavour and thus the pleasure of the reading) was to attach an explanation of how the memoirs came to be written. Moll Flanders' history is a pious exercise, Robinson Crusoe's journal keeps him sane

in his isolation, and Peter Wilkins' account of the land of flying people, and Gulliver's strange tales are the natural responses of reasonable men recounting and describing their strange experiences.

In 12 instances it was claimed that the authors had come into possession of a collection of letters and had merely published and edited them. The more circumstantial the account of the discovery the more persuasive the effect on the reader, or so it was hoped. This was the method used by Charles Johnstone in Chrysal when he claims to have discovered the papers of an old alchemist. Rather engagingly he uses the same source for The Reverie, only this time the papers were stolen by a rogue who left them with a naive woman who had invited him to her house to tutor her daughters. The 'editor' hunts down the papers and publishes them.

In a society where scant respect was paid to the copyright of money-spinning ideas even when published under the author's name, one cannot blame Charles Johnstone for taking the trouble to try to pre-empt any future piracies which might claim also to be based on papers written by the old alchemist:

> It may not, for obvious reasons, be improper to inform the Public, that this concludes the works of our author, of this or any other entertaining kind; the rest of his writings relating solely to his attempts to find the Philosopher's Stone.*[7]

The circumstantial accounts of the discovery of documents and papers grew into a convention for the authors using this narrative voice. Henry MacKenzie developed it fully in The Man of Feeling where the insensitivity of the curate using the manuscript as gun wadding is an opportunity for the author's superior sensibility to be displayed, and simultaneously excuses the rapid shifts of time and place in the fragmented manuscript which are used to heighten the emotional tension by the abrupt steps towards the tragic conclusion.

William Combe exploited this convention by entitling his anonymous work Letters Supposed to have been written by Yorick to Eliza. By publishing the book under this title he could claim either a genuine discovery of Sterne's work, or shield himself from a charge of piracy by claiming that his own title made clear he was only borrowing the characters to use in his own fiction. The ensuing confusion over authorship is still baffling scholars today.

DIAGRAM A *10

HIERARCHICAL CLUSTERS

SINGLE LINKAGE

| | |
|---|---|
| 90% | The Castle of Otranto<br>The Woman of Honour<br>The Recess<br>The Vicar of Wakefield |
| 90% and 85% | The Castle of Otranto<br>The Woman of Honour<br>The Recess<br>The Vicar of Wakefield<br>The Pupil of Pleasure<br>Cleopatra and Octavia |
| 90%, 85% and 80% | The Castle of Otranto<br>The Woman of Honour<br>The Recess<br>The Vicar of Wakefield<br>The Pupil of Pleasure<br>Cleopatra and Octavia<br>The Man of the World<br>The Marriage Act |
| 90%, 85%, 80% and 75% | The Castle of Otranto<br>The Woman of Honour<br>The Recess<br>The Vicar of Wakefield<br>The Pupil of Pleasure<br>Cleopatra and Octavia<br>The Man of the World<br>The Marriage Act<br>The Stage Coach |
| 90%, 85%, 80%, 75% and 70% | The Castle of Otranto<br>The Woman of Honour<br>The Vicar of Wakefield<br>The Recess<br>The Pupil of Pleasure<br>Cleopatra and Octavia<br>The Man of the World<br>The Marriage Act<br>The Stage Coach<br>David Simple |

DIAGRAM A (Cont'd)

| | |
|---|---|
| 90%, 85%, 80%, 75%, 70% and 65% | The Castle of Otranto<br>The Woman of Honour<br>The Recess<br>The Vicar of Wakefield<br>The Pupil of Pleasure<br>Cleopatra and Octavia<br>The Man of the World<br>The Marriage Act<br>The Stage Coach<br>David Simple<br>Injured Innocence<br>Pamela<br>La Belle Assemblee<br>The Decameron |
| 90%, 85%, 80%, 75%, 70%, 65% and 60% | The Castle of Otranto<br>The Woman of Honour<br>The Recess<br>The Vicar of Wakefield<br>The Pupil of Pleasure<br>Cleopatra and Octavia<br>The Man of the World<br>The Marriage Act<br>The Stage Coach<br>David Simple<br>Injured Innocence<br>Pamela<br>La Belle Assemblee<br>The Decameron |
| 55% | Injured Innocence, Pamela,<br>Harriot Stuart, Ophelia,<br>Man of the World, Friends,<br>Sidney Biddulph, The Stage Coach,<br>The Fortunate Foundling, Amelia,<br>Peregrine Pickle, Betsy Thoughtless,<br>Sophia, Lydia, David Simple,<br>Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy,<br>The Pupil of Pleasure |
| | The Cottage, Grandison,<br>Theagenes and Chariclea, Persiles<br>and Sigismunda, Mirza and Fatima,<br>Almoran and Hamet, The Old English<br>Baron, Otranto.<br>Female Banishment<br>Juliet Grenville, Rambles of Frankly<br>Emma Corbett, George Ellison,<br>Julie de Roubigne<br>George Edwards, Roderick Random |

# PRINCIPAL CO-ORDINATE ANALYSIS

## Diagram B.

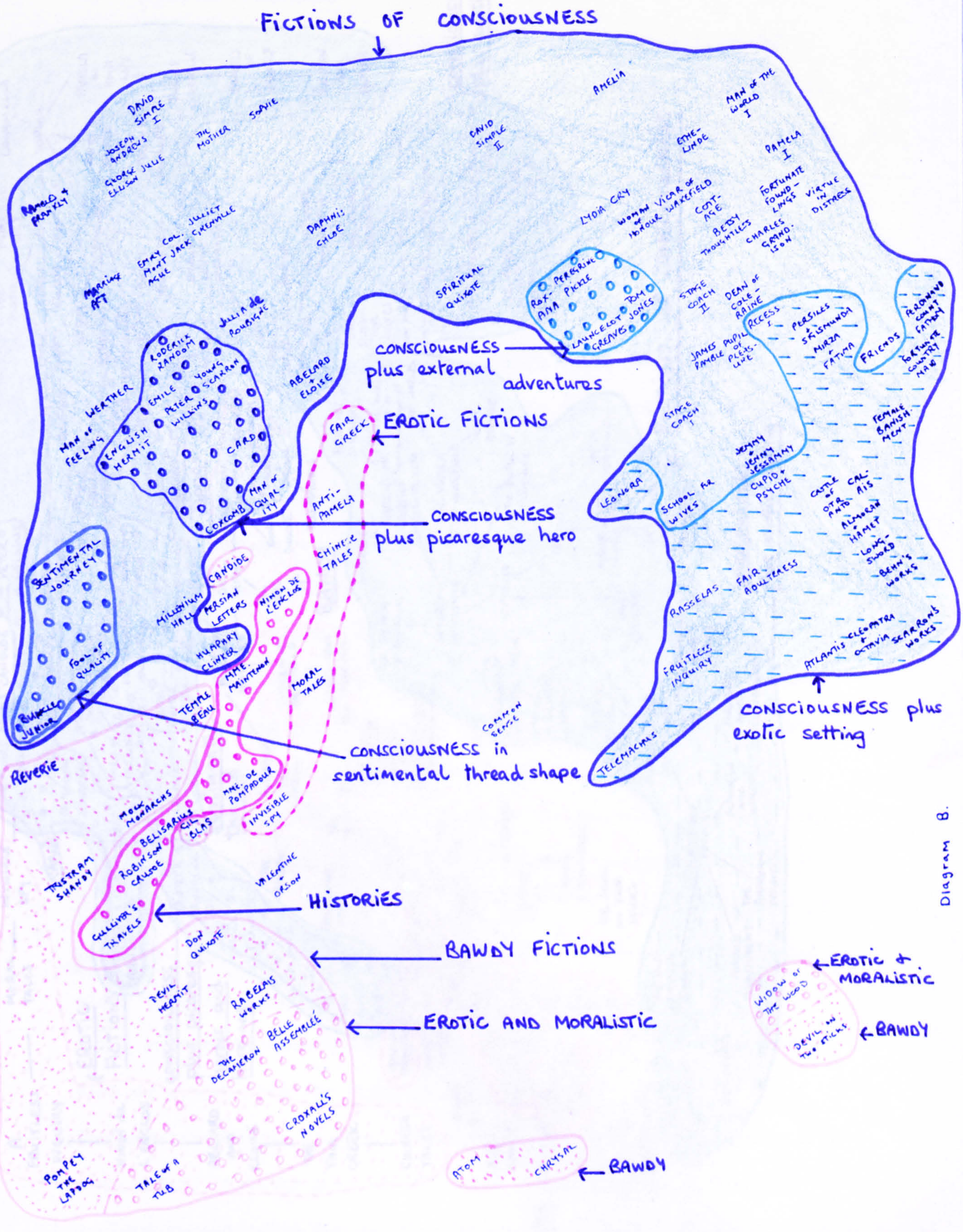
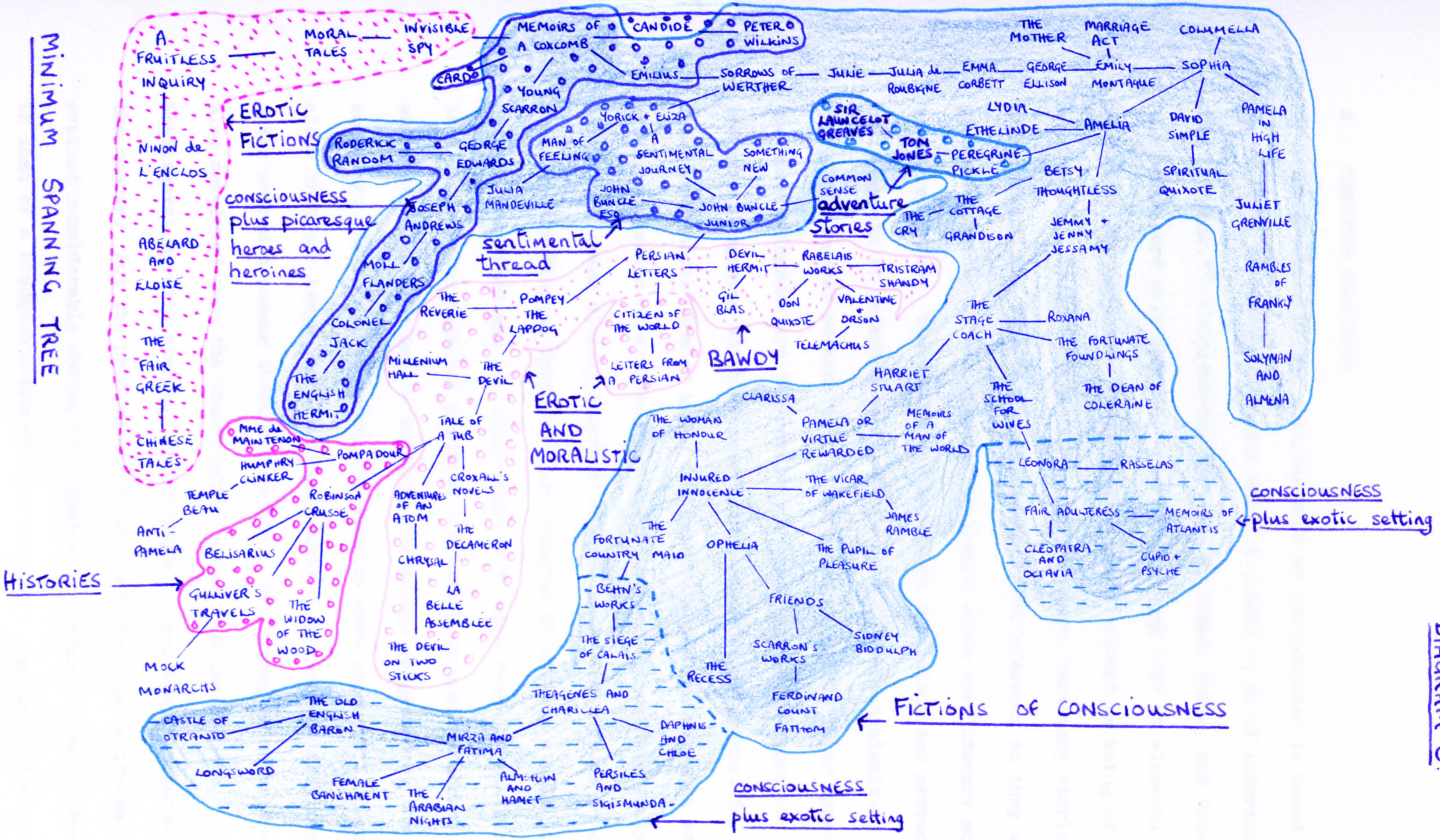



Diagram B.


MINIMUM SPANNING TREE
All books shown share more than 60% of the elements.
A FRUITLESS INQUIRY
MORAL TALES
INVISIBLE SPY
NINON de L'ENCLOS
ABELARD AND ELOISE
THE FAIR GREEK
CHINESE TALES
EROTIC FICTIONS
MEMOIRS OF A COXCOMB
CANDIDE
PETER WILKINS
CARD
EMILIUS
SORROWS OF WERTHER
YOUNG
SCARRON
RODERICK RANDOM
GEORGE EDWARDS
JULIA MANDEVILLE
MAN OF FEELING
YORICK + ELIZA
A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY
JOHN BUNCLE ESQ
JOHN BUNCLE JUNIOR
SOMETHING NEW
consciousness plus picaresque heroes and heroines
JOSEPH ANDREWS
MOLL FLANDERS
COLONEL JACK
THE ENGLISH HERMIT
sentimental thread
THE REVERIE
POMPEY THE LAPDOG
PERSIAN LETTERS
DEVIL HERMIT
RABELAIS WORKS
TRISTRAM SHANDY
GIL BLAS
DON QUIXOTE
VALENTINE + ORSON
TELEMACHUS
CITIZEN OF THE WORLD
LETTERS FROM A PERSIAN
BAWDY
MILLENIUM HALL
THE DEVIL
EROTIC AND MORALISTIC
TALE OF A TUB
CROXALL'S NOVELS
ADVENTURES OF AN ATOM
THE DECAMERON
CHRYSAL
LA BELLE ASSEMBLEE
THE DEVIL ON TWO STICKS
MME de MAINTENON
POMPADOUR
HUMPHRY CLINKER
TEMPLE BEAU
ANTI-PAMELA
ROBINSON CRUSOE
BELISARIUS
GULLIVER'S TRAVELS
THE WIDOW OF THE WOOD
MOCK MONARCHS
HISTORIES
THE WOMAN OF HONOUR
CLARISSA
PAMELA OR VIRTUE REWARDED
HARRIET STUART
MEMOIRS OF A MAN OF THE WORLD
INJURED INNOCENCE
THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD
JAMES RAMBLE
THE FORTUNATE COUNTRY MAID
OPHELIA
THE PUPIL OF PLEASURE
BEHN'S WORKS
THE SIEGE OF CALAIS
THE RECESS
FRIENDS
SCARRON'S WORKS
SIDNEY BIDDULPH
FERDINAND COUNT FATHOM
THEAGENES AND CHARICLEA
DAPHNIS AND CHLOE
CASTLE OF OTRANTO
THE OLD ENGLISH BARON
LONGSWORD
MIRZA AND FATIMA
FEMALE CANCHAMENT
THE ARABIAN NIGHTS
ALMORIAN AND HAMET
PERSILES AND SIGISMUNDA
CONSCIOUSNESS plus exotic setting
FICTIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS
THE MOTHER
MARRIAGE ACT
COLUMELLA
EMMA CORBETT
GEORGE ELLISON
EMILY MONTAGUE
SOPHIA
JULIA de ROUBIGNE
JULIE
SIR LAUNCELOT GREAVES
TOM JONES
LYDIA
ETHELINDE
AMELIA
PEREGRINE PICKLE
DAVID SIMPLE
SPIRITUAL QUIXOTE
PAMELA IN HIGH LIFE
BETSY THOUGHTLESS
THE COTTAGE GRANDISON
THE CRY
common sense adventure stories
JEMMY + JENNY JESSAMY
JULIET GRENVILLE
RAMBLES OF FRANKY
SOLYMAN AND ALMENA
THE STAGE COACH
ROXANA
THE FORTUNATE FOUNDLINGS
THE DEAN OF COLERAINE
THE SCHOOL FOR WIVES
LEONORA
RASSELAS
FAIR ADULTERESS
MEMOIRS OF ATLANTIS
CLEOPATRA AND OCTAVIA
CUPID + PSYCHE
CONSCIOUSNESS plus exotic setting
DIAGRAM C.

## 4 COMPUTER GROUPINGS

The grouping of the fictions made by the computer is based on an analysis of all the elements which I judged to be of interest in the fictions.*[8] Consequently the family, shape, voice, and tone of the books were only four features among a long list of elements sorted by the computer, which treated every element as being of equal importance. It is interesting to see, however, that many stories which shared the same shape also shared other elements so they were grouped together by the computer in groups which any literary scholar would recognise. The groups are sometimes surprising and provocative, but they can be defended on the basis of a literary analysis.

The computer methodology is described in detail in an appendix.*[9] The three diagrams are the results of three different types of computer programme which successfully produced similar results. The hierarchical cluster group (Diagram A) shows the fictions at different levels of similarity. The Principal Co-ordinate Analysis (Diagram B) maps closely together stories which are similar to one another, the Minimum Spanning Tree (Diagram C) shows a single link between one story and any other story with more than 60% similarity. In all cases the computer produced the titles grouped as shown; it was my task to name and to identify the groups suggested by the computer. As soon as the computer results were produced it became clear that one large group had been exposed, a group of fictions which shared a common theme and intent. The intent is inherited and also developed from the traditional Romance stories and the Sentimental Novella stories: to stimulate an emotional response from the reader. But the precise nature of that emotional stimulus evolved considerably during the eighteenth century. The difference is that of a bludgeon compared with a rapier. In the earlier

fictions the reader is bombarded with scenes of horror, terror, and tragedy. If one wept in sympathy with the characters one would be in tears from the first to the last page as one character after another collapsed, recovered, and then collapsed again. Battles are scenes of carnage, littered with corpses; heroines are incarcerated, torn from their lovers, and threatened with execution. In the Novella stories especially many heroines suffer the unfortunate experience of seeing their lover murdered before their very eyes. The action is melodramatic and the reader is stunned rather than pained.

The rapier touch of the eighteenth-century fictions marks a genuine development of this attack upon the feelings of the reader. In the eighteenth-century stories which aimed at stimulating tears the reader is touched by microcosmic experiences. A passing sight of a wounded beggar or an injured animal is developed to stimulate a sentimental response, to produce not a flood of grief but a single tear of pity. At a deeper level of the story the reader is required to respond not only from the heart, but also from the head. The purely emotional response to the older stories is inappropriate for the more complicated stories of the eighteenth century. The characters are no longer faced with the simple problem of defeating the forces of evil which inexplicably beset them, they are required to make complex moral decisions and put them into practice in their complicated lives. The traditional heroes and heroines are simple models of goodness, and their opponents are stereotype villains whose motives for malignant behaviour were never explained. The eighteenth-century development was to make all the characters more complex and to put them in a fictional world where there are no stereotype choices between good and evil. Moral decisions have to be made in a climate where compromise and betrayal are tempting

possibilities. People who behave badly generally have made a moral choice to behave badly and have clear motives for their behaviour. Many of the characters are both good and bad, repenting and reforming or falling victim to temptation in the context of the story, and such changes in moral position are scenes of central interest in the complex eighteenth-century fictions.

The group exposed by the computer are these fictions which stimulate a delicate sentimental response from the reader by their exploitation of a complex and complicated moral world. The main theme of such stories is the development of the consciousness of the individual and I have called this group the fictions of consciousness.

## 4.1 Fictions of Consciousness

The adventure of these stories is the maturing of the consciousness of the individual. Typically, the hero and the heroine are attracted to each other in recognition of each other's merits. Their separate adventures before they can be married serve to develop their individual characters. In the early pages they are charming, happy, and protected young people. Their period of trial not only tests them - in the way of the old Romances - but is a period of development. Their view of the world, of themselves, and their moral code, is tested under severe circumstances. Their retention of their view despite temptation and trial is their victory, which is rewarded by each other's love. The crucial ingredient in the character of the successful hero or heroine is this ability to see the world in an individual way, to make independent moral judgements, and to retain that view and those judgements in the face of temptation and persecution.

In practice it can be seen how this bare outline provided the skeleton for all the stories in the computer-selected group of the fictions of consciousness. Heroines such as Sophia, Pamela, Ophelia, Betsy Thoughtless, Juliet Grenville, and the heroines of The Cottage, The Cry, The Stage Coach, The Fortunate Foundings, The School for Wives and Injured Innocence, have to cling to their view of themselves and their moral standards when their circumstances are at the worst. They may be betrayed by their husbands like Amelia, Pamela, or the heroine of The School for Wives; or dangerously alone in a threatening situation like young Pamela, Sophia, Ophelia, Betsy Thoughtless, Lydia, or the heroines of The Recess. Against their own fears, and against the attacks of the world the heroines have nothing to protect them but their beliefs in their own worth, and their commitments to doing their duty regardless of what it costs. The reward for this stoical courage is the triumph of the heroine's ideology. The enemies in the outside world are defeated and forced to recognise that the heroine was right all along. The husbands come home, the lovers re-appear. The final line of every fiction (if respect and modesty did not forbid) could be 'I told you so'. Indeed, many of Pamela's later letters say precisely that.

The individual's view of him or herself provides the conflict of the stories as the individual opposes the common view. This is shown especially clearly in those stories where a working-class heroine has to argue her view of her own merits against the conventional snobbery. Pamela, Ophelia, Fanny of Injured Innocence, and the bourgeouis Clarissa lay claim to a spiritual equality which implicitly denies the social superiority of their lover. Their victory is gained by forcing the lover to see them as equals, and they do this by enduring that acid test of status for women: sexual

assault. The double sexual standard which meant that working-class women were sexually used by upper-class men is used in the fictional world to test the gentility of a heroine. Her claim to be regarded as the equal of an upper-class male is tested by her response to being treated as a typical working-class woman. If she succumbs to assault or seduction she has accepted his lowly view of her. If she resists then he has to accept her as a member of the Quality, accord her appropriate status and respect, and in these fictions that means an offer of marriage. As his wife, the heroine attracts the respect of society. The victory of her view means that her social status is adjusted to accord with her view. Her social promotion is more a recognition of her status than a reward.

Heroes also have to construct and defend their view of the world, and their struggle to reach maturity and to find their place in the world is shown as more complex than the lives of the heroines whose identity depends so heavily on chastity. Heroes enjoy far greater freedom and can develop their personality and plan their future while travelling far afield undertaking work, making or losing a fortune, and even enjoying sexual experience. Because heroes do not have to be virgins they can experience sexual pleasure and then reform and repent as an important part of their development. Many heroes have sexual partners who are rejected when they fall in love with the heroine, and this is an important part of male development. For some heroes, like Booth, Mr B, or the hero of The Friends, the old ways die hard and part of their struggle to maturity is to resist the temptations of their bachelor days.

The concentration upon consciousness is the innovation of the eighteenth century. The importance of events and adventures is reduced. The fictions concentrate instead on the response and reaction to events in the consciousness of the hero and heroine. What they think and feel matter more than events of a journey, attacks, or escapes. The balance is clearly a fine one, and in the groups shown by the computer it is possible to see borderline cases where the interest of the fiction is divided between the external events and the adventures of consciousness. The group includes some of the best-known fictions of the eighteenth century. Richardson's three fictions; Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield; Fielding's Amelia, and Tom Jones; Defoe's Roxana; and the two dynamic imports: Goethe's The Sorrows of Werther; and Rousseau's Julie. As the diagrams show, some stories seem to be central to their group. In the MST group of fictions of consciousness Sophia and Injured Innocence are each linked directly to six other stories. This does not mean that other stories imitate them or that they adopt elements from their neighbours, but that both Sophia and Injured Innocence show an approach, theme, and elements which are central to the fictions of consciousness.

Both are stories of poor girls whose circumstances suggest that they can be abused as ordinary working-class women. In Sophia's case her immediate family as well as the wider world see her as a poor girl whose chastity can be sold to her noble lover. Sophia retains her view of herself as a lady despite her worsening poverty. Her lover slowly learns that Sophia is not like her sister, his former mistress, and learns to value her at her own estimation. His proposal of marriage and the splendid and detailed marriage settlements are a recognition of Sophia's worth. Both young people develop and mature; Sophia is tested in poverty and with sexual

temptation, and Sir Charles learns a lesson in spiritual equality and repents and reforms. The theme of a man coming to his senses and reforming is central in Sophia's near neighbours - Amelia, Pamela II, and Columella - while the maintenance of a moral ideology despite contradiction is the theme of all the neighbours including David Simple, Juliet Grenville, and Emily Montague.

In Injured Innocence the fiction of consciousness is taken a step forward. In appearance this step is revolutionary: the heroine's consciousness of her innocence overcomes the great stain of sexual intercourse and Fanny makes a happy marriage with her lover. However this is a deceptive appearance for the modern reader. Fanny's seduction is completed by a mock wedding ceremony in which she is sincere in her vows. To many eighteenth-century readers disregarding the new-fangled 1753 Marriage Act, the exchange of betrothal promises before witnesses followed by consummation would be a valid ceremony.*[H] Fanny's view of herself as a married woman is founded on more than a working-class girl's opinion. To many readers of the eighteenth century Fanny was a deserted wife, not a seduced girl. Consequently the triumph of Fanny's view is one of the many triumphs of injured wives over reprobate husbands. The neighbours of Injured Innocence: Pamela, The Fortunate Country Maid, Ophelia, The Vicar of Wakefield, and The Pupil of Pleasure, all share this theme of the triumph of the virtuous woman over a reprobate lover. The Woman of Honour is a development of this story, with Clara winning two men to virtue and sobriety and marrying a third.

### 4.1.1 Exotic Fictions of Consciousness

The largest sub-group inside the fictions of consciousness group is that which combines the story of developing consciousness with an exotic or pseudo-historic setting. In some of the stories the

fascination of the exotic setting and the potential for melodramatic action is too much for the authors, who abandon the interest of consciousness and concentrate wholly on dramatic and melodramatic events. These exotic stories include many written before the eighteenth century but which retained their popularity throughout the period. Daphnis and Chloe and Cupid and Psyche are classical Romances and many other stories in this group, though written in modern times, nonetheless retain the flavour of style of the old Romances. Leonora, the story of a commune of young people, deliberately employs archaic language, names, and incidents, and the Romance shape of stories within stories. Theagenes and Chariclea, and Persiles and Sigismunda, also follow the same shape. This is one section of this group, but also included are the Eastern-based fictions of consciousness such as the Arabian Nights, Mirza and Fatima, Almoran and Hamet, and Female Banishment. In both methods the stories have been grouped together with little regard to the difference between Eastern stories and classical Romances.

While to the average reader it is the different setting which is most striking, it is interesting to see that in the computer's count of elements the Eastern stories and the classical Romances have so much in common that the difference in setting is apparently a trivial one. The computer result thus gives the reader an insight into the similarities between the two groups. At first sight one is dazzled by the exotic appearance of the Eastern stories but it is undoubtedly true that the mixture of gods, tyrants, peasants, and magic is common to both eastern and ancient Romances.

An even more interesting connection is made by the computer's grouping the much later gothic stories with these exotic fictions of consciousness. The gothic stories are linked with both classical Romances and Eastern stories, which suggests that the gothic style introduced few radically new elements into prose fiction but in fact reproduced traditional and popular elements of the classical Romance or Eastern stories in a slightly different context.

The emphasis which some literary critics have put on the gothic development is challenged by this finding. In the light of the PCA and MST methods grouping gothic with classical Romances and Eastern stories one can reconsider the so-called 'gothic elements'. One critic identifies gothic elements as being the use of Nature to heighten emotional tension in storms or gloomy mists, the recurrence of scenes of incest or near-incest, and the use of the style of stories within stories - old manuscripts, digressions and sub-plots to disorient and confuse the reader.*[12] However, all these elements are used effectively in the classical Romances and Eastern style stories, and are adapted by the eighteenth-century fictions of consciousness long before the flowering of the 'gothic style' late in the century.

The connection between gothic and the classical and Eastern stories is made in the MST through the Eastern story of Mirza and Fatima which tells of a hopeful young general, coached by the Fairy of Adversity, who defeats the tyrant, frees the kingdom, and marries the heroine. Like the two gothic stories of The Old English Baron and The Castle of Otranto the heroes are orphans aided by super-natural powers, trained as soldiers, who have a right to the kingdom or estate. In defeating their enemy all of them win the hand of the girl they love, the daughter of the house.

Oddly enough, in MST The Recess does not appear in this subgroup but is in the main group of fictions of consciousness - a reasonable position for a story so modern in tone and pre-occupation with manners and conventions, despite its pseudo-historic setting and extravagant adventures. In the PCA The Recess is a borderline case, close to the Romance Persiles and Sigismunda and to the Eastern story Mirza and Fatima on the basis of its exotic and archaic elements.

## 4.2 Picaro

The Picaro stories mostly overlap with the fictions of consciousness in the MST, and appear as near neighbours scattered among the fictions of consciousness in the PCA map. They clearly differ from the main group of fictions of consciousness since they centre on one predominant character and his or her exciting adventures in the world. Unlike the fictions of consciousness where the interest of the story is in the development and growth of an individual, the action is largely external with adventures and occurrences happening to the chief protagonist and few extended passages of reflection or emotion. The important part of the story is the action; thoughtful passages reflecting on events, so important to the fiction of consciousness, are not a major part of the Picaro stories.

The one major identifying characteristic of the Picaro protagonist is that he or she rarely develops as a personality or emotionally matures during the course of the story. The true Picaro hero may conclude his adventures in a very different setting and class from where he started, but he remains the same irresponsible adventurer. Roderick Random, the Coxcomb, and Syrena the Anti-Pamela, all enjoy tremendous adventures but show few signs of any emotional development or maturity. The majority of the Picaro stories feature male protagonists; Moll Flanders and the scandalous Anti-Pamela are

the only Picaro heroines, a recognition that the active, adventurous, erotic life of the Picaro protagonist could not be enjoyed by the newly-restricted eighteenth-century heroine.

## 4.3 Sentimental Novella Stories

The Sentimental Novella stories were written as little cameo scenes for the reader's emotional indulgence. They were designed to inspire the reader to tender emotions, to stimulate tears of pity or of sentiment. They differ from the fictions of consciousness in their concentration on the stimulation of tears - whereas fictions of consciousness appeal to a broader range of emotions. They also differ in that they do not trace the course of any change or development in the protagonist. The heroes and heroines of the Sentimental Novella stories tend to be stereotyped sensitive people or stereotyped victims: they no more grow and develop in the course of the story than do the Picaro heroes.

The shape of the Sentimental Novella stories is another obvious difference. The fictions of consciousness tend to be extended pieces of prose because the description of a character and the development of the personality is a relatively lengthy affair. The Sentimental Novella stories use the succinct shape of the traditional Novella. Some are written as cameo scenes strung tenuously together by a connecting thread of narrative, and some form a more coherent story with the sentimental scenes set in a framework. It is interesting to see that the variation in shape does not prevent their adjacent grouping. The prevalence of sentimental scenes and the repeated use of the same sentimental elements meant that the varieties of shape were ignored by the computer, which identified them as forming a Sentimental Novella group.

In the MST the Sentimental Novella stories form a small group, connected to the fictions of consciousness by the sentimental story of Werther, and shading off into bawdy Novella stories. A Sentimental Journey and John Buncle Junior both have a mixture of sentiment and bawdiness, and stories close to them can be either predominantly one or the other. The mixture of lachrymose cameos with erotic or bawdy scenes seems surprising to the modern reader, but the clear overlap of the two groups shown by the computer emphasised how some eighteenth-century readers enjoyed both tears and suggestiveness in the same story.

## 4.4 Bawdy Novella Stories

The Bawdy Novella stories are a substantial group in which a comic approach to sexuality and scatological humour predominates. The master of bawdy humour, Rabelais, is shown as central in the MST group and surrounded by stories with similar humour in the PCA group. Embedded in the Bawdy Novella stories in both diagrams are the Erotic Moralism stories which maintain a straight face about virtue, chastity, and the punishment of evil-doers while relating erotic and comic stories with relish. Like the overlap of sentiment with bawdiness, this overlap of moralism with erotic writing seems a little incongruous, even hypocritical. But the zest of the writing is divided equally between the abhorrence of sexual looseness, and a stimulating description of the precise acts which are so improper.

In the MST group Lyttleton, Letters from a Persian, occupies a central position, showing that he not only adopted Montesquieu's idea for a story but also incorporated many popular elements in his piracy. The group surrounding his story are all bawdy stories on a thread sharing a bawdy and non-sentimental attitude to life. The group includes most of the magical spy stories such as The Atom,

Chrysal, The Reverie, and Pompey: narrated by inanimate objects or animals which are able to tell tales of scenes of impropriety. All of the Eastern letter-writer stories are included in this group, and there is an interesting sub-group around Rabelais Gargantua and Pantagruel which seem to be linked together by their multiple-plot shape. The importance of this shape and the traditional Romance elements accounts for the surprising link of Telemachus connected through another old Romance, Valentine and Orson.

4.5 Histories

The persuasive background of some fictional tales enabled them to masquerade as biographies or auto-biographies. Such are three of the Histories included in this group which are supposed to be auto-biographies of three French royal mistresses: Mesdames de Maintenon, de Pompadour and de L'Enclos. Robinson Crusoe is also offered to the reader as a factual account, and all of this group share the appearance of versimilitude even if their version of history seems fanciful. The identification by the computer of a group of Histories which need not be wholly factual accounts for the inclusion of Belisarius which is presumably included because it is a serious attempt to write Roman history in the context of a fiction. The MST group also includes the even more fanciful history of Gulliver's Travels, which some gloomy pedants would reject as too unlikely to be true, and also includes the supposedly true history of a lawsuit, The Widow of the Wood.

4.6 Erotic Novella Stories

A comparison of the computer results does seem to suggest a small group which shares a theme of erotic sexual activity told in a Novella shape, either on a thread or set in a framework.

The Fruitless Inquiry, L'Enclos, Moral Tales, Chinese Tales and The Invisible Spy form a group in the MST group diagram with Abelard and Eloise and The Fair Greek as a sub-group with erotic scenes but a more coherent cohesive plot. In the PCA diagram this group is much smaller but The Fair Greek, Anti Pamela, The Chinese Tales, Moral Tales and The Invisible Spy, seem to come together to form a unit.

# CHAPTER VIII

## SETTING

The setting of the stories of this survey is a vehicle for the chauvinist prejudices of the authors, and most of the stories exemplify the patriotic prejudices of eighteenth-century Englishmen and women. The most important consequence of this is a massive indifference to Europe and, indeed, to any part of the world outside England or even outside south-east and central southern England. Most of the stories are set in this small corner of Britain and imply that everything of value is encapsulated in this little patch of the country.

Those stories which are set outside England tend to show a major prejudice against all foreign countries. This is particularly marked in the attitudes to Eastern countries, which are used by the authors to contrast the tyranny of the East with the freedom and splendour of the English constitutional monarchy. Nearer home, the stories written by English authors set in Europe tend to show the English prejudices against foreigners in their description of the sophisticated, immoral, and above all unpredictable Europeans. Even those few English authors whose characters enjoy foreign travel write scenes where the Englishman is endangered by the unpredictable nature of his hosts. Sir Charles Grandison, Yorick, and the Fortunate Foundlings all approve of some aspects of Europe, and yet all of them are in danger of losing their liberty because of the peculiar laws and customs of their eccentric un-English hosts.

Naturally this prejudice is not shared by authors who are Europeans and whose works attained popularity in translation in the British circulating libraries. The chief protagonists of Emile, Julie; or, The New Eloise, Werther, and the French mistresses' autobiographies, seems quite unconscious that they are labouring under the disadvantage of being foreign! Disasters befall the heroes and heroines of European authors, but they are not the consequence of being a stranger in an unfriendly country. The insularity of the English authors adds a new emphasis to the normal tone of paranoia when their characters cross the Channel and become exposed to new and foreign hazards.

English society is fictionalised as the best society available and the only attack on that society appears in stories where the tone of criticism is muted by a fanciful or magical setting. The criticisms of the magical observers who tour England are muted by their magical nature. The devils, guinea, lapdog, and atom are scathing about many aspects of British life; the reader is impressed with their criticism but more amused and diverted at the scandalous scenes they unveil. The serious polemic in the magical observer books is matched with the diverting unserious tone of the stories.

The more serious criticisms of the Eastern observers are more emphatic. But even they moderate their tone of distaste at abysses in the society in their attempt to entertain. The observers may suggest that their Eastern home society has much to recommend it, but their ideal of a constitutional monarchy is so similar to the idealised English structure that the reader recognises praise of the English system with only occasional criticisms of how the ideal system is sometimes abused.

Other criticisms of English society are safely embedded in fantastic magical stories. Gulliver's Travels may have been designed as a satiric attack on the Whig oligarchy but the fantasy is so delightful and overwhelming that it is possible to read it only as a fairy story, as generations of young readers can testify. Philip Quarl and Peter Wilkins' more pointed criticisms of the English system attack abuses not structures, and only offer the alternative of improving the system to make it perfect in operation as well as theory.

The settings embody the prejudices of the real authors and they combine to create a fictional world with a coherent geography which the eighteenth-century readers would have recognised by their wide reading of stories which showed one major fictional picture. This fictional world is divided into six main kingdoms with a number of characters crossing the borders in the course of their adventures.

1 THE NEW WORLD

The smallest and least popular region is the New World - America and Canada - which is featured in five stories as the starting place for adventures, or the retirement home at the end of the story. No stories in this survey are set wholly in the New World; the land remains just on the horizon of the fictional world, a place of promise and opportunity never seriously examined.

Moll Flanders and Colonel Jack retire to this land of promise at the close of their careers in crime and manage to make new lives for themselves in America. For both of them the New World is a haven where old scores can be forgotten and a genuinely new life can be established. Colonel Jack leaves behind him his life of crime and becomes a trusted manager once he has crossed the Atlantic and broken free of the old criminal sub-culture. Moll's escape to

respectability and prosperity in the New World is cruelly frustrated by her accidental incest; her enforced return to England is a return to theft and prostitution. Like fairy-gold, the wealth of the New World cannot cross the Atlantic with her and she is again destitute in the old world. Not until she has crossed the Atlantic again and returned to America can Moll settle into a moral and wealthy life style.

This is an interesting contrast with Defoe's other heroine of this survey, Roxana. Her move to Europe is not sufficient to escape the guilts and ghosts of her crime in England. For Defoe, only in the New World can the restrictions and corruptions of the old be escaped and people rise honestly by their own efforts.

This land of promise is only tantalisingly glimpsed in the other stories but they share the view of the New World as a freer, more prosperous society. The old pastoral myth of a land so fertile that it needs almost no work is directly stated:

> This colony is a rich mine yet unopen'd;
> I do not mean of gold and silver, but what
> are of much more real value, corn and cattle.
> Nothing is wanting but encouragement and
> cultivation; the Canadians are at their ease
> even without labour; nature is here a
> bounteous mother, who pours forth her
> gifts almost unsolicited.*[1]

The excitement of the new territories and the shock of the new climatic conditions is vividly described by the authors in the short periods in which their characters are visitors in the New World.

The authority is the Canadian author Frances Brooke whose descriptions of the delights of the New World make that setting the most vivid in the book. The icy winter is not just an exciting season, it influences how people live. The New World is freer than the conventional life of England and is developing its own youthful customs:

> We had a million beaux yesterday, notwithstanding the severe cold; 'tis the Canadian custom, calculated I suppose for the climate, to visit all the Ladies on New-Year's Day, who sit dressed in form to be kissed: I assure you, however, our kisses could not warm them; but we were obliged, to our eternal disgrace, to call in raspberry brandy as an auxiliary.*[2]

The commune of young people in England which is the happy ending of the Emily Montague story is launched, far more convincingly, in Canada when the young people are snowed up together during an amazingly cold winter. Emily's romping with her lover, their sledging, their delicious snow-bound house parties, their distance from the conventional world of the towns are all suggestive of a world where manners are not strict and the eyes of the world not as perceptive and censorious as in England. The beauty of the wild landscape, the harsh winters, and dramatic springs make this fictional New World a vivid place where Nature is wild and lovely and people unrestrained and unconventional.

> After a fortnight's snow we have had near as much clear blue sky and sunshine: the snow is six feet deep ... There is something exceedingly agreeable in the whirl of the carrioles which fly along at the rate of twenty miles an hour; and really hurry one out of one's sense.
>
> Our little coterie is the subject of great envy; we live just as we like, without thinking of other people, which I am not sure here is prudent, but it is pleasant, which is a better thing.*[3]

The image of the New World is taken even farther in Lydia; or, Filial Piety with a description of the tribal life of a Canadian Indian. The wildness of the scenery is a symbol of the wildness of the tribal life which is governed by Natural laws. The Indian is a Noble Savage:

> In this country then the primaeval Laws of Nature still hold their native Sway over human Hearts; the Views of Heaven have not yet been violated by the pernicious and impious Schemes of corrupted Men; those Charms which Nature bestow'd on the human Race to bind with mutual Joy the Sexes in the Wealths of Love, still render Lovers happy.*[4]

The pastoral idyll of tribal life is a common view of the life of the Indians. In Lydia their natural morality and simple lifestyle form a contrast with the affected and corrupt life the Indian prince encounters when he visits England. In Emma Corbett the Indians are part of the exotic and strange new land which Emma discovers while searching for her husband. The Indians' natural morality is Emma's protection as, disguised as an Indian, she journeys to find her husband. But their warlike nature has been employed in the conflict and Emma's husband is lying wounded by a poisoned arrow - one of the earliest fictional victims of an Indian attack.

In Harriot Stuart the Indians take an active part in the story. Their camp outside the gates of her European-style garden fascinates Harriot but she dares go no closer than the garden gate. In the pay of her lover, Indian braves burst into the safe garden and kidnap her, carrying her swiftly down river in their canoe. The desired response in the reader of a frisson of fear at the heroine's kidnap is considerably enhanced by the strangeness of the exotic Indians, and the empty landscape of the New World which emphasises the heroine's vulnerability. Without hope of rescue Harriot has to engineer her own escape, which she does with commendable resource. In one odd feature of the story Harriot finds refuge with a conventional peasant-type small-holder whose lowly status seems unchanged despite emigration. He acknowledges Harriot's lover as his feudal Lord in an unusual introduction of Lords and peasants into the New World setting.

All the other stories emphasise the independence of the people and their social equality.

2 THE EAST

The discovery of the fictional world of the East was an explosive revelation for the readers of Arabian Nights Entertainment in 1706 and five of the eleven Eastern stories (8.7% of the total survey) follcw the broad outlines of that most important fiction. Arabian Nights outlined the geography and politics of the fictional East with such colour and conviction that other stories set in that fictional country have generally developed the picture rather than painted a fresh, original view. Antoine Galland created the world of the East with a combination of exotic human behaviour and magical supernatural activity.

In the Arabian Nights model the East is a world where the supernatural has a direct effect on the lives of mortals. Animals, or even fish, speak; people enjoy prophetic dreams and fall into trances, or under enchantments. The spiritual world is populated by genii and good and bad fairies. Oddly, there are few ghosts and almost no manifestations produced by a guilty human conscience or an over-active imagination. All the supernatural activity of the East is real magic following laws of its own.

The human activity is equally exotic and structured. In the fictions which echo the Arabian Nights power is concentrated in the hands of an enormously powerful Sultan and Grand Vizier. The royal family may struggle for power as the Sultana in Female Banishment, or the country may suffer under the tyranny of a bad Sultan as in Mirza and Fatima, and Almoran and Hamet. The solution to such political problems is the victory of a good Sultan who plans to

reform his country along democratic and constitutional lines - reassuring the British reader that the British model of government is the best human imagination could devise.

Politics are important in the Eastern stories and those which weave exciting stories around the Eastern tyrannies always make the point that the best way to govern is by consitutional monarchy. One Eastern story, Solyman and Almena, is so top-heavy with political theory that the reader barely notices the suffering heroine who endures three kidnap attempts before her husband, the political theorist, manages to get her safely home and married.

The political theories are an important element of the Eastern fictions but many readers must have enjoyed principally the exotic aspects of fictional Eastern life. The harem excites especially fascinated attention and the recurrent eighteenth-century fantasy of polygamy is titillated, but left unsatisfied, by repeated references to hundreds of scantily-dressed, sexually-hungry women locked up together and wholly dependent on their lord and Master. Repressed by a belief in the didactic mission of fiction the authors seldom develop this picture, and most heroes of the Eastern fictions chose to liberate their wives from this oppression and establish them as monogamous and near-equal partners. Only in the political theorist Montesquieu's Persian Letters is the harem excitingly featured with a rebellion caused by frustrated female sexuality.

The Fair Greek is an interesting story which combines a realistic picture of fictional Europe with a persuasive picture of the more exotic East. A French diplomat in Constantinople falls in love with a harem slave who turns out to be a Greek girl. He offers her his protection and love and brings her, after many adventures, home to Paris. As an Eastern woman her sexual morality is always suspect

and the story closes with the diplomat in an agony of constant suspicion about her sexual behaviour.

In other stories which combine contemporary Europe with the East the mixture is less equal and emphasises the European society.

Three stories from the East cross the border into the fictional England and Europe as two Persians and a Chinaman broaden their minds by travel. In their absences the fragile security at home is broken. The Chinese traveller's family is enslaved, while in Persian Letters the harem explodes into a revolt. All three travelling Easterners follow the political thinker Montesquieu's lead to comment approvingly on the British liberal constitution and balance of power, and all of them are quick to detect and condemn corruption and abuse in English society.

## 3 FANTASY

Some of the most charming fictions of this survey are those set in the minor kingdom of fantasy. Drawing on so many sources for its energy, stories, and phenomena the kingdom of fantasy relates both to Ancient Historical stories and to Eastern stories; some of the sensitive studies of individuals and their responses to extraordinary situations foreshadow later fictions which were to concentrate on the consciousness of the characters. Fourteen stories (11.0% of this survey) are set in fantasy-land and they tend to share not only certain fantasy elements, but also the technique of rendering fantasy adventures plausible by a mundane and prosaic introduction.

Peter Wilkins, the orphan Cornishman who marries an aerial wife and brings bourgeois enterprise and industry to a land of flying people, is forced to go to sea because of his prosaic and difficult home circumstances after a marriage with a servant-girl and a breach with his step-father.

Gulliver starts on his travels because of a love of adventure and wandering and then finds his mercantile business demands his continued voyaging. Both outrageous and delightful fantasy stories are introduced by a plausible voyage and realistic shipwreck, and this forms a pattern to create a receptive credulity in the reader who is then dazzled and delighted by the most unlikely subsequent events. Robinson Crusoe and Philip Quarl enjoy less fantastic adventures, but their experiences are similarly introduced by realistic pictures of English society.

In other stories the prosaic English society gives credibility to magical inhabitants or visitors. The Invisible Spy whose magic powers make him invisible, Chrysal the talking guinea, Pompey the lapdog, and the Three Devils haunt a realistic English society, and the persuasive tones of their observations render them credible.

Some fantasy stories are free from any realism but their real or pseudo-ancient historical atmosphere gives them credibility. Cupid and Psyche is set in a Mediterranean country of the classical Romances, Atlantis is another island of classical times. Common Sense starts his life in a similar setting, while such stories as The Adventures of an Atom or The Tale of a Tub are laws unto themselves.

4 ANCIENT

In the kingdom of Ancient History the traditional Romances and gothic stories meet. Seventeen stories (13.4% of the total survey) are set in a mythical period of Ancient History which has such recognisable features that it can be regarded not as a period of time but as an identifiable fictional place, the 'never-never land' of 'once upon a time' in the 'olden days' of stories. In such a land the Mediterranean islands of Telemachus overlook a coastal town like

the town in The Fruitless Inquiry. Outside the walls of the town are the fruitful plains and beyond them the wild woods where Valentine is suckled by a bear and where the great castle of Otranto towers over the valleys.

Rational laws of nature are suspended from time to time in such a fictional world where the supernatural is present and gods and mythological beings take a hand in the affairs of mortals. In the stories of eighteenth-century authors the supernatural operates to warn or threaten mortals; Edmund dreams of his murdered parents and is instructed to seek revenge, and the castle of Otranto is made uninhabitable by the continual discoveries of portions of a giant's ghostly body. In earlier fictions the supernatural behaviour is random and inexplicable. In Daphnis and Chloe mythological inhabitants live alongside the mortals and cause little surprise, and in Valentine and Orson a head of brass oracle speaks to the two heroes without having much to say.

One of the most interesting discoveries of this survey is finding so many elements of the old Romances in the stories of eighteenth-century authors. The old tales contributed motifs, characters, story-lines and scenery to the eighteenth-century fictions. Gothic fictions especially borrow heavily from the old tales. Indeed most of the so-called "gothic elements" are borrowed not invented. Some Romances enjoyed not only influence but a long run of popularity: Valentine and Orson, Cupid and Pysche, and Daphnis and Chloe survived into the eighteenth-century and competed successfully for their places on the rapidly-changing shelves of the commercial circulating libraries.

Some stories set in the Ancient kingdom have a convincing historical flavour and the authors of Cleopatra and Octavia, Belisarius, and The Siege of Calais, exploit real historical events as the background of the fiction. Belisarius reads more like a history book than a fiction; but no author of this survey paid much regard to the idea that people of different periods, or different cultures might have different moral positions and different ways of expressing themselves. Consequently all the characters in all stories by eighteenth-century authors speak and feel as if they were contemporary English ladies and gentlemen. The behaviour of Edmund in the Old English Baron is an especially striking example of the well-bred, well-educated English gentleman transferred unchanged to a pseudo-medieval setting. The lady of his choice is a similar anachronism.

The finest example of the use and abuse of an historical setting is The Recess, which is a glorious assault on the rules of historical accuracy. Few historians even now can be aware that Mary Queen of Scots had two daughters who were walled up for their own safety until they reached adulthood when one married Robert Dudley, so earning the undying enmity of Queen Elizabeth I!

## 5 EUROPE

The fictional Europe is a continent of contrasts, the setting for 21 stories (16.5% of the survey). At one end of the continent are the Mediterranean countries: the Spain of Don Quixote and of the Picaro tales. The country is in a state of near-anarchy with impassable roads and impenetrable forests. It is roamed by beggars and banditti, the shores are threatened by Turkish pirates in slave galleys. The towns are exciting places of activity and amorous intrigue where the fortunes of the Picaro heroes rise and fall with

amazing speed. The townspeople are quick-witted and devious, always alert to the opportunity for a crime or a confidence trick. In the towns of the Novellas husbands are cuckolded, misers are robbed, and women are either fantastically chaste or fantastically hot-blooded, entering with relish into complicated arrangements for marital deceit.

The Italy of Charles Grandison is equally frenetic but the action takes place indoors between the family of Olivia and the Englishman trapped in the complicated negotiations about his proposed marriage. The threatening mystery of the country is felt by Grandison who cannot control the events; there are times when he barely understands what is happening. The violence is never far below the surface. Olivia is driven mad, and Grandison's life is endangered by her hot-headed family.

Switzerland, Germany, and the civilised parts of France seem light-years from the 'cloak and sword' of the Mediterranean countries. Julie in Switzerland and Werther in Germany are both concerned with love and passion, but their lives are calmer and the emotional temperature of the country is cooler. The open scenery and the mountain air is important to both of them. Although both characters suffer great emotional pain, they grieve out-of-doors and are not confined in claustrophobic rooms. They approach their problems with sad logic, not with hot-blooded lunacy.

The fictional view of France is more varied since more authors have had a hand in painting the picture. Of the 27 stories set in Europe 19 are set in France. The ambiguous attitude of the English to their nearest continental neighbours is clearly shown in the different attitudes to the fictional France, as I have suggested.

The authors who show it as a place of sensibility and fashion nonetheless exhibit uneasy moments of Anglophobia. Sterne's assertion, 'They order this matter better in France'*[5] and his opposition to the grumbling complaints of the Smelfungus traveller is not maintained throughout his sentimental journey. The shadow of the Bastille and the fear of Roman Catholicism marks even Sterne's light-hearted tour of the pretty French towns and the pretty French girls. Haywood shares this unease although both Fortunate Foundlings find happiness in France.

Indeed, the only authors who whole-heartedly depict France as a pleasant and safe country are French authors read in translation. The histories of the three French mistresses, The Fortunate Country Maid, The Fair Greek, and The Man of Quality all depict France as a secure and happy country little different from the fictional contemporary England. The convents of the Roman Catholic Church are used as a convenient refuge or prison for intransigent heroines but they are not threatening, looming places; heroines enter and leave with little terror. In the case of Eloise the worst feature of her incarceration in a convent, apart from her desire for her husband, is the boredom of institutional life - a very different picture from the horrors of Protestant authors who condemn Catholicism and the whole Catholic European continent.

Insular prejudice claims that French manners and French fashions are symptoms of immorality. The real-life suspicion of the most important European enemy led English authors to detect corruption and sophistication in the glittering world of Paris and the elegant royal court - incomprehensible to the plain-thinking straight-talking Englishman abroad.

France is threatening to the English authors because its surface similarity with England conceals the differences. It is both more sophisticated and more feudal than the fictional picture of England, and altogether less pleasant.

## 6 ENGLAND

Contemporary England is the most important fictional country for the readers and authors of the eighteenth century, and 63 stories (49.6%) are set wholly and 10 set partly in the authors' fictionalised homeland. A total of 73 stories thus include scenes of eighteenth-century England - more than half of the survey (57.5%). A few stories analyse and describe the society in detail (like the magical observer stories) and some tour the country in a style which mimics the genuine tours of non-fiction accounts. Humphry Clinker, Mr Frankly, John Buncle and his son tour Britain learning the geography and commenting on different life-styles.

The fictional England is dominated by the great metropolis of London to which so many characters are drawn seeking their fortunes or amusement. 'The town' almost always means London. In fictional England there are only two cities: London and Bath. Scarborough and all points north exist only for Smollett and the rare tourist. For the majority of authors London is the only city in Britain and the south of England is the main provincial area.

Most of the fictions of this survey feature scenes in both town and country or on the country roads journeying to or from the town. A total of 43 stories (33.8%), a third of the total survey, are based on a journey; while 27 stories (21.2% of the survey) are set in both town and country scenes. Of stories placed in one main location the countryside is slightly preferable to the town. A total of 29 stories (22.8%) are exclusively rural and 21 stories (16.5%) exclusively urban tales.

## 6.1 Country

The countryside of the fictional world - even when the authors claim they are realistically describing the English countryside - is a never-never land of fruitfulness, moral worth, structured but loving class relations, and good weather. It is the English countryside with all the bad things taken away: no grey days, no impertinent workers, no manure and crop rotation, no bread rioters. No wonder the elite English readers loved it!

> We returned yesterday about six in the evening, and the moment we alighted, my lord leading us into the garden an unexpected scene opened to my view, which recalled the idea of the fabulous pleasures of the golden age, and could not but be infinitely pleasing to every mind uncorrupted by the false glare of tinsel pomp, and awake to the genuine charms of simplicity and nature.
>
> On a spacious lawn bounded on every side by a profusion of the most odiferous flowering shrubs, a joyous band of villagers were assembled: the young men dressed in green, youth, health and pleasure in their air, led up their artless charmers in straw hats adorned with the spoils of Flora, to the rustic sound of taber and pipe; round the lawn at equal intervals, were raised temporary arbors of branches of trees, in which refreshments were prepared for the dancers: and between the arbors, seats of moss for their parents, shaded from the sun by green awnings on poles, round which were twisted wreaths of flowers breathing the sweets of spring. The surprise, the gaiety, of the scene, the flow of general joy, the sight of so many happy people, the countenances of the enraptured parents, who seemed to live over again the sprightly season of youth in their children, with the benevolent pleasure in the looks of the noble bestowers of the feast, filled my eyes with tears and my swelling heart with a sensation of pure yet lively transport to which the joys of courtly balls are mean.*[6]

The approving emphasis placed on the countryside in the fictions is a result of many influences on the authors. At one level they were reflecting the contemporary reality.

Eighteenth-century England was still primarily a rural country, with three-fifths of the population living permanently in the countryside.*[7] The seasonal use of the metropolis and even the spa towns meant that a large part of the year of the Quality was spent in the country houses. Only a small minority of Quality families spent all their time in London and even they owned and visited country estates. Writers and readers were country-dwellers and this is reflected in their fictions.

Authors were also influenced by the tradition of fictions set in the country in which aspects of Nature play an important part. The most obvious of these influences is the tradition of the pastoral epic which developed into the pastoral Romances. The unrealistic convention of shepherds and goatherdboys in a Mediterranean climate was not only influential among eighteenth-century authors but survived in some of the Romances which continued to be demanded by readers in the eighteenth-century commercial circulating libraries. An example of this is the second or third century pastoral romance by Longus, Daphnis and Chloe which is set in a lush Arcardy where the snows of Winter are succeeded by the sweet greenness of Spring. The tone and style of such fictions retained their popularity throughout the period and it seems likely that this taste acquired by readers was later developed into the acute sensitivity towards scenery and weather which is a feature of later stories.

This sensitivity towards Nature was also sharpened by another separate tradition of the 'wild woods' of early fictional forms. Picaro heroes and the heroines of Novella stories often face daunting terrain as they journey through their stories. Impenetrable forests are the scenery of fairy-stories and the old Romances; and in the shades of the trees lurk the banditti which threaten not only the Picaro hero (as in Gil Blas) but survive to frighten

the gothic heroine like Emily in The Mysteries of Udolpho.*[8] The appetite for dramatic scenery which is shown in Sir Charles Grandison as early as 1754, and John Buncle, 1756, was part of a continuing literary tradition inherited from the Romances when knights and monsters battled it out in the tangled mediaeval forests and Orson was fostered by a friendly bear.

This double tradition of an enjoyment of a fruitful and lush pastoral Nature with the excitement and mystery of unknown and dramatic scenery appears constantly throughout these fictions. The combination of the appeal of both views of Nature is shown in Peter Wilkins, where an adventurous journey by an underground river in a daunting and dangerous cavern leads to a lost world of fruitfulness and innocent beauty. Candide finds a lost valley - the Eldorado - via almost impenetrable mountains, John Buncle discovers unknown valleys in the equally formidable Derbyshire Peaks, and Ophelia lives in total rural isolation in a valley in Wales. In many of the stories the tradition of pastoral lushness is the popular counterpart for descriptions of wild scenery. The two are mutually complementary. It is a later development, which turns away from a delight in the fertile lowland scenery and concentrates only on the dramatic and wild.

The importance of country life in these fictions is shown by the use made of country and city as contrasting places of virtue and vice. Even when the town is the main backcloth for the adventures, the authors suggest that it is a place of vice and imply that country living is more peaceful and more moral. Pamela complains specifically of the moral dangers of living in the city. David Simple retreats to the country with his wife and friends to avoid the corruption of the city, and Betsy Thoughtless, Emile, the Fool of

Quality, the Woman of Honour, Harriot Stuart, and many others all retire to the country as an integral part of the happy ending of their stories.

For Julia de Roubigne country living both permits and symbolises spiritual development and peace.

> Our days are not now pre-occupied by numberless engagements, nor our time anxiously divided for a rotation of amusements; I can walk, read, or think without the officious interruption of polite visitors; and, instead of talking eternally of others, I find time to settle accounts with myself.*[9]

For Betsy Thoughtless the move to the country marks the moral reformation of her character and coincidentally brings her into contact with the man she truly loved but lost through her city-bred foolish behaviour.

> She threw herself upon the mossy seat, where scenting the fragrancy of the sweets around her, made more delicious by the freshness of the morning's gale - 'how delightful - how heavenly', said she to herself, 'is this solitude, how truly preferable to all the noisy giddy pleasures of the tumultuous town, yet how have I despised and ridiculed the soft serenity of a country life;*[10]

This prejudice against the city is extended to encompass all civilised and European life in one of the stories set in the New World. The Indian lovers in Lydia; or, Filial Piety are naturally chaste as a result of their unspoiled country living:

> Here, lest some wanton Imagination in sarcastic Smiles should suggest that this metaphysic pair of Enamerato's had risen from one Bed, it is necessary to let them know that the Indian Maids need no Bars nor Doors of Separation from the Youth of that Country. ... Here this ye refined polite Nations of Europe and learn purer and more exalted Notions from the simple and uncorrupted Manners of Americans lost in Woods.*[11]

The importance of the country is as a moral place - a setting or a refuge for good people - and also as an emotional element - a lush and beautiful pastoral Arcardy, or a wild and frightening or inspiring scene.

## 6.2 Wild Woods

In 28 (22.0%) of these fictions wild mountain or forest scenery is an important ingredient of the story. In Picaro stories such as Gil Blas, or parts of Don Quixote, the forests and mountains are obstacles facing a Picaro hero in his search for fortune or fame. The stories set in the New World also include scenes of wild and untouched Nature which the authors describe with relish as the backcloth to the slightly different story they have to tell. The vivid descriptions of the Canadian snows in Emily Montague and the wild and dangerous forests in Lydia are successful examples of the tradition of the European mediaeval forest grafted onto a realistic description of a new continent.

Most stories in which the hero or heroine is forced to travel far from the protection of home feature wild scenery and dangerous inhabitants or animals to further harass the bewildered protagonist. The Fortunate Country Maid escaping from her abductor in a French forest has the misfortune to fall into a wolf trap with a wolf inside, while the travelling heroines of Fielding are sometimes lost in a nightmarish landscape of darkness with a few hostelries and dangerous roads.

In pseudo-historical stories such as The Castle of Otranto, Longsword, and The Recess, the wild and barren nature of the landscape is a feature excused and explained by the historical and geographic setting. The Castle of Otranto is set in the Italian mountains and exploits the benefit of such an ancient and geographic setting with many melodramatic features to dismay the very modern heroines. Longsword and The Recess are set in mediaeval and Elizabethan England and use the untouched countryside and empty landscape as part of the back-cloth to the story.

Even stories supposed to be set in contemporary England claim that there are parts of England totally undiscovered. John Buncle discovers hidden valleys in the Derbyshire Peak District and in North Yorkshire and Ophelia lives in total isolation in a Welsh valley seeing no-one but an elderly peasant.

> We landed in the West. My aunt's romantic despair led her into Wales; where she found a small cottage, situated on the side of a hill, commanding a beautiful, though a wild and mountainous prospect. ... I had never seen any of my own species but my aunt, and a few times an old man, who had been at our house on occasions necessary to our rural life.*[12]

The enthusiasm for wild and dramatic scenery was not solely a literary phenomenon in the eighteenth century. It inspired new attitudes in other art forms and was also responsible for a boom of tourism to mountainous and wild regions both in Europe, and a little later in Britain: the Lake District in the 1760s, and Wales, Scotland and the New Forest from the 1780s.*[13] It also inspired landlords to convert their gardens and parklands into imitations of wild scenery, sometimes with little regard for the suitability for such elements in the arable country of south-east England. It is against this background of enthusiasm for a newly-discovered form of natural beauty that the reader enjoyed Werther's walks and soliloquies in the Alps, Julie's Alpine trysts, the meeting of Ethelinde with her lover in the Lake District, and the wild scenery of <u>The Castle of Otranto</u>.

The enjoyment of artefacts associated with such scenery like temples, grottoes, fountains, and bridges is also featured in the stories such as the Temple to Solitude erected by the ladies of Millenium Hall, and the proposed monument to Pamela's despair by Mr B's lake. But even while the enthusiasm for such romantic artefacts was at its height there was an author with wits sharp enough to

satirise the pleasure. This is the background for Columella; or, the Distressed Anchoret, in which the hero is carried away by his enthusiasm for romantic features and buys a country estate to devote himself to reading and dreaming in agreeable solitude. The book is a comic triumph for the author, Richard Graves, who slowly builds a picture of Columella's intense discomfort and entertaining incompetence as a landscape designer. Cows stray into his woods and eat his anemones, his fountain runs dry, and his domestic peace is ruined by his spoilt and discontented servants. Columella's fanciful additions to his garden are ridiculous, and even worse are the excesses of his neighbour who crams into his village garden every feature of gardening fashion:

> As the situation was in the village, they were necessarily confined within a wall of less than an acre in circumference: within this compass however they had contrived to introduce every individual article of modern taste. There was a large shrubbery, a small serpentine river, over which was thrown a Chinese bridge of considerable diameter; there was a Chinese pagod, a Gothic temple, a grotto, a root house or hermitage, a Cynic tub or two by the water side.*[14]

It is no coincidence that the thrust of the satirical attack of Columella is against a landlord who uses his estate for recreational and leisure use. Graves concentrated on the minor foible of a passion for landscape architecture and ignored the real problem of the changing agricultural practices. This may explain the unusual pattern of popularity for Columella which - unlike all the other humorous books - is more popular in the English provincial libraries than it is in London or Scotland. Presumably London readers were not especially interested in satires on country life, and Scottish readers were generally immune from the craze for inspiring scenery till later in the century.

The satire is a limited one. When Columella fails as a serious productive farmer his failure is seen as a problem - not as a joke:

> As to the farm which he had taken in hand, partly as an agreeable amusement, and partly to augment his income, it did not promise ... to answer either of those ends. For Columella trusted too much to servants to make it advantageous; and his nice feelings so far aggravated every trifling difficulty attending the management of it, that instead of an agreeable amusement, it proved a constant source of vexation and uneasiness.*[15]

Perhaps because the satire is so limited, English landlords and their families, who were responsible for the destruction of traditional English country life, could enjoy the comedy without feeling any sense of guilt. Columella attacks a landlord who plays with the land and refuses to accept his responsibilities in country society. It says not a word against the landlords who altered the lives of their dependents in pursuit of greater profits.

Despite the appeal of Columella, in real life the fashion for dramatic scenery and related artefacts continued; and in literature the wild woods of the old Romances and Picaro tales were successfully transplanted to the gothic stories.

## 6.3 Fruitful Valleys

The complementary myth of the fruitful valley inherited from the Pastoral Romances took on a new significance when it was adopted by eighteenth-century writers and offered as a serious description of the reality of country life. The natural wealth of Arcardy or of Eden is part of the myth of the stories sited in those golden days, but the myth of the natural fertility of eighteenth-century English farms is contradicted by the history of improving agriculture and rural unrest. I would suggest that it was not the recurring popularity of the myths of the Pastoral Romances which prompted the

writers and the readers to enjoy tales of natural fruitfulness and a contented peasantry, but the class bias of the stories which satisfied the need of the elite to deny their campaign to enclose and improve the yield of common land and their oppression of the poor.

## 6.4 Improving Agriculture

Only four stories in this entire survey mention theories or techniques of improving agriculture, despite the fact that the eighteenth century was the most important period for the agricultural revolution which transformed the face of the English countryside and made possible the development of towns and industry. Of these four stories it is noticeable that only two were set in England. John Buncle Junior mentions in passing the benefits of improving the yield from farmland, but his description of the improved farm and the improved garden are set in the context of the Pastoral myth, as the modernised farm is worked by happy peasants and a benevolent lord.

Sir George Ellison also combines an interest in modern techniques of agriculture with an old-style benevolent paternalism towards his peasant-tenants. He manages, as real-life landlords apparently did not, to enclose his lands and improve crop yields without making any detrimental changes to the lives of the workers. The extra profits gained from his experimental agriculture are distributed in charity; Sir George makes no profit for himself. No details are given of how Sir George manages to modernise his farming practices and yet retain a feudal-style paternalism. The implication is that a benevolent Nature responded to the attempts of a good man.

A detailed and scientific description of crop rotation and the theory of fertilisation of the soil - the two major developments in eighteenth-century farming practice - are discussed, of all places, in Telemachus, when the Mentor tells farmers how to improve the yield of their lands outside an ancient Mediterranean city.

The case of Defoe is especially interesting. His long knowledge of the changes in farming practices and work relationships is missing from his fictions.

> Defoe was an incomparable observer of the detailed realities of country life, with his notes on methods of production, marketing and rents. It is from him that we learn the degree of specialization and market-production in early eighteenth-century agriculture, ...*[16]

Defoe's descriptions in his fictions of town life and the criminal sub-culture may smack of realism but he did not expose the truths of country living in the same way. If only one fiction in this survey-Colonel Jack - does he exhibit any special knowledge about agricultural improvements. It can be no mere coincidence that his examination of agricultural practices is set in the fictional New World - at a safe distance from the harsh realities of the English experience. Colonel Jack's improvements of his master's estate do not - significantly - mean increased work-loads, nor greater intensity of labour for the workers. Colonel Jack's innovation is to introduce a benevolent feudal-type paternalism to an estate of harsh slave labour and so earn the love, and increased output, of the slaves. His improvements do not symbolise the English experience of a change from traditional practices and personal relationships to a cash nexus and the creation of a landless working class. They deny and contradict that pattern. Colonel Jack's innovations in the New World introduce feudalism into a slave society, not cash relations into a traditional society.

At a more trivial level the description of improved gardens does not explain how an ideal garden is created. Only four stories mention the designing and planning of a garden, and two of these are set in distant lands or times. The Recess is set in Elizabethan

society, and one of the beleaguered sisters enjoys improving a garden during a brief spell of peace in her adventures. Julie in Rousseau's story tells her former lover how she has worked to improve her garden and create a bird and animal sanctuary. The improving of English gardens is mentioned in The Marriage Act, and in Millenium Hall. The problems and contradictions of using land in such a way are examined in detail in only one book: Columella, which as I have described satirises and caricatures the hobby.

This absence of any realistic description of the English countryside cannot solely be explained by the continuing appeal of the Pastoral myth. In all other areas of life the authors of eighteenth-century stories were prepared to develop or reject fictional conventions to write in a more realistic and vivid way. The melodramatic potential of the banditti could have been equalled or surpassed by the terrors of a heroine trapped by a rioting 'bread or blood' crowd, but such a scene is totally alien to eighteenth-century rural fictions. What is striking is not only the total absence of a rural proleteriat, but also the absence of an entrepreneurial rural bourgeoisie and of any rural landlords who seriously work and use the land. All these gaps in the fictional world are caused by the absence of rural work: the lands, the fields, are fruitful by Nature in the convention of the pastoral myth, they do not need enclosure, draining, hedging, ditching, manuring, and crop rotation to make them yield in abundance.*[17]

Without serious rural work the fictional countryside does not need realistic rural workers, or rural entrepreneurs or experimental landlords. The real-life practices and class relations of the countryside could be ignored and the fictional countryside remain the countryside of the pastoral Romances.

Consequently the only class relationship in the fictional countryside is the relationship which is part of the pastoral convention: the benevolent lord and the grateful peasantry. The development of this stereotyped relationship yielded much pleasure for the eighteenth-century reader. Pamela's father's respectful but independent defence of his daughter's honour (a defence mounted too feebly and too late effectively to rescue the girl) was an enjoyable fictional development of the feudal relationship between a member of the Quality and a cottager.

The cottager became even more humble 28 years later when he persuades his Lord not to marry his daughter, who is not fit to be Lady Whatley:

> 'What are you about, my Lord?' said Adams, 'I am thoroughly sensible of your goodness, but ignorant and artless as we are, we know what is due to ourselves. My daughter was not born to be Lady Whatley. No, my Lord, I will never agree that you should marry beneath yourself; my wife, and Fanny herself, will be of the same opinion; and I have the honour, in their stead, to point out to you what is your duty on this occasion and what is ours.'*18

It is tempting to speculate that as real-life cottagers disappeared from the enclosed commons and improved marginal lands, the authors of fictions were further freed from any constraints of reality and depicted increasingly humble cottagers. While the class of the literate elite moved farther and farther away from a real relationship with their employees it was possible to fantasise more and more extravagantly about the thoughts, emotions, and language of the rural poor. Consequently another book published in 1769 tells of a couple of elderly peasants who accommodate first one young lady, then two, then share their parlour, and finally turn their whole house over to the noble family who have taken a fancy to it.

> '... Your honour is mistaken if you think
> any thing we can do for your honour and
> the ladies is a trouble; - we have thought
> ourselves in heaven as 'twere (ha'nt we Isaac?)
> since your honours have been in our little
> habitation.'*[19]

Such scenes are made possible because of the economy of the fictional countryside. Since enclosures do not exist, deserted heaths and isolated cottages form part of the landscape of Southern England. Since cottagers have retained full feudal rights they are self-supporting and can maintain a deferential independence and freely offer gifts to their Lord. The peace and tranquility of the fictional countryside - such an important feature of the stories - is created by the affectionate and stable class relationships.

> Can a nobleman of spirit prefer the rude
> insults of a licentious London Rabble,
> the refuse of every land, to the warm
> and faithful attachment of a brave, a
> generous, a free, and loyal yeomanry in
> the country.*[20]

Very few landlords are shown as wilfully bad, and these are characters whose general behaviour is censured by the author. Mr Orgueil in David Simple fails in his lordly duty to the poor and this is another symptom of his meanness which contributes to David's ruin. Columella fails to play his part as a member of the rural elite and it is this waste of his talents which is the worst aspect of his eccentricity. He fails in his duty as a member of the ruling class, and his defection endangers the entire social structure.

> But when a young person, after having
> prepared by a liberal education, and a long
> and regular course of studies, for some learned
> or ingenious profession, and qualified to be
> useful in the world in some eminent station;
> when such a one retires in the vigour of his
> life, through mere indolence and love of ease,
> and spends his days in solitude and inactivity;
> or even in those meaner occupations which
> persons of inferior abilities and unimproved
> talents might with equal, or perhaps with

> superior skill, discharge; such a one, I say, not only robs the community of a useful member in a more elevated sphere; but probably lays the foundation of his own infelicity: for he will not only find himself unqualified to enjoy that retirement of which he had formed such romantic ideas; but the consciousness of having deserted his proper station in society (which perhaps he may see filled by some former rival of inferior abilities) and the reflection on his misapplied talents, will probably be a continual source of dissatisfaction and remorse.*[21]

In only one instance in this survey does a note of uncertainty creep into the assumptions that all members of the Quality will do their duty towards their dependants and employees. In the didactic book Millenium Hall which is so certain for so much of the time, the complaint made by the old woman against two Squires who failed in their duty has the slightest hint of ambiguity:

> 'We were half-dead for want of victuals, and, then people have not courage to set about anything. Nay, all the parish were so when they came into it, young and old, there was not much to chuse, few of us had rags to cover us, or a morsel of bread to eat, except the two 'Squires: they indeed grew rich, because they had our work, and paid us not enough to keep life and soul together: they live above a mile off, so perhaps they did not know how poor we were, I must say that, for the ladies tell me I ought not to speak against them, for everyone has his faults.'*[22]

For one guilty moment it seems that all is not necessarily well in the hills and dales of the fictional countryside. The rapid recovery as the old lady affirms her lesson that the Quality are above criticism does not obscure the uneasy suggestion that provision for the poor is not infallible when it depends upon the consciences of a privileged elite. It is an interesting ambiguity in a peculiar book. Elsewhere in the same story the attitude is far clearer. As the travellers approach Millenium Hall they see young women haymaking who are described as visual objects unspoilt by offensive poverty or stupidity:

> In them we beheld rural simplicity, without any of those marks of poverty and boorish rusticity which would have spoilt the pastoral air of the scene around us.*[23]

The crimes of major villains of these fictions are attacks on the person or property of the heroine; employees and dependants never suffer from anything worse than accidental and short-lived neglect. Despite the historical evidence of the exploitation of rural workers, the deliberate erosion of the rights of cottagers, the stealing of the common lands, and the neglect of dependants, in the England of these fictions, such attacks simply never happen.

Why the readers of the eighteenth century should enjoy such an unrealistic convention in this one remarkably specific area of rural work, and why they should with such unanimity shun the truth of contemporary farming practice must surely be because they felt - perhaps unconsciously - deeply guilty about the deterioration in the lives of the rural workers. This deterioration was the short-term result of the changing agricultural methods which in the end produced more food and more reliable distribution of food. But during the years of transition from a mainly subsistence to a mainly cash economy, material and emotional hardship was experienced by the rural workers.

The absence from the fictions of rural change and the agents of this change can be explained by the fear and guilt felt by the elite reader. In fictions read for pleasure they did not want to be reminded of what they did in their real lives. They might have been forced to recognise the cruelty of the consequences, as did one of the most important agronomists, Arthur Young, writing just one year before the publication of The Cottage, and Injured Innocence:

> I had rather that all the commons of England were sunk in the sea, than that the poor should in future be treated on enclosing as they have been hitherto.*[24]

## 6.5 Love in a Cottage

The isolated cottage in the fictional countryside is a symbol of the elite readers' anxiety that the countryside, despite their activity, should remain unspoiled and unchanged. The deserted countryside and lonely cottage were locations inherited from the pastoral Romances which had dramatic potential for contemporary eighteenth-century fictions; but they also served to reassure the reader that the sweeping changes in land use had not damaged the countryside which still remained romantically wild or naturally fruitful.

At the same time the lifestyle of the cottage became a symbol of simplicity and natural charm. It is the natural home of the virtuous and unspoiled heroine and is the natural haven for the happily-married couple who need no sophisticated pleasure or urban diversions to make them content. The England of these fictions is scattered with the delightful small-holdings to which the hero and heroine can retire. Pamela rides out to a rural dairy to meet her husband's little girl, and she and the wealthy Mr B also enjoy holidaying in her parents' simple, but extended home. Clarissa runs a poultry house and keeps a record of the progress of her hens. There are 49 cottages in the fictional landscape of this survey where the hero and heroine can live simply, like the make-believe peasants of courtly masques; indeed the book The Cottage is named after such a rural paradise.

The story of The Cottage is an example of how these authors use the cottage motif. The cottage of the title is the refuge in which the impoverished and orphaned heroine collapses and lives on the hospitality of two poor elderly peasants while she is nursed back to health and reconciled with her aristocratic lover. The noble couple are so taken with the cottage life that they plan to use it, not as a permanent home, but as a holiday refuge. Even for this restricted use the cottage will not serve their needs. Just as the eighteenth-century mansions were improved and extended, the holiday cottage too has to be altered:

> All that pleasing rusticity which cannot fail to delight a sensible mind to be preserved with great caution - the front - the windows, the little garden, - the vines to remain in the same order - behind the cot so as not to attract the eye of passengers, will be built a commodious room, large enough to entertain a few particular friends of the exalted pair, who, for the future, are to look on this retreat as their own.*[25]

In only one story - Ethelinde - do the young couple intend living permanently in their cottage. The story is unique in its rejection of wealth as a prerequisite for a happy ending and the couple decide to use their cottage as a home and not as a toy. Even they, however, have no intention of running their cottage as a small holding and becoming self-sufficient. They propose to live on gifts from Ethelinde's wealthy friend.

> 'neither Ethelinde or I have any intention to quit the dear though humble abode on the banks of Grasmere water, where we have found happiness, and where we enjoy "That blest seclusion from a jarring world." which, young as we both are, we have both learned to covet.'*[26]

This romantic rejection of wealth in favour of love and a small establishment was a stereotype symbol recognised by eighteenth-century authors and readers who consciously refer to 'love in a cottage'.

> 'A cottage!' cried Miss Matthews, sighing;
> 'a cottage with the man one loves is a palace.'*[27]

It is the persuasive effect of this belief which influences the young lady in one of the sub-plots of Columella to marry her footman because she thought:

> 'I could live happier in a cottage with the
> man I loved than in the greatest splendour
> with one whom I fancied I disliked.'*[28]

It is perhaps worth re-emphasising the gulf between what we know of the history of the period and the emphatic and unanimous picture offered by the fictions. In the latter, cottages are still surviving as small-holdings, whereas historians would suggest that the cottagers who depended on part-time work and on traditional rights and subsistence farming were the most vulnerable sections of the community when farming practices were changed. The cottages of the fictions are small houses with at least two or three private rooms, a separate kitchen and living room, and often a pleasure garden. The real cottages of the eighteenth-century were often little more than one or two-room buildings lacking such amenities as private rooms or specialised cooking and dining rooms. The cottage of the fictional world is more like a farm house or small manor house of the eighteenth-century real world.

> The whole cottage, for it was still merely
> a cottage, had about it a look of neatness
> and comfort which convinced Ethelinde it
> belonged not to a labourer.*[29]

## 6.6 Rural Commune

The picture of the countryside as an unspoiled peaceful background for the leisure of the elite and a little picturesque work for happy peasants encouraged the idea of the rural commune as the ideal way for elite men and women to live. The happy couple in a cottage might find the need of little stimulation as the seasons wore on, and the fictional solution was the country house-party. In David Simple, Harriot Stuart, The Decameron, Persiles and Sigismunda and 54 other stories (45.6% of the total survey) the characters form their own society and live in the style of a commune, in one house in the country. The best of town life - stimulating and agreeable society - with the best of country life - peace, beauty, and solitude. The convention was inherited from the ancient Romances and even in the eighteenth-century stories serves its purpose of introducing stories by acting as a framework for multiple Novella-style stories.

In The Decameron as in La Belle Assemblée and Leonora a group of young people gather together in the home of an heiress to tell stories and fall in love with each other. The origin of The Decameron house party is interestingly grim: the seven ladies and three men are fleeing the plague in Florence and the opening scenes in the plague-ridden city are among the most effective in the book. La Belle Assemblée, in contrast, are a group of wealthy aristocratic beautiful French people who meet at a house party. The house party of Leonora centres around the heroine's love of independence and her refusal to marry.

Other communes evolve because of the closeness of the ties between women friends, like Harriot Stuart and her tireless correspondent Amanda. When everyone arrives on the same side of

the Atlantic and Harriot has completed her marathon escape from the passions of a French count and an English lord, the young people marry and live happily together. Julie, the new Eloise, forms a commune-like life-style with lengthy visits from her best woman-friend, while the commune of rural bliss in Lady Julia Mandeville with dancing peasants, masquerades, and rural feasts comes to an abrupt end with the violent death of the hero.

## 7 TOWN

The picture of city life in the eighteenth-century fictions is not as vivid as the fictional picture in the novels one hundred years later when the industrial revolution and the revolution in transport had made the contrast between country and town even more startling. A country person visiting London in the eighteenth century would not be dazzled by gas lamps or deafened by trains, as the visitor in the nineteenth century. Although the crowds of London and the noise and bustle surprise the fictional characters, the nightmarish horror of strange inventions and busy urban people were a later development both in reality and fiction.

Consequently although there was a sense of the moral danger of the town, and a very strong sense of alienation felt by country characters in a large bustling urban crowd, there was not the same sense of fear that is a feature of nineteenth-century fiction. The town was very different from the country but it had not yet become a place totally foreign for the country visitor. Thus fictions are critical of city life, and use the city as an example of a place where vice can lie concealed and virtue can be attacked; but the city itself was not yet a fully-developed malignant force.

Only the observer stories on a thread - the Devils, the Eastern Travellers, the Invisible Spy and Chrysal - seem totally to identify the city with all the sins of the human condition, and to blame the city itself for the breakdown of moral standards. The ability of the invisible observers to open doors of city houses, or to sit on a column or a park bench and watch the world go by, is used to show that nearly all the inhabitants of the city are tainted with vice, and the reader feels almost that it is the fact of city-life which has corrupted them. In the Devil stories, especially, the shifting crowds seem an amorphous mass to anyone but a Devil who can identify individuals in a setting best adapted for his diabolical intentions. Other magical observers use the closely packed houses to look in one window after another, and discover the inhabitants engaged in every sort of vice from the adultery and gambling of high society to the petty crime and thieving of the slums. Most invisible observers also tour the commercial areas of the city to criticise merchants and speculators whose fortunes seem to be founded on greed. Few commentators can resist the opportunity to attack the city fathers, aldermen, and councillors for their enjoyment of their speculative prosperity.

Stories with a more centralised plot exploit the convention of seeing the city as a haunt of vice to exacerbate the sufferings of the heroine. Once alone in the city she is certain to face major attacks on her virtue, even more dangerous than those faced by country girls. The underlying sense of paranoia which is a feature of stories about young women is enhanced sometimes by the impression that the entire city is on the side of the seducer or rapist and that there is nowhere for the girl to hide. City pleasures lay a

young woman open to attack: Amelia dare not go to a masquerade even though promised the protection of her husband, and Harriet Byron's visit to a masquerade ends in disaster. As Harriet's experience suggests, even a young woman under the protection of their friends and family cannot be sure of her safety in the city where she may be lost in the crowd and easily kidnapped. For those young women who do not have the protection of family and friends the situation is indeed desperate. Lydia, Miss Murrells in The Stage Coach, Betsy Thoughtless, Julia Townsend in The Spiritual Quixote, Clarissa, and many others are easily kidnapped by their would-be seducers and taken off to whore-houses.

Once the heroine is captured the city seems an unresponsive place. The women who run the whore-houses are prepared to co-operate with their customers and have no mercy on the helpless girls. Clarissa's frantic escape attempts whirl the reader into a sense of nightmarish despair that the whole of London is on the side of Lovelace the rapist and that there are no good people in the entire city.

This picture, so skilfully exploited by Richardson and used by many other authors, is such a strong one that it comes as a surprise that Monimia in Ferdinand Count Fathom finds a true refuge with a strange lady. More than one reader must have expected the charitable lady to be a procuress, but on this exceptional occasion a heroine is lucky and has found a genuine protector.

In those stories where the city is not active in a nightmarish conspiracy, there is a sense of licence permitted by the anonymity of the crowd. Poison-pen letters which distress Amelia, Pamela, Betsy Thoughtless, and Lydia, are possible because of the very nature of city life. An enemy can readily observe a target and interfere in their lives, and yet can be concealed in the crowd.

Unlike the country where bad behaviour and bad characters are glaringly apparent bad behaviour can be concealed or even encouraged in the town, and bad characters conceal their vice behind a mask of social politeness.

Equally, any minor error of judgement or ambiguous behaviour by the heroine which might escape comment in the quieter country can be tracked and identified in the town. There is a pervasive sense of the eyes of the world forever watching private behaviour and forever commenting on private affairs. The Wife is full of advice on how to deal with husbands in private but is even more conscious of the proper behaviour in public. Much of the advice is not so much directed to actual behaviour as to its appearance. Wives are counselled not to be over-affectionate with their husbands, not only because it may bore him, but also because it will embarrass him in public. Similarly, drinking and gluttony are condemned not only as vices but as habits which appear unpleasant to others. The cure recommended by Haywood is that the greedy woman should place a mirror before her plate so she can see how she appears to others as she crams her mouth with food. Appearance is the primary concern.

It is another feature of the double standard of sexual morality that it is ladies who bear the brunt of the world's observation. While the errors or even deliberate wrong-doing of gentlemen can escape attention, the smallest slip of the heroine attracts much adverse comment.

The image of the town divided into quite separate areas, which pervades the nineteenth-century novels, emerges in the fictions of the eighteenth century. Class divisions are important. In the elite areas of town everything is observed, nothing can be kept secret; but in poor areas a young woman can be incarcerated in a

whore-house or even (as in Sir Launcelot Greaves) in a mad-house, with no notice or help from neighbours or people in the street. These self-enclosed areas enable villains and heroes to move from one separate city society to another, playing a different role in each area. Ferdinand Count Fathom can move freely around London behaving badly in a number of different areas without the gossip about his morals preceding him. Peregrine Pickle can set up a fraudulent fortune-teller one side of town with no-one connecting him with the joke. Booth is unfaithful to his wife Amelia as if she were a thousand miles away, since he is in a debtors prison and she is in their London home, and Mr B disappears from Pamela's view altogether for some days as he moves out of their social circle.

This freedom of movement from one enclosed area of the fictional city to another is like many of the freedoms of the fictional world - available only to gentlemen. Gentlemen can move from low-life areas to the elite areas of the fictional town because they are not marked by their contact with working-class people, but a lady would risk her reputation in such areas. Gentlemen seek sexual pleasure and low-life contacts in the working-class areas of the fictional town but they can return, without loss of status, to the elite area of town and the social circles of the Quality.

Ladies however are rigidly confined to the elite areas of the fictional town and their reputations are in jeopardy if they are seen outside the elite areas. Miss Murrells in The Stage Coach has to swear to her fiancé that her being seen in a bagnio in a disreputable area of town was a result of a violent abduction before they can be reconciled.

The exceptions to this rule are the working-class women who serve the sexual desires of upper-class men. They gain a limited mobility since their work as whores or servants naturally takes them into the Quality areas of town. Moll Flanders and Syrena belong in the working-class areas yet can visit the elite areas to prey on elite families.

In only one fiction is the wall between the respectable part of town and the working-class area breached and that is a minor gap in the lower levels of the merchant-trader class. In a scene which foreshadows Dickens' sense of small circles, Roxana is faced by her abandoned daughter who reappears despite the social gulf between them.

The sense of small, enclosed social circles is as important in the stories based in the city as in those based in a country setting. In the country the characters are forced to rely mainly on the family for social life, but even in the fictional city where a wider range of friends might have been made the characters confine themselves to a very restricted circle. The city family is open to social visitors, and city-bred characters go out into society, but the circle of intimates remains small and based on blood relations. Betsy Thoughtless is a highly sociable woman yet when she is in need it is only her brother who responds helpfully. Harriet Byron in the middle of a dynamically successful London season is emotionally tied to her blood relations. Sidney Biddulph is dependent on her brother, the Harlowes seem to know no-one but blood relations; cousins, country neighbours, and family are the main characters in Tom Jones, Sir Charles Grandison, The Vicar of Wakefield, The Dean of Coleraine, The Man of the World, The Fool of Quality and many others. In David Simple the four chief protagonists who meet as strangers alone in the world speedily form an enclosed unit, go visiting in London

in this clique, and retire together to the country.

Perhaps it is this important element of small closed social circles which is responsible for giving the reader a jaundiced view of city life. There are few mentions of the pleasures of city life: the varied social scene and the cultural pleasures. Discussion of such events is mostly done in a satirical or criticising tone, and the majority of stories set in the city are confined to the home of one family. The fictions do not praise city life in the way that they praise country life. The city is a backcloth against which the dramas of the family are acted out; it is seldom a real feature of the story. When city life is an important feature it is almost always shown as endangering the heroine's morals or making her lonely and unhappy. Altogether 52 stories (49.9% of the survey) make a point of criticising urban life.

The prejudice against the city is reflected in the homes of the chief protagonists and the didactic use made by the authors to point to the cities as the home of vice. Consequently most villains who make a clear choice are city dwellers. Of 56 villains who can choose between town and country 34 of them (60.7%) are city dwellers. Only 22 (39.2%) villains making a clear choice between town and country choose to live in the country.

Most heroes are town dwellers, though the preference is a very slight one. Of the 109 heroes who show a clear preference for one style of living over another 56 (51.3% of heroes) are city dwellers, and 53 (46.6%) are country gentlemen. But most of the town dwellers retire to the country at the end of their story.

The town is an appropriate setting for the early part of the story for many heroes because of their ambiguous moral position.

For those heroes who attack the heroine before being reformed by her moral love, a city background reflects and symbolises their worldly sophistication and immoral attitudes. But even those heroes who are good young men are often exposed to town life as a part of their education, to teach them the sophistication which a gentleman of Quality needs, and which a lady of Quality is better without. The great didactic example, Emile, is a country boy but his mentor considers it suitable that he should experience city life before he marries un unspoiled country girl and retires to the country.

It may be that this sexual double standard was modified during the century and the idea of male virtue became more important and the appeal of the seducing rake diminished. One can certainly trace a tendency for more heroes to live in the innocent country. Books published in the 1750s show a clear peak in the number of town-dwelling heroes which diminishes after the middle of the century. This may indicate a minor trend towards sexual morality for gentlemen as well as for ladies.

Of those 105 heroines expressing a clear preference, most of them - 57 (54.2%) - choose to live in the country, but a large minority of 48 (45.7%) choose to live in the town. However most of the town dwellers like Amelia, Betsy Thoughtless, Emily Montague, or Lydia retire to the country once they are happily married, and make a point of saying they are happiest with a rural life.

# CHAPTER IX

## CLASS SETTING

The most important geographic setting is England, but the authors have little or no interest in the three-fifths of the population who were propertyless.*[1] The stories are set in the class of authors and readers: the elite of the society. The fictional world is the world of the propertied and the leisured. Thus although money and the maintenance of status is a constant anxiety, very few of the characters work to earn their income, and the setting does not generally include the work-place. The fictional world is the houses and gardens of the wealthy. Working-class characters are present only in their capacities as servants or peasants.

If merchants, squires, and aristocrats can be seen as part of one hegemonic elite, the Quality, it is apparent that nearly all the stories - 118 of the 127 - are set among the lives of this elite. Only five stories (3.9%) are set in trading or working-class backgrounds. Indeed the most popular single background is the cream of society, the aristocracy, (63 stories, 49.6%) with a smaller number set in the squireachy (38, 29.9%). An even smaller group features town merchants (17, 13.3%).

The authors of the eighteenth century inherited the fictional convention of the Romances that the lives of ordinary working people are not the stuff of fiction. The Kings, Queens, and courtiers of the Romances were translated into Lords, Ladies, and Squires of the eighteenth-century fictional world. In both the world of the Romances and the later world of the eighteenth-century fictions working-class people are there to serve and support their betters.

Since fictional England is an improvement on the real country, class-relations in the fictional world are more stable, more unequal, and more pleasant than those in the real world.

The elite of the stories is clearly defined and stable. Good breeding in the fictional world always shows itself, and is always rewarded with wealth and status. Working-class people stay very firmly in their place unless they are young women of exceptional beauty, virtue, and talent, when they may be able to earn - through exceptional suffering - a place in the Quality. In the real world of rapidly-changing fortunes and rising and falling status as the country lurched into the first Industrial Revolution, the calm certainty of the fictional world must have been a pleasure to contemplate.

## 1 HEROES, HEROINES, AND VILLAINS

Most of the people of this stable fictional world are members of the Quality. Of the heroes, 56 are aristocrats, 8 are impoverished aristocrats, 37 are squires, 12 are merchants, 2 are traders, and 5 are of the working classes.

Of the 111 heroines of the survey whose status is clear 101 are members of the Quality, though generally their status is not as high as that of the heroes. Only 42 are aristocrats, 6 are impoverished aristocrats, 38 are members of the squireachy, 15 are merchants' daughters. There are 2 trading-class girls, and 8 working-class heroines.

There are relatively few villains in the survey: only 72. Most of these are aristocrats - 42 of them are noblemen. Fifteen of them are squires, while only 4 are merchants, and 2 are working men.

Wealth is linked with high status in most cases, and by the end of the story all virtuous, impoverished aristocrats come into their rightful fortunes. But at the start of the stories proportionately more villains are wealthy than any other group of characters. Sixty villains are wealthy men (83.3% of the group), while 64 heroes have wealth which represents only half of the heroes (53.3%). Slightly more heroines are clearly poor than they are wealthy - 58 heroines are poor (49.5% of the heroines), and 51 are wealthy (43.5%). However, many wealthy heroines suffer short periods of discomfort or hardship because of temporary money problems.

While most stories are set against a backcloth of Quality living, heroes and to a greater extent heroines are not necessarily wealthy or nobly born although they tend to belong to some level of the Quality. Villains start the stories wealthy and noble; it is part of the conclusion that they should be punished with poverty and the heroes, and most especially the heroines, be rewarded with goods and status. Therefore nearly a third of the villains lose either wealth or status (29.6% lose wealth and 30.5% status). More than a quarter of the heroes (27.5%) and more than half the heroines (56.4%) rise up the social ladder, particularly from the squireachy to the nobility. Nearly half the heroes (46.4%) and more than half the heroines (58.9%) are rewarded with wealth.

2 MONEY

Wealth, and the problem of insufficient supplies of money, is thus one of the most important features of eighteenth-century fiction. Problems of insufficient money play a major part in more than a third of all the stories; 49 stories (38.5% of the total survey) show the hero or heroine in financial embarrassment, and in most cases in genuine

poverty. In a quarter of all the stories of the survey either the hero or the heroine endures a period of real hardship, neglected by family and friends.

Although social status is intensely important and small variations of social status matter as much in the fictional world as they probably did in the competitive real world, the major reward for good behaviour, and the preferred punishment for bad behaviour, is the award or loss of money. The authors enjoy a detailed accounting at the end of many of the stories of the substantial inheritances bestowed on the good people and the fortunes snatched from the villains.

This emphasis on money is not only the interest in material goods which one might expect from a society where massive fortunes were being created and lost, but also a logical outcome of the emphasis on the good breeding of the fictional characters. Since most of the characters belong to some level of the Quality, their good breeding is an established fact and the most appropriate reward for their good behaviour is the means to live in a style commensurate with their blood and behaviour. Since their lineage is irreproachable, only their material resources can fluctuate throughout the story. Villains lose both wealth and status as their punishment, but wealth is the reward for Quality heroes and heroines.

The importance of money and status in the stories is demonstrated by the fact that the main obstacle to the marriage of 26 couples is a discrepancy of either wealth or status, or not enough money to marry. When the heroine is in poverty, or in a low-status position, the hero is tempted to mistreat her; only her defence of her virtue forces him to see her as an exceptional individual, and propose honourable marriage to her despite her lowly status. However a number of couples are faced with the problem of a discrepancy in their social status

when the hero suddenly discovers that he is related to nobility and thus belongs to a different social class from the heroine. This conflict occurs in Daphnis and Chloe, Humphry Clinker, and Joseph Andrews. Both Chloe and Fanny discover that, like their fiances, they too are nobly born, and so the marriage can go ahead without the newly-ennobled hero demeaning himself.

In Humphry Clinker the contrast is less acute since the hero is not the legitimate son and rightful heir but is a bastard son - not of an aristocrat but of an attractively vulgar squire. Humphry is thus able to marry his servant-girl love without offending the reader's sense of social proprieties.

When the discrepancy of status is caused by the hero's relative poverty or lowliness, the marriage cannot take place until he has improved his position. No heroine crosses the class divide to marry beneath herself; to do so would be to lose her own status forever. Although heroines may love men who seem to be poorer and not as well-bred as themselves, the marriages in Peregrine Pickle, Roderick Random, Tom Jones, The Old English Baron and The Man of the World, take place only when the hero's social and material position has been improved by the discovery of his true parents, or the inheritance of wealth.

Charles Montgomery, the hero of Ethelinde is gentleman enough to know that his poverty will be a permanent bar to his courtship of the heroine. As her father tells a friend:

> 'he dares not think now of aspiring to an alliance with my daughter: all, therefore, he has to ask of me is, whether I will refuse him permission to consider himself as making an effort in life, not merely to possess himself of an affluence, but to obtain such a fortune as may give him that hope to which he now presumes not to raise his eyes.'*[2]

However, in a rejection of the stereotype solution of a wealthy, happy marriage the hero returns as poor as he left. The couple can marry, not because he is equally rich with Ethelinde but because she has lost her fortune and they are equally poor. The convention of equal status for the bride and groom has been retained, but Smith has rejected the convention that a happy ending means a wealthy marriage. Nonetheless the couple will not face poverty together. They plan to live in the Montgomery cottage on the edge of Grasmere Water, leading a life of leisure subsidised by Ethelinde's wealthy admirer who seems happy to finance his rival's connubial bliss.

Harry, in Julia Mandeville, is not prepared even to attempt to work for money to equalise the position between himself and the woman he loves. In despair he fights a duel and dies before discovering that he is in fact the rightful heir to the Mandeville estate and that his parents had planned his marriage with Julia who understandably then dies of grief.

This major interest in money may surprise critics who think of the eighteenth-century fictional world as one where sentimental and emotional conflicts take priority. In fact the fictional world is extremely conscious of the need for money, and wealth is shown as an attractive asset. A happy-ever-after ending means a wealthy ending for the hero and heroine in every story but Ethelinde. In the comfortable world of the fictions good people become rich and important as a matter of course.

There is consequently no suggestion that money is the root of evil and that wealth brings unhappiness. Rich people are shown as extremely happy in 40.1% of all the stories of the survey and are unhappy in only 19 stories (14.9%). In the fictional world money is an appropriate reward for virtue, and good people manage their wealth

to benefit others. Money does not corrupt good people; only weak, greedy, or envious people can be corrupted by wealth. Even in those stories which form a quarter of the survey where money is the cause of a quarrel (33 stories, 25.9%), wealth is nonetheless the reward for the good people; Sidney Biddulph, Amelia, and David Simple are rewarded with their substantial inheritances despite the cheating behaviour of their corrupted siblings.

A notable exception to this comfortable fictional world is the microcosmic world of Defoe whose three popular stories in this survey are designed to show that poverty leads directly to crime through the desperation of the poor.

Colonel Jack, Moll Flanders, and Roxana turn to crime or prostitution in desperation, and none of them permanently reforms or even considers his or her moral position, until they are in circumstances where they can financially afford the luxury of a conscience. In Defoe's fictional world the poor struggle against overwhelming obstacles, turning to crime as their only hope of survival.

There is no recognition of innate good-breeding, nor any chance of a long-lost relative or mystery benefactor turning up to restore the hero or heroine to fortune. Defoe's common-sense sympathy with the poor is a separate view from the main picture of the eighteenth-century fictions of this survey, which do not consider the emotions or the well-being of the poor at all.

Indeed, in the comfortable view of the fictions the poor are content in their poverty, extremely grateful for charity but seldom complaining if charity or even justice is withheld. In a substantial minority of more than a fifth of the survey (27, 21.1%) poor people are specifically shown to be happy with their lowly position.

This attitude towards money is obviously related to the stable social structures of the fictional world. While the fortunes of the Quality may fluctuate with good and bad behaviour rewarded with poverty or wealth, the poor people have no dramatic and exciting fluctuating fortunes. They are born to live in poverty and if they are virtuous they will be content with their station.

The attitude which is consistently demonstrated is an heroic disdain for money which will be rewarded for members of the Quality with the best of all things: money! This is not necessarily hypocrisy. The heroes and heroines do not despise wealth, they show only that they can live without it. This attitude is shown very clearly by Sidney Biddulph who rejects an advantageous match on moral grounds, and whose later acceptance of real poverty is in striking contrast to her brother's ambition, ostentation and meanness. It is she who offers charity to an unknown stranger and is rewarded by the discovery that he is a disguised nabob, and her uncle. Her brother's concern for money has been counter-productive, it is Sidney who is adopted by her uncle: her brother is left with the extravagant wife he married for her dowry.

It is a feature of the eighteenth-century heroic character that wealth or poverty alike should not shake the steadiness of principled behaviour. The opportunity to demonstrate this indifference to poverty or wealth is provided in the 49 stories which show hero or heroine in financial difficulties.

## 3 HEROINES AT WORK

It is to survive in the abyss of poverty that heroines have to work. Of the 17 heroines who are seen to be committed to some kind of paid work, all but one work because they are forced to earn money

to survive. Five work as servants, 5 as whores, 2 as craftswomen, 2 as companions, and the 3 others work as a shepherdess, a milliner, and a career nun.

The experience of the 5 servants indicates the nightmarish possibilities of exploitation in a society split by a class divide and guided by the morals of the sexual double standard. Miss Murrells in The Stage Coach is forced into service by poverty and persecuted by her mistress' noble husband. Enraged at her repeated refusals, he has her arrested on a false charge of stealing from his wife. Next he captures her and takes her to a bagnio. She makes her escape and goes to a new family as a servant only to be ill-treated again. In desperation Miss Murrells goes to work for a milliner only to be discovered and again persecuted by the noble rake with her employer's connivance. Only the arrival of her former rejected suitor saves her from these persecutions, and marriage restores her to the safety of the elite.

The persecutions suffered by Fanny Adams in Joseph Andrews, by Lydia in Lydia; or, Filial Piety, and by Pamela equally demonstrate this problem of the employer's power, as does the story of the Mother in The Mother; or, Happy Distress. She was wrongly arrested for theft by her employers as their son had fallen in love with her. In his absence the innocent widow is separated from her child, and sentenced to transportation to the American colonies.

Experiences higher up the social scale working as a companion are equally distressing in fiction. Cynthia in David Simple, and Harriot Stuart are both wrongly accused of trying to seduce a gentleman, and insulted.

All the whores - Moll Flanders, Roxana, Syrena, and Mesdames de Pompadour and Maintenon - show a pattern of being sexually exploited by wealthy men. All turn this exploitation to their own advantage in time, but the initial seductions are facilitated by their relative weakness in the male-dominated societies. Mme de Maintenon, an impoverished widow, cannot reject the advances of her monarch. Her memoirs obscure their sexual relationship and emphasise her pious influence on Mme Montespan and the King. Mme de Pompadour's memoirs are even more successful in concealing her sexual relationship with the King. In her story the author glosses over the initial approach and quickly establishes the King and his mistress as platonic friends, but it is an understood fact that a woman could not refuse the friendship of a powerful man.

All three of the English whores succeed in their careers, though Moll and Roxana are both haunted by their pasts. Syrena tries her hand at a number of trades, working as a milliner, a house servant, a housekeeper, but mainly as a whore.

Although she is not designed to be a sympathetic character even Syrena demonstrates the power of men. Her seduction, like Moll's, is one where a man takes advantage of her desires.

> The young officer perceiving the Ground he gain'd, did not fail pursuing the Attack, and bombarded her so fast with Speeches out of Plays, tender Pressures, Kisses, and the more intoxicating Juice of the Grape, that at length the Town was wholly his; ---- the momentary Rapture over, the Power of Reflection return'd to this unhappy ruin'd Girl; - she reproach'd him and herself; - she wept; - she exclaim'd; - but it was all too late.*[3]

Neither Syrena nor Moll seem likely to have kept their virtue, but in both these unemotional, even bawdy, stories the first seduction is a betrayal of the young girl's trust.

> It must be confessed this action of Vardine's was cruel and ungrateful - what must have become of the undone and forsaken Syrena, had she been possest of the Softness and Tenderness which some are; ...*[4]

Syrena throws up her apprenticeship as a milliner and becomes a servant, planning to seduce the young master of the house. In the end she is lucky to escape with her liberty.

Two craftswomen in these stories seem to be dependent on their skills. Millenium Hall is run as a self-supporting commune where distressed gentlewomen teach young girls the skills of service, and themselves embroider and paint. They keep strict working hours and also run a farm. Sophia supports her mother and herself with ladylike skills, embroidery and drawing designs for fan-mounts, until the arrival of Sir Charles and a splendid marriage. In Daphnis and Chloe, Chloe works as a shepherdess until her marriage, while in Abelard and Eloise Eloise becomes a senior nun although secretly still pining for her husband.

What is immediately striking is that all the women who are employed in paid labour are either sexually harassed or actually seduced. All of the women who work as servants or milliners are sexually assaulted, the two companions are sexually harassed, and all of the English whores start their careers not as gold-diggers but as working women who in the first instance give away their love. Moll and Syrena cannot resist men of higher status and glamour, and Roxana falls for the combined attractions of warmth, a full stomach, and an amorous partner.

Even those heroines who are not clearly engaged in urban wage work but work on the land as pastoral shepherdesses are not safe from assault by their landlord. The peasant shepherdess of Injured Innocence or the Fortunate Country Maid are both hounded

and sexually persecuted by their landlord and feudal-style employers. The heroine of Injured Innocence loses her virginity to her feudal lord believing herself to be married to him, while the Fortunate Country Maid maintains her virginity but suffers excessive persecution from her lover and from his amorous father.

What is indicated so strikingly in these stories is the sexual exploitation of working-class women which is an essential element of the sexual double standard. The chastity of upper-class women and the sexual freedom of upper-class men can exist together only if working-class women are used for the release of upper-class male sexual energy. The titilating danger of this morality is that a lady, whose chastity should be inviolable by virtue of her social status, may in exceptional circumstances be mistaken for a working-class woman and sexually propositioned. The erotic potential of such a scene provides the excitement of many of the stories as the authors show how ladies of the Quality can be tantalisingly unprotected. Every lady of Quality in this survey who is forced into paid work is either sexually harassed, seduced, or raped.

What is especially forceful about this pattern is that it understates the amount of sexual harassment suffered by working-class women in the fictional world, since it shows only the sexual approaches to the most important female characters. The numerous sexual encounters between upper-class men and working-class women are not recorded, but throughout the fictions there is a groundswell of accepted opinion that working-class women will be seduced or attacked by gentlemen. Even the heroine's gentility and heroic status does not protect her from the unstated assumption that if she is working she is fair game to upper-class men.

It is interesting to compare this with heroines who are poor but who are not forced into wage work. Poverty does not invariably lead to sexual assault: some heroines suffer poverty and escape sexual assault. However, most women who are sexually assaulted are poor at the time of the attack. Two exceptions are Harriet Byron in Sir Charles Grandison, and Jenny Jessamy, who are sexually assaulted despite their wealth and position. All the other 11 victims of sexual assault are poor at the time of the attack.

The willing loss of virginity is not a feature exclusive to poor women. Of the 21 heroines who are willingly seduced, half are poor but half are well-off and succumb to their desires without any additional pressure from poverty. And oddly, rape is also not confined to working-class women but is a danger more regularly faced by the wealthy heroines.

Of the 8 rape victims in the stories only 2 are poor at the time of the attack: the victim of rape by deception in Injured Innocence and the drugged victim in The Man of the World. However, all of the victims are unprotected by their families and friends at the time of the attack which otherwise could not take place. It may be that rape was regarded as unacceptable whatever the victim's social position so it is an act of villainous behaviour whether directed against a poor or a wealthy woman.

This could be another result of the sexual double standard which suggests that the acquiescence of working-class women should preserve men from sexual frustration and the need to rape.

Only two women enjoy jobs of high status and it is no coincidence that they play the villain's role in the stories. Neither of them appear to work at their positions as monarchs, and it is clear that the positions are inherited and not earned by merit. The villainous Queen Elizabeth I in The Recess works at nothing more significant than amorous intrigue, and the Sultana in Female Banishment is motivated only by ambition and sexual lust.

Although they challenge the stereotype of the female victim of the fictional world they also support the myth by showing two women in power who have neither earned their positions nor fulfilled their responsibilities. Both women abuse their position for spiteful personal ends and show women in authority to be ineffective and unsuccessful, even in their typical malice.

The fictional world may reflect with some accuracy the dearth of opportunities for women of Quality in the real eighteenth-century England. That a happy marriage is the desired conclusion for both fictional and real women is hardly surprising when set in this bleak context of the absence of work opportunities. If an upper-class woman did not marry in the fictional world there was little else for her to do without hazarding her chastity and physical safety, and this fictional picture may tell us something about conditions for real women. In any case, as the opportunities open to heroines indicate, there were virtually no jobs suitable for a lady which would support her financially.

The one exceptional job (ironically for the didactic authors) is the ancient profession of whoring. The only heroines who emerge from their work experience wealthier than when they started, and the only heroines who make a long-term commitment to their careers, are the whores. Syrena Tricksy is the only unsuccessful exception,

and she is more of a confidence trickster than a whore. The others, Moll, Roxana, Mme de Pompadour, and Mme Maintenon, all make a good living out of prostitution. Despite the didactic and moral intentions of the authors the stories possibly represent a major truth about women's work in the eighteenth century.

## 4 HEROES AND VILLAINS AT WORK

Ficitional women lose not only status but even physical safety at work. The experience of work for men is both profitable and enjoyable. Many more heroes than heroines work for a living, though the most popular occupation is being the landlord of an estate, not really wage labour. This survey has counted only those eight heroes who seem to be actively engaged with their lands. Equally popular is the Army, then the Navy - mainly the mercantile marine - for 7 heroes, then the calling of knighthood for 6 heroes. Six heroes work as merchants, 6 are churchmen, and there are 2 kings, 2 servants or tutors, and one monk, goatherd, cobbler, highwayman, actor, and ambassador.

Immediately apparent is the far wider range of financially rewarding work open to fictional men than to the fictional women: a total of 16 different occupations compared with half that number for women, and 2 of the female jobs are socially unacceptable or illegal - prostitiution and fraud. Men's jobs are also exciting or adventurous - like knight-errantry or exploring - or they have high status and are financially rewarding - like big business or running large estates.

Villains tend not to have employment but Ferdinand Count Fathom is a confidence trickster and companion, there is a villainous King, and a villainous soldier and sailor.

## 5 THE CLASS DIVIDE

The fictional world is one of strict class division where any crossing of the social divide between the classes always end in disaster. This is true of all the fictional marriages since a lady does not marry a man who is her social inferior until he has improved his status, or hers has fallen to his level; the minority of stories where an apparently middle-class or working-class girl marries a member of the elite are not a true exception to this rule. The marriage does not represent a bridge across the class divide because the girl's nature is shown early on as innately noble. Her heroic qualities identify her as wrongly placed in her social class and the hero's recognition of her worth rescues her and places her among her natural peers - he does not really promote her socially. She proves her claim first to the hero and it is his recognition of her innate superiority which makes him see marriage as appropriate since he would be marrying a spiritually noble individual, an equal. His eventual acceptance of her physical integrity entails an acceptance of her individualism and paves the way to the marriage which establishes her outward status to conform with her spiritual qualities. It is this integrity of the working-class heroine which justifies her social mobility and shows that it is not promotion which she gains but recognition.

All other relationships whichcross the class divide end in disaster. Such disasters are not limited to the protagonists. As in real life any erosion of the social boundaries affects the entire society. In the fictional world crossing the class divide for emotional involvement threatens all class relations. Gentlemen are permitted by the sexual double standard to cross the class divide to sexually use working-class women. If they became emotionally

involved with such women the system would be challenged. Ladies are never permitted to cross the divide for either pleasure or love.

Generally the stories teach by negative example. A young girl's flirtation and affair with her mother's footman in The Fair Adultress is the downfall not only of her entire family who are shamed by the scandal, but the ruin of a happy marriage since she is set on a course of vice which leads her to seduce a married man and break his faithful wife's heart. The exploits of Syrena Tricksy in decent families show clearly the damage that can be done by an ambitious maid servant. After she has organised her mock-seduction, Syrena nearly forces Mr L to marry her. Only the discovery of her letters detailing the plot to her old bawd of a mother saves the young man and reveals to him and to the reader the danger of crossing the class divide.

Columella loses control over his household because of his failure to keep a proper distance between himself and the servants who are impertinent and unwilling. His visitors quickly identify why his housekeeper is so incompetent:

> 'Atticus and I have both agreed, that no servant would take the freedom which your house-keeper does with you, my friend, if you had not taken some freedoms with her.'*[5]

Columella compounds his mistake by marrying the lower-class woman who alienates his friends and increases his loneliness. His punishment for crossing the class divide is severe.

Columella's housekeeper is no Pamela. She makes no claims to be spiritually equal to Columella and she fails the gentility test by a willing consent to seduction. Columella's behaviour to her - using her as a servant and a sexual object - is acceptable behaviour in the society of the sexual double standard. His major mistake is to promote her socially despite her inappropriate behaviour and in

so doing he threatens his class unity by the introduction of a vulgar stranger, and destroys his own happiness. As his friends' jocular comments point out, his behaviour to her was acceptable if improper when he treated her as a sexual object; when he married her his folly had far more serious consequences. An even more miserable fate is faced by the lady who married a footman for love in one of the book's sub-plots:

> 'If he should happen to have good luck, and win a few shillings, I shall not see him again for a week: if he loses his money, he will probably come home fuddled, and use me ill; then perhaps he will work again for two or three days, and then be gone again. And this, Sir, is the comfortable life which I lead in this delightful solitude.'*[6]

As both examples suggest, the marriage of two people of different classes will lead to happiness only if one of them truly belongs in the other's world. The success of Pamela in adapting to genteel status is achieved because of her innate gentility, tested and proved by sexual assault. The failure of Columella and the lady who married a footman is that they married for love or lust a partner who naturally belonged to the working classes. The Quality man who marries beneath the elite class will face unhappiness unless the bride is innately noble. The Quality woman who marries a man of lower status in the fictional world will lose her own status forever.

Crossing the divide will do the working-class person no good either. The authors generally imply that no decent working-class people would attempt to improve their social position by such means, or indeed by any means. The fanciful view of class relations prevalent in the fictional world depends on the myth that the working classes are content with their lowly status. Consequently only the wicked or the greedily dissatisfied would wish to change their social position.

## 6 SERVANTS AND PAUPERS

In the class relations of the fictional world those who are not of the Quality are depicted as belonging in one class. Yeomen, independent cottagers, feudal peasants, personal servants, house servants, and paupers are lumped together in the fictional world into one class of non-Quality people. This blurring of class differences below the elite division is exemplified by the description of the cottages of the fictional landscape which sound more like small manor houses of the yeoman class. The telescoping of the working classes into one fictitious group serves a number of purposes for the elite authors and readers. By ignoring the social gradations the authors are able to ignore social mobility, and thus greet with outraged surprise any attempt by an upwardly mobile working-class individual to continue his ascent into the ranks of the Quality. His behaviour can be seen as the outrageous attempt to leap from the very bottom of society to the very top - not as part of a gradual promotion. Another advantage of treating all non-Quality fictional characters as one amorphous peasantry is that they can be concealed and subsumed into a stereotype model - the good peasant or faithful servant of the fictional convention.

The vast majority of non-Quality people are simply invisible in the fictions and make their appearance in only a very few books of this survey. Meals are cooked, rooms cleaned, and ladies dressed without any servant appearing for more than a fleeting moment. The servants play no role in the development of the plot and their emotions, even as spectators, are of no interest.

A very small minority of non-Quality people are developed into stereotype characters of two main types. One type is the peasant clown who can serve as a comic manservant to provide light relief

during the serious and important adventures of the Quality hero. Thus Sancho Panza, Roderick Random's Strap, Man Friday, all the Shandy servants, the Spiritual Quixote's Jerry Tugwell, and many other workers serve as buffoon foils. They suffer grotesque acts of violence and indignities which their masters largely escape, and generally follow their masters without wages, for love, and as a symbol of the innate nobility of the Quality person who attracts service. Even refined later fictions retain the comic element of the stupid personal servant. The mocking of a servant's uncouth dialect and stupidity is a feature in otherwise sensitive stories like those written by Mrs Radcliffe or Frances Burney.

The passionate loyalty of the workers to their betters is developed in the complementary stereotype personal servant who worships the hero or heroine without any comic scenes. Julia de Roubigne's wet nurse worships her young mistress, as do the servants of Juliet Grenville, Julie the New Eloise, Clarissa, Pamela, and Harriet Byron. This is a minor stereotype occurring in only 11 stories (8.6%) but it shows very clearly the sense of the divide in the fictional world between significant people: those of the Quality, and those who serve them. It supports the central fantasy that working people love to serve their masters, and are happy to be poor.

This patronising attitude towards servants is naturally extended to those who as pensioner or pauper are wholly dependent on the hero or heroine. Two Richardson protagonists, Sir Charles and Pamela, show by didactic example the importance of controlled charity, enabling the deserving to support themselves; and other heroes and heroines exhibit greater sensibility by spontaneous generosity.

The pleasure of patronising the poor seems so universally felt that it may be only a modern reader who feels doubts about the behaviour of the ladies of Millenium Hall who rescue circus freaks which they call 'the monsters'*[7] and show them off (after first asking permission) to total strangers. The Ladies visit their pensioners' cottages:

> 'There never passes a day that one or other of the ladies does not come and look all over our houses, which they tell us, and certainly with truth, for it is a great deal of trouble to them, is all for our own good ... nor do they ever come here without giving us some good advice.'*[8]

No tone is too servile for the palate of the eighteenth-century reader. A teenage Juliet Grenville has adopted a pauper family and is amply repaid with praise:

> O, exclaimed the grateful createur, and cast herself on her knees before me,Are we not all your purchase, your property to be disposed of at your pleasure? Are you not, young as you are, the angel-mother of all my little ones?*[9]

In the fictional world (with the sole exception of Sterne) no author voices any clear doubts about the charitable behaviour of the Quality. The hero is able to take over the lives of his dependents and earn nothing but gratitude, despite his responsibility for their previous distress.

> Whatley removed Adams to his own seat, where the old man soon recovered his health. A very elegant apartment was prepared for Fanny, who a few days after their arrival, dressed in a magnificent suit, was married to her Lord ... Lord Whatley agreeably surprized Adams, by presenting to him his two sons, dressed in a manner becoming their change of fortune.*[10]

The tone of confident patronage is so strong that even elderly and dignified working people are converted into child-like idiots under the relentless control of their charitable betters. In

The Cottage the elderly cottagers agree to give the noble couple their own house and move to the big house to stay close to their beloved lord and lady. In the move they become burlesque characters:

> 'Isaac and Sarah, he says, are capering about as if they were their own children, they have been all over the house with them, and are now showing what they think most worthy of observation without doors. Dear good souls, I must hasten down to see their happy countenances.'*[11]

Juliet Grenville, though only a young girl, is so confident of her position as a member of the charitable elite, that she adopts the same tone when she visits two total strangers and enters uninvited:

> We entered without ceremony, and found the good old couple at breakfast over two porringers of new milk and a brown loaf. God bless you, and much good may it do you, my good sir and madam, said I; and so took a seat without being bidden. They stared at us awhile and seemed something confused; for I believe they had not been accustomed to visits from gay strangers.*[12]

## 7 GENTEEL HARDSHIP

The attitude to poverty among the gentry is far more sensitive and sympathetic. The stories may well reflect a real-life feeling that in a rapidly changing society class loyalty is an important emotion. In the absence of an established banking system only the support of family or friends would save an entrepreneur with cash-flow problems. Family and friends also supported each other through the gifting of profitable official posts. The old clan-style family network had made the head of the family responsible for a wide number of distant relations, and the traditional feudal hospitality meant that the head of a household was obliged to house any visitor no matter how unwelcome. The remnants of these ideas, as well as a new consciousness that in a class under pressure the mutual help of neighbours and friends is indispensable, may account for the assured expectations of the heroes and heroines in the fictional world.

It is the regrettable failure of family and friends financially to support Amelia, David Simple, and Sidney Biddulph that leads to their problems, and it is the return or discovery of suitable benefactors which solves the crises. In Amelia, Ethelinde, and David Simple, the protagonists show gratitude, but no embarrassment at being financially supported by friends, not even blood relations; and this attitude is present in other stories. Valentine and Camilla are prepared firstly to live on David Simple's charity, then the Simple commune looks to neighbours and friends for their financial support. The refusal of the Orgeuil family to support them is shown as a vicious and spiteful attitude, as if the author is saying that members of the elite class have a moral responsibility to support each other.

Ethelinde is wholly supported by a married man who has declared his adulterous love for her, and when she turns from him to her impoverished lover they are both content to live on his bounty. Although they live simply it is Ethelinde's friend who is meeting the major expenses, the propriety of which is not mentined in the story.

Emma Corbett also is supported by her rejected suitor who follows her to America while she searches for her husband. Renaldo supplies Monimia with all her money, and there is no suggestion that the lady is compromised by being kept by her lover. She is subsequently kept and nursed by an unknown woman in Ferdinand Count Fathom. Lieutenant Probit finances Lydia in Lydia; or, Filial Piety, and into the bargain looks after her widowed mother. Perhaps the oddest example of group support is that offered to Saint Preux by the friends of Julie in Julie; or, the New Eloise. Despite the fact that he has seduced and nearly ruined Julie her friends support him, find

him employment, and finance travel for him to take his mind off his sorrows. Her husband is pleased to see him and he becomes a welcome visitor to their home.

# CHAPTER X

## THE FAMILY

In the fictional world of the eighteenth-century as in the real world the responsibility to the family and to the class overlaps; the didactic tone in the fictions which explains how a member of the elite should behave to his or her dependants is echoed by the instructions of how to behave to relations.

In the real world the division between the family and the wider social circle was being only tentatively redrawn as the heads of families slowly felt that members of their class, clan, or extended family shouldbe treated differently from their wives and children. For most of the century the sense survived that a head of a family was also head of the entire household with wide responsibilities.*[1]

The roles would themselves overlap: a bad landlord or bad employer failed in his duty to his dependants and ruined them; a bad father, sibling, or son, failed in his duty and ruined his dependent family. The exclusion of women from managing the estates of Quality families and the increased idleness of Squires' and merchants' wives meant that the family unit depended wholly on the success of the male head of the household for their economic survival. His success in the outside world was the most important measure of him as a husband andfather.

The importance of the male head of the household is a source of tension in the stories as it may have been in real life, but this tension is most often expressed when it is the eldest son rather than the father who is controlling the family. In the majority of the stories the parents are absent. Nearly half the heroines, a total

of fifty (42.7% of heroines) and more than half the heroes 69 of them (54.3%) are orphans, while 30 heroines (25.6% of them) and 26 heroes (20.4% of them) have only one parent surviving, generally the father. To emphasise this impression of the lack of influence of the parents most heroes (82, 64.5%) live away from home and two-thirds of the heroines do not live with their parents. A group of 23 heroes (18.1% of them) live with relations and not with their parents, and 40 heroines (34.1% of them) live with relations.

In real life nearly a fifth of squires married more than once*[2] and this is reflected in the fictional world with the 22 step-parents present in this survey. Most of these step-parents are featured in the heroines' families; only 3 heroes have a step-parent. For the heroine a cruel step-parent is a convenient structural device enabling the author to expel the heroine unprotected into the world and expose her to dangers which a living mother would never permit. Similarly, the popular orphan status for the hero enables an upper-class hero to be set in the otherwise unlikely situation of having to find his fortune before being received into his noble family.

In the absence of parents it is the relationship between siblings which causes the most tension. In 21 stories sibling rivalry causes unhappiness, and 14 of these are cases in which a spoiled older brother - the future head of the household - usurps his father's position and alienates him from his daughter. This may be a fictional version of a real conflict.

While the authority of men as fathers and husbands was emphasised by society and supported by the Bible, the authority of an older, or even a younger, brother might have been less acceptable to young women.

The predominance of primogeniture in the eighteenth-century and the growing popularity of entail*[3] meant that the eldest son's position in the family was assured, but siblings were expected to resign their claims to the family estate for his benefit. The importance of the eldest son in the family surpassed even the status of his mother who, if widowed, would become largely dependent on him. Maternal authority was thus challenged by the son and heir and this is reflected in the fictions which also show some fathers who cannot exert parental pressure against a dominant son. Clarissa's unattractive brother is allowed to dominate her because he is planning the family's future, Ethelinde's brother throws her and her father into poverty because neither of them can control him, Archibald Evelyn in The Card is another uncontrollable, indulged older brother. Sidney Biddulph's older brother virtually abandons her at the first hint of her independent moral judgement and she has to choose between his authority or that of her mother. Aurelia's older brother in Sir Launcelot Greaves goes as far as locking his own sister in a madhouse in an attempt to impose his will on hers. Mr B's disdain for his sister's opinion in Pamela is only a harsher, more overt version of Sir Charles' dominance over his two sisters. Even a younger male sibling could suffer from the prominence given to his elder brother, the heir. The Fool of Quality is treated well by his parents only when his elder brother dies and he in his turn becomes the heir. These are the fictional tensions reflecting the high status of the son and heir as a result of the practice of primogeniture and the general belief in male superiority in the real world.

1 INCEST

The conflicts between brother and sister also had sexual and emotional roots. In the real England of the eighteenth century the children of Quality families turned to each other for company and play as the growing class consciousness separated them from potential working-class playmates. The growing intensity of all family relationships inspired a degree of tenderness among siblings which might last for a lifetime, especially as the high mortality rates left them parentless and wholly dependent on each other for love and support.

At the same time the style of married life changed from a distant marital relationship, emphasising duty and mutual convenience, to one of mutual affection and help.*[4] The ideal basis for such a marriage which was to be both intimate and permanent was an intimate and long-term preparation in which the couple could get to know each other well before committing themselves to a lifetime of monogamous emotional intensity. The fictionalised solution to this difficulty was to make the hero and heroine members of the same residential community: to develop their love over time and in a true knowledge of each other. Thus couples court and fall in love in the unlikely fictitious communes of La Belle Assemblee, Persiles and Sigismunda, Leonora, and Emily Montague.

More likely in fact, and more popular in fiction, were the couples who became acquainted living as a ward or long-term guest of the family in the same house as the hero or heroine as in Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy, The Cry, Grandison, Pamela, The Old English Baron, Juliet Grenville, Joseph Andrews and The Man of the World. This sort of intimacy could be produced also when the couple were near neighbours as in Daphnis and Chloe, Tom Jones, The Man of Feeling, Julia Mandeville and Julia de Roubigne.

These sexual relationships have inescapable overtones of incest especially in the many examples where the story explicitly states that the young people have loved each other from early childhood. The emphasis on the infantile love of Juliet Grenville aged three and Thomas aged six, suggests a sibling sexual relationship and prepares the reader for the later shock that they may be brother and sister on the verge of marriage.

> 'He took an unaccountable liking to me: he had a wonderful pleasure in assisting my mistress to teach me my letters: he never quitted me but with regret. Our whole happiness seemed to consist in our being together; and in our hours of play or leisure our amusements received a double delight, from our talking to, and looking at, and touching, and fondly caressing each other.'*[5]

Indeed, the suggestion that very young children are capable of making a sexual choice, which is the basis of six of the love stories, suggests that no relationship can be regarded as free from sexual overtones: if children are sexual and love sexually then the relationship between children, even brothers and sisters, can be sexual.

The eighteenth-century belief in the inheritance of original sin and thus the sinful nature of small children from birth would naturally support this fear of infant, and thus sibling sexuality.

The coincidence in real life of two elements - the intensifying relationship of siblings, and the need for a familiar well-loved partner for marriage - brought the ideas of the role of a brother and the role of a husband close together in the imagination. The anxiety about incest is reflected in the fictions by the importance of the sibling relationships. It is not surprising that the anxiety is not tackled directly with an examination of fully incestuous relationships. The fictional mirror distorts and reduces the anxiety until the fiction can serve as an acceptable working-out of the tensions.

This is very clearly demonstrated in Julia de Roubigne when the hero and heroine, who are not blood-related but have loved each other from childhood, meet again after a gap of some years. The obstacle to their love is Julia's marriage of necessity to another man. Overtones of incest are present in her marriage too since her husband is a friend of her father and seems part of her father's generation. Her true love and Julia meet at the cottage of their shared wet-nurse to say their final farewell. The symbolism is obvious, the more so since their wet nurse loves them like a mother and calls them her foster-children.

> 'the last time I saw my lady, when I asked after her foster-brother, she told me, I must not speak of him now.'*[6]

> 'She loved them (said Le Blanc) like her own children, and they were like brother and sister to each other.' - 'Brother and sister, indeed!' (said Lisette.) She was more sagacious and had observed things better.'*[7]

Other stories in which the element of incest is reduced to a level which the reader can emotionally bear are those where the hero and heroine pretend to be brother and sister for their own safety. Their relationship echoes the pretence as it is familiar and sympathetic, while the lack of a real blood relationship means they can transform their pretend sibling state into a real marriage. This occurs in both Theagenes and Chariclea and Persiles and Sigismunda, while Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy, wards of the same guardian, have loved each other since childhood. Their relationship is familiar, tender and loyal, but almost totally lacking in physical contact. They spend most of the story living apart, communicating by letter, and are finally happily married.

Another way of acknowledging a brother's sexual involvement with his sister and yet safely reducing the tension is to place the

choice of her husband in his hands. In the successful versions of this compromise the brother can marry his sister to his best friend, thus enjoying a kind of surrogate sexual relationship with her. This is very apparent in Sir Charles Grandison, who seems at times to be involved with everyone, not least his two sisters and his ward. Lady G's rather frantic rejection of his authority becomes more interesting seen in this context as a rejection of her brother's overwhelming sexuality. The tension between the two is reduced as soon as she accepts her brother's choice of husband. David Simple conveniently falls in love with both the brother and sister at once, and they choose him together. The conflict of fraternal sexuality is explored in some stories by the heroine rejecting her brother's choice of partner. Thus Clarissa, Sidney Biddulph, and Betsy Thoughtless all reject the incestuous overtones of marrying their brother's man. In all these cases the emotional energy of the conflict between brother and sister can be understood only by the suggestion that the scene is a concealed working-out of incestuous tension.

Sidney Biddulph's brother is 'vexed to the heart' when she proposes to obey her mother and marry a man who is not her brother's choice:

> 'Indeed, Sidney, I must blame you for this part of your conduct; it looks like a strange insensibility in you. ... I do not mean to reproach you with your compliance, but I am vexed to the heart and must give it vent.'*[8]

When her mother had decided against Falkland, her brother's friend, his reaction makes this suggestion of incest very clear, as he identifies with the rejected man:

> 'I cannot help thinking that both Falkland and I are very ill used ... Madam (to my mother) you shall be troubled no farther by my friend or myself;'*[9]

This theory that incest is explored in disguise is supported by the fact that in all of the stories only four cases of genuine incest are threatened, and incest occurs only once. Incest is consummated only once - by Moll Flanders when she unknowingly marries the son of her lost mother. The cool tone of the narration preserves the reader from becoming too involved in the guilt of the act especially as it is presented as a material problem for Moll, the loss of her first proper establishment, as well as the slide into mortal sin.

Three stories feature threatened incest of parents with children. In The Fortunate Foundlings a father makes an attempt on his illegitimate daughter's honour, not realising she is his child although he reared her and her brother as his wards. Louisa runs away from home, but the family are later reunited when the father Dorilaus discovers they are his children. In The Mother; or, Happy Distress a son attempts to seduce his mother until she reveals her true identity and tells him her attentions are purely maternal, and the Queen in Female Banishment desires her son but chooses to plot against him, preferring his power to him.

These examples are the closest the authors of this survey come to confronting the fear of incest and it is clear that the closer the act of incest comes to fulfilment the more remote becomes the tone of narration, as one would expect if the authors are trying safely to reduce a fear rather than confront and express it.

This anxiety about incest which prompts the authors to suggest incestuous relationships but frightens them from expressing a fully-consummated relationship becomes more overt in the gothic novel. Incestuous relationships were a major element of the gothic novel, sinful but not inexpressible.*[10] The real-life anxiety that made incest an inexpressible fear was thus short-lived and may represent

the short period of time in which people in real life adapted to the idea of a companionate marriage and also adapted to the idea of intense but non-sexual sibling love. The growing belief in the innocence of childhood which flowered in the nineteenth century could have contributed to this.

2 SISTERS

A number of stories deal with rivalry between sisters, and it is interesting to see that while unrelated women have intimate and loving relationships, or form loving relationships with sisters-in-law, only one pair of sisters in the survey are emotionally close. They are the sisters in The Recess who spend their early childhood together and are parted by their adventures and then by death to the genuine grief of the survivor. All the other sisters in the survey - eight pairs in all - are competitive. Only two sisters-in-law are competitive while eight women form loving relationships with their brother's wives. The closest relationships are formed by women with women where there is no blood tie. Nineteen women are shown to have a close relationship with other women and it is this relationship which often forms the excuse for the multiple letters recounting the heroine's adventure, or forms the basis of the happy-ever-after commune. Only six women are shown in fierce competition with other unrelated women.

This minor but interesting pattern of sister rivalry may also be a result of the increased emotional intensity of family life in the eighteenth century. The increased affection between parents and children could have led to increased insecurity when children saw their parents preferring a sibling. This new area of emotional pain obviously contributes to the tensions between sisters and brothers,

but it adds a new dimension to the tensions between sisters, and between two sons.

Clarissa suffers from a spiteful elder sister as well as from an unkind brother, and the sister especially relishes separating Clarissa from her mother. Amelia's sister increases the gulf between Amelia and her mother and also forges her will to disinherit the previously favoured daughter - again the emotional conflict is linked with money. Sophia's sister is unendingly spiteful to the virtuous Sophia, and not all poor Sophia's love or filial duty can win her mother's affection.

> Her mother and sister had never loved her with any great degree of affection, and their tenderness for her was now entirely lost in the uneasy consciousness of having owed an obligation to her, for which they could not resolve to be grateful.*[11]

In The Vicar of Wakefield, The Temple Beau, and The Marriage Act the status of one daughter rises and falls in comparison with another and the children appear as competitors for parental attention.

The old Romance of Cupid and Psyche includes the popular element of sisterly jealousy. The sisters are jealous of Psyche's socially successful marriage:

> "... let us not be the messengers of her happy condition to our parents and the people; for those are not properly blessed whose riches no one is acquainted with. She shall know that we are not servants, but her elder sisters. And now, indeed, let us depart to our husbands, and visit our own poor habitations, for such they are when compared with hers, and, being furnished with more compressed thoughts, let us return with greater firmness to the punishment of her pride.*[12]

The pain of being a worthy but rejected younger son is clear in The Fool of Quality:

> He is second son, Sir, to the Earl of Moreland. The Earl of Moreland! you amaze me greatly, is this all the notice and care they take of such a treasure? Sir, replied the nurse, they never sent for him but once; they don't mind him, they take him for a fool.*[13]

The fictions provide a salutary reminder that the 'new affective responsibilities'*[14] did not necessarily lead to greater emotional security and happiness.

## 3 PARENTS AND BABIES

The relationship between parents and infants was not one which greatly interested the eighteenth-century reader. Despite the 2 theoretical examinations of infancy and childhood in Pamela in High Life and Emile, there are only 3 stories in which child-care and the life of babies is portrayed as worthy of the reader's attention. The intense interest in childhood as a time of innocence and formation of adult character was a phenomenon which came later. As Fielding says following a short paragraph describing parents reunited with their child after a long absence:

> But I ask your pardon for dwelling on such incidents, and will proceed to scenes which, to most persons, will be more entertaining.*[15]

The 3 stories which do describe baby-care show an interesting unanimity of opposition to wet-nursing and swaddling. The belief that a wet-nursing mother would spoil her milk if she had sexual intercourse*[16] may have been the understood but unstated reason behind Mr B's insistence that Pamela's baby should be sent away to a wet nurse in Pamela II. Pamela's reluctant obedience and the baby's subsequent illness indicate where Richardson's sympathies lay.

The sexual overtones of breast-feeding were again emphasised in Juliet Grenville when in an ideally happy marriage Juliet will not let her husband see her feed the baby. Their tone suggests that they are discussing a sexual favour:

> One evening as the minim creature lay nuzzling under the veil of a cambric handkerchief Lord Thomas sat opposite, gazing in speechless delight: permit me, Juliet, said he at length - I will give you a thousand pounds for one peep. No friend, said she, not for all you are worth. - You have nothing to say to it, it belongs to this little wretch here; and she pressed him closer to her bosom.*[17]

The opposition to swaddling prompted by Locke - so diligently read by Pamela, and supported by Rousseau in Emile - is followed also by the other fictional parents. Sir George Ellison instructs his wife that their son shall be allowed to kick freely to allow his legs to grow strong.

Locke's belief in fresh air and exercise to make children healthy and strong is supported in the contrasting treatment given to the brothers in The Fool of Quality. The neglected younger brother grows healthy and strong as a result of neglect while his older, pampered sibling grows weakly and eventually dies.

> Meanwhile the education of the two children was extremely contrasted. Richard who was already entitled my little Lord, was not permitted to breathe the rudeness of the wind. On his lightest indisposition the whole house was in alarms; his passions had full scope in all their infant irregularities; his genius was put into a hot bed, by the warmth of applauses given to every flight of his opening fancy; and the whole family conspired, from highest to the lowest, to the ruin of promising talents and a benevolent heart.
>
> Young Harry on the other hand, had every member as well as feature exposed to all weathers, would run about, mother-naked for near an hour, in a frosty morning; ... and was daily occupied, in playing at wrestling ...*[18]

# CHAPTER XI

## LOVE AND COURTSHIP

Historians who have considered the impact of the fictional on the real world think that the attitude to love and marriage in the fictional world coincided with a new emphasis on love and marriage in the real world. Lawrence Stone believes that the impact of the flood of new fictions from the 1770s onwards can be seen in the dramatic increase of marriages of love from the 1780s. He suggests that earlier marriages were made for dynastic or material motives and were planned by parents, with the young couple having the power only of veto. The fictional world's emphasis on love created a climate of opinion where the choice of partner devolved on the young people and their parents retained only the power of veto. Sexual passion 'became fashionable in the late eighteenth century thanks largely to the spread of novel-reading'.*[1]

The evidence in this thesis would disagree with such a view of fictions as a cause of change, and Stone himself suggests that 'after 1780 romantic love and the romantic novel grew together and the problem of cause and effect is one that is impossible to resolve'.*[2] I would suggest that the fashion for sexual love in the fictional and the real world are symptoms, and not causes, of a change in ideas which flowered in the last two or three decades of the eighteenth century. It seems unlikely that the fictions could cause such a major change since sexual love had been the most popular topic in every fictional family throughout the period. While sexual love is treated in a light-hearted or bawdy fashion in some Novellas or Picaro tales, others lay great emphasis on the importance of passion.

Romances and Histories stress the importance of sexual love, and in many the main story is a courtship and the happy conclusion is marriage. Of the stories in this survey 101 of the 127 stories (79.5% of the whole) include or feature an important love story. Consequently those Quality readers who made marriages of convenience and duty had always enjoyed the contrast of a fictional world which suggested that sexual love was of prime importance, and that sexual choice by the young people was the right foundation for a happy marriage. The fictional world had always stressed the pre-eminence of sexual passion and this had no measurable effect upon the marriage plans of the reader of Quality until after 1780 when 'for the first time in history romantic love became a respectable motive for marriage among the propertied classes'.*[3]

It is possible therefore to dismiss the idea that the sudden arrival of stories of sexual love in the fictional world stimulated a sudden change in sexual behaviour in the real world. However, there was a change in the fictional world in the latter half of the eighteenth century and this was of crucial importance to the authors and readers of the fictions. My analysis of the stories suggests that the majority of fictions written in the middle of the century deal in far more detail with feelings of the individuals and far less with external events or problems. This is the arrival of what has been called in this thesis the fiction of internal consciousness - the story where the main action takes place in the consciousness of the individuals and where the adventure is the development and maturing of the personality. The stress is upon the individual's feelings, and upon the individual's relationship with other complex and interesting people. The individual exists in a complex social world where moral and social considerations have to be taken into

account, and the reader is gripped with the adventure - not of the lone traveller through Picaro-type forests - but of the lonely, conscious, sensitive individual in the wilds of society. A comparison between, for example, Persiles and Sigismunda, a Romance written in 1617, with most mid-eighteenth-century fiction makes this distinction clear. Persiles and Sigismunda are in love and are going to marry. The morality or convenience of this relationship is not questioned; the obstacles they face are material ones of geography and climate, and practical problems with the intervention of other people. The reader meets them as an affianced couple and they remain true to each other.

Most of the eighteenth-century love stories of this survey have no major obstacle to overcome before they can reach a happy conclusion. There are no external obstacles as significant as the problems facing one individual in coming to terms with another. Only 50 courtships face any obstacle imposed by external forces and many of these can be avoided by a decision on the part of the heroine that her emotions, and the right to determine her own future, are more important than social or parental restraints.

However, for 21 heroines the only bar to their happy marriage is a trivial delay like the temporary absence of their lover as in Lydia or in The Stage Coach. In 24 cases the obstacle to the marriage is a discrepancy of wealth and status between the couple. When the heroine is poor the problem is overcome by a change of consciousness - the hero assaults her until her resolute defence forces him to realise that she sees herself with the same rights of chastity as a lady of Quality. If the hero is poor or low in social status his lack of position does represent a genuine bar to their marriage; they may love, but not marry, until the appearance of a

noble family or the surprise inheritance of wealth permits a wealthy marriage. If the couple are initially both working-class the ennobled hero remains true to his girlfriend, who also generally discovers that she too is nobly-born.

The most memorable obstacles to marriage are the villains, but there are surprisingly few villains in the stories. Many have no villain at all and in only 7 stories do villains provide a real obstacle to the happiness of the couple. The malice of Sir Thomas Sindall in The Man of the World who rapes one woman and then tries to marry their daughter, or the villainous behaviour of the hero-villain who could marry if he wished, like Lovelace or Philip Sedley in The Pupil of Pleasure, are dynamic examples of an uncommon type.

The stress upon the fictional individual's consciousness is reflected in the preference for marriage of choice in the fictional world. In 72 stories (56.7% of the total survey but 79.1% of those stories which express a clear opinion on the matter) the authors specifically support the marriage of choice, and reject arranged marriages. In a minority of 11 stories the tradition of the early and mid-eighteenth century real world is represented with the young people having the right only to veto the parents choice. The 8 stories where the young people are shown as having no influence over the choice of the partner may represent a minor boom as authors explored the dramatic potential of a forced marriage but do not suggest a major change in the moral climate of the fictional world which remains resolutely on the side of marriages for love. Most of the heroines who marry against their hearts, or who are forced to give up the man they really love, have difficulties in finding happiness. Eloise, Julia de Roubigné, Betsy Thoughtless, one of the heroines of The Siege of Calais, and Clarissa, would all have been happier if they had been

allowed to marry the man of their first choice. Those 7 heroines who defy their parents and entertain a clandestine courtship and marriage have the satisfaction of seeing their parents or guardian accept their lover and applaud their choice.

The new development in the fictions which coincides with the 1780s developments is the emphasis on the individual: on the individual's right to choose a partner, and on the reflections, constraints and errors related to that choice. But however fascinating this development of the fictional world, it seems unlikely that it should inspire a rapid major change of heart in the real world. The change from hundreds of years of tradition of the arranged marriage to the innovation of a marriage of choice, with all the concurrent risks in a society where marriage was still a business of property and divorces infrequent and scandalous, must surely have been stimulated by something more revolutionary than a change of emphasis in traditional love stories.

In any case, as I suggest elsewhere, the intimate relationship between authors and readers contradicts the idea that the eighteenth-century fictional world could lead the real world in ideological change. The fictional world was a more or less accurate reflection of the real world, constructed by authors generally living in the contemporary world; it was not an instrument of propaganda constructed by an avant-garde elite. Consequently a change in the fictional world reflects but would not cause a change in the real world. That reflection can support the change, or speed-up the acceptance of a new idea by giving it wide and encouraging publicity, but the initial stimulus would come from some cause in the real world.

If this was so, then the problem remains that the change to fictions of internal consciousness seems to precede the change in the real world to love matches. I think it is likely that both the change in the fictional and in the real worlds was caused by the development of a revolutionary new idea which had its first impact in the fictional world which is naturally quick to accept new ideas - having nothing to lose and much to gain by the introduction of fresh ingredients - and more slowly in the real world where revolutionary ideas had to battle with traditional views for their place. In this model of cross-fertilisation of ideas, the revolutionary idea developed slowly in the real world, was adopted by the fictional world where it was used experimentally and then with growing confidence, and stimulated a new tendency in fictional writing at the same time as it was gradually penetrating the lives of people in the real world. The change in the fictions starts showing around 1760 onwards; the change in the real world is traced by historians from the 1780s. The revolutionary idea was the body of ideas about the importance of the individual, as opposed to the old ideas about the importance of the larger group to which the individual belonged as a minor functional element. The larger group could be the immediate family where the individual had duties and work to perform, the extended family, or clan where the individual adopted a role depending on age, sex, or seniority; the group of workers where the individual played a role determined by tradition, or the class to which the individual was expected to subsume private ambitions and pleasures beneath obligations to maintain the elite in a privileged position. The revolutionary idea was that the individual was not primarily significant in these public functions, but was important as an individual, important to him or herself, important in personal relationships, important in making individual choices about ambitions

and goals in which the individual might first consult his or her own feelings and then - and only then - consult the feelings of other people or the larger group.

The consequences of this idea are easier to trace in the restricted world of fiction than in the real world although both were reshaped by this idea. In fiction the emphasis on the individual led to the stories of internal consciousness where the drama and attention is focused on the feelings and development of one or two main characters. The excitement of the story comes from their struggle to control their lives and to understand themselves, to grow to their full potential. The love stories become complex interactions between one developing personality and another. The couple choose each other under the stimulus of sexual attraction, but they consider that choice with care in prolonged reflection. They consider also their role in the larger world and the obligations they owe to others. Their duties and obligations are not automatic, they are the result of a considered and careful choice; the drama of many stories is the chief protagonists maturing to be able to make the right choice, both of partner and life-style.

The emphasis upon the individual leads naturally to an emphasis upon feelings. The entire fashion based on the idea of sensibility developed from the emphasis on the individual as the most interesting ingredient in the fictional world, so all other ingredients measure their importance in terms of the effect they have on the sensitive individual.

In the real world Lawrence Stone defines a critical change 'from distance, deference and patriarchy to what I have chosen to call affective individualism'.*[4] The emphasis on the individual manifested itself clearly in religious, spiritual, and imaginative areas

where a personal relationship with God and a personal spiritual odyssey became an acceptable concern. The fashion of sensibility was not confined to the fictional world but the emphasis on the feelings of the individual and his or her response to external stimuli indicates the impact of the idea of the individual on the real world. The social changes are far too wide-ranging to be charted. It is only possible here to suggest that an individual who trusted his or her independent judgement in preference to a collective decision, or a traditional way of working, would be an innovative, inventive person. The stimulus of individual feelings such as greed or ambition were liberated with the higher spiritual individual feelings, and the constraints of a rigid hierarchical traditional society were loosened by the emphasis shifting from the needs of the wider group to the needs of the individual and his chosen kin.

The kin would indeed be chosen. If individual feelings were the prime factor in decisions and plans then domestic life especially would feel the impact of the stress on individual feelings and the pursuit of happiness. Marriages became personal emotive relationships, and the relationship with children also became emotionally important. The extended family, where duties and obligations were owed to many members, was destroyed by the emphasis on feeling. Only the smaller nuclear family could satisfy the individual's new need for privacy and the individual's simultaneous need for intense relationships.

Inevitably, as the women of Quality were squeezed out of positions of power and out of productive work in the real world they became increasingly confined to the home where the demand for emotional satisfaction was concentrated. The interest in the individuality and maturation of children concentrated their attention on their role as mothers. Changes in childcare which took place at this time, such as

a marked decrease in child-beating*[5], the interest in pediatrics*[6], and in discipline by reward and reason rather than by violence*[7], could be effected only by one full-time, committed individual. That individual was likely to be the child's natural mother and she was encouraged in her role by her belief that she was promoting the child's happiness and her own fulfillment by this close relationship. The emphasis on the search for happiness through personal relationships prompted also the intensification of the relationship between the husband and his wife. Such an emotional development can only have been encouraged by the legal changes which deprived women of the right to own property; the source of her well-being, both emotionally and financially was a woman's husband or father.

While men and women were affected by the emphasis on individual happiness and both started to seek such happiness through emotional personal relationships, such relationships may have meant more to women who had few other sources of satisfaction or entertainment in their lives. Similarly, although both men and women read fictions it may have been that the stories of love and emotional development spoke most emphatically to women who may have been prepared by convention and education for light fictional reading, and who may have had more time to read than their better-educated, better-occupied husbands. Both in the fictional and in the real world women were encouraged to monopolise areas of emotional life and the repercussions of this are still visible in the real and fictional worlds of today.

## 1 RIVALRY AND FLIRTING

The details of courtship gained in importance by the stress on the individual's consciousness and behaviour, and the interest in the heroine's maturation and development, permitted a period of youthful silliness through which the heroine could pass. Consequently even

the best heroines are permitted a degree of sexual freedom provided they do not cross the line of sexual intercourse or foreplay. Betsy Thoughtless is involved in a little innocent romping when she is young and silly and although this is shown as dangerous levity, it is not a bar to her marriage. Her loss of her lover and subsequent unhappiness is caused by general misbehaviour - her flirtatious nature was not the sole cause of her grief.

The two well-known Richardson coquets, Anna Howe and Lady G., tease and flirt with their lovers and yet retain their respectability. In the two Richardson cases the coquettish behaviour masks first indifference and then growing liking. Most heroines - like Richardsons's chief heroines - feel too deeply to play with the feelings of their lovers, and most of the coquets of the survey are heroines of sub-plots, or ladies who serve as a foil to the main heroine. Altogether there are 42 respectable coquets in a third of the stories of the survey (33.1%). As the heroines' best friends their liveliness serves as a foil to the heroines' seriousness and deeper feelings.

Six courtships are overshadowed by a rival. Harriet Byron is the most remarkably patient of the women who have to share their lover, but Sophia, Sidney Biddulph, Betsy Thoughtless, Harriot Stuart and Fanny in Injured Innocence all suffer from rivals for their hero's affections. In Betsy Thoughtless' case Trueworth goes so far as to marry the other woman. Not until he is widowed and Betsy's own husband is dead can the two finally be united. Other heroines have to face rival girlfriends, and they deal with them in the same way in which the two jealous wives win back their husbands - by superior charm.

# CHAPTER XII

## SEXUAL MORALITY

The majority of the stories of this survey support without question the double standard of sexual morality where the man is free to enjoy sexual encounters and the woman is a virgin before marriage and monogamous thereafter. Husbands sometimes retain sexual freedom after marriage and this is generally seen as a problem for the wife, who is faced with the task of reclaiming her husband. In the stories with a happy ending she succeeds in so doing by retaining her charm and friendliness towards her erring husband who grows tired of illicit pleasures and returns home.

A total of 70 stories (55.1% of the survey) clearly show the double standard of sexual behaviour. Most of the heroes (99, 86.0% of heroes) are shown as sexually active and a minority of 20 are rakes whose sexual appetites and sophistication are a dominant feature of their characters. Their appetites lead them to attempt to seduce the heroine, and in some cases they succeed. In other stories they abduct or rape the heroine. But even in such an extreme and unique case as Injured Innocence the rake can still reform and be married to the woman he betrayed and abandoned. The difference between such rampantly sexual heroes and the villains lies only in their appeal to the reader and to the heroine. The rakish hero often has an ambiguous appeal: he is both threatening and yet desirable; while the rakish villain is often repulsive. The rakish hero is interested only in the heroine's person, while the rakish villain has mixed motives, like Manfred in The Castle of Otranto who desires Isabella but also needs her to legitimate his claim to the castle, or the Pupil of Pleasure who is conducting a sociological

experiment in his debauchery. Perhaps the most significant difference is that the heroes are amenable to their victims' influence while the villains' late reformations are never in response to their love for the heroine.

The double sexual standard is most marked when it extends into marriage with the wife accepting her husband's sexual infidelity. Six stories show wives suffering from unfaithful husbands and trying to win them back by patience and uncomplaining love. Pamela's self-trial when she examines her behaviour to see why her husband should be grossly neglectful of her is a well-known example of a major pattern in eighteenth-century fiction. Less familiar, but equally subservient, is the behaviour of Clarinda when faced with her unfaithful husband:

> To expostulate I feared might estrange his affection, and I hoped <u>that</u> melancholy which I could not disguise, and that tender behaviour which my heart prompted, would awaken his reflection, and enable his duty to gain the victory.*[1]

The didactic message of stories of wives confronting unfaithful husbands is very clear. Haywood states it explicitly:

> ... as law and custom have given the superiority to the men, it is doubtless the duty as well as interest of every wife, who would preserve the affection of her husband, to be constantly assiduous about two things: first, by a prudent watchfulness over his temper and her own actions to avoid whatever might create in him a disgust; - and secondly to endeavour, by a soft and endearing behaviour, to win, and, as it were, steal him from those errors to which he may possibly be addicted, and which his pride, perhaps, would not suffer him to be reasoned out of.*[2]

Even the increased sensibility of the later years of the century did not create a revulsion of feeling against this subservience of one individual to another. The enduring appeal of the picture of

the suffering of innocent women was sufficient to guarantee the popularity of fictional scenes where the innocent wife suffered and the culpable husband enjoyed himself. In Combe's mawkishly sentimental Letters the wife's comfort is to be the stoical courage of suffering bravely borne:

> If he treats thee well, which I trust he will, return his kindness with gratitude. - If it should be possible for him to neglect or insult thee, teach him by thy patience and submission to use thee better. - If that should fail - still continue to persevere in the line of duty; for it will be an honour and a comfort to thee!*[3]

This attitude has its roots in the pleasure the readers took in the sight of a virtuous woman in undeserved pain, but it also reflects the survival of the sexual double standard in society. As Johnson reveals, a betrayed wife was forced to bear the pain since there was simply nowhere else for her to go:

> if for instance, from mere wantonness of appetite, he steals privately to her chambermaid. Sir, a wife ought not greatly to resent this. I would not receive home a daughter who had run away from her husband on that account.*[4]

Female sexuality in the stories is a complicated response. Most of the heroines are sexually active, or at least passively warm. More than half the heroines, 66 of them (59.4%), are actively sexual, making a choice of a husband and making that choice clear like the two passionately-devoted heroines in The Recess, or the infatuated Charlotte in The Friends who overlooks her husband's infidelity and implication in a murder since she loves him so deeply. Nearly a third of the heroines, 35 of them (31.5%), are passively warm in that they accept the heroes' approaches and do not positively rebuff or positively invite them. This is the attitude of Betty Evelyn who admires her brother's tutor but easily controls her feelings and is

shocked to hear of a woman who elopes for love in The Card. An exaggeration of this temperate sexuality is Leonora who cannot bear to marry and discovers she loves the hero only when he is injured and near death, or Miss Walton who leaves her discovery of love until the Man of Feeling is on his deathbed and actually does die.

Only 7 heroines are clearly frigid in that they consistently reject sexual advances, like one of the virtuous ladies of Millenium Hall, and the cool Princess of Rasselas. Emile's Sophy seems very cold sexually despite her flirtatious and coquettish behaviour. Once engaged to be married she establishes an agreement with Emile that he is to have no sexual rights, and intercourse is to occur seldom and only when she permits. As a token of his respect they are to sleep apart on their wedding night. The enamoured Emile admires her delicacy.

However not all women in the fictions manage to deny or control their sexual life. In 50 stories (39.3% of the survey) important women characters are shown engaging in sexual intercourse although they are unmarried. Most of these are the immoral women of the sub-plots, but in 21 stories it is the heroine who is involved in pre-marital sexual activity. In a number of scenes such activity seems coerced but the fictions reflect faithfully the sexual double standards of the society which emphasise the loss of maidenhead of a woman and not the nature of the act in which she lost that virginity. Consequently, whether the sexual intercourse was a seduction or a rape matters little to most of the authors who regard the loss of their heroine's virginity as an unmitigated disaster whatever the circumstances of the act. In only 2 cases - Clarissa, and Injured Innocence,- do heroines insist that their chastity is untouched because they lost their virginity without their informed consent:

Clarissa in a drugged sleep, and Fanny as a victim of a complicated deception. It is no accident that the only resolution of Clarissa's contradiction of her physical loss of virginity is her death. In this way her carnal experience is denied through the death of her physical body, and her assertion of spiritual innocence is supported by her insistence on her spiritual future. In the case of Injured Innocence Fanny's lover returns and marries her. He is restating the marriage vows which he made previously in deception and thus confirming her view that they had been married ever since the first false marriage. Only 2 women of the survey - Fanny who marries her lover, and Julie in Rousseau's book - make happy marriages after the loss of their virginity. Julie is interesting in that she does not marry her lover, but marries another man who is sympathetic and understanding and does not insist on physical virginity, or even untouched emotions, on the part of his bride. The importance of this attitude and its revolutionary nature is emphasised by its unique presence in this survey, and by the author's recognition that he was saying something extreme. Although the story is very unlike the early Romance, in calling Julie 'the new Eloise' Rousseau is stressing the differences between his new heroine, and the traditional heroine of Abelard and Eloise who could make no moral, emotional, or material recovery from the error of her seduction.

By generally avoiding the question of whether a heroine is raped or seduced the authors supported the emphasis of the sexual double standard on the physical virginity of a bride of the Quality, and they also avoided precise physical details of the struggle or consent which would have led them into trouble with the moralist critics who disapproved of detailed physical lovemaking in the stories.

The attitude to the loss of chastity of women in the sub-plots is even less ambiguous than the attitude towards heroines. In 29 sub-plots women are shown succumbing to the appeal of a seducer and their loss of chastity is always a didactic negative example. Indeed, a fallen woman is the most popular subject for a sub-plot and occurs in 41.2% of all the sub-plots of the survey. Unchaste women lose their attractions and their lovers reject them, often in favour of the virgin heroine. The passionate willingness of Olivia in Sir Charles Grandison cannot compete with the unconquered virginity of Harriet. Other unchaste women decline into prostitution and death. Their stories serve both as a didactic negative example and enable the author to introduce some thrilling and erotic scenes which do not endanger the heroine. Such is the sub-plot in Emily Montague where a woman is seduced and then abandoned by her lover. She dies in misery and poverty and her virtuous friend adopts the abandoned child. Almost all the cameo-stories in Atlantis are about the seductions of women and all end in tragedy. The most harrowing is the story of the ward who is seduced by her guardian's theories of polygamy. Their pretend-marriage ends in ruin when he infects her, makes her pregnant, and leaves her for a chaste woman whom he marries. The previous mistress of Sidney Biddulph's husband meets Sidney and tells the tale of her undoing, while Amelia's seduced friend warns both her and the reader against the perils of masquerades.

Seductions of heroines or secondary characters tend to be described coolly or are implied rather than directly described. The exceptions to this are those seductions which occur in distant times or in fantasy lands when the readers may have felt safe in enjoying more erotic detail which had no direct relevance to their own lives.

Peter Wilkins, delightedly unwrapping his flying wife from her wings to find her naked underneath, is stimulating but unrealistic while the vividly erotic experiments of Daphnis and Chloe take place in a safely remote, pastoral, ancient setting:

> They were sitting side by side against the trunk of an oak, and having once tasted the delights of kissing were indulging in that pleasure insatiably. They were also embracing, in order to press their lips more closely together. In the course of these embraces Daphnis pulled Chloe rather violently towards him with the result that she somehow fell over on her side, and he following his kiss, fell over with her. Realising that it was just like their dreams, they lay together for a long time as if they had been tied together. But as they had no idea what to do next and thought that love could go no further, nothing came of it.*[5]

One can almost smell the 'jessemine' in one of the seduction scenes of the safely remote fantasy-land of Atlantis. A country with a hot climate in every sense of the word:

> The weather being then violently hot the umbrelloes were let down from behind the Windows, the Sashes open, whence the Jessemine that covered 'em, blew in with a Fragrancy. Tuberoses set in pretty Gilt and China Pots, were placed advantageously upon Stands; the Curtains of the Bed drawn back to the Canopy made of yellow Velvet embroider'd with white Bugles, and the panels of the Chamber were Looking-Glass. Upon the Bed was strew'd, with a lavish Profuseness, plenty of Orange and Lemon flowers; and to complete the Scene, the young Germanicus in a Dress and Posture not very decent to describe. ... He had thrown himself upon the Bed, with nothing on but his Shirt and Nightgown, which he had so indecently disposed, that slumbering as he appear'd his whole Person stood confess'd to the Eyes of the Amorous Duchess.*[6]

This early story (1716) is especially interesting since it seems designed to stimulate the female reader as it is male nudity and the seduction of a young man which is lovingly described. Such delights for the female reader do not appear in later fictions where seductions are never again described in such luscious detail nor feature young men as their object.

The cooler tone of seduction scenes is especially marked in stories set in eighteenth-century England where the moral consequences of describing realistic scenes in a contemporary setting may have worried the authors:

> we will lock up likewise a scene which we do not think proper to expose to the eyes of the public. If any over-curious readers should be disappointed on this occasion we will recommend such readers to the apologies with which certain gay ladies have lately been pleased to oblige the world, where they will possibly find everything recorded that passed at this interval.*[7]

This example further contrasts with the quotation from Atlantis since it implies that readers would be 'over-curious' to wish to know details of the sexual acts, and that such erotic descriptions are improper in a fiction.

One aspect of a society where the sexuality of women was increasingly repressed emerges clearly in the fictional world: the undercurrent of fear about uncontrollable female sexuality. This fear inspired the stereotype figure of the old maid whose repressed desires have turned to bitterness or eccentricity; and spinster eccentrics appear in Humphry Clinker, Tom Jones, and other stories. The related stereotype of the amorous woman, no longer able to attract lovers and forced to rely on the secondary pleasures of working as a bawd or procuress, aids the rapists in the stories. The fear of female sexuality becomes a terror when a woman takes the sexual initiative. Such amorous women are always described as grotesque:

> Her countenance enflamed and reddened so as to deepen the artificial layer of tints that overspread its surface; eyes twinkling and glimmering with those occasional fires: and languishingly fixed upon me with a certain timidity and diffidence, as if they were asking charity: her neck, bare in some places, through the disorder of a tippit, which had faithfully answered her intentions, in giving way to the slightest pull, discovered the peels and cracks of a varnish, which had not been proof against the variety of its inflexions. ... the whole, in short of her person, spread before me like a desert of dried fruit.*[8]

# CHAPTER XIII

## PUNISHMENT AND PAIN

An interesting parallel with the sexual double standard by which working women bear the burden of male sexual licence is the distribution of suffering in the stories where women, and especially the heroine, endure most of the pain caused by the villain, by nemesis, and even by accident. The pain suffered by the heroine is far in excess of anything suffered by either the hero or the villain, even including the well-earned punishments of the villains at the close of the story. A total of 32 heroines are locked up, another 2 are kept in a madhouse, and 11 are held captive in a convent. Of all the heroines in this survey 40.5% of them suffer the loss of their liberty in one way or another.

Heroines suffer pain and death too: 57 (51.3% of them) suffer some sort of physical assault while 18 heroines die, and 3 are murdered. Even when this assault stops short of actual rape or murder it is a severe and prolonged experience. Although women of Quality who remain wealthy tend to escape the assaults which result from being exploited in a working environment, they are freely abused and this abuse is not always sexual. Harriet, the betrayed woman in The Pupil of Pleasure, lies broken and bleeding after a coach crash, a scene drawn with such relish that one is forced to assume that readers and authors obtained considerable pleasure from the picture of a woman suffering bodily pain.

In contrast only 31 heroes are locked up, including one hero in a madhouse (26.9% of all heroes). A total of 15 heroes die, and 6 are murdered: altogether there are 21 dead heroes (18.2% of them).

The villains, who might have been expected to bear the brunt of the suffering are relatively untouched. A quarter of them escape scot-free, (15, 25.4% of them) and 10 of these (16.9% of villains) are actually victorious. Only 6 villains (10.1% of them) are punished with imprisonment, one in a madhouse, while 9 die and 5 are killed. Although the majority of villains (30, 59.3% of them) are defeated at the end of the story, the preferred punishment for most of them (56 villains, 94.6%) is a loss only of wealth and status rather than physical suffering or a loss of liberty. The diabolical cruelty of Ferdinand Count Fathom goes unpunished after he reforms and recovers from his illness, while the cruelty of the entire aristocratic family, spiteful sister and lecherous father, is forgotten and forgiven by the Fortunate Country Maid. As she says:

> 'My Joy was too great to admit of any Resentment.' *[1]

Townley is forgiven murder in The Friends, and the considerable grief and pain in the The Fruitless Enquiry is generally borne by innocent women. The alarming cruelty of Mrs Orgueil in David Simple, whose wilful neglect causes the death of a child, goes unpunished; the evil-doers in The Atom, The Devil on Two Sticks, and Chrysal, get off scot-free.

Most significantly, the pain or death of the heroines tends to be a prolonged and agonising business while the death or dismissal of the villain is seldom dwelled on by the authors. So although villains die more often than any other character (which one would expect in fictions which tend to have happy endings) the most evocative descriptions of suffering deal with the heroine's pains.

Heroines suffer so much more than the other characters that their pain cannot be explained away by suggesting that this is part of the structure of melodrama. The pattern of pain and grief for the heroines is suspiciously regular and suggests that the fictional world is revealing an obsession with female suffering. This can be explained, to some extent, by the real world of authors and readers. Women as second-class citizens of the eighteenth century endured real hardship. Working women were exposed to sexual assault and abuse but even women of Quality could face legal physical punishment from parents, guardians, and husbands.*[2] The reflection in the fictional world is the fantasy of total female helplessness, depicted especially clearly in all the exotic societies of the East, and in the ancient past such as in The Fruitless Enquiry where brothers, fathers, and lovers, are prepared to gang-up on an isolated and defenceless woman. In the fictional Europe the Roman Catholic Church is depicted as providing another force for the oppression of women. The heroine can face institutionalised abuse and imprisonment like Eloise, Clementina in Sir Charles Grandison, the Fortunate Country Maid, or a heroine of The Siege of Calais.

Another thread contributing to the fictional world's vivid tapestry of suffering female virtue was the increased interest in the physical suffering of the crucifixion. The identification of virtue with suffering is a feature of all versions of the Christian faith but seventeenth and eighteenth-century Methodists and some minority sects relished the imagery of the cross and the importance of blood.

> See from his head, his hands, his feet
> What grief and love flow mingled down,
> Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
> Or thorns compose so rich a crown?
>
> His dying crimson like a robe
> Spreads o'er his body on the tree*[3]

The medical belief in the importance of cupping patients contributed to the emphasis on the heroine bleeding in response to a crisis. Harriet Byron's nosebleed and Amelia's vents of tears are a physical sign that both women are in an extremity of feeling which needs physical relief. It also shows them as symbols of virtue who are giving blood or tears because of the wickedness in the world.

> Amelia now threw herself into a chair, complained she was a little faint, and begged a glass of water. The doctor advised her to be blooded; but she refused, saying she required a vent of another kind. She then desired her children to be brought to her, whom she immediately caught in her arms, and, having profusely cried over them for several minutes, declared she was easy. After which she soon regained her usual temper and complexion.*[4]

The pleasure in the physical suffering of the virtuous accounts for much of the relish of pain and death which is found in the fictions. However, the sexual aspects of the suffering heroine should not be overlooked; even when she is suffering from assaults which are not necessarily sexual in intent the reader still has a picture of a helpless woman exposed to danger. In the case of sexual assaults the erotic potential is even greater. The ambiguous authorial attitude to sexual assaults in Pamela, for example, was spotted by Richardson's contemporaries who responded with a number of satires on the titillating struggles of Pamela. Equally, the suffering of Clarissa and Clementina seems sometimes designed to arouse rather than appal the reader. Sir Charles Grandison is supposed to be the least ambigious of Richardson's stories yet the suffering of Harriet, let alone the exotic tortures of Clementina,

seems to be told with relish. Even Harriet's relatively brief abduction and assault is told with meticulous detail. As she recounts the episode she seems to be counting her injuries with an almost masochistic pleasure: "I have the marks still," she says.

> I begg'd pray'd, besought them not to go, and when they did, would have thrust myself out with them. But the wretch, in shutting them out, squeezed me dreadfully, as I was half in, half out; and my nose gushed out with blood.
>
> I screamed: He seemed frighted: But instantly recovering myself - So, so, you have done your worst! - You have killed me, I hope. I was out of breath; my stomach was very much pressed, and one of my arms was bruised. I have the marks still; ...*[5]

The belief that 'neither male nor female is victimised by sex until Richardson*[6] is contradicted by the excessive pain suffered by women in the Novella stories of the late seventeenth century as in The Fruitless Enquiry. The suffering of women in fiction has a long tradition, reflecting in the fictional world the pleasures and pains of patriarchy in the real world.

Sexual misbehaviour is an important element in the fictions, and immorality or crime is featured in most of them (102 or 80.3% of the survey). The peak of popularity for this sort of writing occurred in the middle years of the century but remained important for the entire period of the survey. The popularity of scenes of wrong-doing remained constant but I believe there was a change in attitudes. In the early years of the eighteenth century the readers relished not only scenes of bawdiness and crime but also enjoyed the serious treatment of melodramatic crimes like banditry, theft, and murder. In later years, with the increase of sensibility and delicacy among some readers, attitudes changed. Comic misbehaviour and crime were no longer acceptable but the melodramatic

sufferings of the innocent retained their appeal; criminal and vicious behaviour became elements for serious treatment. In a further development of this serious attitude some stories sincerely condemned evil, and a few rejected all scenes of crime and vice altogether. They are a small minority, but 13 fictions (10.2% of the total survey) clearly condemn wrong-doing. With the exception of Telemachus, all were written in the years 1750 to 1780. Similarly, the 9 fictions which have no scenes of crime at all were all written either in the last half of the century, or preceded the eighteenth century.

This rejection of vice and, even more emphatically, this lack of interest in evil-doing even as a fictional device may be a predictable result of the increased importance of sensibility and delicacy. The surviving popularity of scenes of vice and suffering does not contradict such a trend. Such scenes changed their nature to appeal to the new mood of sensibility. The relish for evil-doing with scenes of mortal sin became a minority feature, confined to gothic and exotic stories, while in the majority of the domestic realistic stories evil was transformed into minor spitefulness in 27 (21.2%) of the stories of this survey.

As The Cry specifically indicates, the old crusade against villains and dark forests evolved into a microcosmic adventure:

> the puzzling mazes into which we shall throw our heroine, are the perverse interpretations made upon her words; the lions, tigers, and giants from which we endeavour to rescue her, are the spiteful and malicious tongues of her enemies.*[7]

One of the consequences of concentrating on such internal adventures of consciousness is that in order for them to be as exciting as the discarded lions, tigers, and giants, the spite and

malice of the enemies has to be of fantastic and nightmarish proportions. In The Cry the heroine's tone takes on a note of hysteria as she tries, hopelessly outnumbered, to defend herself:

> ... One very pleasing manner in which Ferdinand made love to me was by the innocence and chastity of his behaviour.
>
> The horse-laugh which burst from the Cry on Portia's last expression, was so loud and continued so long, that she almost despair'd of ever again resuming her discourse. At last with a broad grin on all their countenances, as if ready to burst out again on the next words she should utter, they jogg'd each other into silence.*[8]
>
> ... The rough and unmannerly behaviour of the Cry, for a moment confounded Portia, enough to bring into her face a blush ...*[9]
>
> Portia could have uttered nothing more likely to inflame the Cry with indignation than the assertion that she was not to be ruffled by their ill-grounded contempt: and they were ready to have fallen on her affectation with the utmost virulence of their tongues.*[10]

This exaggerated accusation and lonely defence is exceptionally hysterical in tone, but this way of seeing the world is repeated in other stories. Lydia; or, Filial Piety or Ethelinde both have scenes where the heroine faces the grossest attacks from dull and insensitive people who seem determined to misunderstand her. Her delicacy and innocence is turned against her and used by them as evidence of her affectation, or even wrong-doing. She has nightmarish experiences with unavoidable vulgar acquaintances.

For Sidney Biddulph, Pamela, Psyche, and the Fool of Quality the grief of the situation is heightened as the rejection or attack comes from a member of the immediate family. Pamela suffers assault and bullying from her sister-in-law, and Psyche's sisters spitefully conspire to ruin her life. It is part of the popular pattern that the heroine's virtues are the very characteristics which inspire malice.

Sophia's generosity to her mother and sister only exacerbate their cruelty to her:

> Thus did the unhappy Sophia, with the softest sensibility of heart, and tenderest affections, see herself excluded from the endearing testimonies of a mother's fondness, only by being too worthy of them, and exposed to shocking suspicious of undutifulness; for an action that shewed the highest filial affection: so true it is, that great virtues cannot be understood by mean and little minds, and with such, not only lose all their lustre, but are too often mistaken for the contrary vices.*[11]

Sidney Biddulph and Betsy Thoughtless suffer pressure and cruel criticism from their hosts and guardians while they are young and impressionable girls, and the Fool of Quality's family openly prefer his indulged older brother and neglect him. In David Simple the frantic envy of Mrs Orgueil leads to the death of Cynthia's daughter through wilful neglect.

Both male and female authors contribute to the pictures of spiteful behaviour but the sense of paranoia is conveyed most vividly by Sarah Fielding in The Cry, David Simple, and Cleopatra and Octavia. The vitality of Fielding's portrait of hysterical self-defence may have been inspried by the problems facing a single impoverished woman in an oppressive and competitive society. But the picture of paranoia was not confined to female authors: Richardson's heroines seem surrounded by overwhelming pressures, and one of them can escape only through death.

This exaggerated spitefulness can be explained by the real-life fear of public comment natural in a society where social standards were changing so rapidly, and yet manners and morals were still seen as one. Mildly improper or even accidentally incorrect behaviour could brand a woman of Quality for life. The chance of

a suitable marriage was dependent on her good reputation, yet with changing styles of what was permissible, and the unchanging malicious nature of gossip, a lady in society would have walked a knife-edge of propriety. The potency of all those cruel tongues, which is conveyed so vividly in more than a fifth of the stories of this survey, perhaps can be understood only when one visualises the small enclosed elite frequenting very few fashionable places. A woman ruined in Bath would be ruined also in London: the 'cry' would go before her. As Haywood says:

> Bath is the same thing as London; - people
> are so perpetually going backwards and forwards
> that what is talk'd on in one place can never
> be long a secret in the other.*12

Another contributing factor may be the birth of the new mood of sensibility. To a genuinely sensitive person the eighteenth century was full of distressing sights and sounds, and before sensibility became the hallmark of fashion a sensitive person might expect to be the butt of unfeeling humour like Harley in The Man of Feeling. The hysterical tone of self-defence of these stories may be explained by the pain suffered by sensitive people forced to live in a tough and competitive society.

# CHAPTER XIV

## SOCIAL STANDARDS

The stories adopt a fairly unanimous attitude to some notable features of social life. Gambling, masquerades, and duels offered such dramatic possibilities for a fiction that the authors seemed unable to resist the temptation of involving their heroes and heroines in them. But their attitude towards such events is often disapproving, and this may be a reflection of the growing opposition to them in the eighteenth century.

### 1 DUELS

Only 6 heroes go so far as to refuse to fight duels on moral grounds, and 4 heroes fight duels against their better judgement. They are like Sir Charles Grandison who is morally opposed to duelling but on 3 occasions is forced to draw his sword. The 10 stories specifically opposed to duelling argue their case very forcibly, but they are in a minority. In 41 stories duels form an exciting part of the action. The appeal of the duel as a climax to a story, a convenient way of disposing of the villain as in The Siege of Calais, or as a tragic end for the hero as in Julia Mandeville, is too strong to permit the disappearance of this device from the fictional world. And indeed, the duel was an important feature in the real world of the elite of eighteenth-century England.*[1]

### 2 MASQUERADES

The interest in masquerades - the balls where masked strangers could meet and talk to each other without introduction - is more of a minority interest, but the authors' didactic opposition to the balls is clear. Of the 16 stories which feature masquerades only one fails

to make it clear that they are potentially improper, even dangerous, occasions. The exception is The Friends, a book more concerned with characters and actions than with a moral position.

Pamela's distress at discovering the tone and style of the balls is increased by the discovery of her husband's flirtation, while Harriet Byron's abduction and near-rape is made possible by the confusion of disguises. A French masked ball is a scene of impropriety in The Fortunate Foundlings; and Jenny Jessamy makes the common complaint that they would be enjoyable occasions if they were properly organised and exclusive. Two plots against Amelia's honour depend on her attending the masked ball at Ranelagh but wisely she refuses to go, and even goes so far as to deceive her husband and disguise her friend to avoid attending.*[2]

3 GAMBLING

The stories are almost unanimously opposed to the practice of gambling, which is shown as a most serious addiction in 37 of the 39 stories in which characters are seen to gamble. The wasteful and addictive practice - generally playing cards for high stakes - and the related vices of greed, envy, and cheating are the meat of the observer-style stories while gambling is featured in all of the Eastern observer stories, and in Common Sense, The Invisible Spy, The History of the Devil, The Devil on Two Sticks, and Chrysal. Betsy Thoughtless' behaviour includes gambling, and Roderick Random gambles his fortune away. Booth in Amelia gambles while his wife and children are on the edge of poverty, and the Fool of Quality and the Citizen of the World are strongly opposed to the game.

> It is impossible to give you any idea of this scene, in which every moment produced such sudden transitions from dispair to exultation, from shouts of joy to the most blasphemous execrations of their very being, on the vicissitudes in the momentary fortunes of the actors, that the very recollection of it is a pain to me, as it bears too strong a resemblance to the fortunes of the damned.*[3]

In this clear bias the authors are reflecting the birth of a concern in real life over the problem of gambling which had turned 'from a pastime into an obsession, from an innocent amusement into a scourge'.*[4]

# CHAPTER XV

## RELIGION AND POLITICS

The majority of the stories, written as they were by authors living in a self-styled Christian society under a system of government which was elected by the wealthy elite, support both an overtly Christian position and are generally in favour of strictly limited democracy.

### 1 RELIGION

More than a third of the stories express approval for behaviour based on the Christian religion. In 44 stories (34.6% of the total survey) the characters or the authorial commentary refer to God as a judge of the fictional actions or a forgiver of the sins. Many of the characters are shown as behaving well as a consequence of their Christian beliefs.

However, while all the stories (except those specifically concerned with Eastern religions or ancient pagan customs) take place against a general background of a Christian country, a substantial proportion comment on different methods of worship.

A number criticise and discuss the state of the Church of England. A total of 43 stories, a third of the total survey (33.8%), show concern at corrupt features in the established Church. Joseph Andrews and The Marriage Act show examples of corrupted or lazy parsons, and other stories also show Church of England priests as greedy or lazy men. The tone of criticism is always moderate, and suggests that the Church itself is not at fault but is occasionally ill-served by a minority of corrupt priests.

Fourteen stories (11.0% of the total survey) defend the Church of England against such criticism, claiming that it is fulfilling its function and is leading the nation.

The Roman Catholic Church and the dissenting sects, including Methodists, are strongly criticised but the tone of the attacks on Catholicism differs very markedly from the opposition to Dissenters. An attack on Roman Catholicism occurs in 24 stories (18.8% of the total survey) but this is less a moral attack than a result of two different traditions of fiction. In one tradition, which stretches back to the Novella stories, the convents and monasteries of the ancient Roman Catholic church are convenient institutions to separate a hot-blooded girl from her lover. This tradition was developed by later authors where supposedly modern convents in contemporary fictional Europe are happy to incarcerate heroines at the behest of Roman Catholic villains. Both the Fortunate Country Maid and Jenny Jessamy are imprisoned by the Catholic Church for the sexual convenience of one of their members. However, neither girl suffers badly from the experience and the convents are not shown as places of terrifying ordeal. Indeed some Roman Catholic heroines, as in The Siege of Calais or The Castle of Otranto, are glad of the refuge.

Some of the worst behaviour by Roman Catholics in Sir Charles Grandison, where Olivia is driven nearly mad by a combination of unrequited love and theology, is shown by Richardson to be the work of a misguided fanatic and not a consequence of the religion itself. Indeed, Richardson is one of the authors who advocate Protestant nunneries to provide women with a pleasant option to marriage.

The other fictional tradition which portrays convents and monasteries in the worst light also stems from the Novella stories where the corrupt behaviour of nuns and priests provides comic or titillating stories. The lusts and appetites of the priests provide much of the comedy in The Decameron:

> An abbess rises in haste and in the dark, with intent to surprise an accused nun abed with her lover: thinking to put on her veil, she puts on instead the breeches of a priest that she has with her: the nun, espying the headgear and doing her to wit thereof, is acquitted, and thenceforth finds it easier to forgather with her lover.*[1]

Such a tradition was continued in the seventeenth century by Aphra Behn in her stories, and survived in the observer stories of the eighteenth century. The emphasis shifted slightly from the sexual lusts of the priests to their greed and unfairness to their flock in Chrysal:

> The severity with which the Jesuit required satisfaction for the imaginary faults of the poor Peruvian, may, perhaps, lead you to think, that his zeal would be inexorable to real crimes; but the following account will show you, that it was no such thing, and that he looked upon nothing as a crime which was not detrimental to the power, or temporal interest, of his society.*[2]

The criticism is neither serious nor impassioned and does not concern itself with the threat to liberty of Roman Catholicism, despite the religious ingredient in the continental wars of the period. Only in Tristram Shandy is the Roman Catholic Inquisition described as a serious threat, and even then the Shandean satire challenges the sentiment of the scene.*[3]

In 14 stories (11.0% of the total survey) the Roman Catholic church is shown in a good light, as a force for virtue. Don Quixote is given the last rites by a gentle and tender priest, and a begging priest is a sentimental symbol in A Sentimental Journey.

All the French autobiographers, Mesdames de Pompadour, L'Enclos, and de Maintenon, retire to a convent in comfort and contentment, and even the sinner Eloise finds a sort of peace in a convent with compassionate and sympathetic nuns.

The opposition to Dissent in the fictional world is a much smaller element but the tone of attack on Dissent is vitriolic. Six stories show Dissent as an evil and their tone is extremely bitter. Swift's parable of the three churches in A Tale of a Tub singles out Dissent for the most spiteful attacks, while more entertaining, and equally critical is The Spiritual Quixote, a story based on opposition to Methodism. The young man crazed with Methodism meets Wesley and Whitfield, who are exposed as corrupt and greedy men. The distasteful physical appearance of the Methodists of the fictional world, their lower-class converts, their vulgar language, and their poor theology is the main focus of the book.

> Mr Whitfield, on the contrary, said little about Repentance, but laid all the stress upon Faith alone; so that if a man was, or fancied, or even said that he was, possessed of true Faith, he was immediately pronounced a convert, and, whether he reformed his life or not, became a Saint upon easy terms. By this means chiefly such crowds of Colliers and Chimney-sweepers were transformed into Angels of light, and became entitled to many a comfortable breakfast of buttered-toast and tea with the more wealthy devotees;*4

This sarcasm at the expense of Methodism and Dissent may be a reaction to the threat such forms of religion were thought to pose to the established Church and State. In the view of authors who were enjoying the inequalities of eighteenth-century society, any religion devoted to the lower orders which preached the equality of souls - and thus by implication the equality of all men - was a threat not only to the Church of England but also to the class divisions of the society.

The rise of Britain as a Protestant power in Europe and British predominance on the seas meant the fear of Roman Catholics, which had haunted the national consciousness since the Reformation, could begin to subside. Roman Catholics abroad and at home were less of a threat than those who might try to undermine from within the unity of the Protestant religion and the established order of society. The shift of satirical attention from Roman Catholicism to Dissent can be seen as a reflection in the fictional world of the threats posed to contemporary society in the real world, as Dissenters took over from Roman Catholics as the bogey of the Quality Anglican.

## 2 POLITICS

A third of the stories in this survey discuss politics. Of these 43 stories, 19 can be described as pro-Hanoverian and pro-Whig, 11 are clearly anti-Hanoverian and opposed to the Whig oligarchy, and 13 adopt a reformist position criticising the system for abuses yet not adopting a clear party line. Criticism of abuses of the system penetrated the fictional world but radicalism did not. There are no committed radical criticisms of the division of wealth and power in society; not even the later fictions challenge the division of the fictional world into people of Quality and the rest, and no fiction challenges the myth of the contented working class.

Interestingly, the Eastern stories or Novella thread stories of the observer fictions are the ones which specialise in commentary on contemporary eighteenth-century political and social life. Goldsmith's The Citizen of the World has a Tory slant, but otherwise follows almost exactly the Whig political theorist Montesquieu's Persian Letters. Lyttleton produced a near-exact replica with Letters from a Persian. These three examine the British constitution, political, and social life through the eyes of Eastern gentlemen

travelling for pleasure and education and sending their observations to their Eastern friends. As such the fictions are able to comment and sometimes sharply criticise western societies. However, The Citizen of the World follows the pattern of Eastern stories in contrasting the liberty of Englishmen with the tyranny of Eastern despots:

> In England, from a variety of happy accidents, their constitution is just strong enough, or if you will, monarchial enough, to permit a relaxation of the severity of laws, and yet those laws still to remain sufficiently strong to govern the people. This is the most perfect state of civil liberty.*[5]

The virtues of the British constitution are praised over and over again in the Eastern stories. Perhaps it is no accident that the farther the setting is from home the more passionately patriotic is the tone of praise. The main focus of Solyman and Almena is not the love-affair or the adventures of the couple, but the conversations Solyman enjoys with a British Merchant who describes his country:

> were you, my friend, in the metropolis of Great Britain, you would behold spacious edifices erected for hapless indigence; and find the same skill and care employed for the health and the lives of the poor, that the most affluent circumstances can procure for the rich.
>
> But munificence is not the only ornament that distinguishes my country: there too dwell liberty and justice; liberty, that, however strange it may seem to you, delights in the protection of a monarch; and justice which he causes to be administered without partiality. The greatest Bassa in Great Britain cannot invade either the life or the property of the meanest subject with impunity; he is equally obnoxious to the laws, and would suffer indiscriminately with the most obscure malefactor.*[6]

For Whig and Tory the constitution is an object for veneration. Stories written later in the century with the growing consciousness of English Jacobinism and French Radicalism seem even to develop a rather nervous tone as the authors stress that the people are happy - too happy to rebel:

> The people of this country are now too united and too happy to rebel. - They enjoy the liberty of speaking their sentiments on all political subjects; and individuals may grumble and complain without reserve, if they feel any public measures unpleasant to themselves: but such displeasure, though sometimes loud, is always partial and soon evaporates.*[7]

As the quotation makes clear, the majority of the people are supposed to be content and those radicals who do complain are self-seeking or "partial".

Even the magical observer stories, which are deliberately written with a jaundiced view of society, confine themselves to abuse rather than a direct criticism of the system. The most extreme is The Adventures of an Atom which is a scandalous and vitriolic attack upon the Whig ministers and upon the King himself. But despite the bitterness of some elements of Tory opposition in the real world, the fictional world steers clear of any major challenge to the political status quo in the real world.

## 3 CORRUPTION

The major area where criticism is safe, even patriotic, is when the authors criticise the corruption which was a feature of eighteenth-century political life. Without challenging the constitution, the monarchy, or the political system the authors can attack political reality by exposing the abuses of elections and the greed and ambition of the politicians. Scenes of electoral mayhem are featured in 15 of the stories, but many others refer to corruption as an unfortunate feature of political life.

Peregrine Pickle loses the remains of his fortune through the fraudulent promise from a Whig nobleman of a safe seat in the House of Commons; the travellers in Columella are appalled at the abuses in a town at election time and even glimpse that rare animal in the fictional world, a radical (naturally a sottish and corrupt specimen). Sir Launcelot Greaves sees a town half-mad with greed and bribery, the entire fortune of a Nabob is absorbed by the corruption of local politics in The Reverie, and the Citizen of the World also witnesses the corruption of elections.

Blame for the dreadful scenes is divided between both the briber and the bribed in The Reverie:

> The ambitious are plied with promises, the covetous with bribes, and all with liquor, 'till they are heated to a degree of intoxication sufficient to make them give credit to whatever he says, it matters not how contradictory to common sense and the conduct of his past life:...
>
> Thus far the electors seem to be the only fools, and to leave a name of still blacker import to their elected representative. But to a nearer view the imaginary difference vanishes, and all appear equally entitled to admission to this place.
>
> For who that gave the least attention to the voice of reason, would dissipate his own wealth, and sacrifice the solid happiness of independence, to acquire the power of committing a breach of trust, as absurd as it is perfidious?*[8]

It is no accident that the brunt of criticism falls on the behaviour of the lower orders when they seek to gain from politics. The corruption of members of the Quality is dealt with in the fictions in a far more tolerant tone. While the greed of lower-class voters is disgusting and repellent, the greed of the upper-classes is more acceptable. Consequently, although it seems unfair and unfortunate that several heroes, including the Man of Feeling, Roderick Random,

Captain Booth, and Peregrine Pickle, are dependent on the favour or whim of a powerful man, it is the failure of the individual patron which is shown as the problem. The class to which he belongs is not shown as disgustingly greedy, and the system is not forcefully condemned.

The problem exposed in the fictional world with the system of real-life patronage is once again not the injustice of the system itself, but problems of its operation. There is no question that the promotion of Captain Booth will have been properly obtained by the favour of two great men:

> 'I cannot help saying he hath some merit in the service, ... I am convinced, if his pretensions were backed with any interest, he would not fail of success.'
>
> 'They shall be backed with interest,' cries Mrs James, 'if my husband hath any. He hath no favour to ask for himself, nor for any other friend that I know of; and, indeed, to grant a man his just due, ought hardly to be thought a favour.'*[9]

Elsewhere, magistrates, JPs, members of the watch, bailiffs, prison warders, and above all lawyers are shown to be corrupt or at the very least dangerously inefficient. All of Fielding's stories in this survey show scenes of corruption among JPs or other law-enforcers, a significant comment on the real world where Fielding was himself a London magistrate.

He describes Mr Jonathan Thrasher, JP, as ignorant of the law and unread:

> This, perhaps, was a defect; but this was not all: for where mere ignorance is to decide a point between two litigants, it will always be an even chance whether it decides right or wrong: but sorry am I to say, right was often in a much worse situation than this, and wrong hath often had five hundred to one on his side before that magistrate; who, if he was ignorant of the laws of England, was yet well versed in

> the laws of nature... To speak the truth plainly, the justice was never indifferent in a cause but when he could get nothing on either side.*[10]

There is a total of 39 stories (30.7%) in which law enforcers, or more especially lawyers, are shown as corrupt or mischievous. A corrupt lawyer conspires with Jamima Abington's evil guardians to disinherit her in The Cottage, and legal chicanery nearly dupes the squire hero of The Widow of the Wood into paying-off his trickster wife. George Edwards discovers that the sharpers of the town include lawyers, and the Chinese observer in The Citizen of the World discovers the English judicial system is corrupt. All of Fielding's and many of Smollett's heroes discover that lawyers are too clever, or too dishonest, for them.

*4* SLAVERY

One element - minor, but of historical interest - is the early condemnation of negro slavery in three stories. The earliest is Aphra Behn, Oroonoko the Royal Slave. There is a flavour of genuine tragedy in this odd story of the enslavement of an African Muslim monarch. The royal prince Oroonoko, far from his rural idyllic kingdom, finds that his previous love is also enslaved. They marry, and their life is content until Oroonoko becomes involved in a revolt and is caught leading a rebellion. His wife is whipped to death and he is chopped in pieces until he dies. The macabre details are genuinely horrifying, in sharp contrast with the pastoral idyll of Africa. Both the negro prince and his black wife are described in admiring tones by the author who makes it clear that they are both physically described as more Caucasian than Negroid. However they are both black.

The story is not written as a conscious appeal against the practice of slavery but the negro is at least seen as an aristocrat in his own society, as a person in his own right, and as a tragic hero. His death is seen as a barbaric punishment for an understandable crime.

In Colonel Jack Defoe argues against the practice of slavery. In his commonsense way he shows - by Colonel Jack's successful handling of African slaves - that productivity and efficiency would be increased by humane treatment. There is no radicalism inherent in Defoe's position. He is not advocating freeing slaves or abolishing slavery; he is talking about the improvement of the terms of slavery to make slavery conform with the treatment of free servants in the fictional world.

> But, sir, I dare say I shall convince you also that it is wrong in respect of interest, and that your business shall be better discharged and your plantations better ordered, and more work done by the negroes who shall be engaged by mercy and lenity than by those who are driven and dragged by the whips and the chains of a merciless tormentor.*[11]

Defoe is not seeing the slaves a free proud individuals like Oroonoko. His views on slavery are based on a feeling of humanity towards inferiors - conventional feelings of a fictional good master. Nonetheless he is advocating a change in their treatment based on a combination of the practical calculations of a bourgeois economist and the humanity of a good master. In this case, being good pays material dividends.

Defoe's humanitarian response to the slaves does not extend beyond the fictional convention of his day which portrays working-class people as stereotypes. They are the black counterparts of the fictional peasantry; their inadequate speech, their grateful

servility, their child-like simplicity, and their unconsciously comic behaviour are reflections and yet further exaggerations of the behaviour of white servants in the fictional world:

> Negro: Yes; yes; negro be muchee better if they be mercie. When they be whippee, whippee, negro muchee cry, muchee hate; would kill if they had de gun. But when they makee de mercie, then negro tell de great tankee, and love to worke, and do muchee worke; and because he good master to them.*[12]

Defoe's belief that African slaves should be treated in the same way as free English servants is echoed in Sir George Ellison where the author recommends an apartheid-style society. Slaves are given training to suit them for their labouring tasks, and whites are formally educated. The blacks are treated kindly and no corporal punishment is used on the Ellison estate. Indeed, they suffer nothing worse than the sickly-sweet patronage which is the natural style of Sir George. As in Defoe's practical morality, the yield from the estate proves the point that slaves work better when well treated. Like Defoe also, there is no suggestion that the state of slavery, however kindly practised, is inherently wrong and should be abolished.

# CHAPTER XVI

## STOCK ELEMENTS

A number of elements become standard for authors wanting to add the zest of a shiver or a tear to their story. A survey of the 127 books indicates that some scenes or characters are recurrent. In some of the more coherent stories the stock characters are developed and hold an integral place in the story, while in others they pop up for their effect and disappear. The use of recurring scenes or characters was adopted by eighteenth-century authors in order to benefit from their associations in readers' minds. Thus the eighteenth-century reader would have encountered an element used repeatedly to inspire or heighten a specific emotion and would in time, the authors appeared to hope, respond to the element however unfeelingly used or inappropriately placed.

To discuss stock elements in such a fashion may be to miss a point which the eighteenth-century reader would have recognised. Many elements which continually recur belong together and form a hegemonic view of the world. For example the sexual assaults upon heroines when they are poor are a symptom of the wider treatment of working-class people, and a symptom of the sexual exploitation of working women. It may be that some other elements mentioned here fit into a wider framework. Certainly the appearance of an unsuspected wealthy and noble relation is an essential element for stories which depend upon wealth and status for a happy ending and yet feature poor and unknown heroes and heroines. The pirates and banditti of the stories are sometimes used to explain the absence of such relatives.

With this proviso - that these apparently unrelated elements may somehow fit into a wider picture - it is nonetheless apparent to the reader that a number of elements constantly recur without seeming to have any essential part to play in the stories.

1 THE OLD SOLDIER OR SAILOR

The sight of an old soldier or sailor in the course of these stories could be exploited in a number of ways. The hero or heroine could display sensibility by grieving over the hardships undergone by such a man in the service of his country, could demonstrate generosity by giving him money, or could occasionally exhibit reforming zeal by complaining of the country's neglect of its heroes.

This scene is movingly and effectively produced in The Man of Feeling where the old soldier's story is used to show the immorality of growing British imperialism, and the homecoming of the old man is developed into a tragic sub-plot.

> An old man, who from his dress seemed to have been a soldier, lay fast asleep on the ground; a knapsack rested on a stone at his right hand while his staff and brass-hilted sword were crossed at his left.
>
> Harley looked on him with the most earnest attention. ... His face had the marks of manly comeliness impaired by time; his forehead was not altogether bald, but its hairs might have been numbered; while a few white locks behind crossed the brown of his neck with a contrast the most venerable to a mind like Harley's. 'Thou art old,' said he to himself, 'but age has not brought thee rest for its infirmities; I fear those silver hairs have not found shelter from thy country, though that neck has been bronzed in its service.'*[1]

In contrast with this moving and successful use of the old soldier motif is its almost automatic use in other stories where a sparse description of a sailor or old soldier is considered sufficient to inspire the readers' sympathies. Charles Johnstone provides a convenient example:

> 'Poor soul! he thought he should be paid off ... but the moment he came to Portsmouth, he was turned over into another ship, without getting a shilling of his six years wages or prize money, and sent away directly to America.'[2]

In The Devil on Two Sticks the old soldier is one of the many popular symbols which pass under the Devil's critical eye. The ill-treatment of the veteran is briefly described:

> "He is a brave veteran officer of cavalry; the scar which you may perceive on his right cheek, is the counterpart of many others which he wears in most parts of his body; and were obtained in a long course of dangerous service. He was a Captain before the Colonel of his regiment was born, and is a Captain still. ... a pair of colours for his grandson is all that this brave man ever received from his country."*[3]

The veteran as a sympathetic but comical figure is developed in mid-century in Peregrine Pickle, where Pickle's lovable uncle is an eccentric veteran. Hen-pecked on land but brave at sea, his hobby is to run his home like a warship. This comical development of the veteran motif was further developed in the following decade by Sterne in Tristram Shandy with the unforgettable person of Uncle Toby, whose tenderness towards all living things including houseflies, is in delightful contrast with his interest in warfare and his construction of model battlefields.

Why the retired soldier or sailor should have become such a potent symbol can be explained by the popularity of the Army and Navy during the almost continuous wars of the eighteenth century - especially since all of these were fought well away from home. The inadequacy of the pay and pension for soldiers and sailors would have made the pauper veteran a common sight, perhaps genuinely distressing sympathetic people; the knowledge that men were often cruelly pressed into service and then wounded and neglected, may have touched the consciousness of the eighteenth-century elite who

were safe from such legalised attacks. The adoption of the veteran as a sentimental symbol may well be a fictionalised version of the genuine concern felt by the eighteenth-century reader.

## 2 DEATHBEDS

A much more popular sentimental element was the deathbed scene. The death of one or both of the main protagonists could be expected to move the reader's emotions, and in many cases the descriptions of the deaths are prolonged and harrowing. Twenty-one heroes and 21 heroines die in the course of the fictions of the survey and the authors described the deathbed scenes with relish. Frances Brooke is representative:

> She is gone, Belville, she is gone: those lovely eyes are closed in everlasting night. I saw her die, I saw the last breath quiver on her lips; she expired, almost without a pang, in the arms of her distracted mother.*[4]

While the death of the hero or heroine is a shattering climax to a sentimental fiction it has the inconvenient consequence of permanently terminating the story, making a sequel an impossibility. Instead of the finality of death for the hero or heroine the authors exploited the reader's involvement with the chief protagonists by taking them very near death in serious illness, or letting them appear as dead, so the author and reader could relish a tragic scene and yet have a story with a happy ending: a case of killing your hero and having him.

Equally, genuine deaths could be enjoyed without interrupting the thread of the story if they were the tragic ends of relatively minor characters, whose absence would not detract from the overall happy ending of the story. Such near-deaths are used in Clarissa as supplements to the tragic death of the heroine and the death of the

villain-hero. In Persiles and Sigismunda the hero and heroine waste away and nearly die under an enchantment, and there are 7 other incidents of near-death in the story to stimulate the readers' sympathies. The story of Emma Corbett evokes multiple sympathy from the reader as the soldier-son is reported dead, and then is found alive, and then dies! The hero Henry is also said to be dead, is found alive but nearly dead of poison, is nursed back to health by his loving wife, and then dies of fever. Meanwhile, Emma dies of poison as a result of her care for him. In total the story has 6 tragic deaths which are central features, 3 near-fatal illnesses when the patients are given up for dead, and 2 wrongly-reported deaths. The agony is splendidly prolonged by the vagaries of the trans-Atlantic postal service which delays the news of death or survival to the correspondents at home.

Mock deaths - the erroneous report of deaths - can be used in this way to provoke the readers' sympathies, but they are also useful to explain the sudden re-appearance of a mystery benefactor or conveniently noble parent who had been wrongly reported as dead.

Those stories which include one deathbed scene tend to include more than one; so in the 75 stories which have one deathbed scene (59.0% of the total survey) there are a total of 242 emotional deathbed scenes. The significance of this total is understood when one bears in mind that only important deaths, deaths which are described in detail or which form a major part of the action, or which concern important characters, have been counted. The 242 deaths are all major deathbed scenes; there are even more minor deaths.

Arabian Nights with its hazardous experience of magic, enchantments, battles, intrigue, and poison has a high mortality rate of 20 emotionally-significant deaths in the stories. This high score reflects not only the large number of stories, and thus protagonists, but also that they are told at a high level of emotional involvement; other books may have as many separate cameo stories but they are not so intense or emotional in tone. The Decameron has 12 emotionally-significant deaths, The Recess with its dramatic tales of Elizabethan skulduggery has 10, and the particularly lachrymose story of David Simple has 8, each a masterpiece of tragedy.

The popularity of the deathbed scene can be explained by its emotional impact on the reader, an emotional reaction exploited easily by even the most unimaginative of authors. Memories of and fears of the death of a loved one must have been a central fact of the eighteenth-century consciousness. In the first half of the century the high death rate coincided with growing affection inside the family*[5] which must have meant many deeply-felt losses during that period. The elite readers of the eighteenth century were likely to have lost at least one parent*[6] and deathbed scenes in fiction must have been a potent picture.

In addition, the early training of children was designed to develop a religious consciousness by emphasising the shortness of life and the likelihood of a premature death. Children who had been driven hysterical with threats of an early death and anxieties about getting to heaven*[7] would mature into readers who were extremely sensitive to morbid and pious scenes in fiction.

## 3 THE MACABRE

Related to this interest in deathbed scenes but with a different emphasis and nature, is the recurrent interest in horrific scenes and macabre elements. Scenes such as Clarissa's prolonged deathbed resignation and the placing of her coffin next to her bed were adopted and transformed by other authors to become scenes of the macabre where the interest is not in pious resignation to death, but a fascination with the trappings of death, and the horrific elements of corpses, skeletons, and graveyards.

A total of 34 stories (26.7% of the survey) includes scenes involving mortal remains set in graveyards or tombs, or featuring a corpse or skelton. Those stories that use such elements sometimes use them more than once so that of the 34 books that include a scene with macabre elements there is a total of 65 such scenes.

Ferdinand Count Fathom and The Old English Baron are the leading stories to exploit such elements, having 3 each of such scenes, while the 3 corpses in Emma Corbett are used to move tears rather than to chill the spine. One of the most memorable skeletons is that belonging to an unhappy wife in The Fruitless Enquiry whose father and husband murdered the man she chastely loved. Concealed in her room she keeps his skeleton to remind her of the greatest love of her life.

## 4 THE SUPERNATURAL

Scenes involving the supernatural are another development of the use of death and the afterlife to thrill rather than to inspire; the supernatural - ghosts, prophetic dreams, and meaningful hallucinations - feature in 58 stories, nearly half all the stories in the survey (45.6% of the total survey). The rationalism of the

eighteenth century and the contradictory lingering love of the unknown seems to prompt an uneasy rationalisation of supernatural elements in these stories. On the one hand the author wants to thrill the reader with a tale of supernatural horror, yet on the other hand is the opposing convention that the stories should be realistic and true to life. Some stories precede this convention and so care nothing for it, like the old Romance of Valentine and Orson or the fantastic Arabian Nights. Seven other stories include unexplained scenes of enchantment and magic with a reckless disregard for the demands of a rationalist critic.

Arabian Nights sets the pattern for Eastern books which include magic and enchantment excused by the exotic setting. Travel books have the same exemption from rationalist laws; Peter Wilkins learns to fly, while Gulliver's travels include giants and tiny people. However, stories set in Europe in the eighteenth century generally tried to explain supernatural elements, once they had served the purpose of frightening the reader out of his or her senses. Thus the most popular element was a prophetic dream which occurs in more than half the stories using supernatural elements (32 stories, 55.2% of the survey). Genuine unexplained hauntings happen in only 8 stories. Supernatural elements later explained away are used in 9 stories. Don Quixote's comical brushes with the supernatural are not the result of magic but the result of his own obsession and the trickery of other people. The would-be Kings of Mock Monarchs suffer practical jokes disguised as magic, while Peregrine in Peregrine Pickle dupes high society with a fraudulent fortune teller. Queen Elizabeth's belief in the ghost of her victim in The Recess is a result of her guilty conscience, as is Ferdinand Count Fathom's similar delusion.

In these ways authors satisfied the insistence that the supernatural in fiction should be explained. The tendency to write supernatural scenes and then try to explain them is not a gothic innovation.

> But though Mrs Radcliffe employed 'the superstitious' it had to be taken exactly in that sense, for with her 'the super-natural' ... was always in the end explained, either as a perfectly natural occurrence, or its manifestations deliberately produced,*[8]
>
> Mrs Radcliffe was following an established tradition.

One element which was to become obligatory in the gothic novel was, of course, the castle. The fashion of the mediaeval castle setting for dramatic and thrilling stories was already well established in the eighteenth century. Fifty-seven stories (44.8% of the survey) include scenes set in a castle, despite the fact that most stories of the survey are supposed to take place in contemporary eighteenth-century England.

## 5 MYSTERY RELATIONS

The appearance of a previously unknown relation who pops up without warning is a surprisingly popular element in these stories, occurring in a third of all the stories in the survey - 42 stories (33%). It can perhaps be accounted for by the demands of the plot. The hero or heroine are often so deeply embedded in disaster that only an external saviour can help them. Often the major obstacle to the marriage of the hero and heroine is a discrepancy of class or wealth, and so the deus ex machina solution of a noble or wealthy relative is generally the only solution to the difficulty. Indeed, in those stories where the heroine is apparently of a higher social status than the hero only a missing noble father can make the hero's status commensurate with that of his girl-friend.

This was not totally unrealistic, as the high illegitimacy rates of the eighteenth century would have made the discovery of a working-class bastard child a not uncommon experience. Matt Bramble's discovery of his son Humphry Clinker is not unlikely, though his own calm acceptance of it is a little surprising. The reappearance of relatives long since given up for lost would have happened occasionally in real life. Poor communications, hazards of travelling, and the enormous fortunes to be made in the expanding Empire would have made the surprise reappearance of an immensely wealthy relative a possibility.

## 6 PIRATES AND BANDITTI

One of the excuses for the fictional relative's long disappearance is that he was captured by pirates. The tenacious popularity of such capture, especially by Moorish slaving galleys, is surprising. Twenty-four stories (18.8% of the survey) use this resource, fore-runners of the gothic story's ubiquitious banditti, the shorebased equivalent. One can only guess why the idea of piracy should have such appeal: as the fictional equivalent to the real threats facing the expanding maritime empire, as a convenient structural connection to Eastern exotic experiences, or as an adoption of an element already proven successful elsewhere like the galley-slave's tale in Don Quixote.*[9] Such a kidnap occurs in The Fruitless Enquiry when a bridegroom is enslaved before the consummation of his marriage. Ransomed from the galleys by a Ceylon princess, he refuses to be unfaithful to his bride and is castrated as punishment. Finally escaping, he returns home to his waiting bride who finds her joy at his return understandably mingled with disappointment. The Fair Greek is rescued from a harem after her capture, while Hippolytus in Leonora is captured by Spanish pirates during his chequered amatory

affairs. In the story The Friends the surprise relation, Charlotte's missing father, has been missing because he was captured by pirates. Chloe is captured by pirates in Daphnis and Chloe, and poor Almena in Solyman and Almena is captured twice by pirates before Solyman manages to get her home from India. The kidnap by bandits of Pekuah in Rasselas is similar in tone to these examples. In all of them the excitement of a kidnap, the fear of violence, and the clash of cultures is totally ignored. Given the potential for melodrama in this kind of incident, the modern reader can only be baffled at the subdued treatment of the pirate theme. Again the explanation may lie in the use of a stock element. Perhaps the authors did not need to describe vividly the approaching galleys or marauding brigands since the reader had a perfectly clear mental picture of what was taking place in one story, culled from reading many others.

# CHAPTER XVII

## COUSINBOOKS

> Among the multiplicity of subjects treated of, in these volumes, it must have been impossible to have avoided the falling sometimes into the tract of some of the authors who have preceded me ... You call at an Inn for your refreshment - Do you ever trouble yourself whether your Host took the chickens out of his own coop or borrowed them from a neighbour?*[1]

One aspect of these stories which must strike the reader very forcibly is their degree of mutual inter-relationship. To call this relationship piracy or plagiarism is to impose on it a perjorative term which the author's exchanges of ideas and characters does not support.

While it would be naive to assume that eighteenth-century authors willingly shared a common reservoir of plots, styles, characters and elements, the concern expressed by some of them contradicts such a vision of collective creativity; but others showed little shame in incorporating another author's ideas.

In this survey books which obviously bear a close relationship to each other are called 'cousinbooks', irrespective of which is said to be the better creation, and I deal with seniority only for the purpose of tracing a 'family tree'.

As this survey has tried to suggest, to read any one of these fictions in isolation is hardly to read it at all:

> they admire one novel because it puts them in mind of another which they read a few days before. By them it is required that a novel should be like a novel.*[2]

The importance of this inter-relationship has been totally ignored by modern critics. In this survey of fiction stocks of commercial circulating libraries of the total 3,000 titles stocked

200 are clearly cousinbooks as indicated by title alone. The real number of cousinbooks, if all the stories could be read and compared, would certainly be much larger.

Cousinage could take a number of forms. Satires on a story could challenge the moral message of the original story using the original characters, but non-satirical stories also borrow an author's characters. Some books were recognised as sequels written by the original author and some developments of a story were written, without permission, by other authors. Some authors produced cousin-books of analysis in which the actions and thoughts of the characters were discussed and defended, while other cousinbooks are reprinted excerpts of pleasing passages from the original. An important cousinbook form is the adoption of another book's theme or mood. In very many books the borrowing of style of narrational voice of another author can be suspected but not satisfactorily proved. Equally difficult is tracing the history of a particular element or symbol which is transferred intact from one story to another until it becomes part of the fabric of a certain type of fiction. Presumably there must have been a time when it was introduced, but it is difficult now to establish authorial ownership.

An example of satirical sequels were the many stories spawned by the two original Pamela books. Richardson's ambiguous story about the servant girl's erotic struggles in defence of her virtue was a fruitful ground for satirical attack, and two of the major writers of the day, Haywood and Fielding, produced brilliant satires which attained a wide readership according to the commercial library records: The Anti-Pamela and Joseph Andrews. Many stories show the cousin form of one character leaving the covers of his original story and turning up in other fictions. In 13 instances in this survey a

character pops up in another author's fiction. Sir Charles Grandison is especially prone to wander. His relation Mr Grandison meets the Spiritual Quixote, and he is related to the Evelyn family in The Card. He attends the wedding in The Card and his opinions are discussed or featured in a number of books.

Sir George Ellison, in his travels around England, calls at Millenium Hall. Yorick is also an important character in three fictions. He appears originally in Tristram Shandy, but then goes on to make a sentimental journey under the guidance of his original creator. His letters to Eliza show William Combe cashing-in on the sentimental parson's popularity.

There are 12 examples of sequels in the survey. Richardson and Sarah Fielding wrote sequels to their popular stories of Pamela and David Simple. But Richardson was also plagued with a number of piratical sequels which adopted Pamela's adventures and marriage as their own.

Lyttleton takes the time to explain that the hero of Letters from a Persian is a different Persian from the narrator of Montesquieu, Persian Letters - a claim which cn have convinced no-one. John Buncle Junior claims to be the son of John Buncle, while Le Diable Boiteux by Le Sage spawned a number of cousins including William Combe, The Devil upon Two Sticks, who calls his work 'a continuation'. The Reverie is not only a newly-discovered supplement to the manuscripts which yielded Chrysal, it also claims to be 'a continuation' of Paradise Lost. In two cases - Haywood, The Wife, and Saumery, The Devil Turn'd Hermit - the reader is promised a sequel.

The adoption of complete characters, scenes, or descriptions was a common one, satirised by Charlotte Smith in Ethelinde where a budding author is proud of the originality of her work:

> 'only one event is borrowed from the Arabian Nights and one description from Sir Charles Grandison'.*[3]

In 4 cases the tone of one popular story was adopted by others. The Shandean sentimental whimsical style was so popular it is almost impossible to identify the adaptations. The individual cases of copying form such a large body that the voice becomes an integral part of eighteenth-century fiction. It can be heard clearly in Emma Corbett where the use of fractured sentences and hysterical punctuation builds the tension and adds to the sentimental pleasure in the Sternean way; similarly it contributed much to the style of The Reverie and, naturally, Letters.

In 4 cases a scene, description, or event so pleased one author that he or she transported it wholesale. In Peter Wilkins the magnetic mountain which draws his ship inexorably to be wrecked on its shores was first featured in Arabian Nights, and the underground river which sweeps both him and Candide into a secret country also flowed from the East of that tale. The popularity of scenes which tell a didactic message - against gambling or political corruption - have been analysed in their context as propaganda, but the sharing of such popular scenes by a number of authors is a further indication of their sense of cousinage.

The stories could also give rise to cousinbooks of analysis which discussed moral points illustrated by the fictions, or simply reprinted interesting passages without comment. Richardson prepared his own cousinbook of analysis based on his three popular fictions: A Collection of Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions, and Reflexions, Contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison, 1755. An anonymous author produced The Paths of Virtue Delineated; or, Pamela, Clarissa, and Grandison abridged.

The work of Richardson, Sterne, Henry Fielding, Goldsmith, and many others was used in collections.

Richardson's reputation produced a curious cousinbook relationship, as at least two aspiring authors claimed the credit of his name as editor and advisor. Thomas Hull, The History of Sir William Harrington, 1771, states that his work was 'written some years since and revised and corrected by the late Mr Richardson', and the anonymous Life of Louis Balbe Berton de Crillon, published in 1760, claims to have been 'translated from the French by a Lady and revised by Mr Richardson, author of Clarissa, Grandison, etc.,' according to the librarians in their catalogues.

A total of 34 books - more than a quarter of the total survey (26.7%) - shows a close cousinbook relationship. If this total could be expanded to cover the relationships of books inside the survey with works as yet unread and so not included in this survey the total would prove even higher. The titles alone in the library catalogues indicate that a number of explicitly acknowledged cousinbooks were popular. There is the anonymous Tom Jones in his Married State (1748), Baker's Don Quixote Continued (ecd 1755), the anonymous Eleonora; from the Sorrows of Werther (1785) and George Brewer's Tom Weston after the manner of Tom Jones (1791).

A more distant cousinage is established when the characters of one book discuss another book, or when the narrator or author refers to another fiction to illustrate a point. In the fictions read for this survey alone such literary comments either by characters or by the narrators occurs in 30 cases (23.6% of the total survey). In some instances such references are superficial, but in some cases they are an important development of the plot. In The School for Wives the injured wife Clarinda discovers that her husband's ward has

fallen in love with him. She lends her copy of Sir Charles Grandison to the girl and recommends that she study how Emily in a similar situation struggled to overcome her feelings. The remedy is successful - a tribute to the story - the ward learns her lesson from the fiction and goes on to fall happily in love with a suitable young man.

The guest list for the wedding in The Card is itself an index of popular fiction. Invitations are sent to Roderick Random, Pamela Andrews, Joseph Andrews, Harriet Byron, Tom Jones, Clarissa, David Simple, Betsy Thoughtless, Charles Grandison, and Dulcinea.*[4] The reader must be sorry to miss the reception. Other minor references include a mention in The Cry of Joseph Andrews,*[5] Fatal Curiosity*[6] and many references to Don Quixote.*[7] Prévost d'Exiles is forceful in his denials that his story The Fair Greek resembles at all such loose Romances as Cleopatra,*[8] or The Princess of Cleeves*[9] and protests, perhaps a little too much, that his story bears no resemblance to The Fair Circassian.*[10] The Fortunate Country Maid reads The Paysanne Parvenu*[11] and finds its story very like her own - as well she might since her story seems to be a very close adaptation. The Rambles of Frankly refers to Tristram Shandy*[12], and to Gulliver's Travels.*[13]

Two central authors stand out in this world of interlocking relationships. Laurence Sterne and Cervantes set original patterns in theme and treatment which is acknowedged by countless references in other fictions, and copied or adapted. The 'family-tree' of Sterne cousinbooks (see Diagram A) shows how his two stories spawned 14 cousins which are clearly indentifiable - and undoubtedly there are many more. Diagram B clearly indicates the importance of Don Quixote as a central influence on all eighteenth-century writers.

# LAURENCE STERNE

- TRISTRAM SHANDY, 1760
  - MISS LUKEY HANDY, 1760
  - CHRISTOPHER WAGSTAFF, ANON 1762
  - LA RIVIERE, ANON 1766
  - LE FEVRE, 1787
  - A HISTORY OF MY FATHER, KOTZBUE 1799
  - SHANDYMONIAN, ? (c a. 1781)
  - SPURIOUS ?
- STYLE
  - DIARY OF AN EXCURSION IN THE MANNER OF STERNE
- A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY, 1768
  - A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY TO SPAIN, (ca. 1785)
    - DIAGRAM A.
  - A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY TO GREECE, (ca. 1774)
  - A SENTIMENTAL TOUR, (ca. 1789)
  - A SENTIMENTAL TRAVELLER, (ca 1787)
  - A SENTIMENTAL TRIP TO HOLLAND, (ca. 1795)
  - LETTERS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BETWEEN YORICK & ELIZA, WM. COMBE 1780

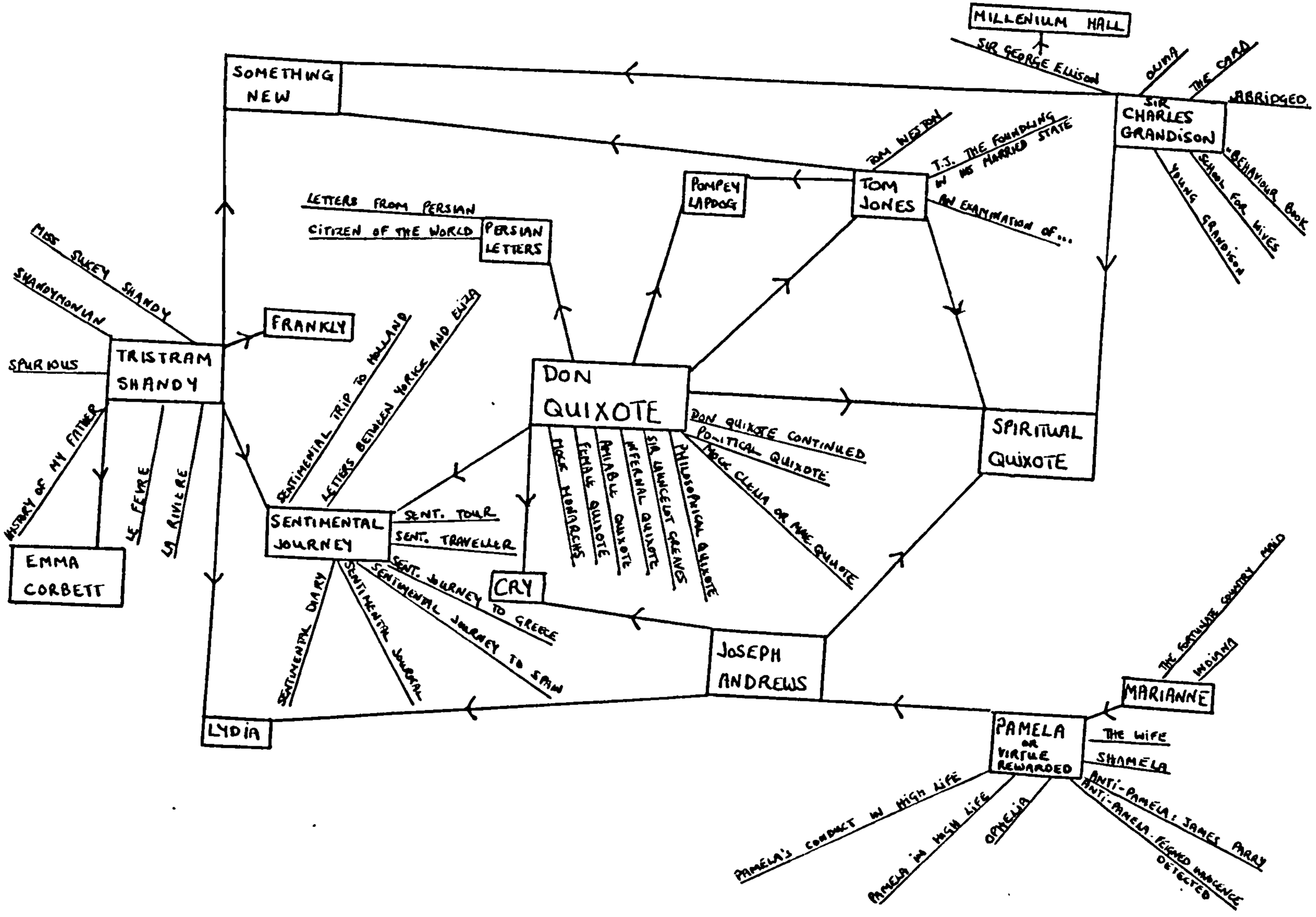

MILLENIUM HALL
SIR GEORGE ELLISON
OLIVIA
THE CAMP
ABRIDGED
SIR CHARLES GRANDISON
SOMETHING NEW
TOM WESTON
T.J. THE FOUNDLING
HIS MARRIED STATE
AN EXAMINATION OF...
YOUNG GRANDISON
SCHOOL FOR LIVES
BEHAVIOUR BOOK
POMPEY LAPDOG
TOM JONES
LETTERS FROM PERSIAN
CITIZEN OF THE WORLD
PERSIAN LETTERS
MISS SUKEY SHANDY
SWANDYMONIAN
FRANKLY
SPURIOUS
TRISTRAM SHANDY
SENTIMENTAL TRIP TO HOLLAND
LETTERS BETWEEN YORICK AND ELIZA
DON QUIXOTE
DON QUIXOTE CONTINUED
POLITICAL QUIXOTE
MODERN CLELIA OR MRS QUIXOTE
SPIRITUAL QUIXOTE
HISTORY OF MY FATHER
EMMA CORBETT
LE FEVRE
LE RIVIERE
SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY
SENT. TOUR
SENT. TRAVELLER
MOCK HEROICKS
FEMALE QUIXOTE
AMIABLE QUIXOTE
MEDICINAL QUIXOTE
SIR LANCELOT GREAVES
PHILOSOPHICAL QUIXOTE
CRY
SENTIMENTAL DIARY
SENTIMENTAL JOURNAL
SENT. JOURNEY TO GREECE
SENT. JOURNEY TO SPAIN
JOSEPH ANDREWS
LYDIA
THE FORTUNATE COUNTRY MAID
INDIANA
MARIANNE
PAMELA OR VIRTUE REWARDED
THE WIFE
SHAMELA
ANTI-PAMELA; JAMES PARAY
ANTI-PAMELA-FEIGNED INNOCENCE DETECTED
OPNELIA
PAMELA IN HIGH LIFE
PAMELA'S CONDUCT IN HIGH LIFE

Diagram B

The arrival of a fiction which breaks the mould of traditional writing, satirises the old style and offers a replacement, produces an intensely sympathetic character, and a theme which is capable of almost infinite parody and adaptation, is not an event which happens often. While no-one could read Don Quixote without enjoyment it may be that modern readers, accustomed to sympathetic and complex hero figures maturing, progressing, and changing throughout the story, with much of the emphasis of the story on this inner change in consciousness, may miss the point that this emphasis was an innovation of revolutionary proportions. The emphasis which this thesis has placed on the story of internal consciousness is a result of the adoption of such a story by virtually all eighteenth-century writers from the original creation of Don Quixote.

# CHAPTER XVIII

## CONCLUSIONS

The clarity and the conviction of the fictional world of the eighteenth century were brought about by a number of factors. The number of readers was small, and literacy was a skill mainly confined to the upper classes. Readers and authors belonged to the same class, spoke the same language, and dreamed the same dreams. Just as their view of the real world was similar - sharing class prejudices and class beliefs - their view of the fictional world was similar. While there were professional writers who wrote for their living - and this survey has shown that they produced the most popular works - most of the fiction was produced by amateur or semi-professional writers. There was no exclusive group of authors who wrote for a passive readership. The elite of the eighteenth century both wrote and read.

Until the last quarter of the century production was relatively limited. The small group of literate people shared not only the same backgrounds, experience, and language, but also shared their books. As contemporary letters and biographies indicate, one member of the elite could be confident that another had read the same fictions. Given the prevailing fashion of reading, it would be an exceptional person who had not read or skimmed-through a new, fashionable work. The specialisation of different types of fiction to please different tastes of readers must have been developing for some time, but in this survey the popular fictions do not seem to appeal to different sections of the readership; one can trace a rise and fall of the popularity of different elements in all the books more or less at once. In the commercial circulating library

catalogues of the eighteenth century there is little sign of the specialism of fiction which can be seen in modern libraries, with books offered to the reader on the basis of their setting (like Westerns) or of their content (like love-stories).

The unity of the fictional world did not prohibit innovation and change. Authors might decide to make a radical departure from the rules of the fictional world but would not produce little worlds of their own in ignorance of the greater creation. Any author departing from the great body of popular fiction would either set a new fashion which would be followed by others - as if the fictional world expanded to accommodate a new trend - or would be taught by unpopularity not to try such a departure again. Popular ideas were incorporated into the body of fiction; unpopular ideas were seldom featured more than once.

The fictional world was thus not a static body but one which changed and evolved over time as some elements became popular and others fell into disuse. Some of the older fictions survived and retained their popularity with eighteenth-century readers so in the survey one sees not only the influence of the traditional fiction families - Romances, Picaro Tales, Novella Tales, and Histories - but actual examples of the old stories, some written more than a thousand years earlier. The fictional world of the eighteenth century was both an inheritor and an evolved version of the fictional worlds of earlier times. In due course it evolved in turn to become the fictional world of the nineteenth century, though never again would it be enjoyed exclusively by one class of society and expose exclusively their likes and dislikes.

The readers were satisfied by the inclusion of sentimental elements which in time became stereotypes to which they could respond, and by examples of sensibility in action as heroes and heroines became increasingly self-conscious, thoughtul, and sensitive. As the appeal of sensibility widened, every element of the story either had to stimulate the reader or build up the picture of the hero and heroine as a person of acute sensitivities and, consequently. of refined tastes. These tastes were constantly demonstrated in the fictions and created a coherent construction of likes and dislikes suitable for the person of sensibility. Dress is used to show modesty and economy with a preference for simple lines, light colours, and fabrics; houses are well-managed without ostentation; scenery is natural and unspoiled; the Arts are spontaneous but cultured; and the country is preferred to the town. Readers accepted these tastes as symptoms of sensibiity in the fictional characters and applied them to their own lives, using them to identify real people of sensibility. In the elite of literate people a further elite was created: those people who spoke the language and recognised the signs of sensibility. Readers and authors, as well as characters in the fictional world, regarded signs of sensibility as a symptom of advanced emotional development, an easily-demonstrated outward sign of an inwardly developing and maturing consciousness.

At the same time the emphasis upon the needs of an individual stimulated the adventures of internal consciousness. In these stories the interest is concentrated on one or two individuals and their development and maturation. The emphasis of the fiction is no longer on external events but on the effect external events have on the development of the hero or heroine. While some stories retain more or less melodramatic external events, others concentrate wholly on

the development of the individuals. Even a casual reading of fictions such as Clarissa, or Betsy Thoughtless, or The Cry indicates that while the fiction is full of external adventures - including escapes and assaults - the main theme and developing adventure is the growth and maturation of one or two individuals.

The drama of such stories is the odyssey of an individual towards full self-consciousness and maturity. Heroes or heroines can be identified by their early independent view of the world and their place in it. The independence of their view is the foundation of self-conscious morality which in time will be recognised and rewarded. Heroines plunged into temporary poverty can cling to their image of themselves as aristocrats despite their loss of status, and their adventures deal mostly with this triumph of their view over the reality of their loss of position. Success at the end of the story, like Sophia's wealthy marriage, restores them to the status they claimed throughout. Heroines born into poverty and to working-class families have a harder struggle to impose their view of themselves as valuable and important individuals, equal to any other. Tested by violence and by sexual assault, their happy ending is to succeed in having their view of themselves accepted by the elite. For both heroes and heroines the happy ending of high status and wealth represents the triumph of their view of their deserts - recognition by society rather than reward.

The hero's consciousness can challenge almost any reality, including poverty and apparent poor breeding. It can even liberate him from past errors; as part of his journey of consciousness he can reform and leave his previous life behind him, and most heroes use this reform to show their genuine emotional and psychological development away from their old sinful selves. Even after this step

some can lapse into philandering yet repent and reform again, like Mr B. in Pamela II, as his consciousness of his obligations, duties, and self-worth develops still further. The heroic ingredient of a potent sense of self can overcome almost any obstacle.

The one major contradiction is the heroine whose consciousness, however well developed, can never overcome the physical state of her body. Unlike philandering heroes who can reform, the heroine cannot recover from the loss of her chastity. The double-standard of sexual morality in which the heroine is virginal or chaste, and the working-class women used to satisfy upper-class male lusts, is shown in startling clarity in the fictional world with only two dissenting voices. The old stories which still enjoyed popularity in the eighteenth-century circulating libraries do not describe the sexual act as an absolute disaster for the unmaried woman since they do not take sex seriously. Early Picaro and Novella writers portray sexually active, even dominant, women enjoying freedom without any subsequent punishment. Later writers such as Aphra Behn showed the pleasures of female sexual freedom followed by disaster, but short-lived sexual pleasure is still a possibility for the heroine. The unique alternative to abstinence, or indulgence with more or less punitive consequences, was that of Rousseau, where Julie manages to enjoy sexual pleasures with one man and marry another. No other eighteenth-century heroine enjoys illicit sexual intercourse without punitive consequences.

## 1 DOMESTIC FICTIONS AND DOMESTICATED WOMEN

Such an inescapable limitation on the possibilities of heroines produced three main responses from eighteenth-century authors. In the early years, especially before the stories about consciousness dominated the fictional world, a number of authors simply ignored the

newly-restricted female characters or used them only as stereotype heroines in the happy ending for a Picaresque hero. A female character so restrained by sexual chastity could have no place in the boisterous Picaro world and could be introduced only at the end of the story as part of the hero's reward.

However, for other authors the heroines' new restrictions provided two major opportunities. One was to develop the heroine inside the limitations, to consider her circumstances and her character inside her virginity and inside her home. This trend produced the popular fiction of the domestic drama. The other twin development was a fiction which dabbled dangerously on the borders of the heroine's limitations, which recognised the all-important need for the heroine to remain chaste and preferably inside her home, and yet provocatively exposed her to danger and threat. This contrasting reaction produced the fictions where the heroine conforms to all the conventions of the domestic heroine, despite being forced out into the world to encounter extraordinary and often unlikely tests and hardships. This development blossomed in gothic fiction where the typical domestic heroine is catapulted into exotic and pseudo-historical circumstances.

In both developments the dominant theme is the heroine's struggle to avoid compromising herself despite the force of attack from the outside world. The additional ingredient of the sense of paranoia typical of eighteenth-century authors means that the outside world looms more and more threatening to the domesticated heroines, and even the slightest encounter with forces other than those safely domesticated take on the signs of a major encounter.

Those stories which concentrate on domestic life treat the threat of the outside world in a fairly subdued fashion. Inside her home and inside her mind the heroine explores, discovers, learns, and considers her own personality, moral standards, and future. The men from the outside world who penetrate the domestic circle to threaten and court her, and her occasional forays, provide the conflicts, contradictions, and paradoxes she must resolve. She dreams, considers, and resolves inside the limitations of the home, and inside the limitations of intense relationships with a few people. The home is wealthy and elite, so there are no scenes of work. It is relatively small, with the presence only of immediate kin and a few special friends. The fear of the outside world is betrayed in the preference for the domestic hearth and well-known faces; there are few visits and few visitors. Inside these extra limitations the domestic fictions deal more and more with the microcosm of family life, personal behaviour, manners, emotions, and domestic detail.

Without the distraction of dramatic events the story narrows to tiny, revealing details of behaviour and manners. Without any permitted sexual pleasure the courtship takes place at a level of delicate gesture - the meeting of eyes, a smile, a touch of the fingertips - and in much talk. The heroine's consciousness matures inside the home and concerns itself with relationships inside the domestic circle. The most exciting event for housebound heroines is a prolonged and complicated courtship. The limitations of the fictional women, inactive and house-bound, prompted authors who revelled in these limitations to develop the love story as the over-riding theme of fiction. Courtship and the progress of marriage is simply the most interesting event available to people confined to the home, and the limitations on their heroines forced authors to

concentrate on the love-story. Naturally there is no place for melodramatic villains in the small family circle. Bad behaviour is spiteful cattiness, malicious gossip, or - at the very worst - competition for parental or sexual attention. The reduction in the scale of villainy was not even regretted by the reader. The micro-cosmic life bred a microscopic sensitivity, and heroines such as Sophia, Sidney Biddulph, or Betsy Thoughtless are as devastated and distressed by gossip as their fictional forebears had been by threatened genocide.

The tone of paranoia is present even in the most innocuous domestic tales. Strange men from the outside world, like Lovelace or the Pupil of Pleasure, penetrate the domestic home and threaten the occupants. Even more often the results of trading in the outside world, though never glimpsed by the stay-at-home ladies, can mean success or disaster for them. For numerous heroines, including Amelia, Ethelinde, Pamela II, Lydia, the Woman of Honour, or the heroine of The School for Wives, the economic future is determined outside the home by forces they cannot comprehend or encounter. None of the stories of this survey wholly and totally excludes the external world, although the tendency to concentrate on domestic life and ignore external events and business was a growing one.

Where the heroine leaves the shelter of the home, the tendency is to test her limitations to the utmost. Authors frightened and fascinated the reader by taking the heroine to the very brink of disaster. Unlike women in the earlier tales who could journey and romp and escape with impunity, the limited heroines risk everything - virginity, status, and even life - once they step over the threshold.

The dramas of the story lie in the heroine's crossing of the threshold and in the ensuing conflict between her fragile self and the aggressive outside world. The importance of crossing the threshold for the domestic heroine is shown especially clearly in Clarissa, where the fatal dash through the garden gate throws her into the power of Lovelace the rapist. Such a scene is repeated by Harriot Stuart where she is kidnapped and taken through another garden gate. Her emphasis upon the breach in the defences of the house suggests the domestic home under siege:

> night stole upon me unawares, and just as I
> was preparing to return, three or four
> Indians rushed into the garden; the gate,
> thro' the carelessness of the gardener,
> being left unfasten'd they seized me
> immediately.*[1]

The exposure of the heroine to dramatic danger was exploited especially by the writers of pseudo-historical stories like the gothic tales. The excitement of such books lies in the contrast between wild and unconventional behaviour permitted by the historical period and the modern conventions set upon the heroine. In The Old English Baron, The Siege of Calais, and in The Recess particularly the heroines are constrained domestic heroines whose problems of survival with intact virginity and reputation are all the more acute for their setting in a wild, uncontrolled historical period.

## 2 FICTIONAL WORLD : REAL WORLD

One of the problems of visualising the eighteenth-century fictional world as the eighteenth-century reader would have known it - as an independent imaginary creation - is that the critic is forced to confront the relationship of this imaginary world to the real world.

While there are many theories about the nature of this relationship, this thesis has used the simple working rule that the fictional world serves more or less as an accurate mirror of the real world: reflecting some aspects, distorting others, omitting some altogether, and emphasising others. Developments in literature of voice, family, or shape could take place independently of the real world, but major trends of ideology must have had their roots either in events or in ideas in the real world. The fictional world could reflect such changes or reinforce them, distort, or deny them.

## 2.1 Reflecting Reality

The consciousness of authors and readers is a fact of the real world which the fictional world can reflect. A change of consciousness is an event in the real world which the fictional world can sometimes expose. If the author dreams of a world where people can decide their own future, set their own moral standard, and determine their obligations to families and friends, then his or her consciousness of what constitutes a happy worthwhile life has already been affected by ideas about individualism. If one author is an individualist then others are likely to be individualist too. By the time the fictional world shows a change of direction by including a body of new attitudes, these ideas will already have been shared and discussed in the real world. Their appearance in the fictional world may add validity and stimulate more discussion. The transition of ideas from the real world to the fictional world and back again encourages their popularity. The appearance of fictions of individualism is a symptom of the ideas gaining ground in the real world as well as a potent force to promote and spread such ideas.

Since authors were not a separate, enclosed elite in the eighteenth century they were not avant-garde leaders of ideas but rather representatives of the consciousness of their class. If their class, their readers, had felt no attraction towards the ideas of individualism and sensibility, then the ideas would never have emerged in the fictional world, or would have appeared only briefly. The consciousness of readers and authors was formed in the real world and the popularity of developments in the fictional world was dependent on their appeal to the readers there. Ideas and changes in the fictional world grew from changes in the real world, and their survival and success depended on their reception there too. The process is intimate and closely related, and in an effort to ba_lance the views of some historians who see the fictional world as leading the consciousness of real people I may be overstating the fictional world's dependence on the real world.

The development of fictions of internal consciousness came from the trend in the real world towards ideas of individualism: the rights of the individual, the importance of personal rather than public relationships, the importance of independent morality, and an emphasis on personal spiritual odysseys of growth and maturation. Some historians see evidence of such a trend in the latter half of the eighteenth century, others would go back farther and point to the religious individualism of the Interregnum. It must suffice here to acknowledge that individualism was not invented in the eighteenth century, neither in the fictional nor in the real world, but has a long and continuing history where sometimes the individual and sometimes society takes precedence in the minds of people. In the middle of the eighteenth century the pendulum of taste swung to the

rights of the individual, and both the marriages for love in the real world and the adventures of internal consciousness in the fictional world are symptoms of this.

## 2.2 Reinforcing Reality

The fictional world reflects changes in the real world when it shows the growing importance of the consciousness of the individual, but it may have reinforced changes in the real world with the enthusiastic portrayal of the narrowing of the lives of the heroines and their specialisation in relationships inside the domestic circle. It is right to view with some scepticism a popular theme in the fictional world which supports a decline in the status of a major section of the readership. At the time when women's power and status in the real world was declining because of changes in laws and traditions, the women read and wrote fictions which emphasised the pleasures of leisured life inside the home.

In the real world the speed of change made business life more difficult for all entrepreneurs, and favoured those who were free to adopt a full-time professional attitude to their business. Only men could make their business the first interest in their lives and use their homes to support and service them. A businesswoman who was also a wife and mother, or even a daughter, could not expect the total support of her family as could her male rival. Any woman who also had the responsibility of organising the home, or who could expect frequent pregnancies, could not compete against a specialist male entrepreneur. In any case property was increasingly entailed on sons or on the next male relative, however distant. When women did inherit, fathers and husbands increasingly appointed guardians and trustees so women were unlikely to have free control of capital.

When the daughter or wife of a small trader found herself in possession of the family business she also might find her father's trading contacts or guild closed against her.

Even women who had taken a share in the family business, working with their husbands and fathers, found this role denied them later in the eighteenth century. Social ambitions of traders and farmers prompted them to encourage their wives to enjoy the leisure which was a hallmark of Quality life. The women of the established elite found that the professionalisation of land management and farming, and the increasing numbers of full-time paid servants (rather than retainers and hangers-on) meant that their role was reduced to token supervision. Women at all levels of the Quality moved from roles as producers into roles as consumers.

As these developments were taking place in the real world the fictional world emphasises the dangers of work and, indeed, of any experience outside the home. Negatively, the fictions identify the world outside the home as fatally threatening; the limited heroine risks everything once she crosses the threshold. Postively, the fictions emphasise the pleasures and interests to be found at the fireside of the Quality home. With one voice they tell the reader that women are safer, happier, and better able to explore and develop their true natures at home. The emphasis upon the house-bound courtship of long discussions and small gestures teaches women that home is the best place to develop loving relationships. Courtship continues after marriage between loving partners who enjoy the privacy of their small home to develop their relationship. In a development of major significance a few fictions start emphasising the other pleasure and occupation open to house-bound women: the rearing of children.

The interest in childhood which flowered in the early nineteenth century Romantic movement was initiated in the eighteenth-century fictions as part of the appeal of the fictional home. In a few fictions children are shown as interesting individuals who crucially need their mother's constant presence and guidance. In others, attention is focussed not upon the childrens' needs but on the mother's satisfaction in ministering to them. Amelia's children make little impact on the reader and Pamela's child is too young to display much individuality, but the emphasis upon Amelia and Pamela as good mothers is part of the appeal of the two women. As Amelia and Pamela also demonstrate, the good woman stays at home with her children regardless of the activities of her husband in the outside world.

In fairness, eighteenth-century authors cannot be blamed for the fictional world's emphasis on leisure for women. This is a feature inherited from the earlier fictions which concentrate on the leisure activities of both sexes of the elite. The new element introduced in the eighteenth century is the emphasis upon the home, and the glorification of the domestic circle as the setting for all that is interesting in life and the proper place - indeed, the only place, for a woman of Quality.

Social developments like the decline in the status of women are too complex to be explained by a vulgar theory of patriarchal conspiracy with the fictional world providing the propaganda. But it is no simple coincidence that when women were being squeezed out of business, farming, and work opportunities, domestic life is shown as the ideal occupation for women of Quality. In the real world women sought domestic activities to fill the expanded leisure hours, and

men came to see it as appropriate that a woman's place should be at home. Their mutual fictional world emphatically supports this view.

2.3 Denying Reality

But the fictional and the real world do not always move together. The fictional world is a mirror, but a distorting mirror, of the real world. In areas of tension in the real world the fictional world is especially important as it promotes propaganda, distorts or even denies reality. An example of this is the treatment of the fictional countryside during a time of crisis in the real world.

The anxiety felt by the elite at the consequences of their changes in agricultural practice and class relations is dramatically exposed in the fictions by the glaring omission of any realistic picture of the countryside. Even authors such as Defoe, expert in agricultural change, did not break the silence about the treatment of agricultural workers. The fictional world repeats the classic pastoral myth of a contented peasantry and in so doing is forced to construct a fictional countryside totally unlike contemporary eighteenth-century England. To deny changing agricultural practices the fictions are forced to omit any reference to rural entrepreneurs, so they make no mention of experimental landlords, middlemen, rural tradesmen, landless labourers, or rural proleteriat. There are only two classes in the fictional world: peasants and Lords; they live in a feudal harmony enhanced by the extraordinary prosperity of the peasantry who live in small manor houses with pleasure gardens, livestock, and their own fields, and spend much time haymaking and merrymaking. From this class come the rare but delightful feudal-type personal servants who either adore their master or mistress or jokingly presume as favoured retainers to cheek their employer. The evidence

of the fictional world is unanimous - there are no radicals, no thriving bourgeoisie, no ambitious upwardly-mobile middle class, no discontented starving workers.

This persuasive picture can be explained by the guilt of the elite, conscious of their role in destroying living standards of rural workers; but the fictional world also operates as an ideological support for the elite of the real world. Since poverty in the fictional world is a result of individual accident resolved by individual patronage, then readers and authors could reassure themselves that they need indulge only in occasional individual charity to solve the problems of hardship in the real world. Since working-class and middle-class people barely exist in the fictional world, the readers and authors in the real world were not presented with the worry of living in an enclosed elite in a time of mobility. Indeed, since in the fictional world the automatic result of social mobility is hardship and distress for everyone, the readers and authors were justified in maintaining the real-world elite position against incursions from the lower classes.

In the fictional world of the eighteenth century the elite need not defend their monopoly of wealth and status since there is no major threat of a socially-mobile middle class. In the fictional world in the nineteenth century this defence became vocal, determined, and spiteful as increased tensions in the real world stimulated the development of a new stereotype butt for sarcasm - the ambitious middle-class person.

## 3 CONCLUSION

Different aspects of a culture necessarily relate since they have their roots in the one society, although they may look very different as they grow and develop. Similarly, the elements popular in the fictional world are cross-related and inter-related but share a common background in the consciousness of the culture. One of the major themes is the story of developing consciousness, and this inspires the whole area of sensibility with stimulating elements and themes. Simultaneously it caused the decline of erotic writing and of comic writing which had been primarily scatological, bawdy, and violent. Comic writing could revive only when authors had evolved a voice for humour which matched the refinement and the delicacy of the fictions of internal consciousness, and when they found areas of behaviour which could be mocked without serious offence. This process did not take long, as Jane Austen shows:

> It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.*[2]

While violence and sexual abuse became serious offences and no longer could be treated lightly, all areas of crime or even mis-behaviour receive serious treatment. In twin developments crimes against the heroine become either outrageous, as in the terrors suffered by gothic heroines, or became scaled-down to the level of domestic experience as petty spite and malice. No more is the heroine merely pushed around - she is nearly murdered or is the butt of a little cattiness.

These developments are closely related to the emphasis on the consciousness of the individual, which differ for male and female individuals. The consciousness of heroines is shown to be developed best in the home, to safeguard their virginity and chastity, and

this trend stimulated the development of the fiction based on the detail of behaviour - already important to a society which measured godliness by external details. The limitations of adventures set solely in the protected home inspired in turn an emphasis on relationships; conflicts with external threats or mishaps were reduced or excluded altogether in favour of the problems of developing relationships. Relationships, not events, became the central concern of the fiction and the love -story became not the successful conclusion to a story of external adventures but the meat of the story itself.

The emphasis on the home militated against any new development in the fictions to describe and discuss work. This lack of interest was exacerbated in the predominantly rural society by the stress laid by the fashion of sensibility on the wildness in Nature and the picturesque in Man. Consequently, there is no interest shown by the fictions in changing agricultural practices or in the emerging industries. Readers and authors preferred descriptions of wild scenery or natural fruitfulness. Equally, there is no interest in realistic descriptions of contemporary agricultural labourers: readers and authors preferred stereotype portraits of a feudal peasantry. The sense of guilt felt by the literate class at the consequences of changing work practices proved a major stimulus to this trend in the fictions.

The unity of the fictions is a result of the hegemony of the class which wrote and read them, but comes also from the interchange among authors of many individual fictional elements. Authors even share a number of characters who originate in one story and reappear in another, with or without their creator's permission. Narrational voices, ideas, and attitudes, are adopted from one story to another.

It is easy to trace such related stories when there is an obvious plagiarism or sequel; far harder to detect the spread of an idea when it has become so popular that it grows into a recognisable voice. For example, the epistolary method of Richardson was adopted by so many authors that all cannot be individually accused of copying him. The innumerable adoptions of the style add together to form a family. In this way it is possible to miss the full impact of Tristram Shandy. Early individual plagiarisms melt into the background of a new voice in fiction: sentimental, whimsical, comical. The voice of Tristram echoes in almost every fiction published after his arrival in the fictional world. Other authors' versions were more sentimental and more heavy-handed, and they dropped the bawdy humour of the double-entendre in the mainstream fictions. The original voice becomes submerged under innumerable versions and the voice of Tristram Shandy becomes embodied in the sentimental style.

The central fiction of all those studied for this survey is Don Quixote, and this great work virtually founded the fiction of consciousness and provided the fertile ground of the Quixote story. As I have indicated, the Quixote story was rewritten and renewed in innumerable popular versions. The theme of an avid reader losing touch with reality, undergoing comic misunderstandings, suffering some pain, and then coming to his or her senses was adopted by countless authors. Perhaps the most famous, unfortunately outside the scope of this survey, is Northanger Abbey*[3] where the female Quixote figure is recalled to reality by the traditional method of shock, and true love.

It is more difficult to try to trace directly the simultaneous impact of Don Quixote on the form and voice of the fictions.

Don Quixote itself did not emerge from thin air, but is a satire on the Romance family and retains the Romance form. The seed of change is the enforced concentration on the hero whose progression into insanity and subsequent recovery forms the developing theme of the story. The attention of author and reader was concentrated thus on the psychology of Don Quixote, and the story perforce traces the development of his consciousness. This theme of consciousness, in the short period of this survey, comes to dominate the fictional world and alters the form, the setting, the narrational tone, and the content of the fictions. The stimulus for this change, and the acceptance of change, was in the real-life consciousness of readers and authors; but the seed of change in literature was this one dynamic work.

This thesis has attempted to follow a logical line of enquiry. Fictions were selected for study on the basis of their popularity among the main outlets for fictions - the commercial circulating libraries. There were no initial ideas about the existence of a fictional world and no intent to discover such a place. The important elements and their inter-relationship, which built a fictional world, were forced on my attention and could not be ignored. It cannot be proved that they had the same effect on an eighteenth-century reader, but I believe that such a reader would see in this thesis an imperfect but recognisable description of a much loved Never-Never land of fantasy caught in a crucial moment of change. This was the fictional world which started life in the earliest days of oral story-telling and delights us still.

# APPENDIX I

## LIST OF ELEMENTS OF THE SURVEY

| GENERAL ELEMENTS | OPTIONAL ATTITUDES |
|---|---|
| 1 Politics: | Pro-Hanoverian monarchy and pro-Whig. Anti-Hanoverians and anti-Whig. Reformist. Radical. |
| 2 Political Discussion | inside the body of the fiction. |
| 3 A positive attitude to a Balanced Constitution. | |
| 4 Religion: | Anti-Roman Catholic, Pro-Roman Catholic. Anti-Dissent. Pro-Dissent. Concern about Corruption in Church of England. Suspicion towards all religion. |
| 5 Religious Tone: | Agnostic Naturalism. Christian. Cynicism or Atheism. |
| 6 Didactic Elements: | Education theories. Defence of the Church of England. Humanism. |
| 7 Class Setting of Fiction: | Aristocracy. Squireachy. Merchant Class. Trader Class. Working Class. Impoverished Aristocracy. |
| 8 Attitude to Working-Class Characters: | Patronising. Realistic. |
| 9 Attitude to Money: | Major interest. Evil. Trade and Work Virtuous. |
| 10 Setting: | England. Europe. East. Romantic Ancient. Fantasy. Canada and America. |
| 11 Setting: | Town. Country. Journeying. Both. |
| 12 Attitudes: | Town evil: country good. Seasonal use. |
| 13 Rural Myths: | Improving gardens featured. Agricultural theories discussed. Leisure use of cottage. |
| 14 Main Content: | Love. Thesis. Observation. Journey. Adventures. |
| 15 Form: | Letter. Manuscript. Third person narrative. First person narrative. Thread. Subplots. |
| 16 Sub-plots Subjects: | Fallen women. Working-class. Any. |
| 17 Complete Sub-plots: | How many. |

| GENERAL ELEMENTS | | OPTIONAL ATTITUDES |
|---|---|---|
| 18 | A Cousinbook to another | fiction. |
| 19 | Type of Cousinbook: | Satire. Sequel. Concealed plagiarism. Shared Characters. Borrowed Theme. Borrowed Style. Promises a sequel to come. |
| 20 | Size in 1,000 words. | |
| 21 | Form: | One plot. Double-header. Collection. Thread. Multiplot stories. |
| 22 | Date of first edition. | |
| 23 | Tone: | Sentimental. Realism. Anti-sentimental. |
| 24 | Comedy: | Satire. Bawdy. Scatological. Violent. Humourless. |
| 25 | Morals: | Sexual double-standard. Hero and heroine equally good. Equally sexual. |
| 26 | A Saintlike heroine. A saintlike hero. | |
| 27 | Attitudes to 'evil': | Spicy interest. Genuinely repellent. Both. No evil. |
| 28 | Duty-versus-Love: | The right to choose. To veto the parents' choice. No right. |
| 29 | Emotionally Significant Deaths: | How many. |
| 30 | Deaths; Near Mistaken: | How many. |
| 31 | Macabre Scenes: | How many. |
| 32 | Supernatural: | Significant dreams. Hauntings. Trick-supernatural. Magic. |
| 33 | Castles: | How many. |
| 34 | Overtones of Incest. | |
| 35 | Appearance of the Devil. | |
| 36 | An Old Soldier or Sailor. | |
| 37 | Duels: | Boycotted. Fought. Fought despite principles. |
| 38 | Mystery Relations: | How many. |
| 39 | Capture by Turks or Pirates: | How many. |

| GENERAL ELEMENTS | | OPTIONAL ATTITUDES |
|---|---|---|
| 40 | The Commune. | |
| 41 | Attitudes to Gambling: | Neutral. A Vice. |
| 42 | Attitudes to Masquerades: | Neutral. Disapproving. |
| 43 | A Coquettish but good woman. | |
| 44 | A Passionate older woman. | |
| 45 | A Negative Attitude to Lawyers. | |

ELEMENTS OF CHARACTERS

HERO, HEROINE AND VILLAIN

| | |
|---|---|
| Education: | None. Informal. Formal. |
| Speciality: | Dance. Reading. Sport. |
| Home: | Parents. Relations. Institutions. Alone. |
| Home Sited: | Rural. Urban. |
| Temperament: | Cheerful. Melancholic. Mad. |
| Health: | Good. Frail. |
| Class Position at Start of Story: | Aristocrat. Squire. Merchant. Trader. Working Class. Poor Aristocrat. |
| Social Mobility: | Climbs. Falls. |
| Financial Position at Start of Story: | Wealthy. Poor. |
| Financial Change: | Gets richer. Gets poorer. |
| Behaviour During Adventures | Active. Passive. |
| Self-Help: | Saves self. Rescued. Reforms. |
| Marital Status: | Single. Married. Widowed. |
| Personal Development: | Changes. Stays same. |
| Religion: | Roman Catholic. Protestant. Other. |
| Conviction: | Atheist. Pious. |
| Relations: | Two parents. Only father. Only mother. Orphan. Step-parents. |
| Work: | Paying job. |
| Age: | Young. Middle-aged. Old. |
| Nationality: | English. German. Eastern. Italian. Fantasy. Swiss. French. Belgian. Irish. Spanish. |
| Adventures: | Imprisoned. Imprisoned in Convent. Imprisoned in Madhouse. |
| Sexual Nature: | Active. Passive. Actively Frigid. Perverted. |
| Deaths: | Dies of natural causes. Dies in childbirth. Murdered. |

Importance in Story: Major. Peripheral. One of Several.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF HEROINES

Sexual Experience: Raped. Assaulted. Seduced.

Adventures: Kidnapped. Elopes. Runs Away.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF VILLAINS

Conclusion: Victorious. Defeated. Escapes.

Motive: Sexual. Financial. Jealousy.

Related to: Hero. Heroine. In Loco Parentis. Is Hero.

Sex: Female. Male.

# APPENDIX II

## COMPUTER METHODS

The use of a computer in a study of English Literature is not new. Indices and concordances have been made possible with the help of computers. But the use made of the computer for this research is radically new. The computer was employed to count recurring elements in stories and group the stories on the basis of their similarity. The computer also produced tables to show that some elements tend to occur in the same story while other elements are mutually exclusive.

Because no-one has used computers in this way before. there are no tested computer programmes designed to do this work. Consequently a number of techniques usually used in other disciplines were tried out on this research. Some proved to be more successful than others in producing clear results from the data, and it was pleasing to see that successful techniques confirmed each other, and confirmed the impression that an`average reader might have drawn from a simple reading of the stories.

The selection of the data which forms the basis of this research was made in the first instance by me in the choice of books I read. The reading list was compiled from the surviving catalogues of the commercial libraries of the eighteenth century. Titles were listed in order of their popularity in the surviving library catalogues, and I located and read 127 of some of the most popular books. From this survey I selected a number of elements which related to the actual presence and personality of the hero, heroine and villain. I took especial note of changes which took place in the course of the adventures of these chief protagonists, such as their social position

and rise or fall during the course of the story, and their relative wealth or poverty. I also noted a number of general elements which related both to the content of the story: such as the style of humour, the presence or absence of morbid scenes like graveyards and corpses, and elements which related to the shape of the story like the number of sub-plots contained in the tale, or the preference of first person, third person, letter-style or discovered-manuscript-style narrative. Some elements I noted because of their historical interest: for example the political and religious prejudices of the stories. However, the vast majority of the elements I noted were suggested by their importance in the stories. A number of elements seemed to continually recur and were obviously an important feature in the eighteenth-century story. A larger project could have included many more elements - this survey is by no means conclusive - but as it already includes 127 stories and 129 basic elements (nearly all with multiple-choice answers) the problems of managing such amounts of data has already become serious.

The first step, once the data had been entered on computer files was to produce a Similarity Matrix which arranged the identifying codenumbers of the stories so as to build a display in which one can look up one story and scan along the line to see listed, in order of their similarity to it, all the stories of the survey. The Matrix looked not unlike a mileage chart which shows how many miles there are between a selection of towns.

Even at this early stage some problems had to be solved. The zeroes in the original data sometimes meant that a book had deliberately excluded an element, and sometimes that there was no data available on that particular element. To resolve this problem only 'significant zeroes' (where a zero indicated an authorial choice) were counted.

The programme was also adjusted to count the multiple choice answers to questions as well as the more simple Yes/No answer. For example: the programme was adapted to count five variations of political opinion: Pro-Hanoverian and Pro-Whig; Anti-Hanoverian and Anti-Whig, Reformist, Radical, or No Opinion; as well as the more simple count of presence or absence of scenes of incest. Other researchers may like to note that this is a complicated process. In preparing data a simple absent or present check would have been easier in the end, though it takes up more space in the early stages.

Once the Similarity Matrix had been established other techniques could be used on the data using the Matrix as a basis. The Statistical Program Package of GENSTAT Programmes, developed by the Rothamstead team was used for subsequent calculations.*[1]

First of these was the Minimum Spanning Tree which is a diagram showing the shortened form of the book titles linked to each other in order of their similarity and showing the strength of the similarity. Each book is linked to another book to which it is similar. In order to produce a meaningful diagram I rejected all links of under 60%: so the resulting diagram showed only those books which shared more than 60% of elements in common. The results from this were very useful as the diagram shows. It produced not only a clear way of seeing which book was like another but also showed that books sharing similarities seemed to group together. At a later stage I was able to mark these groups which, on the basis of my reading of primary and secondary material I thought shared a similar style or content. Five major groups were identified with six subgroups. These groupings were later reproduced almost precisely by the Principal Co-ordinate Analysis.

After the Minimum Spanning Tree the method of Hierarchical Cluster Analysis was employed. This method formed the books with different levels of similarity into different groups or clusters. Then the two clusters with the greatest similarity were combined to form one large cluster, and compared with the remaining clusters. This process can go on until only one large cluster remains containing all the books; and the job of the researcher is to select the stage at which there are few enough clusters to form significant groups, and yet not so few that books are bundled together ignoring their dissimilarity.

While this is the general principle of Hierarchical Cluster Analysis there are five methods for producing the results and each of them forms the clusters in slightly different ways.

The problem posed by this method - unlike the other methods used - is that while the titles are successfully grouped together, the strength of the connections between individual stories is not shown. Thus the Minimum Spanning Tree shows that Werther is connected to Emile, which in turn is connected to Coxcomb; and one can see that there are aspects of Emile which are similar to Coxcomb, and aspects of Werther which are similar in turn to Emile. However the groupings of cluster analysis does not define these individual connections and leaves one wondering why some stories are grouped together. It was this problem which made the method less useful for this survey than the other methods. It is worth noting, however, that with this method the fictions did form coherent groups.

The final method used on this data is called Principal Co-ordinate Analysis, and is used to solve the problem that psychologists call multi-dimensional scaling. A key to the method is the word

multi-dimension; since the method measures distances between the books not in a flat two-dimensional sense, but in a multi-dimensional sense. The computer scans all the data as if the elements and books were stars in space and determines in which direction the group of stars are facing: not only all the points of the compass but up and down as well. Then, looking at the group from the favoured point the computer maps all the positions of each book. The computer then selects another point and produces another map. The job of the researcher is to compare the maps produced by the computer and see which one shows the group (which could be looked at from any position) in its most meaningful shape. Once that map has been selected the researcher can examine the patterns formed by the data. It is very satisfying to see that this method produced groups virtually identical to those selected by me on the basis of the Minimum Spanning Tree diagram. I would argue that these groups would make sense to any average reader of the fictions.

One of the major problems of this work is the amount of bias which can be introduced by the researcher. The computer works on my selection of data and its results are accepted or rejected by me on the basis of - at worst - my prejudices and preconceptions; and - at best - my informed opinion. This bias would be more of a problem if one had expected a totally bias-free quantified result. But since literature is not a science one could never obtain a totally objective result from any study. The very act of reading involves value judgements and the involvement of the reader and the reader's personality with the author and the author's creation. All this research has attempted has been to approach to identify recurring elements, and group the fictions with those elements in mind.

The computer has been used as an infallible memory which can remember every element and every story in which it appears. It is then able to show which stories share elements and features in common. The later cross-tabulation of elements is the result of the computer 'remembering' which elements occur with each other. In this way the computer has been used as an annexe of the reader's memory. In accordance with traditional literary practice I had read and noted aspects of the fictions and responded to them as any reader would have done. The innovative use of the computer meant only that I was able to totally recall every one of the 129 basic elements in the 127 fictions. As a reader I have a clear impression that the fictions have a tendency to be serious and lacking in humour; the use of the computer as a counting memory means that I can say that of 127 fictions 84 books or 61.8% of the survey are humourless.

At this level the computer is used as a counting memory but its other function of grouping the stories together according to their shared elements is one where it operates independently once it has been given the necessary data. The bias of the researcher re-enters the picture when the researcher decides to accept and name the groups which are indicated by the computer. As can be seen on the groups I have outlined, the computer groups generally make patterns which an average reader would recognise. In one area especially - where gothic stories are consistently listed with Eastern and Romance stories - the computer analysis reveals a similiarity which a casual reader might miss.

In this way the computer and the reader work together and the in-built bias of the work is no more than one would expect in any literary study. In fact the bias may be slightly less since the computer does not forget that an element occurs in a book, nor does

a title slip its mind. The conscious bias is present, but such unconscious errors have been eliminated.

The bias of the selection of the data, the elements, is more of a problem and one which later research could improve. The temptation to include marginal but fascinating elements: - such as the political attitude of stories - was irresistible; and provides some important information on these attitudes. Elements which kept recurring were added into the survey as they become apparent, during the course of reading, but no doubt there are others which should have been included.

However the results do prove both data and method. The three most successful methods all produce well-defined groups which not only make sense to me, but also seem to be suggested by literary critics who seem to describe some of the groups in their descriptions of the evolution of the novel form.*[2] *[3] The groups described by the literary critics correspond almost exactly to the clusters selected by the computer and named and identified by me.

The second major project for this research was to determine the relationship not of one book to another, but of one element to another. To establish these connections a package of computer programmes: The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used.*[4]

Every element of the hero, heroine and villain's character was compared with every other element of the hero, heroine or villain's character to produce a profile of the chief protagonists which shows what characteristics are most popular in each character and what characteristics are rare. Every characteristic was counted on a one-way table (ie simply counted); and every characteristic was compared with all the others.

This same process was carried out with all the other general elements which referred to content, family shape, authorial voice, and tone so that every single element (and all the multiple-choice answers) were compared to every other one.

The results from this massive survey have formed the basis of this research. The claim that this thesis is a glimpse into the fictional world of the eighteenth century could not be made without the support of the detailed evidence of elements drawn from 127 fictions and compared with each other. Just as the computer grouping of the stories revealed certain coherent groups, the computer comparisons of the elements reveals a coherent world of fiction and its' changes over time.

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