

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE MORALITY
OF HENRY FIELDING'S NOVELS
TO THEIR ART

by

Eustace J. Palmer, M.A.

Thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of the University of Edinburgh
in the Faculty of Arts

August, 1966 .



CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	iii
List of Abbreviations	iv
Introduction	v
Chapter One. Amorality, Morality and the Discovery of the Comic Art — The Plays	1
Chapter Two. <u>Shamela</u> — Hypocrisy and a Style	41
Chapter Three. A "Moral" Approach to <u>Joseph Andrews</u>	73
Chapter Four. Comic Epic in Prose — a New Kind of Novel	113
Chapter Five. <u>Jonathan Wild</u> — an Exploration in Irony	176
Chapter Six. A "Moral" Approach to <u>Tom Jones</u>	232
Chapter Seven. A Comic Epic in Ironic Prose	295
Chapter Eight. A "Moral" Approach to <u>Amelia</u>	356
Chapter Nine. The Decline of Fielding's Art	398
Bibliography	432

PREFACE

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor K.J. Fielding, Saintsbury Professor of English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, Mr. Mark Kinhead-Weekes, now Senior Lecturer at the University of Kent and posthumously to Professor J.E. Butt, formerly Regius Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at the University of Edinburgh, all of whom supervised my studies. I remain deeply indebted to them for kindness, sympathy, encouragement and guidance.

I am also grateful to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom for the award which enabled me to pursue my course of research.

Fraser House,
Dalkeith Road,
Edinburgh, 9.

Eustace J. Palmer

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

<u>J.A.</u>	<u>Joseph Andrews</u>
<u>J.W.</u>	<u>Jonathan Wild</u>
<u>T.J.</u>	<u>Tom Jones</u>
<u>ELH</u>	<u>Journal of English Literary History</u>
<u>JEGP</u>	<u>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</u>
<u>MLN</u>	<u>Modern Language Notes</u>
<u>MLQ</u>	<u>Modern Language Quarterly</u>
<u>MLR</u>	<u>Modern Language Review</u>
<u>MP</u>	<u>Modern Philology</u>
<u>N & Q</u>	<u>Notes and Queries</u>
<u>PMLA</u>	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</u>
<u>PQ</u>	<u>Philological Quarterly</u>
<u>RES</u>	<u>Review of English Studies</u>
<u>SB</u>	<u>Studies in Bibliography</u>
<u>SP</u>	<u>Studies in Philology</u>

N.B. The dates given in references in the footnotes are the dates of the editions used whereas the dates given in the bibliography are usually the dates of first publication unless otherwise stated.

Reference to Fielding's novels is always to Book and Chapter.

Unless otherwise stated the place of publication of all works referred to is London.

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies of Fielding's work have concentrated on the elucidation of his morality in an attempt to demonstrate that Fielding was not only a comic novelist but also possessed depth and moral earnestness. Prior to this "moralistic" phase of "Fielding" studies, critics had devoted their attention to the comic aspects of his art. But each of these approaches is inadequate and limited. The weakness of the first is that Fielding's novels are made to read like heavily didactic, overtly moralistic sermons rather than complex works of art. This is clearly exemplified in Martin Battestin's book, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art and, to a certain extent, in George Sherburn's essay, "Fielding's Amelia: an Interpretation". The second approach has the disadvantage of leaving the impression that Fielding's works are hilarious (perhaps even bawdy) but are completely lacking in depth and serious meaning. Behind these two approaches lies the assumption that there is tension between the "comic" and the "moralistic" and that the two cannot be blended. A modern critic, Professor Andrew Wright, goes so far as to suggest that Fielding had no moral intention and that the atmosphere in his work is festive rather than lenten. Another, Professor Ian Watt, believes that the comedy in some of the scenes alleviates the brutality and forestalls moral condemnation. But the truth must be that the comic and moralistic are interdependent and that Fielding's comedy is part of the technique he evolved for promoting moral judgement.

For an accurate assessment of Fielding's work, therefore, we should, as Battestin does, study the ideas which influenced Fielding, but we must then go on to see how the comic art modifies the moral basis and creates

Fielding's own morality which may not necessarily be the same as that of the men who supposedly influenced him.

In this thesis two chapters are devoted to each of the major works and one each to the plays, Shamela and Jonathan Wild. In the first of these two chapters (or the first half of the chapter in the case of the minor works) an attempt is made to plot the moral basis of the satire and its range. It is then seen that such a reading in "moral" terms does not fully account for our experience in reading the work, so an attempt is made in the second to examine the operation of the comic art, and as a result it is demonstrated that Fielding's morality makes an effective impact and his meaning is clearly communicated only because of the skilful handling of his art.

CHAPTER ONE

Amorality, Morality and the Discovery of the Comic Art — The Plays

I

Any serious study of Fielding's art must begin with the plays, for it was during his brief association with the London theatre that he developed and perfected those techniques which he subsequently used so dexterously in the novels. Fielding the apprentice dramatist was more attracted by the comedy of Restoration drama than by Sentimental drama, and his first plays were written in the Restoration tradition. However, he soon discovered the shortcomings of Restoration comedy and, for a brief spell, turned his attention to the composition of plays in the manner of Sentimental comedy. But the plays written in the Sentimental tradition proved no more satisfactory than those written in the Restoration tradition. Fielding had come to believe that comedy had a moral purpose, and he soon realized that neither Restoration drama nor Sentimental drama enabled him to achieve the aim of the comic dramatist — to instruct and divert at the same time. Fielding's need, therefore, was to develop techniques which would enable him both to achieve his moral purpose and to divert his audience. It was with this in view that he turned increasingly to farce, burlesque and the mock-epic during the later stages of his dramatic career. Burlesque and mock-epic taught Fielding awareness of style and how to imply moral absurdity through style; farce and burlesque taught him the detachment which was necessary for every practitioner of the device of irony. These were the comic devices Fielding was subsequently to use in the novels for

moral purposes, and one can see why any discussion of Fielding's art and morality must include the plays, for it was in these that he resolved his artistic problems and developed his literary techniques.

Most commentators on Fielding have realized that the hand of the dramatist can be seen in the manipulation of the novels; yet they have emphasized only minor aspects of this connection. We can all observe that the entrances of most of Fielding's chief characters are like those of leading dramatis personae on the stage.¹ Yet, much more important, are stylistic similarities between the novels and plays. This may seem strange to critics who think that Fielding's plays are very dull, and that with Joseph Andrews he began writing in a new genre with a new style.² But Joseph Andrews is a first novel and for a first novel it is a very workmanlike performance. One needs to explain how an author who had no experience in the field of the novel (a form still only just developing) should discover, with his first attempt, the correct techniques. A brief survey of some of Fielding's plays would reveal that mock-epic, farce, irony, burlesque and other stylistic devices which are used to such telling effect in the novels, and which partly account for their brilliance, are already present in the plays, and that throughout his dramatic phase Fielding was experimenting with various styles.

When Fielding began writing for the stage in the late Seventeen-twenties, the prevailing dramatic mode was Sentimental comedy. Yet he chose as dramatic mentors not the then acknowledged sentimentalists, Steele and Cibber,

¹ See John Butt, Henry Fielding (1954), p.10. He brings out some of the similarities.

² Winfield Rogers has rejected this view. See Winfield Rogers, "Fielding's Early Aesthetic and Technique", Studies in Philology, XL (1943), 529-551.

but the famous Restoration dramatists, Wycherley, Vanbrugh and Congreve. So he chose, in effect, to write in a mode which at the time was out of favour. That Fielding should do this, is instructive in itself, and it suggests his view of the role of comedy; but in order to understand this more fully, one must make a distinction between the nature of Restoration and Sentimental comedy.

Restoration comedy has always been a bone of contention amongst critics. Contemporary critics like Jeremy Collier attacked its immorality and suggested that it merely reflected the licentiousness of the Restoration period without reflecting on it. Modern critics, however, would regard the immorality of Restoration comedy as a complex problem, and would refer to the work of Congreve and Wycherley as evidence that the best Restoration comedies were superior precisely because their authors knew what they were about, and were not merely reflecting, but reflecting on their society. The Way of the World, The Plain Dealer and The Double Dealer all show evidence of their authors' moral preoccupation. Most critics would, however, agree about the hilarity of Restoration comedy, the brilliance of its wit and the inventiveness of its plot. These are the qualities which explain its popularity for the theatre-going public; they also explain why Fielding was attracted to this particular dramatic mode, for, although he believed that comedy should instruct, he also believed that it should divert. In Fielding's eyes, therefore, the comedy of Restoration drama was its attraction and outweighed what he saw as its "immorality". So it is not astonishing that Fielding's first plays were written in the Restoration tradition.

But the dangers of this mode for an apprentice dramatist are obvious.

Unless he matched the brilliance of Restoration wit and the ingenuity of its intrigues, he could not hope to succeed. There was also the danger that he would produce plays which were brilliantly funny, but which lacked moral earnestness. Both of these dangers were exemplified in Fielding's first play, Love in Several Masques, which was produced in 1727 when the author was only twenty. By any standards, Love in Several Masques is a dull and unimpressive play. It clearly lies within the Restoration tradition, although Fielding does his best to tone down the indecency. The scene in which Lady Trap tries unsuccessfully to persuade Merital to seduce her is the only "closet scene" in the play. The young men are intelligent and mischievous but they are not as unprincipled as other Restoration heroes, and at the end the reader feels that they deservedly marry their lovers. Nevertheless, the amount of intrigue which is carried on by Lady Trap in her endeavours to procure a young lover, and by the young lovers themselves in their attempts to thwart the designs of their elders, is reminiscent of Restoration comedy. The names of the characters show that they derive from the "types" of Restoration drama, which in their turn go back to the comedy of Humours of Jacobean drama. Moreover, the dialogue is very similar to that of Restoration comedies, but it fails to achieve the same brilliance. The reader forms the impression that Fielding strives after the perfection of Congreve without quite attaining it. For example:

Mer: Do you think a fine woman so trifling a possession,
my Lord?

L. Form: Why — a fine woman — is a very fine thing — and so
is a fine house, I mean to entertain your friends with:
for they, commonly, enjoy both, with the additional
pleasure of novelty, whilst they pall on your own taste.

Mer: This from you, my Lord, is surprising. Sure, you will allow some women to be virtuous.

L.Form: O yes. I will allow an ugly woman to be as virtuous as she pleases, just as I will a poor man to be covetous. But beauty in the hands of a virtuous woman, like gold in those of a miser, prevents the circulation of trade.

Mer: It is rather like riches in the possession of the prudent. A virtuous woman bestows her favours on the deserving, and makes them a real blessing to those who enjoy her: whilst the vicious one, like the squandering prodigal, scatters them away: and like a prodigal, is often most despised by those to whom she has been most kind.¹

The "cut-and-thrust" of Restoration dialogue is absent here.

Merital's second remark is not a witty rejoinder to Lord Formal's first; it merely provides a cue for Lord Formal to come in with his remarks on virtuous women. Similarly, Merital's third remark is not a rejoinder to Formal's second; it is more like a lofty proverbial saying than witty repartee. Fielding does make a brave attempt, but the wit is forced; it does not flow effortlessly from his pen.

Love in Several Masques is clearly a first play. The plot is very muddled and it is difficult to see what is the point of it. With the exception of Rattle, there is hardly any vicious character; and whatever intrigue there is, is fairly harmless. There is, therefore, very little need for satire or moralization, and accordingly, these are almost completely absent. Both in inventiveness of plot and in the quality of its dialogue the play compares very unfavourably with many Restoration comedies.

Fielding's next play, The Temple Beau, produced in 1729, is both a better play and more solidly based within the Restoration tradition. The

¹ Fielding, "Love in Several Masques", in The Works of Henry Fielding, ed. J. Browne (Edinburgh, 1871), Act I, Sc.v. All subsequent quotations from Fielding's works will be taken from this edition unless otherwise stated.

plot is much more expertly constructed than that of Love in Several Masques, and though the characters are still "types" in the comedy of Humours tradition, they are much more individual than in the preceding play. Sir Avarice Pedant and his son Young Pedant, Lady Lucy Pedant, Sir Harry Wilding and his son Wilding all live in their own right. The characters of the young men, too, are much nearer to those of Restoration drama than those of the earlier play. Wilding is the typical rake. He has affairs with Lady Lucy Pedant and Lady Gravely, both of them aunts of his friend Valentine; and he takes up his lodging in the Temple with the intention of studying for the Bar, but squanders his father's money instead. In the end he cheats his father of an even larger sum of money by contriving to procure his arrest for the capital crime of burglary. Although he has illicit affairs with the two aunts, he still hopes to marry Bellaria, not, however, for love, but for her money.

It should be obvious from this survey that there is considerable scope in the play for a satirist. Apart from Wilding himself, there are his equally unprincipled friend Valentine, and the two lecherous aunts, Lady Lucy Pedant and Lady Gravely. But The Temple Beau could not be regarded as a satirical play, for the characters who are the most obvious objects of ridicule are let off very lightly. Lady Lucy Pedant and Lady Gravely are frustrated in their designs, and the audience does laugh at their various discomfitures, but their fate is no worse than that. As for the younger people Fielding makes no attempt to look at their conduct critically. Indeed, it seems that Fielding is much more partial to all his young characters than to the old. Whatever satire there is in his early plays is almost always directed at the old and not at the young. In Love

in Several Masques, Lady Trap is satirized but Rattle escapes; in The Coffee House Politician, the old Justice is almost the sole object of satire, while Ramble, who is equally unprincipled, goes off unscathed. In The Temple Beau, Wilding, the villain of the piece, not only escapes censure, he extorts a further grant from his harrassed father and presumably continues his prodigal career. Valentine marries the chaste Clarissa, and gets a fortune into the bargain. It is only poor, old, inoffensive Sir Harry Wilding who is made the object of ridicule. But Fielding is not the only one who seems to be attracted to his young villains. The same thing happens to the audience; the nature of the dialogue is such as to enlist the audience's sympathy on the side of the young rakes. We realize that they are rogues, but their gaiety and zest for life almost win our hearts. We feel that somehow a world is being created in which we are being inhibited from making moral judgements. If Fielding, himself, did intend to make them, he has certainly not succeeded.

The quality of the conversation in The Temple Beau is also much nearer to that of the Comedy of Manners than Love in Several Masques ever achieved. All the same, Fielding often obviously strains after the effect:

Valentine: Veromil, if you please, I'll introduce you. Perhaps you will be entertained with as merry a mixture of characters as you have seen. There is (to give you a short Dramatis Personae) my worthy uncle, whose life and conversation runs on the one topic, Gain. His son, whom I believe you remember at the University, who is since, with much labour and without any genius, improved to be a learned blockhead.

Veromil: I guess his performance by the dawnings I observed in him. His learning adorns his genius as the colouring of a great painter would the features of a bad one.

Wilding: Or the colouring of some ladies do the wrinkles of their faces.

Valentine: Then I have two aunts as opposite in their inclinations, as two opposite points of the globe; and I believe as warm in them as the centre.

Wilding: And point to the same centre too, or I'm mistaken.¹

Valentine's first statement is admittedly witty. His reference to young Pedant as a learned blockhead is pungent and devastatingly accurate. But Veromil's rejoinder lowers the standard set by Valentine; the point of his comparison between Pedant's learning and the colouring of a great painter is not immediately obvious. It is much too laboured. The essence of witty dialogue is that it should make its impact immediately; the audience simply does not have time to sit and ponder the meanings of separate statements. Wilding's reference to the wrinkles on ladies' faces does not logically follow Veromil's simile. It has clearly been thrown in because references to wrinkles on ladies' faces were bound to excite laughter. The rest of the conversation is neither witty, nor absolutely clear. It almost seems as though Fielding is desperately trying to whip up laughter in his audience, without quite succeeding.

These two early plays, then, are unsatisfactory because they fail to achieve the brilliance and polish which was the main quality of the conversation in the best Restoration dramas, and because they show little sign of satiric intention, moral earnestness or depth of meaning. This was partly due to the tradition in which he chose to write, for Restoration comedy is a very treacherous mode. The nature of the dialogue and the cleverness of the intrigue compels the admiration of the audience, and unless the author is skilful enough to drive home his satiric points, the audience will be completely unaware of any moral dimension in the play.

¹ The Temple Beau, I, vi.

One is tempted all the more to accept the view that the fault was not entirely Fielding's, when on surveying his entire work the strength of his moral earnestness is manifested. Fielding did believe that comedy had a moral purpose. In the prologue to The Temple Beau he said:

The Comic muse in smiles severly gay,
Shall scoff at vice, and laugh its crimes away.

In the early plays, however, Fielding makes us laugh, not at vice, but with it. The dramatic mode he has chosen, and the way he has handled it, are such as to inhibit him from realizing his avowed moral intention.

II

There is evidence to show that Fielding was dissatisfied with the a-moral atmosphere of his early plays, and this is probably one of the reasons why for a brief period of time he turned his attention to sentimental drama. Indeed, it was this general dissatisfaction with the world created by Restoration comedy that helped further the rise of Sentimental comedy.

For the most part Restoration comedy had exhibited immoral characters on the stage and, in the eyes of most of its critics, had made little attempt to instruct men in the ways of virtue. Restoration dramatists saw as their primary objective the need to provoke the audience's laughter, and very often this was done at the expense of virtue. Restoration comedy, as its critics saw it, was funny but immoral. After the attacks of Jeremy Collier a reaction was bound to set in; and, when it did, it found a champion in no less a personality than Steele himself.

Steele believed that the lives of virtuous people were even more suitable material for comedy than the careers of the vicious. Obviously it would be a different kind of comedy from Restoration comedy, and in the preface to The Conscious Lovers he had described it as a comedy which produced "a joy too exquisite for laughter". Sentimental comedy portrayed the fortunes of virtuous people with the object, not of provoking the audience's laughter, but of winning their approval of the characters' conduct. It could, therefore, have some very beneficial effects on the audience. It could confirm the virtuous in their righteous paths by showing them a reflection of their own goodness, and thus warding off any evil tendencies, and it would persuade the vicious to reform. In both cases, sentimental comedy appealed to the emotions rather than to the intellect. The aim was to arouse the pity (and even the tears) of the audience at the spectacle of virtuous suffering. Arthur Sherbo makes the point in his book on Sentimental Drama:

"If, Steele seems to say, you can look upon goodness on the stage and recognise it and sympathise with it, you, too, are good. Possibly there was no greater compliment to Steele's Conscious Lovers than the tears of the General who wept for Indiana. That a general should weep is significant: first, because as a military man he would be less prone to display emotion; and second, because a General would presumably be a gentleman and a person of some breeding. Steele was writing for other "Christian gentlemen" primarily, one suspects. And Steele, too, had been an officer".¹

It is clear that Steele's brand of comedy had a moral, one might say almost a therapeutic purpose, and it did not aim to be "funny", in the Restoration sense of the word.

Sentimental comedy, however, presents the critic with as complex a

¹ Arthur Sherbo, English Sentimental Drama (Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, 1957), p.72.

problem as Restoration comedy. It has been seen that the best Restoration comedies had a moral dimension as well as being funny. Similarly, many Sentimental comedies were funny and bawdy as well as being moralistic. Arthur Sherbo, in his excellent study, has listed a number of plays, normally regarded as Sentimental, which do not satisfy all the criteria normally laid down for deciding which plays are Sentimental and which are not.¹ He makes the point that almost every Sentimental dramatist attempted, at least, to include some comic scenes in his play. If these were not accordingly funny, it was because there were several amateurs in the field. Steele, himself, wrote some diverting comedies. Sherbo says of him:

"Steele was intelligent enough to recognise the excesses of sermonizing in The Lying Lover (he confesses it was "damned for its piety") and wrote a much more diverting play for his next, The Tender Husband. Fielding's Parson Adams witnesses, however, that he lapsed again in The Conscious Lovers".²

Cibber, regarded by Fielding and others as an arch-Sentimentalist, also wrote a number of entertaining plays. Sherbo refers to him as "a shrewd man of the theatre, rather than a Sentimentalist of any demonstrable sincerity".

Yet for the most part, the less skilful writers of Sentimental comedy carried the reaction to extreme lengths and wrote plays that were pulsating with moral earnestness, but singularly "uncomic". The following "common

¹ Some other critics do not seem to recognize this complexity, and make a rather simple classification of Sentimental comedies. Among them: Ernest Bernbaum, The Drama of Sensibility (Boston and London, 1915); Joseph Wood Krutch, Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration (New York, 1949, reprint of 1924 edition), p.192.

² Arthur Sherbo, p.72-73.

factors" can be detected in most Sentimental comedies. There was usually the presence of a moral problem: the main characters had to make a choice between moral rectitude and material or physical prosperity. There was a greater appeal to the emotions than to the intellect, every opportunity being taken to raise the audience's pity for the afflicted virtuous. The characters were either paragons of virtue, who retained their excellence throughout the play, and were accordingly rewarded at the end, or they were vicious characters, converted at the end without going through any visible process of transformation. Most Sentimental comedies were deficient in wit and humour, but full of noble "sentiment". In addition to all these, their critics attacked the unreality of the plots, and the artificiality of the characters.

It is quite possible that Fielding was one of these critics, and this is probably why he turned to Restoration comedy rather than Sentimental comedy when he began his dramatic career. We have evidence of Fielding's disapproval. In Tom Jones he says:

"Our modern authors of comedy have fallen almost universally into the error here hinted at; their heroes generally are notorious rogues, and their heroines abandoned jades, during the first four acts; but in the fifth, the former become very worthy gentlemen, and the latter women of virtue and discretion: nor is the writer often so kind as to give himself the least trouble to reconcile or account for this monstrous change and incongruity".¹

Elsewhere in Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews, Fielding expressed his scorn for those writers whose sole purpose was to present ordinary mortals with paragons of virtue. He was especially scornful of Colley Cibber, whom he regarded as the Sentimentalist par excellence. Fielding's

¹ See T.J., Bk.VIII, ch.i.

attitude towards Sentimentalism can also be assessed from his treatment of Wisemore, in Love in Several Masques. In most Sentimental comedies Wisemore would have been idealized, for he is the young man who gave up the pleasures of the city in scorn, and returns now, only because he has been instructed by his father to tender honourable love to Lady Matchless. But for most of the play, he is the object of ridicule. Fielding must have objected to the overt moralizing and the sham piety of a Richardson or a Cibber, who thought that by presenting men with patterns of virtue they could persuade them to reform their lives. Although he was regarded by some of his contemporaries as a coarse and unprincipled man, Fielding was, nevertheless, more sophisticated and, in a sense, more perceptive than most of his fellow-writers. He saw into the complexities of human nature and realized that some of the characters created by Cibber, Steele and Richardson were artificial. Society could not be simply divided into the "white" and the "black"; there were several facets to every individual's character and it was only honest for the author to bring out this complexity in his work, and to show how the individual succeeded or failed in his attempt to overcome his defects. This would be as instructive as the "sermon-type" biographies and moralistic plays that Cibber and his school were churning out, but not so openly didactic. Fielding accepted the moral purpose of Sentimental comedy, but he did not accept its method.

When all these points are taken into consideration, it seems strange that, in his first play with an avowed moral purpose, Fielding comes dangerously near to writing a Sentimental comedy. It may be that he had not yet completely formulated his views on Sentimentalism; we must remember that Joseph Andrews, which contains his first full denunciation of

Sentimentalism, was published in 1742, and Tom Jones in 1749. Cibber's Apology came out in 1740.¹ It seems more likely, however, that Fielding had not yet devised a medium which would have enabled him to combine diversion with instruction. He had discovered that his early plays in the Restoration tradition had an immoral atmosphere: he had entertained, but he had not instructed. But now he wanted to write a play whose primary purpose was to instruct, and the only medium that was available was Sentimental comedy. So, in 1731, he wrote The Modern Husband.

As a critical manifesto the prologue to this play is very interesting:

In early youth our author first begun
 To combat with the follies of the town;
 Her want of art his unskill'd muse bewail'd,
 And where his fancy pleas'd, his judgement fail'd.
 Hence, your nice tastes he strove to entertain
 With unshap'd monsters of a wanton brain!
 He taught Tom Thumb strange victories to boast,
 Slew heaps of giants, and then — kill'd a ghost!
 To rules, or reason, scorn'd the dull pretence,
 And fought, your champion 'gainst the cause of sense!
 At length, repenting frolic flights of youth,
 Once more he flies to nature and to truth:
 In virtue's just defence aspires to fame,
 And courts applause without the applauder's shame!

Later he adds:

If then true nature in his scenes you trace,
 Not scenes that Comedy to Farce debase,
 If modern vice detestable be shewn,
 (And, vicious as it is, he draws the town;)
 Though no loud laugh applaud the serious page,
 Restore the sinking honour of the stage;
 The stage, which was not for low farce design'd,
 But to divert, instruct, and mend mankind.

It is interesting to hear Fielding deploring his "frolic flights of youth", and lamenting the failure of his judgement revealed in the early

¹ In Fielding's view Cibber's Apology had been written with the sole aim of influencing the lives of other men.

plays. He seems to be aware that although these plays were good entertainment, they lacked depth and moral earnestness. Henceforth, he intends to redress the balance and to take up his pen in defence of virtue and in opposition to vice, even at the risk of producing a dull humourless play. Fielding also records his view that farce cannot be a serious dramatic mode, and reaffirms his belief in the moral purpose of comedy.

The Modern Husband is strikingly similar to many Sentimental comedies. It demonstrates that, by 1731, Fielding had not yet discovered the appropriate formula for combining instruction with diversion and therefore had to lean heavily on the Sentimental tradition. Yet, in spite of the poor reception it met at the time, The Modern Husband is an interesting play. On the other hand, it is not a comedy. It is much like Amelia in miniature; indeed, the similarity is so close that it is clear that the novel is partly a redrawing of the characters of the play, and an expansion of its themes. The play's interest centres on a wife, Mrs. Modern, who prostitutes herself, with the connivance of her husband, to Lord Richly; and also on the efforts of Lord Richly to seduce a virtuous wife, Mrs. Bellamant, with the assistance of Mrs. Modern. We recall that, in the novel, interest lies in the efforts of the Noble Lord to seduce Amelia with the help of Mrs. Ellison, and that there is also a certain Trent whose wife prostitutes herself to the Noble Lord with her husband's connivance. Furthermore, Captain Trent and his wife join in the attempts to seduce Amelia; Bellamant's jealousy in the play, when he learns about Lord Richly, is treated in the same "Othello-like" way as Booth's when he discovers the activities of the Noble Lord. The themes dealt with in both works — merit and reward, gambling, adultery and the sanctity of the marriage bond — are

almost exactly the same. Fielding's moral intention was also the same; to show modern vice detestable.

If Amelia is Fielding's most Sentimental novel, The Modern Husband is surely his most Sentimental play. It exhibits most of the features of Sentimental drama. Mrs. Bellamant, who is devoted, patient and a paragon of goodness throughout the play, is clearly a Sentimental heroine. Mr. Bellamant is the nearest we have in Fielding's plays to a Sentimental hero; he is dull and pious, and is always ready with some appropriate moral comment such as his remarks to his son about extravagance and his sentiments on merit, favour and reward.¹ He is not entirely good, but then his moral lapses have taken place before the commencement of the play, and during its course, his loyalty to his wife and his moral rectitude are unquestioned. As in most Sentimental comedies there is a moral problem: Mrs. Bellamant has to choose between material prosperity and marital chastity. Mr. Bellamant also has to choose between prostituting his wife for gain and upholding his honour and her virtue. Clearly the play appeals more to our emotions than our intellect and Fielding does his best to evoke our pity and sympathy for the virtuous Mrs. Bellamant and her devoted husband. Almost all the characters, including some of the vicious ones, indulge in an excessive use of "Sentiment", and the moralizing is unabated and unconcealed. The play is totally lacking in wit and humour, and was clearly written with a didactic purpose.

It seems likely that Fielding was forced to resort to the Sentimental tradition as a framework for his first "moral" comedy because he had not yet devised a medium for blending the comic with the "moralistic". He had

¹ The Modern Husband, II, ii.

not yet perfected those techniques which would have enabled him to reach the level of detachment necessary if the writer was to subsume the morality and the didacticism into the comic art. The result is that, in The Modern Husband, Fielding does not seem to be detached; he seems to have allowed his moral preoccupation to dominate the atmosphere so that whatever comic intention he may have had is entirely unrealized. His mood here, as in Amelia, is too savage; he is too involved in the events. What he needs is to conceal his preaching. To do this, he might have resorted to farce or irony. But farce was out of the question, while irony would have required too high a level of detachment — the kind of detachment that he achieved only in Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews.

In The Modern Husband he is not detached; the moralizing is too overt. Mrs. Modern, for instance, laments:

"What wretched shifts are they obliged to make use of, that would support the appearance of a fortune which they have not".¹

This "Sentiment" could have been taken out of a book of "proverbs" or a sermon. In the following remark made by Merit during his visit to Lord Richly, the moral aim is even clearer: "Why, don't you know me? that my name is Merit".² It is almost as though one were watching a morality play. Indeed, Sherbo has indicated the similarity between morality plays and Sentimental comedies. In both there is the same simplified classification of characters into good and bad; there is the moral choice the characters have to make and there is the same overt moralizing.

In the farces Fielding had ridiculed various groups by making use either of burlesque or of farcical situations. In The Modern Husband his

¹ The Modern Husband, I, v.

² The Modern Husband, I, vi.

disapproval is much more openly stated, as these comments of Mr. Bellamant reveal:

Mr. Bellamant: This is, I believe, the only age that has scorned a pretence to religion.

Lord Richly: Then it is the only age that hath scorn'd hypocrisy.

Mr. Bellamant: Rather, that hypocrisy is the only hypocrisy it wants. You shall have a known rascal set up for honour — a fool for wit — and your professed dear bosom fawning friend, who, though he wallow in wealth, would refuse you ten guineas to preserve you from ruin, shall lose a hundred times that sum at cards to ruin your wife.¹

Little attempt is made to disguise the sermonizing. In this and in many other respects Fielding's first "moral" comedy reproduces the characteristics of many Sentimental comedies.

III

Of course, Fielding did not mean to write a Sentimental comedy. By temperament he was averse to it, but he had not yet mastered the techniques which would enable him to avoid it. He desperately needed to devise a medium which would enable him to realize both his comic and moral intentions. There were, indeed, two problems. Apart from that of discovering the correct literary technique, there was also the difficulty of the ideal comic hero. Clearly the heroes of Restoration comedy would not do; they were gay and sparkling enough, but their attitude to life was too immoral. The ideal hero was obviously the gay, lively and

¹ The Modern Husband, II, v.

likeable young man who had some deficiencies of character, although he was not thoroughly bad. In the course of the play, events happen which show up his faults, but which also force him gradually on to the correct path, so that in the end he becomes an acceptable suitor. The ideal hero, in fact, is like Tom Jones. Fielding never achieved this type of hero in his plays, but it is clear that in some of them he was at least moving in the right direction. Spark, Gaylove and Mondish in The Different Husbands, and Merital and Malvil in Love in Several Masques, are of this kind.

Yet, there was still the problem of the literary mode. Although Fielding states strong disapproval of farce in several plays, it became increasingly clear that his real talent, and indeed, the solution to his artistic problem, lay in the direction of farce, burlesque and the mock-epic. In spite of his declarations, therefore, he was to go on writing farces right up to the end of his dramatic career. By temperament he revelled in farce, and he soon came to see its technical potentialities. The same is true of his attitude to burlesque. He does not state outright opposition to burlesque, as he does to farce, but he attempts to distinguish between burlesque and the comic:

"Indeed, no two species of writing can differ more widely than the comic and the burlesque; for as the latter is ever the exhibition of what is monstrous and unnatural, and where our delight, if we examine it, arises from the surprising absurdity, as in approximating the manners of the highest to the lowest, or e converso; so in the former we should ever confine ourselves strictly to nature, from the just imitation of which will flow all the pleasure we can this way convey to a sensible reader".¹

Later on he says:

"And I apprehend my Lord Shaftesbury's opinion of mere burlesque

¹ See J.A., Preface.

agrees with mine when he asserts, There is no such thing to be found in the writings of the ancients. But, perhaps, I have less abhorrence than he professes for it; and that, not because I have had some little success on the stage this way; but rather, as it contributes more to exquisite mirth and laughter than any other; and these are probably more wholesome physic for the mind, and conduce better to purge away spleen, melancholy, and ill affections, than is generally imagined".¹

Fielding should have realized that a mere imitation of nature does not always give pleasure, as The Modern Husband proved. On the other hand, exaggeration to the point of absurdity apart from being funny, may also be valuable if it helps to manipulate the audience's attitude to certain characters. The discrepancy between the status of certain people, and the way in which they speak, can be very effective material for satire. But, perhaps, even unconsciously Fielding acknowledges the value of farce and burlesque. He confesses that he does not share Lord Shaftesbury's abhorrence for it, although he is willing to conform to current critical thinking; indeed, he admits that burlesque contributes more to mirth and laughter than any other genre.

At this stage it will be useful to decide exactly what Fielding means by burlesque. It may be that he is not using the term in the same sense as it is normally used today. Winfield F. Rogers is of the opinion that Fielding never wrote a pure burlesque, with the possible exception of Tom Thumb and that his talent does not lie in that direction; moreover, he himself states his opposition to the genre.² But Fielding, on his own record, had no abhorrence for burlesque, and, as he says, some of the earlier plays are of the burlesque kind. Could Fielding have had something

¹ J.A., Preface.

² Winfield Rogers, p.530.

else in mind? What is burlesque and what is farce?

In his book on English Burlesque Poetry, R.P. Bond gives this definition of burlesque:

"Burlesque consists...in the use or imitation of a serious matter or manner, made amusing by the creation of an incongruity between style and subject....This opposition between what is said and the way it is said, is the necessary qualification of burlesque".¹

If this is the definition of burlesque, how does one distinguish between burlesque and the mock-epic? The essence of the mock-epic, too, is incongruity between subject and style.

The difference between the two genres is this. With burlesque the author contrives primarily to satirize the style, or a particular literary piece. He may then go on to imply moral absurdity in the characters who either use a false style, or fail to live up to their own high style; but this is only a secondary consideration. In order to achieve the desired effect, the style in burlesque usually starts well, but soon degenerates. It moves from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the heroic to a travesty of the heroic. The original style is thus vulgarized and satirized, and then, if necessary, the characters who fail to live up to it are exposed. With the mock-epic the satire is primarily directed, not at the style, but at the characters, and the values they stand for. In fact, it is essential for an accurate use of the mock-epic that the style should remain almost heroic throughout, and that if we substitute one or two words, we get perfect heroic poetry or prose. It is essential that there should be a discrepancy between the height of the style and the nature of the characters who use it.

¹ R.P. Bond, English Burlesque Poetry, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1932), p.1.

Burlesque need not start off with any particular work in mind. If it needed to, then Winfield Rogers would be right in asserting that no play of Fielding is a burlesque, because none of them sets out to ridicule a particular work. Burlesque can be a general "taking-off" of a group of works all written in the same style. It is in this sense that Tom Thumb was a burlesque; it was a burlesque of contemporary tragedy as a whole. Most of the speeches start in the high style, but it is a high style in which several alterations are rapidly made, and in which Billingsgate replaces noble sentiment, until the reader is left with a travesty of the high style. It is not mock-epic, as Rogers suggests, because with the mock-epic the high style is retained throughout. Tom Thumb is burlesque because Fielding intends to ridicule the style and to imply that the authors of "modern tragedy" labour under a misconception of art and nature.

Having made this distinction between burlesque and the mock-epic let us return to Fielding's statement to see whether his conception of burlesque agrees with ours. He describes burlesque as the approximation of the manners of the highest to the lowest and e converso. The approximation of the manners of the lowest to the highest is burlesque, because then the highest, like the King in Tom Thumb, are made to speak in a style which is beneath their station. The style is, as it were, vulgarized; it degenerates. This is burlesque. But the approximation of the manners of the highest to the lowest is mock-epic, because the style remains consistently high as in The Rape of the Lock, or the battle in the churchyard in Tom Jones. The high style, however, is applied to mean personages and the discrepancy between the height of the style and their vulgarity emphasizes their moral inadequacy. It is clear, therefore, that Fielding does not distinguish

between burlesque and the mock-epic; both are "burlesque" as far as he is concerned.

It is not difficult to see why Fielding confused the genres in his mind. Having made the distinction between burlesque and the mock-epic one must concede their basic similarity. Indeed, one must also acknowledge their similarity to farce. Burlesque, farce and the mock-epic all depend on exaggeration, inflation, distortion and incongruity. With farce, one inflates the behaviour and manners of people in particular situations to absurd proportions; and farce is primarily a matter of situation. With mock-epic one inflates the behaviour of puny people to the point at which they resemble lofty people, and the satire results from the incongruity. The mock-epic is a matter of character and of values. With burlesque one takes a literary mode or style and reduces it to absurdity.

So, when Fielding declares "opposition" to burlesque, he has the mock-epic in mind as well. But in spite of his declaration he uses both. Winfield Rogers was surely unwise to assume that Fielding's talent did not lie in the direction of burlesque simply because Fielding made a declaration against it. Fielding's declaration was also, in effect, against the mock-epic, and who would suggest that his talent did not lie in that direction? Winfield Rogers himself describes the style of Tom Thumb as mock-epic. Fielding used burlesque, the mock-epic and farce, and he used them because he realized that since they made use of inflation, distortion and incongruity, they could point to the difference between illusion and reality, profession and practice, actual status and pretension, and could be used as a framework within which moral judgements could be made. As

Winfield Rogers put it:

"Indeed comedy, farce, and burlesque when used under an aesthetic that demands more than amusement, are but three modes of achieving the same thing. Under such an aesthetic each is satire".¹

If in addition to this we realize, as Fielding did, that they can also contribute to the most exquisite mirth and laughter, then we can see that they offer a solution to Fielding's artistic problem. They can be used not only to "divert" but also to "instruct" and reform. Fielding must have realized that although to indulge in farce was to go against the weight of critical opinion, yet his farces were works of greater satiric power than such plays as The Modern Husband and Love in Several Masques. This is probably the reason why his subsequent works continue to have a strong farcical element. During his "Restoration phase" he had unsuccessfully tried comedy without morality; in his "Sentimental phase" he tried morality without comedy, with no greater success. Now at last he seems to have found his way; from now on he concentrates on farce, burlesque and the mock-epic.

Before we go on to examine some of Fielding's more successful plays let us briefly consider another dramatic mode which helped him solve his artistic problems. For Fielding made use of the Jacobean Comedy of Humours in order to develop his technique of farce. The Comedy of Humours depends for its effect on the isolation and exaggeration of an individual's most pronounced trait at the expense of all other characteristics. Once this is realized, it is easy to see how close the Comedy of Humours is to farce. Farce, by its very nature, demands economy of characterization; the author is under no compulsion to portray any individual's character with

¹ Winfield Rogers. p.534.

psychological plausibility. He simply needs to seize on the most significant trait and exaggerate it. When, therefore, Fielding turned his attention to farce, he must have realized that he could make use of the Comedy of Humours to develop his technique. This explains why there are so many characters based on "humours" in Fielding's farces. Moreover, the nature of Fielding's imagination was such as to render him reluctant to probe into his characters with psychological depth. He was essentially the omniscient author who stood outside the world he had created, fitting his characters into it like the components of an enormous jig-saw puzzle, and driving his moral points home. Everything depended on his own manipulation of the plot, and not on his character's psychological motivations. All he needed to do, therefore, was just to sketch such aspects of their characters as were needed to fit them into the puzzle. The economy of farce and the Comedy of humours was vital to Fielding's success in this regard.

By skilful manipulation of farce, the Comedy of Humours, burlesque and the mock-epic, therefore, Fielding was at last able to perfect a medium which made it possible for him to realize both his comic and moral aims.

IV

Fielding's most popular play, The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great is both farce and burlesque. The burlesque begins with the preface where, in conventional style, Fielding undertakes the defence of his tragedy. He then proceeds to discuss the play, as a heroic play would be discussed, under the Aristotelian headings of fable, moral, sentiment and diction. By

annotating the play thoroughly and accurately, Fielding also gives the impression that it is serious and important. But the notes he gives are parallels from a number of heroic plays:

Glumdalca: What do I hear?
King: What do I see?
Glumdalca: Oh!
King: Ah!
Glumdalca: Ah! Wretched Queen!
King: Oh! Wretched King!
Glumdalca: Ah!
King: Oh!¹

At the bottom of the page there is a reference to a parallel passage in Don Carlos. The effect of this is to smear Don Carlos. The absurdity in the passage before us is transferred to the other play.

Yet this is only a minor example of the operation of burlesque in the play, for the excellence of Tom Thumb is due to the consummate skill with which Fielding uses burlesque throughout. We have seen, above, that with burlesque the author's main preoccupation is to satirize the style. He may go on to satirize the characters, but he rarely does so. Fielding is, therefore, one of the first writers to use burlesque morally. He not only exposes the hollowness of the style of heroic drama; he also reveals the moral deficiencies of the characters in his own play. The characters are royal personages taking part in what is supposedly a heroic drama. The audience, therefore, expects noble sentiments uttered in a style compatible with heroic drama, and the dignity of the royal characters. But, instead of noble sentiment, the audience is greeted with rant, instead of dignified discussion, there is uncompromising Billingsgate. The style is deliberately vulgarized, and so reflects on heroic drama as a whole. But also, the discrepancy between the style used by the characters and the style expected

¹ Tom Thumb, II, viii.

of them (in other words, their failure to live up to their high style) indicates moral deficiencies. In his use of burlesque, therefore, Fielding demonstrates a growing awareness of the potentialities of style, and a growing ability to use it to reveal moral absurdity. We can see how this works in detail in three passages.

When Grizzle learns about Huncamunca's impending marriage to Tom Thumb he says:

..... Nor fate itself,
Should it conspire with Thomas Thumb, should cause it,
I'll swim through seas; I'll ride upon the clouds;
I'll dig the earth; I'll blow out ev'ry fire;
I'll rave, I'll rant; I'll rush; I'll rise; I'll roar;
Fierce as the man whom smiling dolphins bore,
From the prosaic to poetic shore.
I'll tear the scoundrel into twenty pieces.¹

Outwardly the framework of the passage is heroic, but there is a gradual deterioration in the quality of the images and the nature of the vocabulary. The first two lines are majestic enough, but the change begins in the third. The image of Grizzle swimming through seas and riding upon clouds is, perhaps, sublime, but it borders on the eccentric. By the time we get to the fourth line we have descended to very mundane occupations. Grizzle can now think of nothing better than digging the earth and blowing every fire. We now realize that we are being presented not with a nobleman, but with a raving maniac — "I'll rave, I'll rant, I'll rush, I'll rise, I'll roar". In case some of us think, however, that we have really been wafted into the regions of the sublime, the last line brings us back to earth. It is not even brutal; it is merely clownish. The whole passage is thus seen to descend from the sublime to the ridiculous and by the last line the heroic has disappeared altogether. Certainly, it has disappeared

¹ Tom Thumb, I, v.

from the vocabulary, even though the external framework may be left. The effect of this is to satirize the heroic; but Grizzle is satirized as well, for we do not expect a man of his position and dignity to dig the earth, blow out every fire, rave, rant, rush, rise or roar. The style demonstrates that he has failed to live up to the dignity we expect of him, and he degrades himself in our eyes.

Tom Thumb, speaking of his beloved Huncamunca, says:

"I'll hug, caress, I'll eat her up with love:
 Whole days, and nights, and years shall be too short
 for our enjoyment, every sun shall rise
 Blushing to see us in bed together.¹

The imagery and vocabulary of the passage debase the heroic framework. They also reflect on the quality of Tom's mind. Love is conceived of in terms of eating, and the beloved becomes nothing more than a delicious morsel. Tom's passion is seen, in its proper perspective, as boundless insatiable appetite rather than genuine, pure love. The last line recalls Volpone's lewd satisfaction at the prospect of spectators looking on while he and his Celia "prove the sports of love". The style of the passage exposes the crudity and vulgarity of Tom's mind, and this crudity is highlighted all the more forcefully because it is unexpected of a person of Tom's supposed "dignity" and "status".

When the King discovers that Huncamunca is in love with Tom Thumb, he says:

Ha! The window-blinds are gone,
 A country dance of joy is in your face.
 Your eyes spit fire, your cheeks grow red as beef.²

Once more the pattern is repeated. The heroic framework is vulgarized

¹ Tom Thumb, II, ii.

² Tom Thumb, II, iv.

by the lowness of the imagery and diction, and the King's crudity is emphasized all the more because the audience does not expect it in a man of his eminence. So that in all three passages, especially in the first two the reader not only observes the discrepancy between the lofty heroic framework and the lowness of the vocabulary, he also begins to make moral judgements. The passions of Tom and Grizzle are too extravagant. Tom is obviously indulging in sexual phantasy and Grizzle's balance and judgement have apparently been unhinged by the turn of events. If we grasp the significance of passages such as these, we are more likely to realize Fielding's aim in episodes such as that in Tom Jones where Tom apostrophises his Sophia, but later retires with Molly into the thickest part of the grove.

The heroic style "triggers off" a whole range of expectations in the minds of readers; they expect noble characters, noble sentiments and noble action. These expectations are created at the start of Tom Thumb for the framework is heroic and so are the characters: we must bear in mind that they are members of the Royal Family, and Tom Thumb is a victorious general. The reader, therefore, expects sentiments in conformity with their noble status. But the nature of their sentiments belies their status, and we are presented, not with the heroic style, not even with the mock heroic, but with a travesty of the heroic. In other words, the dominant style is burlesque, and the burlesque suggests that there must be something morally wrong with the characters because of their inability to live up to the style expected of them. Fielding is thus using burlesque in a novel way; he is using it, not only to satirize a style or a particular literary work, but also to point to the moral inadequacy of the characters.

So burlesque enabled Fielding to imply moral absurdity through style.

Burlesque also enabled him to acquire the level of detachment he needed in order to use the device of irony competently. In order to expose a character's moral absurdity, the author can either do it directly (as Fielding does in The Modern Husband), or indirectly, as he does in the burlesques. In the burlesques he implies moral absurdity by focussing the reader's attention on the discrepancy between the characters' status and their language and conduct. He allows the characters to expose themselves by their own crudity and vulgarity. By so doing Fielding manages to appear uninvolved, and thus attains the level of detachment necessary for the use of irony. Already in Tom Thumb it can be seen that his irony is hitting out in all directions — at bad plays, at the state of contemporary society and at Tom Thumb himself. The entire realm is under censure for entrusting its affairs into the hands of a person such as Tom Thumb. The King says:

Tom Thumb; odzooks, my wide extended realm
 Knows not a name so glorious as Tom Thumb.
 Let Macedonia Alexander boast,
 Let Rome her Caesar^s and her Scipios shew,
 Her Messieurs France, let Holland boast Mynheers,
 Ireland her O's her Mac's let Scotland boast,
 Let England boast no other than Tom Thumb.¹

The first two lines recall Marlow's in Tamburlaine; at the end of the second, however, the reader finds, not the mighty Tamburlaine, but the diminutive Tom Thumb. Moreover, "odzooks" neutralizes the grandiloquent effect created by "wide extended realm", and it is clear that by deliberately associating it with the diminutive Thumb, Fielding is treating the realm ironically. One also notices the way in which the passage seems to descend from the sublime to the ridiculous — a movement characteristic of burlesque,

¹ Tom Thumb, I, iii.

for whereas with the mock-epic the sublime is used throughout to imply the ridiculous, with burlesque there is a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous. The passage accordingly begins with Alexander, then moves on to Caesars and the Scipios, and on to Messieurs, Mynheers and Mac's until it finally ends at the tiny Thumb. The implication is that although this realm is supposedly vast and glorious, it cannot produce a man more valorous than Tom Thumb on whom to depend for its safety. Fielding is able to achieve all these effects because he has discovered a medium which enables him to suggest moral depravity, while remaining detached and uninvolved.

Accordingly, the King and the realm are satirized, and Tom Thumb does not escape unscathed either. Tom Thumb is indeed a savage satire on the idea of the "great man", perhaps with Sir Robert Walpole in mind. By making the "great man" literally small, Fielding draws attention to the insignificance and even the pettiness of greatness. His abhorrence of the "great man" is surely reflected in the lines:

Wherefore? Oh! blood and thunder! Han't you heard
 (What ev'ry corner of the court resounds)
 That little Thumb will be a great man made?¹

The irony in this passage is admittedly directed at the Queen who descends to such raucous language; but it is also directed at Tom Thumb and the idea of the "great man".

It is not only the tyranny of greatness which is satirized in Tom, his lewdness and lust are also exposed. Tom's expressions of happiness at the prospect of marrying Huncamunca are like the lewd effusions of Volpone at the prospect of going to bed with Celia, and Fielding's attitude to him at this point is surely the same as Jonson's towards Volpone:

¹ Tom Thumb, I, v.

Whisper ye winds that Huncamunca's mine;
 Echoes repeat, that Huncamunca's mine;
 The dreadful bus'ness of the war is o'er,
 And beauty, heav'nly beauty crowns my toils!
 I've thrown the bloody garment now aside
 And hymeneal sweets invite my bride.
 So when some chimney-sweeper all the day
 Hath through dark paths pursu'd the sooty way,
 At night, to wash his hands and face he flies,
 And in his t'other shirt with his Brickdusta lies.¹

The familiar pattern of vulgarization and the implication of moral absurdity through crudity of style emerges. There is an attempt here to use an epic simile, but whereas in epics and mock-epics comparison is made with something noble, here the comparison is with a much worse individual — the chimney sweeper retiring in his t'other shirt into the arms of his fond "Brickdusta".

The satire of Tom Thumb is directed against all sections of society and operates at several levels. On one level it is directed against the King and his inactive realm; on another against the entire political structure of England; and on yet another against Tom and the idea of greatness. The play demonstrates the growing assurance with which Fielding uses burlesque as a comic device to promote moral judgement.

Having seen Fielding's moral use of burlesque, we may consider his use of farce. Farce, like burlesque, enabled Fielding to promote moral judgement while maintaining his detachment. By means of the exaggeration of their most marked traits to ridiculous proportions the characters in a farce are exposed, with apparently little effort or comment from the author. Fielding was able to achieve even greater detachment in his farces than would otherwise have been possible, because he wrote them within the framework of the "rehearsal" technique. This technique involved writing

¹ Tom Thumb, I, iii.

a play about the rehearsal of other plays, and it does possess some interesting possibilities. The author could use the play being rehearsed as a vehicle for his criticism of contemporary society, but absolve himself from responsibility for such criticism by claiming that it was the work of the author of the rehearsed play. At the same time he could satirize contemporary plays in his own enveloping play. There is always the danger that if an author makes his play envelop two bad plays his own play might be dull as well. Fielding overcomes this difficulty by using the rehearsed play as the vehicle for his criticism of society so that though the plays are technically bad, they are by no means dull. One way or another, therefore, Fielding manages to retain his detachment.

Yet our task as readers, is difficult, for in the "play-within-the-play" we must be able to distinguish between those comments which are the author's and which are directed against society, and those which are deliberately inserted by Fielding to reflect on the author of the play. For even in the "play-within-the-play", Fielding can be satirizing not only contemporary society, but also the author of that particular play. The rehearsal play is thus a very complex mode within which satire can be manipulated at several levels. The possibilities for levels of irony are also immense. Doubtless it was during his dramatic phase, especially during the "rehearsal" phase, that Fielding began to develop the technique of double irony which was to be so useful in the novels.

The "rehearsal" technique also offers the author a means of commenting on the events of the play. Fielding's imagination is such that he delights in commentary; but this is necessarily unusual in drama, since the author

is normally expected to dramatize his own views and to speak through his characters. Yet the "rehearsal" technique enables him to use his own enveloping play to comment on the "play-within-the-play" or on any other matter. Fielding is thus enabled to comment and to judge while retaining his detachment and apparent impartiality. By means of this technique, in other words, Fielding is able to put the commentator on the stage, usually in the person of the critic or stage manager.

It is in these lights that we must look at The Author's Farce and Pasquin. The Author's Farce consists of two parts: the first is a farce which attempts to give an insight into the lives of literary hacks, while the second consists of the "play-within-the-play", in this case, a puppet show, The Pleasures of the Town, presented by Luckless, the hero of the first half. The first part also contains at least part of a "play-within-a-play", for Luckless, the starving poet, recites his play before the critics Marplay and Bookweight in order to persuade them to put it on the stage. In the enveloping drama Fielding ridicules Luckless's play, which is obviously worthless, and at the same time shows up the hypocrisy and incompetence of the critics, as this speech of Bookweight reveals:

"Why, sir, your acting play is entirely supported by the merit of the actor; in which case, it signifies very little whether there be any sense in it or no. Now, your reading play is of a different stamp, and must have wit and meaning in it. These latter I call your substantive, as being able to support themselves. The former are your adjective, as what require the buffoonery and gestures of an author to be join'd with them, to shew their signification".¹

Even while commenting on Luckless's admittedly bad play, Bookweight's ignorance is also exposed.

The puppet show which carries the satire on contemporary society and

¹ The Author's Farce, I, vii.

contemporary forms of entertainment is set in the underworld where the various theatrical amusements descend to plead before the throne of the Goddess of Nonsense. Fielding models the work on Pope's Dunciad, and the mock-heroic style he uses exposes the worthlessness of the various forms of entertainment. The centre-piece of the play is a contest in which the participants — all of them theatrical amusements — compete for the chaplet of the Goddess of Nonsense, a trophy intended for the dullest of the lot.

In the enveloping play, Bookweight's and Marplay's arrogance and stupidity are exposed by being exaggerated to the point of absurdity. This is the way in which farce operates, and in this instance, Fielding uses it morally. The author of the "play-within-the-play" is also satirized; he exposes himself through his own comments, and also, some of the remarks made by Marplay and Bookweight about his play are very apposite. All this while, Fielding retains his detachment, allowing the characters themselves to do the damage for him. In the "play-within-the-play", the mock-epic style forces the reader to compare the participants in the contest for the Goddess of Nonsense's chaplet with the Homeric heroes and their Homeric games. The consequence of this is that the crudity of contemporary forms of entertainment and the moral decadence of contemporary society are exposed.

Pasquin is much more elaborate than The Author's Farce. Its satire ranges more widely and is more effective. The play consists of two halves, each half containing a play being rehearsed. The first, a comedy dealing with a local election, is by Trapwit, while the second, Fustian's, is a tragedy depicting the defeat and death of Queen Commonsense. Pasquin

illustrates even better than The Author's Farce the way in which Fielding uses the rehearsal technique for moral and satiric purposes. In the first "play-within-the-play", he reduces the process of a local election to absurdity, and shows the mean motives which influence the electors in their choice. The implication is that the village in which the election takes place is not unique, but is typical of the situation in the country as a whole. The following extract shows Fielding's ability to inflate characteristics to their most absurd:

Second Voter: My Lord, I should like a place at Court too; I don't much care what it is, provided I wear fine clothes, and have something to do in the kitchen, or the cellar; for I am a devilish lover of sack.

Lord Place: Sack, say you? Odso, you shall be poet-laureate.

Second Voter: Poet! No, my Lord, I am no poet, I can't make verses.

Lord Place: No matter for that — you'll be able to make odes.¹

The inflation is comic, but it is also moral, for in the process the stupidity and materialism of the voters and the condescension and unscrupulousness of Lord Place are satirized.

In the dialogue between Trapwit and Fustian, Fielding reveals his criticism of contemporary theatre:

Fustian: Is this wit, Mr. Trapwit?

Trapwit: Yes, sir, it is wit; and such wit as will run all over the Kingdom.

Fustian: But, methinks, Colonel Promise, as you call him, is but ill-named; for he is a man of very few words.

Trapwit: You'll be of another opinion before the play is over;

¹ Pasquin, II, i.

at present his hands are too full of business;
and you may remember, sir, I before told you this
is none of your plays, wherein much is said, and
nothing done. Gentlemen, are you all bribed?

Omnes: Yes, sir.

Trapwit: Then my Lord, and the Colonel, you must go off, and
make room for the other candidates to come on and
bribe them too.¹

Fustian's comments reflect on Trapwit's play and Trapwit's own remarks expose the hollowness of his mind and his total ignorance of his art. But Fustian is also satirized, for his comments are for the most part, irrelevant to the scene being discussed, and they also reveal his lack of grasp of the nature of dramatic art. Fielding's irony here is double-edged. The commentator reflects on the play, but the commentator is also exposed. As in former instances, Fielding contrives to maintain his detachment and non-involvement.

In the second play, supposedly a heroic tragedy, Fielding uses burlesque as he does in Tom Thumb, to point to moral inadequacies. In the following passage we see once more how the style descends from the heroic to travesty:

Firebrand: Avert these omens, ye suspicious stars!
Oh Law! Oh Physic! as last even late
I offered sacred incense in the temple,
The temple shook; strange prodigies appear'd:
A cat in boots did dance a rigadoon,
While a huge dog play'd on the violin;
.....

Law: Lawyers were forc'd to ride on porters'
shoulders;
One, oh prodigious omen! tumbled down,
And he and all his briefs were sous'd
together.²

The first four lines are written in the genuine heroic style

¹ Pasquin, I, i.

² Pasquin, IV, i.

commensurate with the status of the realm's prominent citizens Law, Physic and Firebrand. At line five, however, the style begins to degenerate and the images are crude and commonplace. The "prodigious omen" Law refers to is nothing more than a lawyer falling down and "sousing" his briefs. These images reveal the lowness of the souls of Law and Firebrand in spite of their exalted status. Once again, burlesque has been used morally. Fielding satirizes heroic plays, but he also ridicules lawyers, and physicians, and the entire intellectual state of the nation. He could, however deny responsibility for these criticisms by attributing them to the author of the "play-within-the-play". Later the author of the "play-within-the-play" and the critic are also ridiculed:

Snerewell: This tragedy of yours, Mr. Fustian, I observe to be emblematical; Do you think it will be understood by the audience?

Fustian: Sir, I cannot answer for the audience; though I think the panegyric intended by it is very plain, and very seasonable.

Snerewell: What panegyric?

Fustian: On our clergy, sir, at least the best of them, to shew the difference between a heathen and a Christian priest. And as I have touch'd only on generals, I hope I shall not be thought to bring anything improper on the stage, which I would carefully avoid.¹

Once more critic and author reflect on each other and their inadequacy for the tasks they have undertaken are exposed. In Pasquin and The Author's Farce therefore, farce, burlesque and the rehearsal technique are used to promote moral judgement and to maintain detachment. Fielding has obviously learned a great deal since the days of Love in Several Masques and The Temple Beau. Through his use of burlesque and the mock-epic he has discovered how

¹ Pasquin, IV, i.

to use a style to reveal moral depravity. Through his use of farce and burlesque he has learnt how to maintain his detachment. The "rehearsal" technique also helps him to retain his detachment and enables him to liberate himself from the need to comment, for he can now put the commentator on the stage as the critic.

V

It can therefore be seen that throughout his dramatic career Fielding was developing techniques to enable him to realize both his comic and moral intentions. He had tried the "comedy without morality" of Restoration drama and found it inadequate; next he tried the "morality without comedy" of Sentimental drama but discovered that that mode also had its limitations. Finally, he discovered that the solution of his artistic problems lay with farce, burlesque and the mock-epic. These were all comic devices which enabled the author to appear uninvolved. But, when used skilfully, they could also help to promote moral judgements.

For the remainder of his dramatic career, therefore, Fielding continued to develop these techniques. He achieved what had seldom been done before, when he demonstrated his ability to use burlesque morally. Also, by means of farce and burlesque, he was able to write satire at arm's length and thus appear uninvolved. Fielding also developed the "rehearsal" technique because of its potentialities for double irony and because it suited the quality of his imagination, being more compatible with his bias for commentary and non-involvement. These techniques freed him from the necessity of creating characters from within, and enabled him to indulge his

inventiveness of plot.

A close study of the novels would reveal that these are some of the devices Fielding uses in them; and so, stylistically, the novels did not make a clean break from the plays; various techniques were merely developed further and intensified. One must recall that some of the most successful episodes in Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews are farce, burlesque or mock-epic in style. Moreover, most of them are set within a moral framework and, in spite of the comedy, moral judgement is not inhibited. Fielding's attitude to several characters and issues is often revealed to us by means of irony, at times double irony. One can also see that in the novels he retains a high level of detachment which he must have acquired during his dramatic phase. Fielding knew that he had to divert as well as instruct, and that for his satire to be effective he had to achieve detachment. He therefore evolved techniques which enabled him to make his moral points and to divert and remain detached at the same time. But the art was not merely introduced to add comedy to moralistic works; the comic art was inextricably linked with the morality. It was by means of comic devices, burlesque, mock-epic and farce, that Fielding was able to promote moral judgements and make his moral points. The morality therefore cannot be divorced from the technique. It depends for its nature, scope and effectiveness on the comic art. It is only through the one that we are made aware of the other; it is only because of the one that the other is prevented from being obtrusive and nauseating. This is the relationship between the morality of Fielding's works and their art.

CHAPTER TWO

Shamela: Hypocrisy and a Style

I

When the Theatre Licensing Act was passed in 1737, and Fielding found himself and his work unacceptable to the Lord Chamberlain, he had to turn his attention from creative writing to journalism. In 1740, however, Fielding abruptly interrupted his journalistic career and turned once again to imaginative composition with a most wickedly brilliant parody of Richardson's Pamela. There were various reasons why Fielding wished to attack Richardson's work, but the most important was that he resented the hypocrisy of the heroine and her creator. As a result, he went on to write a compelling study of hypocrisy and vanity; and, as he did so, discovered ways of revealing hypocrisy through his style and the form in which he chose to write. Fielding's work also showed the difference between his attitude and that of Richardson towards character, style and plot. If these new elements in his writing are set beside the techniques he had developed in the plays, it should be possible to forecast the kind of novel that Fielding was to go on to write.

Richardson's Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded, immediately achieved popularity on its publication in 1740. Few novels in any age or country could have been received with greater enthusiasm. Early in the following year, The Gentleman's Magazine reported that it was "as great a sign of want of curiosity not to have read Pamela, as not to have seen the French and Italian dancers". Ladies of fashion held up copies of the novel on meeting

their friends in the places of public diversion, and the Reverend Dr. Benjamin Slocock extolled Pamela's praises from the pulpit of St. Saviour's, Southwark. The eighteenth-century English reading public was enraptured by the story of the sixteen-year old girl who virtuously repulsed the attacks of her employer, and was rewarded by eventual marriage to him.

Yet there was a substantial minority who did not share this almost universal enthusiasm for what was probably the first true English novel. Among them was Henry Fielding whose Shamela was the first, and perhaps the most effective of a number of literary "replies". Fielding detested Pamela for several reasons. Firstly, he objected to its morality: he had always believed that morality could not be taught by presenting the public with paragons of virtue who, it seemed to him, were artificial and unreal. Fielding saw that no such girl as a merely virtuous Pamela could exist. Secondly, Fielding may have had a personal grudge against Richardson who, in physical features, tastes, personality, literary craftsmanship, and moral outlook, was perhaps his exact antithesis. Thirdly, Fielding seems to have been annoyed by the scale of Richardson's success. He thought himself a trained and competent literary craftsman, and yet he was living on the verge of poverty, while the author of a work which was, in his view, morally questionable, and stylistically inept, basked in public favour. But perhaps the most important reason was that Fielding was disgusted by the hypocrisy of the heroine and her creator. He must have asked himself how a sixteen-year old girl could hover so tantalizingly between seduction and disgust, marriage and flight, and he reached the conclusion that Pamela should not be seen as a virtuous girl at all, but as a clever little "saucebox" out to sell her virginity at the highest possible

price. Her so-called resistance to her master's advances was a clever attempt to lure him on, until the point was reached when he realized that he could only satisfy his enflamed desires by marrying her. If the heroine should be seen as hypocritical, the author, in Fielding's view, was even more so, for he had duped his readers into believing that they were presented with a paragon of virtue, whereas the heroine was a scheming little "minx". Richardson had deliberately blinded himself to the faults of Pamela, or, at the least, had failed to understand his own creation.

It is doubtful whether the charge of hypocrisy can be fully substantiated. Pamela's inner motives are very complicated, and it is difficult to say precisely what they are. It is, therefore, rash to accuse her simply of hypocrisy. Pamela does have her faults; pride is certainly one of them, and there is a strong suspicion of vanity. But Richardson seems to be aware of these faults and brings them out in a number of scenes. Pamela's vanity, for instance, is demonstrated by her attention to dress. Indeed, dress acquires a symbolic value in Pamela, for it suggests the outward trimmings, the pride and vanity that conceal the native beauties within. This symbolism is used most effectively in the famous scene in which Pamela strips off her clothes and throws them on the lake. It is almost as though, at this point, she casts off her vanity and pride and becomes the Pamela we would have liked to see. She goes through a form of baptism; the old Pamela dies and the new emerges. Weak and helpless she lies in the shed. It is significant that when Nan discovers her she asks to be taken to Mrs. Jewkes of all people. She then reveals an unexpected sympathy for her master and when she is finally confronted by him on his arrival it is a submissive Pamela who drops to the floor weeping,

not arguing. Next, she forgives her master, the master-servant relationship is re-established and Pamela, her arrogance forgotten, waits on her master and considers it an honour to do so.

Richardson then, does not blind himself to Pamela's faults, nor does he fail to understand her. But there are a number of things he is unaware of, among them the consequences of the crudity of his "new way of writing", and, most important, the questionable appeal Pamela had for various kinds of readers. Fielding knew that many people who claimed to be captivated by the novel's portrayal of virtue were really attracted by the "warm" scenes and by the person of the girl herself. Pamela thus enabled them to indulge their approval of virtue and interest in vice at the same time. Fielding knew better than any other contemporary novelist what audiences wanted and how they reacted. He could succeed in establishing an audience-author rapport which few other authors equalled. Perhaps this was because he had at one time written for the stage. In any case, he had a greater awareness than Richardson of what people admired, and he therefore realized that Pamela would be read partly for the wrong reasons. For, although Fielding is usually regarded as a less sophisticated author than (say) Richardson, he is still more aware of the "inner" life and the motives behind human actions and conduct than Richardson is. This is why his satire and irony are never simple. Most eighteenth-century writers believed that satire was simple. Generally they contented themselves with exposing sordidness masquerading as virtue. Fielding goes one step further and exposes the meanness that admires such virtue, fully realizing that it conceals sordidness. Shamela therefore is meant to expose those readers who pretend to admire the girl's virtue when they were in fact attracted to

the "warm" scenes.

Fielding then, is probably right in thinking that Richardson misunderstood Pamela's appeal, but not that he misunderstood her. It is perhaps unfortunate that for two hundred years Shamela, because of its wicked brilliance, has directed the way that generations of critics have approached Pamela. One must not necessarily believe that Pamela is what Shamela suggests. Indeed, to approach Shamela at all one need not concern oneself about its truth — about Pamela; what is important is what Fielding thought of Pamela. Shamela is a parody and it is the business of Parody to "distort". It is, therefore, to be expected that Fielding would distort certain things in Richardson, and it does not lessen the value of Shamela to suggest that it wilfully distorts certain aspects of Pamela. For the real interest of Shamela lies in its satirical demolition of the attitude that Richardson's characters present and the world of false values that Fielding imaginatively creates. It was therefore to distort Richardson's work and thus expose what he thought was wrong in it, that in 1741, Fielding wrote An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews. In Which the many notorious Falsehoods and Misrepresentations of a Book called Pamela, Are exposed and refuted; and all the matchless arts of that young Politician set in a true and just Light....Necessary to be had in all Families. By Mr. Conny Keyber.

The first point of interest about the title page is the author's name. Fielding's authorship of Shamela is now beyond dispute; what is not certain is the reason why he chose to write under the pseudonym of "Conny Keyber". Most critics seem to agree that Conny is a conflation of Colley and Conyers, the first names of Cibber and Middleton respectively, but one still has to

explain why Fielding wanted to use the names of Cibber and Middleton. Brian Downs, in the introduction to his edition of Shamela¹ thinks that Fielding was under the impression that the author of Pamela was Cibber, while Professor Ian Watt² believes that Fielding used Cibber's name because such a move would add topicality to his own work and further discredit a celebrity whom "everyone would recognise under the patent and already established sobriquet of 'Keyber'". In reply to the first claim, one must say that it is unlikely that Fielding would have assumed that the author of the Apology, which appeared in 1740, was also the author of the much more voluminous novel published only a little later. It is possible, though, that Fielding used this pseudonym in order to discredit Cibber still further, and give topicality to his own work. However, a more plausible reason for Fielding's assumption of this pseudonym seems to be that Cibber was the author of a particular kind of biography -- a biography written with the declared intention of affording moral lessons to others. The satire of Shamela ranges far beyond Pamela's hypocrisy and vanity; it embraces all those writers who like Middleton, Cibber and Richardson, wrote with the manifest intention of influencing men; in other words, the satire extends to the exposure of the attitude toward character-biography which is implicit in Pamela, and is also found in the works of Cibber and others.

Cibber's Apology immediately became a "best-seller" on its publication, and it is not difficult for unbiased readers to see why. The work is lucidly written, and the author's wit and intelligence show themselves on

¹ B. Downs, ed. An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews, by Henry Fielding (1930).

² See Ian Watt, ed. An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews, by Henry Fielding, Augustan Reprint Society, No.57. (Los Angeles, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1956), p.3.

every page. It is also, today, an invaluable source-book for anyone wishing to study the social history of the time; for although the author certainly could not be called an impartial observer, yet his analysis of political and other events are penetrating and well-reasoned. His remarks, too, on the abilities and characters of his fellow-actors are generous and balanced. When one considers all these virtues of Cibber's work it seems unreasonable of Fielding to single out the Apology for concentrated attack. But, again, an unbiased modern reader can understand Fielding's attitude; for Cibber's vanity and self-righteousness are just as evident as his wit and intelligence. He makes no attempt to conceal his pride in the part he played in the theatre, and he obviously delights in hearing himself praised. Indeed, Cibber often has to apologize to the reader for digressing in order to relate some minor incident which shows him in the best possible light. While describing the triumvirate of actors who ruled the stage at Drury Lane for instance, he presents himself unashamedly as the stabilizing force, the spokesman for moderation and the reconciler of the divergent views of Wilks and Dogget. The Apology was clearly the work of a very vain man who thought that his life was valuable enough to be recorded for the benefit of posterity. Men, he must have thought, could read in these pages and find examples of how and how not to behave. It is this idea of biography, with Cibber chiefly in mind, that Fielding rejects in his Shamela.

Cibber's self-righteousness was not the only target for Fielding's scorn. In one of the essays in The Champion,¹ he had this to say about Cibber's style:

"His stile is so very singular that one might almost say,

¹ Henry Fielding, The Champion, Tuesday, May 6, 1740.

he hath even a language to himself, (an Honour never before attributed to any author). This particularity of stile is so evident that it will be impossible for the writers of his own or a subsequent Age, to introduce any of their works under his name; nay, I question whether some of his own works, written before he arrived at this perfection, may not be suspected by some future Theobald; and do a little doubt, whether even the Careless Husband, or Love's Last Shift, will be thought equal to the Apology".

Although Cibber's narrative rivets our attention most of the time, it must be confessed that his style is difficult. Fond of lengthy periods, he often loses himself in a maze of words from which he finds it increasingly difficult to escape. Critics such as Fielding found Cibber's grammar peculiar and his style artificial.

It is also because of his style that Middleton is satirized. As Fielding put it in one of his articles, Middleton thought that in writing Cicero's biography, he had to imitate Cicero's manner. But the sonorous period in the hands of Middleton is not the instrument it was in the hands of Cicero, and so a supposedly scholarly, historical work is written in a lumbering pedestrian style. Fielding may well have been outraged by the fact that writers like Middleton and Cibber were earning huge sums of money out of works which were very badly written, while he himself was living in such straitened circumstances. It was to him a symptom of the literary decadence of the age and the accelerating decline in standards and values. Fielding found the servility of Middleton's dedication to Hervey even more intolerable. It may also have seemed to him that Middleton destroyed the validity and value of his entire work and the moral conclusions he drew from it by claiming that Hervey, the effeminate Whig minister, possessed all the qualities of the great Cicero. This was prostituting learning for the sake of interest and, moreover, it was blatant hypocrisy. It is for these

reasons then, that Cibber and Middleton are held up to ridicule in Shamela, and this is why Fielding chooses the pseudonym "Conny Keyber".

There is yet another group of men against whom Fielding's satire in Shamela is directed. For the sake of convenience these men can be referred to as the "faith men", for they were the theologians who believed that faith rather than works was all that is needed for salvation. The logical conclusion of this was that conduct was of secondary, or even minimal, importance as long as outward professions were sound. Fielding was bound to attack this, for one of his main criticisms of Richardson was that he accepted Pamela's professions at face value without looking into the underlying motives of her conduct. Prominent among these "faith men" were the theologians of the extreme right wing of the Anglican High-Church. These men, like Thwackum in Tom Jones, felt that in order to arrest the progress of the Deists, who laid the emphasis on human conduct, and therefore on virtue, they had to threaten everyone with eternal damnation unless he affirmed his faith in God and the scriptures. These theologians, however, were extremists; they were not even representative of the Anglican High Church. Atterbury, that staunch defender of Tory High Church principles, preached sermons on the necessity for doing good, and on the virtue of charity. William Law, perhaps the most distinguished defender of the High Church against the onslaught of the Latitudinarian Hoadly, wrote one of the most telling indictments of the "faith men" in his Of Justification by Works, a Dialogue between a Churchman and a Methodist.¹

This is enough to show that few of the really eminent High Church theologians accepted the Calvinistic doctrines that men like Thwackum

¹ William Law, Of Justification by Works, a Dialogue between a Churchman and a Methodist (1760).

adopted. Indeed, the most ardent upholders of the doctrine of faith were not the orthodox Anglican High Churchmen, but the Methodists, who made it a cardinal point in their doctrine. In Shamela they are consequently the "faith men" who come under attack.

The methodists sought to assure all men of God's pardon, regardless of their sins. According to them, man being born in sin, was naturally corrupt, and the decadence of the modern world furnished evidence in support of this. But, as a result of the atonement, God's free grace, and therefore salvation were offered to all men. The only prerequisite was that they should affirm their faith in the divine providence. This was the doctrine that Whitefield and the Wesleys preached. In E.W. Baker's words, Wesley's doctrine of justification by faith was closely woven into the texture of his religious thought and absolutely central in his theology".¹ John Wesley, in the sermon Justification by Faith, says:

"Faith, therefore, is the necessary condition of justification: yea, and the only necessary condition thereof'...."²
 "...It is the only thing without which no one is justified; the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, absolutely requisite in order to pardon. As, on the one hand, though a man should have everything else without faith, yet he cannot be justified; so, on the other, though he be supposed to want everything else, yet if he hath faith, he cannot but be justified".³

Numerous Methodist hymns expound this doctrine that justification and salvation are open to all men provided they believe. Fielding on the other hand, believed that equal emphasis should be laid on works and therefore on human conduct; so in Shamela he attempted to expose the dangers inherent in the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

¹ Eric W. Baker, A Herald of the Evangelical Revival (1948), p.123.

² John Wesley, The Standard Sermons of John Wesley, ed. E.H. Sugden (1921), I, 126.

³ Wesley, Standard Sermons, op.cit., I, 127.

II

Fielding wished, then, to expose dubious morality, hypocrisy, vanity, bad literary styles and bad attitudes to human character, biography, sex and religion. His problem was to devise a method for doing this most effectively, and he seems to have resorted to the common Augustan practice of using bad literature as a prism through which all these things could be focussed and criticized. The Augustans were acutely conscious of the low quality of many of the literary pieces that were then being produced. Pope's Dunciad and Swift's Tale of a Tub show this eloquently. The Grub Street Journal, some of the papers of Addison and Steele in The Spectator and The Guardian, and Fielding's own articles in The Champion are full of complaints about the declining literary standards of the time. To many Augustans this decline was symptomatic of a more general decline in moral standards, hence the moral implications of Pope's Dunciad and Swift's Tale of a Tub. It seemed to these writers that bad art was due to questionable morality, and it was therefore possible to expose an author's questionable morality by ridiculing his worthless art. This explains the popularity at the time of "the art of sinking" in poetry. Several writers had tried to write verses in imitation of the ancients and had done so very incompetently. In order to criticize them, their attackers used the same poetic form but sank even lower than they, writing in a style which was a travesty of the original. In doing so, they not only exposed the absurdity and falsity of the style of these pseudo-heroic writers, they also revealed the shaky moral assumptions on which their works were based. Parts of Pope's Dunciad, itself, could be regarded as exercises in the "art of sinking" in poetry.



Fielding disapproved of the styles of Richardson, Cibber and Middleton. He also disapproved of Richardson's morality, and the attitude of all three to biography. It must have seemed obvious to him that in order to expose their weaknesses he simply had to write a work using their dubious styles to focus and criticize their attitudes. So Shamela is written in letter-form, the dedication is in Middleton's style, and Cibber's style is used for the introductory letters. Since Fielding's contention is that Richardson pays too much attention to things on the surface and misunderstands Pamela's underlying motives and the moral implications of her behaviour, he suggests that what he sets out to attack is inherent in Pamela and only needs to be made explicit, and given its correct interpretation. Fielding, therefore, uses the same letter-form as Richardson, but instead of the outward professions of Pamela, he reveals the inner motives of Shamela. Some of Pamela's letters are therefore wilfully distorted. This necessarily makes the style cruder although the form is the same, and the discrepancies not only ridicule Richardson's style, but also cast a very unfavourable light on Pamela.

It is clear then that the literary mode Fielding decides to use in Shamela is burlesque. In burlesque the form of the original work is retained but the content and therefore the vocabulary and the style are made deliberately cruder. The original literary form is then satirized and moral judgements can also be made. Fielding retains the form of Richardson's work almost exactly, even to the point of including the introductory letters and the dedication. But the vocabulary, and therefore, the style, are debased, and the result is a parody whose effect is to satirize and subvert what Fielding thinks is Richardson's unrealistic literary convention. Also,

by forcing the reader to relate the crudity of the style to the respective characters in Pamela, Fielding enables him to make moral judgements. We do not expect a Pamela or a Mr. Williams to talk as they do in Shamela. Moreover, Fielding reinforces the burlesque with ironic devices which also help to condition the reader's attitude towards the Characters and reveal their vanity and hypocrisy.

If we compared Tickletext's letter in Shamela, for example, with the prefatory letters which Richardson included in the second edition of his novel,¹ we would realize that it is a conflation of all those letters. J.B.D.F., one of Richardson's correspondents, says: "Little book, charming PAMELA; face the world, and never doubt of finding friends and admirers".² Tickletext says: "Little book, charming Pamela, get thee gone; face the World, in which thou wilt find nothing like thyself".³

There is also a letter in the second edition of Pamela from a gentleman who says he found in the book "all the soul of Religion, Good-breeding, Discretion, Good-nature, Wit, Fancy, Fine Thought, and morality".⁴ Tickletext says: "This Book is the 'Soul of Religion, Good-Breeding, Discretion, Good-nature, Wit, Fancy, Fine thought and Morality".⁵

As one reads on, it becomes increasingly clear that Fielding's technique

¹ Richardson had prefaced the second edition of the novel with a number of letters he claimed to have received from several people.

² Samuel Richardson, Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded, 3rd ed. (1741), I, ix.

³ Henry Fielding, An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews (1741), p.3.

⁴ Pamela, op.cit., I, xvi.

⁵ Shamela, op.cit., p.2.

is to seize upon the more absurd claims of the various letter-writers and render them even more absurd by means of irony and various other forms of underlining and emphasis. Moreover, he has carefully selected those passages in the letters with even the slightest sexual connotations, collected all together in Tickletext's letter, and made them explicit. If we looked in detail at Tickletext's letter we would find it bristling with sexual innuendos. It may be that Fielding enjoyed writing this, yet it is also consistent with his literary technique, for it makes explicit what is implicit in Pamela. The crudity of the language conditions our attitude towards Parson Tickletext and reveals him as a hypocrite, and Fielding suggests that underneath this superficial religious enthusiasm for the novel there is really a sensual attraction for the girl. Phrases such as "measured fulness", "resembling life outglows it", "becomes her dress as roundly as Pamela doth her country habit", are all taken from an introductory letter to Pamela. But in Shamela, Fielding italicizes them, and then adds "as she doth her no-habit". He thus contrives to suggest that Tickletext is thinking not of a book, but of a girl, pregnant first ("measured fulness") and naked next ("as she doth her no-habit"). Tickletext transmits to Parson Oliver, not a copy of Pamela, but of dear, "sweet, pretty Pamela", and goes on to say that Pamela casts off her ornaments of pride [her clothes] frequently in the work, and "presents images to the Reader which the coldest Zealot cannot read without Emotion".¹ This again is copied from the prefatory letters to Pamela.² Here, however, Fielding's irony is in operation and the reader is invited to read beneath the surface and see what

¹ Shamela, op.cit., p.2.

² Pamela, op.cit., I, xx.

he regards as the real meaning. "Emotion" may be religious emotion in Pamela, but in the context of Shamela it is surely sexual emotion. The phrase "the coldest zealot" might refer to a religious enthusiast, but under the weight of Fielding's irony it has sexual implications.

Another of Richardson's correspondents had said: "If I lay the Book down, it comes after me. When it has dwelt all Day long upon the Ear, it takes Possession, all Night, of the Fancy".¹ This surely asked for parody. Fielding makes it explicit by italicizing "comes after me". The sexual nature of the passage is thus made quite plain, and Tickletext is seen to be confessing his obsession with the girl. Later he says, "methinks I see Pamela at this Instant, with all the Pride of Ornament cast off". Again, this statement is taken from one of Richardson's prefatory letters.² But here Fielding's irony suggests that Tickletext has in mind, not a book, but a vision of the naked Pamela. Parson Tickletext's statement that the genius of the author "has stretched out this diminutive mere Grain of mustard seed (a poor Girl's little, etc.) into a Resemblance of that Heaven..." has been mostly taken from Richardson,³ but the words "innocent story" which followed "a poor girl's little" in the original, have been omitted, and this leaves the mind free to suggest whatever it pleases. "Heaven", here, could be a spiritual heaven, but it could also be a lover's "heaven".

One of Richardson's correspondents had claimed that the work, and therefore the author, would become the father of millions of minds.⁴ There

¹ Pamela, op.cit., I, xvi.

² *ibid.*, I, xx.

³ *ibid.*, I, xvii.

⁴ *ibid.*, I, xix.

is only the slightest sexual connotation here. By omitting "minds", however, so that only "father of millions" is left, and by adding "I feel another emotion", Fielding makes the sexuality explicit and suggests that the effect of the work would be to remove restraint and increase the rate of illegitimacy. The form of Richardson's letters has not been altered; indeed the letter reads superficially like a religious correspondence between two devout men. But since it has been infiltrated by a sexual vocabulary the content differs substantially from what the reader might have expected; herein lies the burlesque. The burlesque shows moral inadequacy in Parson Tickletext, and Fielding also makes effective use of irony; the recommendation of the book as "the soul of good breeding", indicates that the writer regards Tickletext with a very critical eye.

In this letter then Fielding suggests that under the guise of religious enthusiasm a clergyman indulges in a sexual extravaganza, and his hypocrisy is accordingly exposed. Fielding also implies that many of those who rhapsodized over the book, Pamela, were, in reality, obsessed with the idea of the girl and not with the book; and he successfully demonstrates the moral anarchy that it can produce even in the mind of a harmless reader.

The dedication, no less than the prefatory letter, is a sustained piece of burlesque and irony. Again Fielding retains Middleton's form and the structure of his lengthy sentences. But the vocabulary is vulgarized and the content is altered. Hervey becomes Miss Fanny, and earthy phrases such as these are common: "This I will take my oath on"; "in spite of all the luscious temptations of puddings and custards"; "if ever I have drawn you upon me I have always felt you very heavy". The gap between the form

and the content exposes the absurdity and pretentiousness of Middleton's style, and the sustained irony, coupled with the use of sexual innuendos, direct us to look critically, not only at Miss Fanny, and Hervey, but, also at Middleton himself, and to doubt his moral and literary judgements. To begin with, Fielding exposes the servility of the dedication and the inconsistency of Middleton's position. Middleton had told Hervey that he would be forced to depreciate his qualities because, in comparison with Cicero's they would appear inadequate. But he went on almost immediately to say that Hervey and Cicero had similar characteristics, and then demonstrated with great care how they matched each other almost exactly. It is obvious that flattery was involved here and this is the object of Fielding's ridicule when he says: "Indeed, I wish it was possible to write a dedication, and get anything by it, without one word of flattery;....". The following passage shows how Fielding's burlesque works with respect to Middleton:

"First then madam I must tell the World, that you have tickled up and brightened many strokes in this work by your pencil".

Middleton's basic form is retained, but the content has been sufficiently altered to point to the burlesque. Fielding deliberately introduces the phrase "tickled up" in order to lower the tone of Middleton's pompous statements, and replaces "brightened by the strokes of your pencil" with "brightened many strokes by your pencil".¹ Miss Fanny is thus seen as a vain elderly lady trying desperately to regain her youth and fading looks, and the satire reaches beyond her to Hervey whose activities are made to sound like a beauty preparation. Thus his effeminacy is exposed.

¹ See Conyers Middleton, The History of the Life of Marcus Tullius Cicero (1741), I, v.

Fielding also tries to bring out certain things which are only latent in Middleton's work. When, for instance, Middleton praises Hervey for having, like Cicero, conversed with the greatest wits of the age, it is obvious that he includes himself among the wits. Fielding says: "You have intimately conversed with me, one of the greatest wits and scholars of my age". This exposes Middleton's conceit, but Fielding does more than expose conceit, for the inclusion of "intimately" and its juxtaposition with "conversed" suggest sexual implications. From now on the style of the dedication deteriorates as is customary with burlesque. Fielding is no longer concerned with imitating Middleton's lofty style; he now wishes to distort it. Accordingly the style becomes colloquially earthy and sexual innuendoes are more frequent. Fielding's technique now seems to be to reduce Middleton's heavy style to colloquial simplicity while retaining his outward form and the length of his sentences. The more pretentious terms are explained by means of simpler ones, and this does away with the hypocrisy and pretence and gives the reader the reality as Fielding thinks it is. So instead of "singular temperance in diet" he writes "forbearing to overeat". Nothing could have exposed Middleton's pomposity and vanity, and Hervey's vulgarity more completely. Instead of Middleton's "It was Cicero who instructed me to write, your lordship who rewards me for writing", Fielding says bluntly, "It was Euclid who taught me to write and you madam who pay me for writing".

Fielding uses the same techniques in The Life of Shamela. With the first letter, for instance, the reader observes at once that the epistolary form of Richardson's work has been retained. But in conformity with Fielding's practice, the vocabulary is debased and the spelling ridiculous.

Shamela's aspirations are expressed as pompously as those of a countess would be, but when her utterances are examined it is clear that there is no gentility here, but vulgarity masquerading as gentility. She wishes to live in Wild Court not more than two storeys high; this is certainly a fashionable and perhaps a "noble" aspiration, but her motives are mean. It is soon revealed to the reader that she has chosen this particular level of accommodation in order to make it easier for Parson Williams to see her, nor does she forget Mrs. Jervis who would like a convenience for a bagnio. As the letters multiply, the style becomes increasingly vulgarized and Shamela's immorality appears more and more outrageous. It is revealed that she has already made a "slip", and her family background is, as it were, filled in. Her mother reveals her own nature. It appears that she has no interest in her daughter's virginity except for its market value. By Letter IV, the pretence to genteel language has been completely abandoned; Pamela's style has been reduced to the level of a "Betty-Chambermaid's". The reader now finds phrases like "Marry come up" and "O, What fine times when the kettle calls the pot!" Throughout this letter Shamela is seen ironically. Not only does the disparity between the epistolary form and their crude contents reveal the vulgarity of her character, but she condemns herself with everything she writes.

Fielding clearly expects readers of Shamela to keep Pamela in mind; for, in his view, Pamela is the pretence and Shamela is the reality, and it is only by looking at the gap between the two that we can see Pamela's hypocrisy. Shamela is not a hypocrite; she does not pretend; she reveals herself fully to us as a woman of the world scheming to entrap her master in marriage. She is wicked, it is true, but she is a hypocrite only in her

behaviour to her master, not to the reader. In Fielding's eyes the hypocrite is Pamela, who behaves outwardly like a decent, virtuous girl whereas, in reality, she is like Shamela. It is Pamela's hypocrisy, therefore, that Fielding wishes to expose, and he does it by inviting us to compare her with Shamela. Nor is Pamela entirely different from Shamela. (We must always remember that Fielding claims to be making explicit certain features already implicit in Pamela). It is Pamela's preoccupation with material things and with petty details which gives rise to Shamela's similar concern in Letter X: here she reveals herself in all her meanness.

If the seduction scenes in Pamela are compared with those in Shamela, it can be seen that Fielding has only brought out and underlined features already present in Pamela. The details are more or less the same. What has been distorted is the attitude of the girl and the language she uses. The following comes from the first seduction scene in Pamela:

"I don't know what was the matter, but my heart sadly misgave me: indeed, Mr. Jonathan's note was enough to make it do so, with what Mrs. Jervis had said. I pulled off my stays, and my stockings, and all my clothes to an under-petticoat; then hearing a rustling again in the closet, 'Heaven protect us! But before I say my prayers I must look into this closet'. And so was going to it slip-shod, when, o dreadful! ^{out} rushed my master in a rich silk and silver morning-gown.... Instantly he came to the bed (for I had crept into it, to Mrs. Jervis, with my coat on and my shoes), and taking me in his arms, said, 'Mrs. Jervis, rise, and just step up stairs, to keep the maids from coming down at this noise: I'll do no harm to this rebel'..... I found his hand in my bosom, and when my fright ^{let me know} it I was ready to die; I sighed, screamed and fainted away. And still he had his arms about my neck; Mrs. Jervis was about my feet, and upon my coat. And all in a cold dewy sweat was I. 'Pamela! Pamela!' says Mrs. Jervis as she tells me since, 'Oh!' and gave another shriek, 'My poor Pamela is dead for

certain!'¹

The following is part of Fielding's version of the same scene in Shamela:

"Mrs. Jervis and I are just in Bed, and the Door unlocked; if my Master should come -- odsbobs! I hear him just coming in at the door. You see, I write in the present Tense, as Parson Williams says. Well, he is in Bed, between us, we both shamming a Sleep, he steals his Hand into my Bosom, which I, as if in my Sleep, press close to me with mine, and then pretend to awake. -- I no sooner see him, but I scream out to Mrs. Jervis she feigns likewise but just to come to herself; we both begin, she to becall, and I to bescratch very liberally. After having made a pretty free use of my fingers, without any great Regard to the parts I attack'd, I counterfeit a Swoon. Mrs. Jervis then cries out, O sir, what have you done, you have murdered poor Pamela: she is gone".²

Pamela's description of the attempted seduction is just as "warm" as Shamela's. Fielding is therefore justified in claiming that the "indecenty" he portrays in Shamela is latent in Pamela. The account of Pamela's process of undressing is detailed, and sounds like a striptease in print. Nor does she omit to tell how she found her master's hand in her bosom. The unbiased reader might well ask whether Pamela had to use so much detail. Fielding takes over the sexual details for his version and emphasizes them. But he does more than this, for he wilfully distorts the attitude of Mrs. Jervis and the girl. Pamela may have used unnecessary detail in her account but there is little doubt that she is meant to be an innocent girl fighting to defend her chastity; there is no doubt either of Mrs. Jervis's sincere desire to protect her. In Fielding's version both of them are seen to be involved in a sordid plot to entrap Mr. Booby, and

¹ Pamela, Everyman edition (1955), I, 49-50.

All quotations from Pamela are taken from the Everyman edition with the exception of the prefatory letters, which are not included in that edition and which are therefore taken from the 3rd (1741) edition.

² Shamela, op.cit., pp.15-16.

Shamela behaves not like the helpless girl in Richardson's work, but like a virago, making liberal use of fingers and nails.

The second seduction scene in Pamela is similar:

"What words shall I find, my dear mother (for my father should not see this shocking part), to describe the rest, and my confusion, when the guilty wretch took my left arm, and laid it under his neck, and the vile procuress held my right; then he clasped me round the waist!

Said I, 'Is the wench mad! Why, how now, Confidence?', thinking still it had been Nan. But he kissed me with frightful vehemence; and then his voice broke upon me like a clap of thunder, 'Now, Pamela', said he, 'Is the dreadful time of reckoning come, that I have threatened, I screamed out in such a manner, as never anybody heard the like. But there was nobody to help me; and both my hands were secured, as I said. Sure never poor soul was in such agonies as I. 'Wicked man!' said I, 'Wicked abominable woman! O God! My God! this time! this one time! deliver me from this distress! or strike me dead this moment'. And then I screamed again and again....

Said he, 'One word with you, Pamela; hear me but one word; and hitherto you see I offer nothing to you' — 'Is this nothing' said I, 'to be in bed here? To hold my hands between you! I will hear, if you will instantly leave the bed, and take this villainous woman from me!' Said she (O disgrace of womankind!) — 'What you do, sir, do: don't stand, dilly dallying. She cannot exclaim worse than she has done: and she'll be quieter when she knows the worst'.¹

Fielding's version reads:

"We had not been a-Bed half an Hour, when my master came pit-a-pat into the Room in his shirt as before, I pretended not to hear him, and Mrs. Jewkes laid hold of one arm, and he pulled down the bed-clothes and came into bed on the other side, and took my other arm and laid it under him, and fell a-kissing one of my Breasts as if he would have devoured it; I was then forced to awake, and began to struggle with him, Mrs. Jewkes crying why don't you do it? I have one arm secure, if you can't deal with the rest I am sorry for you'. He was as rude as possible to me; but I remembered Mamma, the instructions you gave me to avoid being ravished, and followed them, which soon brought him to terms, and he promised me on quitting ^{my} hold, that he would leave the bed".²

¹ Pamela, Everyman edition, op.cit., I, 178-179.

² Shamela, op.cit., p.31-32.

A comparison of the two versions reveals that Fielding exaggerates the sexual elements taken over from Pamela, but he is only able to exaggerate them because they are latent in Richardson's work. In Pamela, Booby does not actually kiss Pamela's breasts, but he certainly kisses her vehemently, and Mrs. Jewkes does urge him to rape Pamela while the girl's arms are held secure. So that, as far as sexual details are concerned, Fielding only has to take them over from Pamela and underline them in his own work. Also, Pamela, though not as vulgar as Shamela, is rather shrewish in this scene; she does refer to Mrs. Jewkes as "wicked abominable woman", "villainous woman" and "disgrace of womankind". These descriptions are true, but they are surely strong words from a sixteen year-old girl. Fielding takes over this shrewishness and reduces it to vulgarity. The result is a savage distortion, but it has only been possible because there were the basic elements in Pamela. The similarity of form and details between the two works forces the reader to recall Pamela while reading Shamela; it also induces him to accord an initial credibility to Fielding's work. The reader might well reason thus: if Fielding has the form and the details right, is it not possible that he has also got the girl's attitude right? Is it not possible that it is Fielding who has perceived the truth about Pamela and that Richardson has been deceived by his own heroine?

The reader, as it were, has expected a Pamela in both cases, but he is presented by Fielding with a Shamela, and as a result of the inevitable comparison, both Pamela and Shamela are shown in an unfavourable light. The comparison, however, works to the greater disadvantage of Pamela, for Shamela is already known as a hypocrite, whereas Pamela is now also revealed as a

hypocrite, a scheming girl using a mask of innocence.

Richardson also comes within the range of the satire. His use of language is exposed, and Fielding shows how closely allied moral puritanism and prurience can be. Moreover, Richardson's hypocrisy is satirized for while he is engaged on the portrayal of Mr. B.'s immorality, he is shown to be unaware of the ambiguity in his own presentation.

Yet if anyone's hypocrisy deserves exposure it is Parson Williams', for he conceals lust and sensuality under the cloak of religious devotion. It is worth pointing out again that Fielding only elaborates elements implicit in Richardson. There is evidence in Pamela that Parson Williams is not averse to protecting his own interest, and that his interest in Pamela has something to do with love.¹ Fielding transforms this love into illicit pre-marital and extra-marital relationships and reveals the bestiality of Parson Williams' mind.² Furthermore, the reader is induced to despise Williams, not only because he, a clergyman, indulges in illicit sexual relationships, but also because he contrives to convince the girl of his religious devotion and orthodoxy, in spite of their sexual encounters. If Shamela is deceived, the reader has to be undeceived, and Fielding's task is to show that there is a gap between ~~the man~~ Shamela thinks he is and the

¹ Pamela, op.cit., I, 124. Letter from Mr. Williams to Pamela: "I know not how to express myself, lest I should appear to you to have a selfish view in the service I would do you. But I really know but one effectual and reasonable way to disengage yourself from the dangerous position you are in. It is that of marriage with some person that you can make happy in your approbation. As for my own part, it would be, as things stand, my apparent ruin! And worse still, I should involve you in misery too. But yet, so great is my veneration for you, so entire my reliance on Providence, upon so just an occasion, that I should think myself but too happy if I might be accepted".

² Shamela, op.cit., p.23.

Williams we ought to see — between the serenity and apparent sincerity of his religious professions and his actual conduct. Mr. Williams' first letter to Pamela is a serene, restrained and truly religious document.¹ In Fielding's version of it,² the quality has degenerated and the mind of the man is revealed in all its crudity. Although the form of the pastoral letter is retained, the language is brutalized and Fielding's irony is in operation shaping our attitude to the parson. Williams is forced into a position in which he reveals himself to us as a totally different being from Shamela's religious hero. His own writing reinforces the impression, for the reader hardly expects to hear expressions like "pierce a virgin barrel of ale", from the mouth of a clergyman. He tells Shamela he must in some respects, estimate her as his wife "for tho the Omission of the Service was a sin; yet as I have told you, it was a venial one, of which I have truly repented, as I hope you have". The tension resulting from the disparity between this apparent sincerity and religious devotion and the implications of his words and conduct shows him in a very unfavourable light.

Through Parson Williams, Fielding also ridicules those theologians who suggested that faith, not works or conduct, was the only prerequisite for salvation, and in Shamela herself he dramatizes some of the dangerous consequences of this doctrine; for Shamela is not only convinced of Parson Williams' religious sincerity, she herself is sincere in her religious views. Ian Watt thinks that one of the difficulties of Shamela is that of reconciling the heroine's conscious sexual hypocrisy with her unconscious hypocrisy.³ But

¹ Pamela, op.cit., I, 110-111.

² Shamela, op.cit., p.23.

³ Ian Watt, op.cit., p.10.

Shamela's religious devotion is not hypocritical. She does read and believe "good books" and she does accept the precepts of Parson Williams' sermons. Her religious faith is sincere, but she has not been made to see the necessity of matching religious devotion with moral conduct. This is due, not to religious hypocrisy on her part, but to the teachings of the "faith men" such as Whitefield and Parson Williams who have convinced her that she can sin and believe at the same time. When, therefore, her conduct is ridiculed it is not only Shamela who is exposed, but also her religious instructors, and the dangers of their teaching. The "faith men" come under the full weight of Fielding's irony when Parson Williams says:

"Those people who talk of Vartue and Morality, are the wickedest of all Persons. That 'tis not what we do, but what we believe that must save us".¹

Fielding has not included the "faith men" within the range of his satire only because of their topicality; they are central to his meaning in Shamela, and to his reflections on Pamela. Shamela has not been taught that there is a connection between religious professions and moral conduct, and Fielding insists that outward professions must not be accepted until actual conduct has been thoroughly scrutinized. If this is true of Parson Williams and Shamela it is no less true of Pamela. We must not take her outward professions at their face value; we must look at the implications of her actual conduct, and Fielding implies that if we did we would discover that she is a much less innocent girl than the eighteenth-century public believed her to be.

In Shamela Fielding exploits irony in all its forms. There is irony of situation in which the speaker condemns himself before our eyes even while

¹ Shamela, op.cit., p.24.

he speaks. This is best illustrated in the letters of Parson Williams. There is also linguistic irony in which our attitude is determined by the presence of certain key words. Talking for instance about "virtue", Shamela says: "Oh! what a charming word that is! blest be he who first invented it". The key words here are "word" and "invented". To her, virtue is something invented; it is not inherent in man's nature, nor does it flow from his religious principles. There is also present the simplest form of irony; by means of which the author condemns the character while appearing to praise him. This comes out best in Shamela's comments on Parson Williams when she learns of his imprisonment:

"The Fate of poor Mr. Williams shocked me more than my own: for, as the Beggar's Opera says, Nothing moves one so much as a great Manⁿ in Distress. And to see a man of his Learning forced to submit so low, to one whom I have often heard him say he despises is, I think, a most affecting circumstance".

In Shamela's eyes Parson Williams is a great and learned man forced to submit to his inferiors. In Fielding's view, he is someone mean and immoral who does not mind how low he stoops to gain his own ends. So the reader reverses Pamela's judgements in order to get the true picture.

Finally irony is employed as a structural device in a way it is used later in the novels. Let us recall the scene in which, after their marriage, Shamela and her husband go for a ride in the coach and eventually quarrel about money. In the course of the quarrel Mr. Booby reveals that he married Shamela only for her person, and Shamela confesses she married Booby only for his money. So far as sex is concerned she prefers Parson Williams. Almost immediately Williams appears killing a hare. Thus, in quick succession, the reader sees Williams the sensualist, Williams the clergyman who finds time to indulge in worldly sports and Williams the rapacious

hunter. (He seizes the hare from the hounds). He sees, not Williams the protector of the flock (he only takes the hare away from the hounds when it has been killed) but Williams the destroyer.

Yet Parson Williams is not the only person against whom irony is directed, for our attention is soon attracted to the coach where Shamela is already busy thinking of how to deal with her husband's quarrelsomeness. But we do not stay with her for long, for Fielding quickly turns the focus on her husband. She has apparently misunderstood him: he is annoyed, not because he is jealous, not even because Williams pursues the hares — since he has given him leave to destroy the game in other places. He is angry because Williams has had the impudence to chase a particular few he had intended to keep for himself. After this, Shamela again comes into focus and the reader sees her heartlessness in wishing all hares "darned" and Williams' hypocrisy in rebuking her for the use of that word. Finally we see Williams not only as a hunter of hares, but also of women; and it turns out that Booby is annoyed with him for daring to pursue his own woman. The way in which the irony is sustained, and our attention is continually diverted from one character to the other so that we see how deeply each is involved in wickedness, is masterly.

Apart from burlesque and irony Fielding makes use of other devices. Imagery plays an important part, the most central image being that of dressing and undressing. This indicates Shamela's vanity, and by implication points to the vanity and hypocrisy of Pamela. There is also the image of hunting and of sport. Women are regarded as game, as pieces of property the rules for whose hunting are laid down by the master, and the art of love becomes a sport in which women are expected to be chased.

Fielding also achieves spectacular effects by juxtaposition of ideas. There is, for example, the juxtaposition of religion and sex, most obvious in the letters of Shamela and Parson Williams. This juxtaposition emphasizes that their "religion" and "virtue" conceal something far more sinister, and this is also true of Pamela.

Burlesque and irony are comic devices. The task of the author who uses them for moral purposes is to ensure that although the reader laughs, moral judgement is not inhibited. After initial failures, Fielding did succeed in achieving this in some of his plays. But in Shamela he shows that he can do it with ever-growing assurance. To demonstrate this, one only has to refer to Shamela's letter to her mother in which she talks of the "kettle and the pot", or that in which she relates the activities on her wedding night. They are both funny, but the laughter is morally directed and the appropriate moral comments are made. Shamela says for instance:

"In my last I left off at our sitting down to supper on our Wedding Night, where I behaved with as much Bashfulness as the purest Virgin in the World could have done. The most difficult Task for me was to blush; however, by holding by Breath, and squeezing my Cheeks with my Handkerchief, I did pretty well".¹

It is Fielding's irony which acts as the antidote to laughter and ensures that the apparent simplicity and frankness of the girl do not win us over. "Behaved" suggests that she is putting on an act, and "purest virgin" reminds us that chastity is not an entirely obsolete virtue. Shamela's hypocrisy and unchastity are thus underlined.

By means of these devices Fielding undermines and condemns all that the characters in Shamela (and by implication all that Pamela and Richardson)

¹ Shamela, op.cit., p.40.

stand for. He also indicates his own positive values. By his exposure of the "faith men" and of the gap between profession and conduct he demonstrates that, for him, conduct is all-important. By exposing Pamela's attitude towards chastity and Shamela's manifest unchastity, he demonstrates that chastity is an end in itself, and not something to be used for ulterior purposes. Finally, and more directly, Fielding embodies his moral positives in Parson Oliver, as he was later to do in Mr. Wilson and Parson Adams.

III

As Shamela marks the beginning of Fielding's apprenticeship as a novelist, it might be interesting to look negatively and see how uninterested he is in Richardson's technique of character from the "inside", or "plot" as the inevitable outcome of character. Fielding must have thought that Richardson paid far too much attention to detail, but Richardson did this partly because he wished to show the inner workings, as it were, of his characters' souls. Richardson's characters grow before our eyes and they develop from the inside. He succeeds almost completely in immersing himself in the characters, and he even has to use some of them as mouthpieces for his own personal comments on the action. This is probably one of the reasons why Pamela does not seem to be the young, unworldly girl that Richardson intended to portray; often when she speaks, it is Richardson speaking through her. Fielding, unlike Richardson, is uninterested in the development of character from the inside and is unable or unwilling to immerse himself in the characters he creates. Shamela, unlike Pamela, does not develop. The Shamela we encounter at the start is the same as the girl we leave at the end. In this work, Fielding is the manager; he sets the scene and then

disposes the characters. Their activities change, but their characters do not. Richardson uses differences in style to indicate differences in character. Each of his characters usually has a distinctive manner of expression. Fielding uses style in order to manipulate our attitude to the characters, not to reveal their true natures. If we look once again at the letter in which Shamela dreams of her future activities as Mrs. B., we can see that the style soon becomes disjointed and hysterical. But it does not give us any further insight into Shamela's character; it only conditions our attitude to her at this stage. Most of Pamela's letters reveal the flutterings of her heart from minute to minute. Those of Shamela have the effect of arousing our disgust.

Fielding, the apprentice-novelist, was thus not interested in Richardson's method of character portrayal; his plot is not the outcome of one character acting on another. It has all been deliberately done and patterned by him from the outset; the characters do not direct the course of the action, they are moved by Fielding in order to enable him to make his moral points.

Shamela then is an accomplished work of its kind; and as a study of hypocrisy and vanity it can be said to foreshadow Joseph Andrews. Yet it prepares for it, most of all, through Fielding's discovery of ways of revealing hypocrisy through style. In Shamela, Fielding wished to criticize bad morality and bad attitudes to sex, religion, character and literature. His principal target was Richardson, the author of Pamela, but Cibber, Middleton and the "faith men" were also to be censured. In order to achieve his ends Fielding decided to resort to burlesque and to use the forms and styles of these authors as prisms through which their moral attitudes could

be criticized. The burlesque structure thus satirizes their literary conventions and the ironic style reveals their hypocritical attitudes, especially those shown in Pamela. We can see that, as a future novelist, Fielding is likely to choose a firm moral pattern and a pre-determined plot, and to make the characters part of the design rather than self-developing persons with an influence on the course of action. Burlesque, irony, the mock-epic and imagery seem all likely to be used, and the style to be varied to condition the reader's attitude to the characters. There is a clear line of development from Shamela to the novels.

CHAPTER THREE

A "Moral" Approach to Joseph Andrews

I

Fielding's moral purpose in Joseph Andrews was more elaborate than the simple exposure of vanity and hypocrisy mentioned in the first chapter of the novel. For it is the satirist's business, not only to expose vice and folly, but also to celebrate the virtues; and Fielding seems to have been aware of this responsibility. He must have realized that the validity of his work would depend, not on its negative and destructive power, but on the nature of the positive values put forward as an alternative to the vices attacked. So he offers his readers Parson Adams, Mr. Wilson and Joseph Andrews, as the embodiment of his moral positives. These three men were warm-hearted, good-natured, charitable, benevolent and sympathetic to the needs of their fellowmen.

Martin Battestin has attempted to demonstrate that the morality these characters represent, and therefore the morality Fielding offered as an alternative to the selfishness, vanity and hypocrisy of society, derives from the teaching of the Latitudinarian divines Barrow, Tillotson, Clarke, Hoadly, and South, on such subjects as charity, faith and the good-natured man.¹ But while Battestin has recognized these positives and their possible sources, the way in which the positives have been found is questionable because such theories were common in eighteenth-century England; some of them could even be found in the writings of the Deists. We need to examine the other possible sources of Fielding's ideas, and to show why

¹ Martin Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art (Middletown, Connecticut, 1959).

he could not have been indebted to them, in order to show that the Latitudinarians were the only possible sources. Secondly, even if the Latitudinarians were the only possible sources of these ideas, we need to establish direct derivation, and we can do this by pointing out similarities between actual statements made by Fielding's characters and those made by the Latitudinarians. Also, it would be helpful to indicate similarities between the utterances of these divines and those made by Fielding himself. This will necessitate extensive use of The Champion, for in this periodical the ideas which were later to be embodied in the novels can be seen to have been discussed at length. Of even greater importance is the fact that, in The Champion, Fielding makes several references to philosophers and religious writers as the source of his ideas, and quotes liberally from their works. It should therefore be possible to trace ideas from the novels to The Champion and from The Champion to the ultimate sources in the works of religious and philosophical writers. If this procedure is adopted, it should be possible to check and refine on Battestin's claim and to see whether Fielding's ideas on charity, good-nature, the good man, benevolence, deism, Methodism and stoicism do owe their origin to the Latitudinarian preachers.

But even if Battestin were proved right, it must not therefore be assumed that the morality of Joseph Andrews is identical with the Latitudinarian ethic. Account must also be taken of Fielding's art which might well have modified the morality considerably. Fielding wrote a work of art, not a moral tract, and our experience in reading the novel is a literary experience. Therefore, if we do discover that Fielding's ideas on good-nature, charity, faith, the Christian life and stoicism, derive from the liberal

divines, we must go further and see how his comic art modifies these ideas and helps to create his own morality.

The Latitudinarian preachers played a prominent part in the great religious and moral debate which took place in England in the latter half of the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries. The intellectual and religious ferment, which was one of the causes of the English Civil War, had not yet spent its force by the end of the seventeenth century. Indeed, long after the political and religious settlements had been made, this ferment possessed enough momentum to carry it well into the eighteenth. The Test and Corporation Acts, the activities of the Nonjurors and the controversy over Bishop Hoadly's pamphlets, attest to the intensity of the debate, which was then raging on questions of belief and the Christian life. The most important consequence of this debate was the rise of deism and rational theology. Free-thinking intellectuals from Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the Cambridge Platonists to Toland, Tindal and Shaftesbury challenged the sacred doctrines of the orthodox Anglican Church. The Deists questioned the necessity of Revelation, the authenticity of miracles, the authority of priests and bishops, the efficacy of rewards and punishments and the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Yet it must not be assumed that everyone was a Deist who questioned the doctrines of the Church or who was referred to as a Deist. Men who attacked the Church for all sorts of scurrilous reasons were likely to take shelter under the title of Deists, because deism, if not orthodox, was at least intellectually respectable. Conversely, any one who doubted the truth of some of the Church's doctrines was likely to be branded a Deist, or even worse an atheist, by the orthodox. The term "deism" seems to have covered a wide

range of men, as the great Doctor Samuel Clarke himself attested.¹ Basically, however, it can be said that the real Deists regarded Revelation as superfluous and believed that a code of conduct could be derived from nature and nature's laws. The extreme High Church branch of the Anglican Church saw in this argument an attack on one of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. It was considered that if man ceased to believe in the truth of Revelation the Church would cease to exist. So it was thought necessary to threaten the doubters with damnation unless they affirmed their faith in the truth of the Revelation and authenticity of the miracles and other mysteries of the Christian faith. As far as doctrine was concerned, therefore, the Anglican Church appeared increasingly Calvinistic. Its more dogmatic defenders insisted that faith in God as revealed through Christ and the prophets was all that was necessary for salvation. Good works were praiseworthy, but not essential. So that at one extreme was a group virtually advocating Christianity without morality, and at the other was a group of pseudo-Christians who stood by a moral code without the incentives and sanctions of revealed religion. As deism spread, the defenders of the Anglican Church became more Calvinistic, and there was a real danger that moderate men would be alienated by the tone and content of their writings. There was a desperate need for someone to state the true Christian position and show that it was not quite so extreme as some of the defenders of the orthodox Anglican Church tended to represent it. It was in an attempt to do this that Clarke, Hoadly, Barrow and Tillotson took up their pens and tried to inject some sanity into a debate, which had been

¹ Samuel Clarke, D.D., "Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion", Sermons at Boyle Lectures (1739), II, 72-76. Clarke identifies no less than four distinct classes of Deists.

conducted with such heat and prejudice, that the real issues were becoming clouded.

The Latitudinarians agreed with the Deists that it was possible to derive a code of conduct from the laws of nature; they also stressed that nothing in the Christian religion contradicted the principles of natural religion.¹ But they went further and pointed out that in order to derive a code of conduct, much depended on the individual's powers of perception, and some men did not possess these powers. Furthermore, even if the individual succeeded in deriving the code, there was no guarantee that he would abide by it. The Christian religion which added the sanctions of punishments and the incentives of rewards was necessary to ensure that men adhered to the paths of virtue. The Latitudinarians therefore agreed with the High Church party that belief in Revelation was essential for salvation; but, again, they went further and insisted that it was not enough merely to affirm one's faith in it. They argued that in order to demonstrate his faith the individual must lead the good and moral life. This is why the Liberal divines laid so much stress on charity as "the main part of religion".

Charity therefore was the cardinal point in the teachings of the Latitudinarians. In their view it approximated to benevolence — a friendly disposition of mind which prompted the possessor to care for the well-being of his neighbour in every respect. In their teaching about charity the Latitudinarians stressed three points.

Firstly man was created in God's image and he came nearest to the divine

¹ Clarke's sermon, Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, devotes much space to proving this point. It also stresses that the religion of nature was antecedent to Christianity and that this was all the ancients had to guide them before Revelation.

perfection when he practised the virtue of charity. Secondly, charity was the "main part" of religion and piety, and the pious man was synonymous with the charitable man. Thirdly, charity was the greatest of all the virtues; indeed, in the broad sense of the word it included all the other virtues, and the virtuous man was the charitable man. Charity meant much more than almsgiving; it was the same as the Greek "Agape" — a universal love of and friendly disposition towards mankind. A survey of some of the sermons of the liberal divines will show in detail how these three aspects of charity were treated.

In support of the first point Barrow, for example, argued that since man was made in God's image, it was his duty to aspire towards divine perfection.¹ The principal attribute of the divine nature was benevolence, and man therefore came nearest to divine perfection when he practised the virtue of charity.

"But so commodious living here; so many offices daily performed among men, of courtesy, mercy, and pity; so many constant observances of friendship and amity; so many instances of fidelity and gratitude; so much credit always preserved (even among pagans and barbarians) to justice and humanity, (humanity, that very name doth fairly argue for us,) do sufficiently confute those defamers and slanderers of mankind; do competently evidence, that all good inclinations are not quite banished the world, not quite, razed out of man's soul; but that even herein human nature doth somewhat resemble its excellent original, the Divine".²

"...But we may further observe, that as children are, indeed, in complexion and feature usually born somewhat like to their parents, but grow daily more like unto them, (those smaller lineaments continually with their bulk and stature

¹ Isaac Barrow, D.D., "The Being of God proved from the Frame of Human Nature", Theological Works (Cambridge, 1859), V, 209-235. All subsequent references to Barrow's works will be to this edition, unless otherwise stated.

² Barrow, Works, V, 226.

increasing and becoming more discernible;) so is man improvable to more exact resemblance of God: his soul hath appetites and capacities, by which well-guided and ordered it soars and climbs continually in its affection and desire toward Divine perfection".¹

Barrow thus makes the point that since the human being was made in God's image he has the potential of goodness in him, and when he demonstrates this innate generosity in action directed to relieve and succour his fellowmen, he approximates to the divine perfection. Like the other Latitudinarians, Barrow tried to refute all those who believed that human beings were by nature depraved and incorrigible. His view of human nature was optimistic:

"Is there not to all men in some measure, to some in a higher degree, a generosity innate, more lovely and laudable to all; which disposeth men with their own pain, hazard, and detriment to succour and relieve others in distress, to serve the public, and promote the benefit of society; so that inordinately to regard private interest; doth thwart the reason and wisdom of nature?

The frame of our nature, indeed, speaketh, that we were not born for ourselves; we shall find man if we contemplate him, to be a nobler thing than to have been designed to serve himself, or to satisfy his single pleasure".²

If we turned from the writings of the Latitudinarians to Fielding's Champion, we would discover that he agreed with their view that charity was the virtue which showed that man was capable of attaining divine perfection. He also shared their optimistic view of human nature. In the issue of The Champion for March 27, 1740, he wrote:

"I know not so great, so glorious, so lovely an idea of the benevolent creator of the universe, as that which is affixed to him by the noble author [Barrow] we have so often quoted, and shall quote. He is (says he) the best-natured being in the universe; The more therefore

¹ Barrow, Works, V, 227.

² Barrow, "Of Self Interest", Works, IV, 126.

we cultivate the sweet disposition in our minds, the nearer we draw to the divine perfection; to which we should be the more strongly incited, as it is that which we may approach the nearest to. All his other attributes throw us immediately out of sight, but this virtue lies in will and not in power".¹

The second point the Latitudinarians stressed in their treatment of charity follows logically from their belief that good works were just as essential as faith. If, as they claimed, piety could only be demonstrated in good works, then charity, or the virtue of doing good would tend to become synonymous with piety. Time and time again the liberal divines stressed in their sermons that the end of all religion and therefore of piety was virtue, and by virtue in this context they meant charity in its broadest sense. This view is powerfully stated by Clarke in the sermon How to Judge of Moral Actions.

"The End and Design of all Religion; the proper Effect and Produce of Good Principles; the Good Fruit of a good Tree; the Ultimate View and Fundamental intention of all religious truths, implanted in men either by Nature or teaching; is the Practise of Virtue. For the word Religion, in its very Notion and original meaning, signifies an obligation; an obligation upon men, arising from the Reason of things and from the Government of God, to do what is just and virtuous and good; to live, in a constant habitual sense and acknowledgement of God, in the practise of the universal justice and charity towards Men..."²

¹ Compare this also with Dr. Harrison's words in Amelia about Man's potential goodness; see Amelia, Bk.X, ch.v. See also Fielding's view in The Covent Garden Journal, No.29 (April 11, 1752), "But I say with Dr. Barrow, let us improve and advance our Nature to the utmost ~~Perfection~~ Effect of which it is capable, I mean by doing all the good we can; and surely that nature which seems to partake of the divine Goodness in this World, is the most likely to partake of the divine Happiness in the next".

² Clarke, "How to Judge of Moral Actions", Works (1738), I, 250. See also "The Excellency of Moral Qualifications" in which he goes to great lengths to explain what true goodness is. It is not just virtue in general as opposed to wickedness and vice; it denotes a particular degree of virtue joined with a singular degree of benignity and beneficence in particular. Hoadly also in the pamphlet, The Nature of the Kingdom or the Church of Christ, tries to show that in St. James' days at least religion consisted in virtue and integrity towards ourselves and charity and beneficence to others.

Several sermons could be quoted to show that for these divines piety was charity, and the pious man was the charitable man.¹ Barrow in a very important sermon — The Duty and Reward of Bounty to the Poor says:

"Nothing better suits Christianity, nothing more graces it, than liberality;....The most gracious wisdom of God hath so modelled our religion, that according to it piety and charity are the same thing...."²

If piety was synonymous with charity, and the hallmark of the religious man was his benevolence, it follows that for the Latitudinarians uncharitableness was one of the deadly sins and was a manifestation of impiety. If the theme of covetousness loomed so large in the sermons of these divines, it is because they believed that covetousness was a form of uncharitableness, and uncharitableness was a sin of the most serious kind. According to them riches were given to men on trust, not for their own pleasure, but for relieving the needs of their fellowmen. Riches were God's and they were entrusted to men in the same way as the talents were to the servants in Christ's parable. Anyone therefore who hoarded treasure for himself without using it for the relief of his fellowmen, was usurping on God's privilege. He was not only uncharitable, he was also covetous because he

¹ It will be seen from the quotation that very often the Latitudinarians meant by charity, mere liberality, although they were careful to point out that true charity meant much more than this. Fielding too, uses the term often in its restricted sense. It does not mean that Fielding and the Latitudinarians were muddled in their thinking; they were obviously anxious to show that relieving the needs of the distressed was an essential part of charity and of virtue.

² Barrow, Works, I, 83 and 85. Later on in this sermon, Barrow says: "That as faith without works is dead so love without beneficence is useless. Charity then being the main part of religion, mercy and bounty being the chief parts of charity, well may these duties be placed in so high a rank according to the divine heraldry of scripture".

sought to appropriate for his own purposes, property which was meant for the entire community of mankind. One can therefore understand why the parables of The Good Samaritan and The Rich Man and Lazarus featured so prominently in the sermons of the Latitudinarians. In his version of The Rich Man and Lazarus, Tillotson tried to show that uncharitableness was a heinous sin:

"I observe that uncharitableness and unmercifulness to the poor, is a great and damning sin. We find no other fault imputed to the rich man but this, that he took no care out of his superfluity and abundance to relieve this poor man that lay at his gate. He is not charged for want of justice, but of charity...."

Later on Tillotson says:

"The uncharitable man is a usurper upon God's right. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and he hath given it to the children of men, not absolutely to dispose of as they please, but in trust, and with certain reservations, so as to be accountable to him for the disposal of it".¹

Even more illuminating is the following comment which seems to sum up everything we have seen so far with regard to the connection between piety and charity:

"Uncharitableness to the poor is a very great sin. It contains in its very nature two black crimes, inhumanity and impiety.... Besides the inhumanity of this sin, it is likewise a great impiety towards God. Unmercifulness to the poor hath this four-fold impiety in it; it is a contempt of God; an usurpation of his right; a slighting of his providence; and a plain demonstration that we do not love God, and that all our pretences to religion are hypocritical and insincere".²

¹ John Tillotson, "The Rich Man and Lazarus", Works (1735), II, 472-473. All subsequent references to Tillotson's works will be to this edition, unless otherwise stated.

² Tillotson, Works, II, 473. The same idea is repeated again and again by Barrow in the sermons The Duty and Reward of Bounty to the Poor, and in The Profitableness of Godliness, Works, I, 174-201. Fielding also seems to agree with the Latitudinarians that charity was the mark of piety and Christianity. In The Covent Garden Journal, No. 39 (May 16, 1752), he says, "Upon the whole, I hope, it appears, that a Person void of Charity, is unworthy the Appellation of a Christian".

The third point the Latitudinarians stressed about charity was that it included more than almsgiving. It is obvious in all their writings that charity was for them a very comprehensive virtue. It was the greatest of all the virtues; indeed, it embraced all the other virtues. Charity was synonymous with virtue in the broadest sense, and it comprised all those qualities or virtues which Christ commended in the Sermon on the Mount. The virtuous man brought forth the fruits of the spirit, and the virtues which the Latitudinarians listed as the fruits of the spirit are obviously included in the broad meaning of charity as they defined it. This is how Clarke expresses it in the Sermon "The Excellency of Moral Qualifications":

"From what has been said, we may observe; that moral virtues, and what the Scripture calls the fruits of the spirit, are one and the same thing....The fruits of the spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance....These things, when considered in themselves,.... are still Virtues".¹

These are in themselves virtues, but charity or virtue comprised all of them. The man who possessed all of them, and showed this good disposition to others was obviously the virtuous man, but he was also what the Liberal divines would refer to as the charitable man. The virtuous man was the charitable man and virtue was charity. Charity therefore, like virtue, was an all-embracing quality. It is interesting that when Clarke in the same sermon quoted St. Paul's famous saying on faith hope and charity, he replaced charity by virtue because for him charity was the same all-embracing quality that virtue was.²

¹ Clarke, "The Excellency of Moral Qualifications", Works, op.cit., I, 270.

² Clarke, Works, op.cit., I, 270: "If a man could speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels (as St. Paul expresses it), and had all faith, so that he could work all miracles; and be not a virtuous man; all this would be only the Operation of the Spirit of God by Him, for the conviction of Others; but to himself, of no advantage, any more than to a Sounding Brass or a tinkling Cymbal".

This all-inclusive nature of charity is most powerfully stated by Tillotson in the sermon Of Doing Good:

"To instruct the ignorant, or reduce those that are in error; to turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and reclaim those that are engaged in any evil course, by good counsel, and seasonable admonition, and by prudent and kind reproof; to resolve and satisfy the doubting mind; to confirm the weak; to heal the broken-hearted, and to comfort the melancholy and troubled spirits: these are the noblest ways of charity, because they are conversant about the souls of men, and tend to procure and promote their eternal felicity. And then to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, release the imprisoned; to redeem the captives, and to vindicate those who are perjured and oppressed in their persons, or estates, or reputation;..."¹

The reader is immediately struck by two main aspects of this statement. First, it gives a comprehensive definition of charity and second, the activities he demands of the charitable man are almost exactly the same as those which Parson Adams undertakes in Joseph Andrews. It seems as if Fielding was indebted to the Latitudinarians not only for his concept of charity, but also for his portrayal of the true clergyman. This view seems to be confirmed when one turns to the issue of The Champion for April 5, 1740. In this issue Fielding undertook to make an apology for the clergy, and gave a portrait of the ideal clergyman, which looks like an outline of Parson Adams' character as he appears in Joseph Andrews. But the interest of the essay lies not so much in the portrayal of the true clergyman, nor in the fact that it seems to have been the basis of Parson Adams, as in its detailed discussion of charity. Fielding listed charity as one of the essential qualities of the clergyman and then went on to

¹ Tillotson, Works, II, 593. Clarke also says: "By the word charity is expressed that Christian temper and disposition of mind, that love and goodwill toward mankind which is the great foundation of all the virtues; and concerning which the same apostle elsewhere tells us that the end of the commandment is charity".

define it:

"The next Virtue which I shall mention is Charity, a Virtue not confined to Munificence or giving Alms, but that brotherly Love and friendly Disposition of mind which is everywhere taught in Scripture".

Charity, according to Fielding, was not confined to our wishes but extended to our actions. There was an obligation on every man to relieve the needs and sufferings of others to the utmost of his ability. In order to stress this obligation, Fielding referred to the Parable of the Talents in a passage which seems to echo sections of sermons on the same parable by Tillotson and Clarke.

Other issues of The Champion demonstrate even further that Fielding accepted the Latitudinarians' comprehensive definition of charity. These Liberal divines stressed very often that charity was enough to cover a multitude of sins. Hoadly in particular gives this idea extensive treatment in his sermon, The Power of Charity to Cover Sins. In the issue of The Champion for February 16, 1740, Fielding embarks on a discussion of the idea in terms which recall not only Hoadly but Tillotson and Clarke as well.

Fielding says:

"The numberless and I believe unequal'd instances of Charity, which we have carefully collected, as far as they have come to our Knowledge, do (as we have often observed) a real Honour to our Age and Nation, and this is a truly Christian Virtue, nay, I will venture to say, the most Christian Virtue: It is this, which, in the Scripture Language, covers a multitude of sins; without which, to speak with the Tongues of men and Angels, is but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal; without which prophesy knowledge and faith are represented as nothing".

Another favourite expression of the Latitudinarians was that charity gilded all the other virtues. In the issue of The Champion for March 27, 1740, Fielding makes use of this same phrase:

"Lastly, that as Good-nature is a Delight in the Happiness of Mankind, every good-natured Man will do his utmost to contribute to the Happiness of each individual; and consequently that every Man who is not a Villain, if he loves not the good-natured Man is guilty of ingratitude.

This is that amiable Quality, which, like the sun, gilds over all our other virtues;... It is (as Shakespeare calls it) the milk, or rather the Cream of Human Nature, and whoever is possessed of this Perfection should be pitied, not hated for the want of any other".

There seems little doubt therefore that Fielding's views on the clergyman in particular, and on charity in general must have been derived from the teachings of the Liberal divines. The similarities between what he says in The Champion, what we see in the novels and what we read in the sermons of these preachers are too numerous to be co-incidental.

II

The Latitudinarians also extolled the qualities of the good-natured man. They thought it essential to refute the doctrines of philosophers such as Hobbes and Mandeville who believed that man always acted from the principle of self-love and that there was no such thing as disinterested benevolence. Moreover, Mandeville held that the actions of men were dictated by whatever passion happened to be uppermost in their minds at the time of action; they were neither the result of innate benevolent promptings, nor did they stem from a conviction that virtue was right. Hobbes and Mandeville therefore drew the conclusion that in the primary stages of society virtue and moral codes were non-existent. They were later invented by magistrates and politicians as the best means of keeping rebellious and barbarous beings in awe. Both philosophers excluded virtue from their

systems and took a pessimistic view of human nature.

Although we have seen that Fielding shared the Latitudinarians' optimistic view of human nature, there has been some controversy about whether Fielding was not as pessimistic as Hobbes and Mandeville and it will therefore be helpful to consider this.¹ Fielding seems to have left some hints in his writings, on the basis of which a prima facie case of pessimism can be made. For instance, Joseph Andrews, in his debate with Parson Adams on schools, does make some statements which seem to imply that, according to Fielding, no amount of education could alter a basically good or bad boy. Mankind was unalterable and therefore unimprovable. But it is clear that Joseph does not have Fielding's endorsement here. Fielding in fact, suggests that provided a boy has good teachers his character could be moulded. Moreover, Dr. Harrison in Amelia does say that there is a potential of goodness in everyone which could be cultivated and brought to good fruit by education. It is true that Fielding created a Blifil and a Jonathan Wild, both of whom seemed to have been inherently evil. But Blifil had had the wrong kind of education, and Wild had had none to speak of. Fielding's view of human nature like that of the Latitudinarians was basically optimistic. He believed that there were seeds of the divine in every human being, which, given adequate cultivation, would enable him to perform acts of benevolence for his fellowmen. So neither Fielding, nor the Latitudinarians could endorse the doctrines of Hobbes and Mandeville.

Small wonder, therefore, that so many of the sermons of Clarke, Tillotson, Hoadly and Barrow dealt with the qualities of the "good man".

¹ See especially L.W. Smith, "Fielding and Mandeville: 'The War against Virtue'", Criticism, III (1961), 7-15. He feels that Fielding's view of human nature was closer to that of the sceptical philosophers Hobbes and Mandeville than that of the Liberal divines.

This also explains the large number of sermons on Self-love, Self-conceit, and Self-interest. This concern with the good-natured man was not confined to the Liberal divines. It was fairly widespread in the eighteenth century. Battestin has rightly pointed out that the theme features prominently in eighteenth-century Literature.¹ Addison's essay on the good-natured man set the pattern, Richardson followed with Sir Charles Grandison, and the cult received its fullest expression in The Vicar of Wakefield.

It has often been claimed that the originator of the cult of the good-natured man was Shaftesbury, who in 1711 expounded his doctrine of benevolence in The Characteristics. However, R.S. Crane has convincingly shown that this ethic of benevolence which characterized the good-natured man, or "the man of feeling" can be traced, not to Shaftesbury, but to the Latitudinarians writing a bit earlier.² According to these theologians the man of feeling, or the good-natured, benevolent man was pre-eminently a charitable man, who sought to alleviate the distresses of the poor out of his abundance.

There is abundant evidence in the sermons of the Liberal divines that they equated the good man with the charitable man in the broad sense of the word charitable; he not only relieved the needs of his neighbours, he concerned himself with their welfare. Barrow in his sermon, The Duty and Reward of Bounty to the Poor, says:

"... he bestoweth whatever he hath within the compass of his possession, or his power;... Everything, I say, which he hath in substance, or can do by his endeaour, that may

¹ Battestin, op.cit., p.29.

² R.S. Crane, "Suggestions Toward a Geneology of The 'Man of Feeling'", ELH, I (1934), 205-230.

conduce to the support of the life, or the health, or the welfare in any kind of his neighbour, to the succour or relief of his indigency, to the removal or easement of his affliction, he may well here be understood to disperse and give. Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, entertaining the stranger, ransoming the captive, easing the oppressed, comforting the sorrowful, assisting the weak, instructing and advising the ignorant, together with all such kinds or instances of beneficence...."¹

In another sermon — The Profitableness of Godliness, Barrow identifies the good-natured man with the pious man. And since the Latitudinarians believed that the pious man was also the charitable man, it is reasonable to deduce that Barrow would identify the good-natured man with the charitable man. On reading the sermon we discover that this is precisely what he does. Indeed he enlarges the portrait of the good-natured man to include qualities which seem more characteristic of the clergyman.² Again, this is hardly surprising, for Fielding and the Latitudinarians regarded the clergyman as the charitable man par excellence.

The second point the Latitudinarians stressed about the good-natured man was that he performed good deeds because he was moved by the genuinely benevolent promptings of his heart, not because he was coerced by the rules of religion, nor because he dreaded the punishments threatened to those who failed to relieve the needy; nor because he had evolved his principle of benevolence from some abstract philosophical system. The Latitudinarians were conscious of the fact that some men were impelled to generous acts by sinister motives. It was therefore necessary to distinguish between the genuinely good-natured man whose motives were pure and praiseworthy, and the man who performed good deeds for the wrong reasons. In three sermons —

¹ Barrow, Works, I, 4-5.

² Barrow, Works, I, 192.

The Excellency of Moral Qualifications, How to Judge of Moral Actions, and The Character of a Good Man, Clarke expressed views which are almost identical with those of Barrow quoted above, but he went further and stressed the need to be able to recognize the deeds of a genuinely good-natured man. The good man acted out of purely unselfish motives, not because he had been impelled to do so by religion or philosophy, or by a desire to gratify his own vanity; there could be a vanity about giving; one could give in order to acquire the reputation of being charitable in the eyes of the world and the Church. Again and again Clarke repeats the saying, God loveth a cheerful giver. The good man did not give grudgingly, he gave because he was prompted by genuine feelings of philanthropy and because he felt for the sufferings of the needy.

Thirdly, the Latitudinarians stressed that the good man experienced a mutuality of feeling with his neighbours. Fielding himself is one of the most eloquent exponents of this idea, but he evidently owed much to the writings of the Liberal divines. In The Champion for March 27, 1740, he wrote:

"Indeed, the ancients seem to have looked on what we call Good-nature as a Quality almost inseparable from nature itself, as appears in the motto of this paper.... Good nature is a delight in the happiness of mankind, and a concern at their misery, with a Desire, as much as possible, to procure the former, and to avert the latter; and this, with a constant Regard to desert".¹

So that, in addition to performing good deeds out of genuinely philanthropic motives, the good-natured man was also distinguishable by a cast of mind; he delights in the happiness of mankind. There is a bond of feeling between him and his neighbours and because of this, their happiness brings him delight and their misery evokes his concern.

¹ Compare this with Tom's sentiments in Tom Jones, when he was being thanked by Mrs. Miller and her cousin.

Finally, the good man experiences great delight in doing good, and this delight was independent of the expectation of praise or of expressions of gratitude. The Latitudinarians were anxious to dismiss the utilitarian motives to goodness. They believed that men should be persuaded to do good regardless of the prospect of rewards of any sort; they therefore stressed that the act of doing good carried with it its own reward. This reward was a delight intrinsic in the very act itself, and independent of external considerations. Tillotson expressed the idea best in the sermon,

Of Doing Good:

"We shall reap the pleasure and satisfaction of it in our own minds; and there is no sensual pleasure that is comparable to the delight of doing good".¹

¹ Tillotson, Works, II, 599.

He says further: "Further the pious man is enabled and disposed most to benefit and oblige others. He doth it by the direction and encouragement of his good example; he doth it by his constant and honest prayers for all men; he doth it by drawing down blessings from heaven on the place where he resideth. He is upon all accounts the most true, the most common benefactor to mankind; all his neighbours, his country, the world are in some way obliged to him, at least he doth all the good he can and in wish doth benefit all men". We can compare this with the activities of Mr. Wilson and Parson Adams. Fielding often echoes the phrase "the delight of doing good". In the issue of The Champion for January 3, 1739-40, he wrote: "I do not know a better general Definition of Virtue than that it is a Delight in doing Good". Here the phrase might mean the urge to do good rather than the intrinsic delight in doing good, but the similarity between the phrases points to the fact that the writings of the Latitudinarians were in Fielding's mind as he worked on his conception of the good man. It is in Tom Jones that he repeats most emphatically the idea of the intrinsic pleasure in doing good. "In return for all these concessions" he says, "I desire of the philosophers to grant that there is in some human breasts a kind and benevolent disposition, which is gratified by contributing to the happiness of others. That in this gratification alone, as in friendship, in parental and filial affection, as indeed in general philanthropy, there is a great and exquisite delight, that if we do not call such disposition love, we have no name for it".

But the benevolence which Fielding and the Latitudinarians advocated must be carefully distinguished from the sentimentality which set in later, in the eighteenth century. Fielding always insisted that the good man should show discrimination in selecting the objects of his charity. "The good-natured man hath a constant regard to desert... good nature requires a distinguishing faculty, which is another name for judgement".¹ The Liberal divines expressed similar views. South, in A Discussion of Covetousness suggested that the man who with "a promiscuous undistinguishing profuseness threw away what he had proclaimed himself a fool to all the intelligent world about him".

In an essay in The Covent Garden Journal,² Fielding himself stated that beggars should not be the objects of the good man's charity. In another essay he listed instead those who had been bred to a genteel life, but who no longer possessed the means to maintain themselves in their original station. He also listed debtors and younger sons who had not been adequately provided for by their fathers. The list seems startling until in Tillotson's sermon, Of Doing Good, we discover a passage which is strikingly similar to Fielding's. Tillotson puts beggars very low on the list, but makes a special plea for the genteel whose fortunes have declined. Fielding's attitude is not so surprising; he was a humanitarian, but he was also a magistrate to whom the problem of beggars, the inadequacy of the poor laws, the evils of vagabondage and the prevalence of crime, presented themselves with a powerful immediacy. He could not therefore be expected to advise the good-natured man to be soft towards beggars and criminals. This is made

¹ The Champion, March 27, 1740.

² The Covent Garden Journal, No.44 (June 2, 1752).

clear in the issue of The Champion for March 27, 1740, where he says, "To be averse to, and to repine at the Punishment of Vice and Villainy, is not the Mark of Good-nature but Folly; on the contrary, to bring a real and great Criminal to justice, is, perhaps, the best-natured Office that one can perform to Society". The good-natured man must possess powers of discrimination and judgement; good-nature by itself was not enough because it could easily be misunderstood and imposed upon. Fielding's doctrine, indeed, is that prudence must be added to good nature.¹

It should be clear then that Fielding's ideas on the good-natured man derived from the teachings of the Latitudinarians. The portrait of the good man which he gives in The Champion is a synthesis of the ideas expressed by Clarke, Barrow and Tillotson. The portrait also looks like a blend of Parson Adams and Mr. Wilson — Mr. Wilson, the man who gives to the poor out of his abundance and who is genuinely concerned about the welfare of his neighbours, and Parson Adams, the clergyman who instructs the ignorant, corrects faults, prays for his fellowmen and calls down the blessings of heaven on their heads. It is interesting that when Fielding came to draw the portrait of the clergyman in his apology for the clergy, the qualities he gave him were almost the same as those he gave the good-natured man. It has been seen how Clarke and Barrow almost identified the good-natured man with the clergyman. Fielding's conception of the clergyman, the charitable man and the good-natured man must owe a lot to them.

It can be inferred from the preoccupation of the Latitudinarians and Fielding with good-nature, the Christian life, charity and the practical obligations of the good man, that they would maintain that works rather than

¹ This is part of his thesis in Tom Jones.

faith was the essential prerequisite for salvation. This does not mean that they underestimated the importance of faith. They themselves believed in the truth of Revelation and recognized its efficacy in confirming what reason by itself was able to discover. However, the Latitudinarians took the view that faith by itself was not enough. One's faith must be demonstrated in a life of Christian action. Like the Liberal divines, Fielding conceded that Revelation was true and necessary and that faith in it was essential. But having done this he went on like them to assert that a virtuous life marked by good works was essential for salvation. Several articles in The Champion are devoted to extolling the virtue of good works, and all the novels are demonstrations of virtue in action. In Joseph Andrews the champion of the doctrine of "Works rather than faith" is Parson Adams himself, who like his idol Hoadly, wants to strip Christianity of its superstitious trappings. On this point Mr. Adams agreed with Whitefield and the Methodists. But he disagreed with them and with the Calvinists and the extreme sections of the Anglican High Church, represented by men like Thwackum and Parson Barnabas, when they insisted that faith was the only prerequisite for salvation. As Mr. Adams put it, their teachings afforded a good excuse for the villain at the last judgement to claim "Lord, it is true I never obeyed one of your commandments, but punish me not, for I believe them all". Fielding's thinking on this subject followed that of the Latitudinarians very closely. Many of the sermons of Barrow, Clarke Tillotson, Hoadly and South, have titles such as, Of Doing Good, Of the Necessity of Good Works, Good Works Necessary to Salvation. Parson Adams' famous outburst about the Christian and the Turk was taken almost exactly from a sermon by Hoadly on the Good Samaritan. Parson Adams says:

"I should belie my own opinion which has always been that a virtuous and good Turk or heathen are more acceptable in the sight of their Creator than a vicious and wicked Christian, though his faith was as perfectly orthodox as St. Paul himself".

Here is what Hoadly had said:

"We may be certain, that an honest Heathen is much more acceptable to him than a dishonest and deceitful Christian; and that a charitable and good-natured Pagan has a better Title to his Favour, than a cruel and barbarous Christian; let him be never so orthodox in his Faith".¹

In Joseph Andrews these principles are demonstrated in the lives and actions of Parson Adams, Mr. Wilson and Joseph. The Latitudinarians also felt obliged to give concrete examples of men whom they specifically regarded as having led the life of faith, and who had manifested their piety in acts or virtue and philanthropy. Battestin has claimed that there is a connection between Fielding's Abraham Adams and the biblical Abraham; he also believes that Joseph Andrews derives from the biblical Joseph and that Fielding based his portrayal of these two men on the sermons of the Liberal divines. Whether Fielding did this is debatable and will be discussed later; it is certain though, that Abraham and Joseph feature several times in the sermons of Clarke, Hoadly, Barrow and Tillotson. As often as the Latitudinarians treated the subject of the pious man they cited the Patriarchs Abraham and Moses as examples of men whose piety had been demonstrated in lives of godly action. In a crucial sermon, Of Being Imitators of Christ, Barrow suggested

¹ Hoadly, "The Good Samaritan", Works (1773), III, 811. See also J.A. Work, "Henry Fielding, Christian Censor", in The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to C.B. Tinker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p.144. He says that he is unable to find any evidence that Fielding wrote with any writer's work open before him and that his opinions were the outpourings of a Christian heart. There is little doubt that Fielding had a Christian heart. It is also quite possible that he did not have the sermons of the Latitudinarians open before him as he wrote. But the evidence of passages such as that quoted above from Hoadly shows that at least, he had their works very much in mind.

that it was the duty of all Christians to try to attain divine perfection and an essential prerequisite for this was faith:

"For instance, if we desire to know what faith is, and how we should rely on the divine Providence, let us propose to our consideration the practice of Abraham; wherein we may see the father of the faithful leaving a most pleasant country, the place of his nativity, and unquestionless most dear unto him under that notion; deserting his home and fixed habitation, his estate and patrimony, his kindred and acquaintance, to wander he knew not where in unknown lands, with all his family, leading an uncertain and ambulatory life in tents, sojourning and shifting among strange people, devoid of piety and civility, (among Canaanites and Egyptians,) upon a bare confidence in the Divine protection and guidance: . . . let us say what discourse could so lively describe the nature of true faith, as this illustrious precedent doth".¹

Tillotson and Barrow were both impressed by Abraham's constancy to his God in the face of adversity and by his unquestioning obedience when asked to sacrifice his only son. They were impressed too, by Moses' rejection of the offer of a kingdom in favour of service to the God in whom he believed. So these two men became the models of the faithful man and therefore of the religious man, and since, according to the Latitudinarians, virtue was the end of all religion, they became the examples of the virtuous man. They were revered not only for their faith, but also for their good and virtuous lives; Abraham, who was often referred to as the most illustrious

¹ Barrow, Works, II, 501-504.

See also Tillotson, "The Excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience", Works, II, 10. — He begins with the patriarchs before the flood; but insists chiefly on the examples of two eminent persons of their own nation, as nearest to them, and most likely to prevail upon them, the examples of Abraham and Moses, the one the father of their nation, the other their great law-giver, and both of them the greatest Patterns of faith, and obedience, and self-denial, that the history of all former ages, from the beginning of the world had afforded". Tillotson — "Moses' choice of afflicted piety, rather than a kingdom", Works, II, 18-25, makes the same point.

pattern of virtue, was the father of his flock and concerned himself, like Parson Adams, with their well-being. Both men were propelled into positions of leadership in which their conduct was as important as their faith. They acquitted themselves so well in the eyes of the Latitudinarians, that when Barrow wished to exhort men to become imitators of Christ in their own conduct, he cited Abraham and Moses as examples of men whose lives mirrored Christ's, although they lived in pre-Christian days.

The portrayal of the biblical Joseph as the model of chastity was as common as the portrayal of Abraham and Moses, as the models of faith. Moreover, Joseph's conservation of his chastity was regarded as a demonstration of his faith in God and his determination to obey his commandments. Joseph was a model of chastity, because he was a model of faith. In the sermon — Of Being Imitators of Christ, Barrow writes:

"Again, he that would learn how to demean himself in resisting the assaults of temptation, let him perpend that one carriage of Joseph; of him, together withstanding the courtships of an attractive beauty, and rejecting the solicitations of an imperious mistress, advantaged by opportunities of privacy and solitude; when the refusal was attended with extreme danger, and all the mischiefs, which the disdain of a furious lust disappointed, of an outrageous jealousy provoked of a loving master's confidence abused, could produce; and all this by one of the meanest condition, in a strange place, where no intercession, favour, or patronage of friends could be had, no equal examination of his cause might be expected; of him doing this, merely upon principles of conscience, and out of fear of God; (saying, how can I do this great evil, and sin against God?) and he that considers this example, how can he be ignorant of his duty in the like case".¹

Joseph's piety was thus seen to have been demonstrated in his refusal to commit an unchaste act because God had spoken out against it; he therefore became the symbol of chastity, and, like Abraham, was regarded as a pattern

¹ Barrow, Works, II, 504.

of virtue; a man whose conduct was worthy of emulation.

So it seems that, in the creation of Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews, Fielding had these biblical figures in mind. Parson Adams is the father of his flock; he refers to himself as such; and his actions are consistent with this conception of his role. Joseph makes reference to his biblical namesake in a way in which Parson Adams never refers to the biblical Abraham; and there are similarities between Lady Booby and Potiphar's wife.¹

Battestin also believes that the idea of "the pious traveller" lies behind Fielding's conception of Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews. Parson Adams and Joseph, we remember, travelled through fairly hostile territory and had to resist many temptations and attacks before they finally arrived at their peaceful abode. This theme, which is not entirely new in literature, had been given extensive treatment by the Latitudinarians in their sermons. Those divines always gave detailed accounts of the experiences of Abraham, Joseph and Moses in the strange and sometimes hostile lands through which they were forced to sojourn temporarily. Moreover, the Latitudinarians stressed that in the course of their wanderings the virtuous qualities of the patriarchs shone by comparison with the vice and wickedness they encountered, and they submitted with patience to all the affronts offered to them, confident that the lands through which they journeyed were only temporary places of abode and that their real homes awaited them.

The importance of this theme in the writings of the Latitudinarians is demonstrated by the number of sermons with topics such as "Good Men Strangers and Sojourners upon Earth, and No Abiding City here by Hoadly, and Strangers and Sojourners upon Earth by Tillotson. In the last mentioned

¹ Who makes advances to Joseph.

sermon Tillotson exhorted his audience not to be grieved by the fact that their lives on earth were short, troublesome and unsettled, for a better life awaited them hereafter. They must consider that the earth was not their home, and that they were only strangers and sojourners upon it.

Tillotson recalled the lives of the Patriarchs who, having no fixed habitation, wandered from one country to another and were exposed in the course of their travels to hazards, afflictions, affronts and injuries:

"Now in this, as by a type and shadow, the Apostle represents to us the condition of good men while, they are passing through this world. They are pilgrims and strangers in the earth; they travel up and down the land for a time as the patriarchs did in the land of Canaan; but are in the expectation of a better and more settled condition hereafter; They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly".

Tillotson further warned his audience that in their daily journey through the world they would encounter many misfortunes, but these had to be borne bravely in the knowledge that they would be entirely absent in the better life promised thereafter.

"The censoriousness, and uncharitableness, and insincerity of men one towards another; to see with what kindness they will treat one another to the face, and how hardly they will use them behind their backs.... And as for the advantages in this world, let us not pursue them too eagerly, we may take the conveniences which fairly offer themselves to us, and be content to want what we cannot honestly have, and without going out of the way of our duty, considering that we are travellers, and that a little will serve for our passage and accommodation in our pilgrimage."¹

The fortunes of Mr. Adams, Joseph and Fanny are similar enough to Tillotson's account to justify the deduction that Fielding was thinking of Abraham, Joseph and Moses, the biblical "loving wanderers" while writing Joseph Andrews. This view seems to be confirmed when on turning to Book

¹ Tillotson, Works, II, 93, 97.

II, chapter vii, the dialogue between Parson Adams and the partridge shooter is discovered. The partridge shooter says, "So I suppose that you are not one of these parts" and Parson Adams replies "No, that he was a traveller and invited by the beauty of the evening to repose a little and amuse himself with reading". There is an almost biblical aura surrounding Parson Adams' reply as a whole. This point is important and will be discussed at greater length later; for if it is true that Fielding agreed with this conception of the roles of the biblical Abraham and Joseph, and that he had them in mind when writing Joseph Andrews, it means that Parson Adams and Joseph are not only the good men, symbols of faith and chastity, but also the representatives of wayfaring Christians, and their journey is an allegory of the Christian life.

So far we have been looking positively to see what beliefs Fielding held and what ideas influenced him in the composition of his novels. It is perhaps important also to look negatively to try to determine what ideas he did not hold. Various scholars have tried to demonstrate that Fielding was a stoic, a deist or an atheist.¹ But as Work has shown in his essay² all the evidence there is in The Champion and The New Patriot shows conclusively that Fielding must have been a Christian. We only have to read The Champion in conjunction with the sermons of Clarke, Tillotson, Barrow and Hoadly and the novel Joseph Andrews to be able to demonstrate that Fielding could not have been a stoic, a deist or an atheist; without doubt he admired the writings of some of the stoic philosophers. Indeed,

¹ See Aurelien Digeon, The Novels of Henry Fielding (Paris, 1923). He claims that Fielding was a deist. See also Maria Joesten, Die Philosophie Fielding's (Leipzig, 1932). She thinks that Fielding was a stoic.

² "Henry Fielding, Christian Censor", op.cit.

Cicero was one of the writers he quoted most often. But in this respect his attitude to Cicero was the same as that of the Liberal divines. Tillotson, Barrow and Clarke always referred to Cicero with respect, especially when they set out to prove that the Christian religion contained nothing that was contradictory to the principles of natural religion. Cicero and his followers had discovered these principles and adhered to them long before the Christian Revelation presented them as part of God's design and commandment. But, in spite of their admiration for Cicero and other stoic philosophers, Fielding and the Latitudinarians could not accept the stoic doctrine. The ethic they embraced required a man to be of good nature with generous feelings and affections, and greatly concerned for the well-being of his neighbours. The stoic denied ties of affection and feeling for other people; the good-natured man could not therefore be a stoic. Not only do we have numerous essays in The Champion refuting the stoics and their beliefs, we also have in Joseph Andrews Fielding's greatest indictment of stoicism. The reader is meant to feel with Joseph (as the good-natured man would) when he laments the supposed loss of his Fanny, and Parson Adams' advice to Joseph to steel himself in the face of this misfortune and suppress his grief should be seen as inappropriate at this juncture. The reader is also expected to sympathize with Parson Adams himself when, on receiving the report of his son's drowning, he breaks down and weeps; the philosophy he has been advocating is thus shown to be inadequate.

It can be shown that in adopting this attitude to the expression of emotion, Fielding followed the Latitudinarians who were very explicit on the subject. In the sermon — Good men Strangers and Sojourners upon Earth, Tillotson had said:

"But there are some evils and calamities of humane life, that are too heavy and serious to be jested withal, and require the greatest consideration, and a very great degree of patience to support us under them, and enable us to bear them decently; as the loss of friends and dearest relations; as the loss of an only son, grown up to be well fix'd and settled in a virtuous course, and promising all the comfort to his parents that they themselves can wish: these certainly are some of the greatest evils of this world, and hardest to be borne. For men may pretend what they will to philosophy, and contempt of the world, and of the perishing comforts and enjoyments of it; to the extirpation of their passions, and an insensibility of these things, which the weaker and undisciplin'd part of mankind keep such a wailing and lamentation about; but when all is done, nature hath fram'd us as we are...."¹

The reader is immediately reminded of Joseph's plea taken from Macbeth that he is a man and must bear his sufferings like a man. Parson Adams himself appears very human in our eyes when he forgets his stoic philosophy and mourns the loss of his son.²

The claim that Fielding was a Deist will not bear the test of proof either. The Methodists apart, there is no other group of religious and philosophical writers that Fielding ridicules so consistently both in the novels and The Champion. Scattered throughout his works are various references to Christianity as having supplanted what the religion of nature (the

¹ Tillotson, Works, II, 98.

² In a number of sermons the Latitudinarians cited the example of Christ himself who was the most patient of human beings though he had to endure unprecedented suffering. But even he at the end gave expression to his grief. Tillotson puts it this way: "Because our blessed saviour, as he had the greatest endowments of human nature in the greatest perfection, so he had a perfect sense of the evils and pains and sufferings of it; and all philosophy that will not acknowledge loss and pain and suffering to be evil, and troublesome, and terrible, is either obstinate sullenness, or gross hypocrisy. To be without natural affection, and to have no affective sense of the loss of the nearest relation, is condemned in scripture as the mark of the greatest degeneracy, and depravation of human nature.

Deist faith) by itself did not have. No doubt he owed something to the Deists.¹ He accepted some of their views as various references to Shaftesbury in The Champion demonstrate. The Deist claim that a code of conduct could be initially derived from the laws of nature without the aid of Revelation was shared by Fielding and the Liberal divines. Several of the sermons of these theologians dealt with the religion of nature and, as has been seen, they conceded that it was possible to evolve a moral code by studying nature's laws. But they went further and emphasized that the Christian religion was in advance of the Deist philosophy because it did not rely on the intelligence of the individual to derive this moral code; it had the advantage of Revelation which declared to man the nature of the moral laws and presented them as part of God's commands. The Deist philosophy, moreover, had no safeguards to ensure that individuals adhered to the moral code, but Christianity offered sanctions and incentives in the form of punishments and rewards. It also held out the prospects of a future life and the immortality of the soul.

Fielding accepted all the points made by the Latitudinarians on deism, expanded them in the essays and provided examples in the novels. We can be sure that in refuting the ideas of the Deists he owed almost everything to the Latitudinarians, not only because they were among the leading apponents of deism, but also because Fielding refers to them in developing his own arguments. He quotes from them and his line of argument follows theirs very closely. Writing in The Champion for January 22, 1739-40 he says:

"I shall not here enter into the discussion of points of so

¹ One feels unable to agree with W.B. Coley who in "The Background of Fielding's Laughter", ELH, XXVI (1959), 229-252, says that the influence of Shaftesbury on Fielding was only literary and not thematic as other critics have claimed.

great consequence, and which have been so often and so well proved as the immortality of the soul, and the certainty of a future state. The reader will find in Tillotson, and Clarke, sufficient demonstrations of this Truth, sufficient antidotes against all such writings as I have above-mentioned".

The rest of the paper is a telling condemnation of deism and a plea for Christianity; it is also a defence of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and an affirmation of belief in the certainty of a future life. In this paper, which is one of the most important for assessing Fielding's religious and philosophical position, he makes use of the traditional arguments of the Latitudinarians, and no one who reads it will be left in any doubt that the philosophy which must have gone into the making of the novels was Christian and not stoic or Deist. In Joseph Andrews the inadequacy of the Deist philosophy is demonstrated by the group to whom Mr. Wilson repairs for consolation after a series of misfortunes in London. One of the members absconds with the wife of another thus proving that the Deist creed could offer no sanction or guarantees to ensure that its followers adhered to moral codes.¹

It should then be clear from this survey of the works of the Liberal divines and Fielding's essays in The Champion that his ethic was basically Latitudinarian. A short survey of the novel Joseph Andrews would reveal that it is these Latitudinarian ideas which Fielding uses as the basis of

¹ In no other person is the Deist creed ridiculed as much as it is in Square in Tom Jones. In making both Thwackum and Square ridiculous Fielding followed the practice of the Liberal divines and struck a middle ^{co}urse between the Deists on the one hand and the extreme High Church divines on the other. Referring to Thwackum and Square he says: "Upon the whole it is not religion or virtue that is here exposed but the want of them. Had not Thwackum too much neglected virtue and Square religion in the composition of their several systems and had not both utterly discarded all their natural goodness of heart, they had not been presented as the objects of derision in this history".

his moral positives in that novel. Joseph is then seen as the symbol of chastity, and Parson Adams as the spiritual guide and leader, the father of the faithful complete with gown and staff; and their journey through the Kingdom is seen as an allegory of the Christian life. In the course of this journey to their appointed home, they pass through hostile territory, encounter hardship, violence, blatant exhibitions of greed, vice, covetousness and selfishness, but endure all these as the Christian must, fully confident that this is not their home, but that a better awaits them. In contrast with the selfishness they find around them, Mr. Adams and Joseph demonstrate Christian charity. Parson Adams is himself the embodiment of this virtue. Charity is his most prominent virtue, not only in the sense of almsgiving, but in the broader sense. Like the Latitudinarian "good man" he cares for the rest of mankind, shares their joys and comforts them in their distresses. He shares whatever little he has with the poor and calls down blessings on their heads. He spends much of his time visiting the sick and instructing the ignorant, and he does this not in the expectation of any reward, but through the benevolent promptings of his heart. Mr. Wilson is the representative of the good-natured man who, unlike Parson Adams, can afford to relieve the needs of his neighbours, and he too does so out of genuinely benevolent motives. As the Latitudinarians would have put it, the whole countryside is in some way indebted to his goodness, and out of his household goes forth that universal benevolence, that "agape" which is synonymous with charity in its broadest sense. Against the charity of Parson Adams, Mr. Wilson and Joseph is set the uncharitableness of those like Parson Barnabas and the hog-keeping Parson Trulliber who affirm their faith but fail to demonstrate it in a life marked by good actions.

III

In coming to this conclusion about the meaning of Joseph Andrews we must nevertheless be aware that we have brought purely external considerations to bear on the novel. The works of the Liberal divines have been reviewed and it has been seen how Fielding accepted their views and enlarged on them in The Champion; the conclusion has then been drawn that it must be the same ethic which Fielding advocates in the novels. Yet no allowance has been made for any possible modifications he may have made to the Latitudinarian ethic.¹ It is surely legitimate to ask whether the interpretation given above is true to our experience in reading the novel. Will it wholly account for the novel as a literary experience? To what extent is Parson Adams based on the biblical Joseph? Does Fielding really intend Parson Adams to be regarded as the father of the faithful and Joseph as the symbol of male chastity?

These questions are valid for we react to the novel as a work of literature, not as a Latitudinarian sermon, and our experience in reading it is certainly a literary experience and not a religious one. We are not immediately aware of the relationship between Parson Adams and Joseph, and their biblical counterparts. Certainly it does not appear that Fielding gave Mr. Adams and Joseph the same degree of approval he would have had to give them if they represented all that their biblical counterparts

¹ Broadly speaking Battestini's claim that Fielding's ethic was modelled on that of the Latitudinarians is right. But he does not take into account the fact that Fielding's comic art may have modified the morality. Perhaps this was not his intention in The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art. In the Introduction to his edition of Joseph Andrews and Shamela (University of Virginia and London, 1965), he does compensate for this omission, but he still does not deal with the techniques of Fielding's art.

stood for. We ought to bear in mind that Fielding may not just be reflecting Latitudinarian ideas, but reflecting on them as well. No doubt, like the biblical Abraham, Parson Adams is a pious and faithful man. Moreover, the episode of the supposed drowning of his son shows that there is some connection between him and the patriarch. But in spite of the similarities there are striking differences. When Mr. Adams is called upon to render up his son he does not do so quite as unquestioningly as the biblical Abraham does, and it must be noted that the Latitudinarians emphasized Abraham's obedience when called upon to sacrifice Isaac. This for them was the supreme proof of his faith; it is this that Tillotson stresses again and again in his sermons. Also, the Abraham whom we see in the sermons is very much a man of the world, who is capable and well-equipped to deal with whatever problems may emerge during his sojourn in hostile lands. Parson Adams is ill-equipped to deal with the world. Abraham is a patriarch, not only because he is a spiritual leader, but also because he is a political leader. He has leadership qualities, such as coolness in the face of opposition that Parson Adams conspicuously lacks. Parson Adams is a dignified figure, especially when he comes into contact with those who attempt to make a fool of him, but the Abraham of the sermons has a much greater dignity, one is almost tempted to say, a much greater respectability.

Battestin does realize these differences, but he does not draw the logical conclusion. For the logical conclusion surely is that Fielding is not offering his readers copy-book patterns^{ns} of virtue like the Liberal divines, but is reacting much more critically to the material he had read, or to put it in other words, is giving a rather more original redrawing of the inherited material than Battestin would have us believe. The point

is more easily made when we consider Joseph, for there are significant differences between the attitudes of the two Josephs to chastity. The biblical Joseph (as seen by the Latitudinarians) is a mature adult who comes to his decision as a result of intense reasoning and who is accordingly convinced that adultery is a sin. The other Joseph is a very naive young man who has adopted an unrealistic attitude to chastity through the influence of the hypocritical letters of his sister and the sermons of Parson Adams. Battestin, it seems, is wrong in assuming that Fielding took Joseph and Parson Adams straight out of the sermons of the Latitudinarians. Commenting on Barrow's sermon on Abraham and Joseph as models of faith he says:

"The continence of Joseph had long been proverbial, the standard biblical prototype of male chastity -- and a favourite, we might add, with Fielding".¹

We do not, however, have any basis for believing that the story was a favourite of Fielding's although we can say with certainty that he knew it.

Battestin goes on:

"Before looking at Barrow's sermon more closely, however, we may profitably recall the opening paragraphs of Joseph Andrews, in which Fielding, like Barrow, proposes the usefulness of the good man's example as prompting to imitation, and declares the moral function of the historian to be the communication of 'such valuable patterns' to the world".²

But if we read the opening chapter carefully we would realize that Fielding has his tongue in his cheek; he is plainly making fun of the idea that by presenting men with patterns of virtue an author could persuade them to change their lives for the better. Battestin goes on to say that the

¹ Battestin, p.32.

² *ibid.*, p.33.

treatment of the theme of chastity in the first few chapters of Joseph Andrews is merely an expansion of the treatment of the same theme in Barrow's sermon. But close comparison of the two versions reveals marked differences. Barrow obviously takes his hero seriously and is interested in presenting a pattern of virtue. Fielding wants us at least to regard Joseph's behaviour with a critical eye. Fielding did subscribe to the concept of male chastity, but Joseph is not meant to be a symbol of male chastity in the same way as his namesake in Barrow's sermon. Unless we realized that there is something wrong with Joseph's attitude to chastity in the early chapters of the novel we would be misreading it.

It can be argued equally strongly that Mr. Adams' and Joseph's wanderings were not necessarily meant to recall the wanderings of the patriarchs. The Latitudinarians refer to Abraham travelling through hostile lands to reach his appointed home and spoke of Joseph's sojourn in strange territories. But need we therefore conclude that Fielding's Abraham Adams and Joseph Andrews are the exact eighteenth-century analogues to the biblical heroes? One must remember that the Liberal divines also referred to Christians generally as travellers and sojourners in hostile lands, and Parson Adams and Joseph could be regarded as representatives of good ordinary Christians and no more. Parson Adams has not left his home for another as the other Abraham had done; he is not seeking his destined home; he is returning to it.

The truth is that much more has gone into the making of Joseph Andrews than the mere moral basis inherited from the Latitudinarians. Fielding has not just written a tract; he has written a comic novel. Parson Adams

and Joseph are both laughable figures. Fielding's irony is directed at Lady Booby, Mrs. Slip-slop and Pamela; but it is also directed at Joseph and Parson Adams. It seems that Fielding wished to demonstrate that the good can be made to look ridiculous without in the least compromising goodness. Parson Adams and Joseph are innocents as far as the world and knowledge of it are concerned. In this respect they derive, not from the biblical Joseph and Abraham, who are anything but innocents, but from the Picaresque tradition of Scarron, Lesage, Marivaux and above all Cervantes. Don Quixote and Sancho Pancha have little knowledge of the world into which Cervantes lets them loose. Don Quixote in particular lives in a world of dreams and illusions, and in the course of his wanderings these illusions are exposed; so is his complete inability to deal with practical matters. On the other hand his very innocence and simplicity expose the duplicity and corruption of the world through which he blunders. The same is true of Parson Adams, and, to a lesser extent, of Joseph.

But the literary dimension of the novel is not just "Cervantick"; the work is also a comic novel with roots as deep in classical epic as in the sermons of the Latitudinarians. Fielding understood the theory of the classical epic as described by Le Bossu, and in the introduction to Joseph Andrews he described the kind of comic epic he was about to write. We can read the journey of Parson Adams, Joseph and Fanny as the Christian journey to the appointed home, but we would be equally justified in seeing it as an Odyssey in the manner of Homer, in which the good man travels through dangers and temptations to recover his home and family. The novel has the sweep of an epic, and in conformity with the epic theory every incident leads to the denouement — the recovery of the ancestral home. Joseph

Andrews is therefore a unity; and all digressions, whether they show Parson Adams and Joseph in a ludicrous light or not, lead up to the conclusion. In this comic epic as we have it, therefore, we see the good men, the wayfaring Gospel Christians, but we also see the laughable innocents whose actions at times are subjected to criticism; and all of this contribute to the unified moral design.

We must also see in Joseph Andrews an attack on Richardson and Cibber. Both of these men had been held up to ridicule in Shamela, but this time Fielding attacks, not their morality, but the idea that virtue could be taught by presenting mankind with patterns of virtue in literature, letters or in sermons. The message of the first chapter of Joseph Andrews is that the sermons of Parson Adams and the letters of Pamela have failed to equip Joseph for the business of living. In Fielding's view one learns about morality and human conduct not from patterns of virtue but by experience acquired in life.

Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews are not the straight "white" characters that Battestin thinks Fielding has derived from the Latitudinarian sermons. The sermons undoubtedly formed the basis of this morality, but the portrait of Abraham and Joseph he found in them has been modified by his comic art to create a new perspective through which we are able to see Joseph and Parson Adams in a slightly different light.

In dealing with every novel our interpretation must be based on our experience in reading the novel, and our experience in the reading of Joseph Andrews is not just one of morality, but also one of art, of form and of style used in such a way that they create morality; they condition our attitude to characters and even alter the assumptions we may have had about

them through reading the sermons of the Latitudinarians. In this novel Fielding uses the entire range of comic effects we have seen him develop in the plays and in Shamela. Irony, the mock-epic, burlesque and farce are all employed as means of scrutinizing the views and ethics of Cibber, Richardson, Joseph, Parson Adams, the Deists and even the Liberal divines themselves. These devices are thus used as means of subjecting various moral values to questioning criticism. Once more it must be emphasized that the morality and the art cannot be separated. Having reached conclusions about the moral basis of the novel we must analyse the art and see how it modifies and manipulates the morality and whether, in fact, it does not create a new morality. In the next chapter therefore, an attempt will be made to see how Fielding uses technique to question and then to transform the ideas he inherited and how his morality issues from the handling of his comic art.

CHAPTER FOUR

Comic Epic in Prose — A New Kind of Novel

I

In the introduction to Joseph Andrews Fielding claimed that he was about to write a new kind of novel — a comic epic in prose. Any analysis of Joseph Andrews must take this statement into account for Fielding's ideas on the "comic" and the "epic" have played an important part in determining the form and nature of the novel. Joseph Andrews is conceived in "epic" terms, and the main characters — Parson Adams and Joseph — belong to the "epic" tradition of Aeneas in The Aeneid and Odysseus in The Odyssey. They are the eighteenth-century equivalents of the "epic" good men forging their way through dangers and temptations to recover their homes and families. In the course of their wanderings they demonstrate the Latitudinarian virtues of charity and chastity in opposition to the vanity, hypocrisy and selfishness they encounter. But the novel is also a comic novel in which the inexperience and naivety of the innocent Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews are exposed and ridiculed, and some of their beliefs subjected to questioning criticism, while they in their turn are the means of precipitating and satirizing the hypocrisy and selfishness of society by their very innocence. Throughout, Fielding employs comic devices — farce, burlesque and irony — as means of manipulating the reader's responses and modifying the picture of Joseph and Parson Adams that might have been derived from the sermons of the Latitudinarians;

at the same time he uses these devices to expose the values of the false "seeming" world. So that the comic experience produces a balanced view as the innocents explore the world, expose its weaknesses, and in their turn are tested by it.

Many of the criticisms usually levelled at Fielding's technique will be removed if it is realized that in composing Joseph Andrews he was anxious to conform to the demands of the epic convention.¹ For Fielding, like most other cultivated Augustans, was equally familiar with classical as with modern literature and he therefore knew what the practice of the ancients was. So it must be assumed that when he said he was going to write a comic epic he knew what he meant. He did not make this claim simply to confer respectability on a new genre, but meant that his work should be seen to conform to epic convention, as it was understood by most educated Augustans. They thought of the epic as implying a unified moral analysis in which all the various parts were subordinated to the moral design and all the digressions, episodes and interpolations were relevant to the central moral point the author intended to make. Ian Watt has pointed out that although the epic was not very highly regarded in Fielding's day, yet those who knew about it were agreed on one point — that the most important feature of the epic was the moral or fable.² H.T. Swedenberg makes the same point:

¹ It is important that we keep the word "Epic" in mind. Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (1957), p.250, seems to lay the emphasis entirely on the word "comic". So too does H. Goldberg, "Comic Prose Epic or Comic Romance; the Argument of the Preface to Joseph Andrews", PQ, XLIII (1964), 193-215. He thinks that Fielding makes no distinction between "Epic" and "Romance".

² Ian Watt, pp.239-248.

"There was, for instance, the theory of the epic poem as a moral fable. Le Bossu had pictured Homer as casting about for his moral before he thought of his plot or characters. Not all English critics were willing to go to this extreme, but almost universally they conceived of the epic as a poem based on a fable, designed to teach high moral lessons. Though the epic poet was expected to entertain, he was also required to keep his moral purpose always in mind. His characters, consequently, were persons of heroic stature, high, noble, and inspiring, though not necessarily completely virtuous".¹

Ethel M. Thornbury, in her survey of epic theory in France and England, also shows that the moral implications of the epic were accepted throughout France and England. De Scudery, Chapelain, Le Bossu and Madame Dacier in France, and Dryden, Addison and others in England held that the main aim of the epic poem was to instruct.²

Fielding was aware of eighteenth-century epic theory; he was particularly conversant with the work of Rene Le Bossu, whose influence was decisive in the development of epic theory in England. Therefore, in order to grasp fully the epic implications of Fielding's work, it will be helpful to review Le Bossu's ideas on the subject of the epic.

Le Bossu published his Traite Du Poeme Epic in 1675. Although it was an exhaustive analysis of the epic in the Aristotelian manner, it is clear that, as far as Le Bossu was concerned, the most important aspect of the epic was the moral or fable. He hunted through The Iliad, The Odyssey and The Aeneid and reduced each of them to a simple moral or fable. In his view, both Virgil and Homer had thought about their

¹ H.T. Swedenberg Jr., The Theory of the Epic in England 1650-1800 (University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1944), pp.146-147.

² Ethel M. Thornbury, Henry Fielding's Theory of the Comic Prose Epic, University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, No.30 (Madison, 1931), p.44.

moral first before they commenced writing the expansive epic to incarnate the moral. This may sound ludicrous to modern readers, and, no doubt, it must have sounded ludicrous to some of the Augustans. But they agreed with Le Bossu that the epic was a deliberately constructed work with a moral clearly in mind. According to the French critic:

"The End of the Epic Poem is to lay down Moral Instructions for all sorts of people both in general and in particular. This part belongs to the poem as it is a Fable. It contains the Moral which serves for the foundation of the Fable; and besides that it contains the Manners of those Personages who make some considerable Figure of the Poem".¹

Fielding accepted Augustan epic convention as spelled out by Le Bossu. Once we realize this we need not demand that Fielding should have informed us of his moral purpose in Joseph Andrews. He was writing for a sophisticated and literary audience, and he knew that so long as he mentioned the word "epic" most of his readers would realize the moral implications involved. This is perhaps more difficult for readers today, and it is the failure to grasp the full implications of Augustan epic theory which led Andrew Wright to make the strange suggestion that Fielding had no moral intention and that his work had no connection with life. Referring to the Preface to Joseph Andrews he says:

"Nothing here even hints at an exemplary intent behind the comic epic poem in prose: what Fielding does point to is a kind of spectacular immediacy."²

¹ Rene Le Bossu, A Treatise of the Epic Poem, trans. W.J. (1719), I, 14-15.

² Andrew Wright, Henry Fielding, Mask and Feast (1965), p.18.

What Andrew Wright says is true, but, writing as he was for an Augustan audience, Fielding did not need to state his exemplary intent. He took it for granted that every literate Augustan realized that the primary purpose of every epic was to instruct and that its most important aspect was the fable or moral.

Le Bossu also insisted that the moral analysis in an epic poem should be unified, and a major section of the treatise is devoted to a discussion of the unity of the epic. Indeed, he believed that the unity of the action was almost as important as the fable. He conceded that the poet might need to make digressions; indeed, he almost suggested that he would need to make digressions; but all the digressions should be seen to contribute to the single unified moral fable:

"This reducing of all things to Unity and Simplicity is what Horace likewise makes his first rule.

According to these rules then, it will be allowable to make use of several Fables; or (to speak correctly) of several Incidents which may be divided into several Fables; provided they are so order'd that the Unity of the Fable be not spoil'd thereby".¹

It can be seen, therefore, that Fielding's inclusion of digressions in his comic epic had the full backing of Augustan critical thought. Most of his literate contemporaries agreed with Le Bossu that digressions were a legitimate part of the epic provided they could be fully integrated with the work and be made to contribute to the unity of the moral design. Fielding intended his digressions to be integrated with the rest of the work, and it can be demonstrated that they are for the most part, relevant to the central themes. The works of Homer and

¹ Le Bossu, I, 94-95.

Virgil are full of episodes such as the Leonora episode in Joseph Andrews, and although that "digression" does not in any way affect the fortunes of Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams, it highlights the folly of vanity, which is one of the targets for Fielding's satire. Leonora is condemned, not only for her vanity, but also for her cupidity and lack of consideration for the feelings of other human beings, and Fielding points to the moral that by her denial of love (a major theme in the novel) she dehumanizes herself and destroys all possibility of happiness. The vices condemned in Leonora are later exemplified in Trulliber, Mrs. Tow-Wowse and others — all of them people of lower status. In the Leonora episode the same vices are seen in operation among the upper classes and this completes the survey. The same point can be made of the episode of Paul and Leonard. Again, obstinacy and arrogance, qualities associated with Parson Adams, are demonstrated among the upper classes. Neither Leonard, nor his wife is prepared to concede victory in argument to the other; they stand by their original positions as obstinately as Mr. Adams does to his. In the end, they both demonstrate their uncharitableness by asking Paul to leave because he tells them the truth. The poet and player scene is relevant to the discussion between Joseph and Parson Adams which it precedes, for it deals with the relative merit of words and precepts and actual experience.¹ The "Wilson" episode is so crucial for an understanding of the novel that it will be given separate treatment.

¹ See also Maurice Johnson, Fielding's Art of Fiction (Philadelphia, 1961), pp.61-71. He thinks the scene forms a comic counterpart to the argument between Joseph and Mr. Adams.

Fielding's digressions, in conformity with Augustan epic convention, are thus seen to be relevant to the central themes. Indeed, it is in these "digressions" that the main themes are most nakedly illustrated. Leonora's inhumanity, the uncharitableness of Leonard and his wife, the pugnacity of the poet and the player and the villainy of Mr. Wilson's London friends, are more devastating than anything to be seen in the main plot of the novel. These episodes are in fact, not "digressions" from the "central" concern itself; they are only "digressions" from plot. Normally, by the term "digression", we mean a passage which is not only unrelated to the plot, but also to the central concern. But Fielding's digressions, though unrelated to the plot, are closely related to the central themes. Hence, as far as the novel is concerned, he is using digressions in a radical way.¹

Having stressed that the epic should be a unified moral analysis, Le Bossu went on to outline further characteristics. The epic poet not

¹ See A.A. Parker, "Fielding and the Structure of Don Quixote", Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, XXXIII (1956), 1. Quoting Ethel Thornbury on the structure of Joseph Andrews he writes, "An earlier authority, Professor Ethel Thornbury, makes the same criticisms of Joseph Andrews and is more explicit in her adverse criticism of the structure of Don Quixote". "The adventures of Joseph and Fanny and Parson Adams are frequently not related to the central theme of the story very closely, although, even in this early work, Fielding shows a greater interest in binding the episodes together than Cervantes had in Don Quixote, where the episodes are for the most part not bound together at all except by the unity of having the same hero". "No episode in Don Quixote necessarily leads into another episode. In fact, much of the action is a series of unrelated events..." Professor Parker then goes on in his very perceptive essay to show that the episodes in Don Quixote are thematically if not causally related, and that Fielding's failure in Joseph Andrews is due to a failure to understand Cervantes' art. But it seems to me that the same case which Professor Parker makes for Don Quixote's thematic unity can be made for Joseph Andrews. All the "digressions" and other episodes are relevant to the central theme even if they are not all causally related.

only set out to amend the faults and vices of the age, he also steeped his poem in the manners and customs of society, so that it revealed the spirit of the age:

"The school-men treat of Vertues and Vices in general. The Instructions they give are proper for all Sorts of people, and for all Ages. But the Poet has a nearer Regard to his own Country, and the Necessities he sees his own Nation lie under. 'Tis upon this account that he makes choice of some piece of Morality, the most proper and fittest he can imagine: and in order to press this home, he makes less use of Reasoning, than of the force of Insinuation; accommodating himself to the particular Customs and Inclinations of his Audience, and to those which in the general ought to be commended in them".¹

This idea that the epic concerned itself with the manners and customs of men found widespread acceptance in England in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and Dryden, one of the foremost exponents of epic theory in England, took up the point in his Discourse on Epic Poetry. He expressed views similar to those of Le Bossu, accepting among other things, that the epic poem was a unified moral analysis.² He also accepted the view that the epic was concerned with the manners of an age, but he went on to use this characteristic as a means of distinguishing between the epic and tragedy (or the dramatic). Dryden felt he had to account for the fact that tragedy was shorter and more concentrated than the more leisurely epic,

¹ Le Bossu, I, 34.

² John Dryden, "A Discourse on Epic Poetry" in Dryden on Satire and Epic Poetry (1888), p.107. "An HEROIC poem (truly such) is undoubtedly the greatest work which the soul of man is capable to perform. The design of it is to form the mind to heroic virtue by example; it is conveyed in verse that it may delight while it instructs. The action of it is always one, entire and great. The least and most trivial episodes and underactions which are interwoven in it are parts either necessary or convenient to carry on the main design".

and the reason he gave for this was that tragedy dealt with the passions, while the epic concerned itself with the manners of men. For, "After all, on the whole merits of the cause, it must be acknowledged that the epic poem is more for the manners and tragedy for the passions".¹

This distinction that Dryden made between "manners" and "passions", the epic and the dramatic is very crucial for an understanding of Fielding's technique. Dryden said, in effect, that the distinction between the epic and the dramatic was that the dramatic was concerned with psychological analysis and the impact of this analysis on the audience, whereas the epic concerned itself with the manners of men, not with psychological analysis or with the passions. Fielding agreed with Le Bossu and Dryden that the epic dealt with the manners and not the passions. The significance of this has not been generally grasped, probably because Fielding stated his view in a later section of Joseph Andrews and not in the outline of his epic theory presented in the preface. In Book III, chapter one, he says: "I declare here once for all, I describe not men, but manners, not an individual, but a species". This statement ought to be read within the context of epic theory, bearing in mind the pronouncements of Dryden and Le Bossu. Fielding says, in effect, that his intention is not to portray men who could be psychologically analysed but to portray their manners and conduct. He wanted to write an epic, and he knew that according to Augustan critical thought the epic dealt with the manners, not the passions of men. In conformity with epic theory he set out, not to analyse the motives and passions of his

¹ Dryden, p.112.

characters or to create full-blooded beings like Clarissa or Pamela into whose souls the reader could pry, but to portray types or species whose manners and conduct could be observed and judged and whom he could use as components of his moral design. We can thus see the difference between Fielding and Richardson; it is precisely the difference between the epic and the dramatic. Fielding must not necessarily be accused of being unable to probe his characters with psychological depth as Richardson did with his; the two writers wrote different kinds of novel and had different intentions. Richardson's work is "tragic" and dramatic, and therefore psychological analysis is appropriate. Fielding's work on the other hand is epic, and deals with the manners, not the passions of men.

Since Richardson's characters are autonomous areas of imaginative exploration, they do determine the course of events and the plot is not, so to speak, entirely in Richardson's hands. Fielding's characters, on the other hand, do not determine the course of the plot. The plot is always deliberately constructed by Fielding himself in order to point to a particular moral, and many of the characters are types, created according to particular formulae in order to make specific moral points. Mrs. Tow-Wowse for instance, has been created according to a specific formula for quarrelsome wives of innkeepers. She is a moral type not an individual existing in her own right, and the style Fielding uses in the episode in which she features is designed, not to bring out Mrs. Tow-Wowse's character, but to manipulate the reader's attitude to her.

If then we bear in mind that Fielding has written a comic epic in conformity with Augustan critical thought on the epic, the objections various

commentators have made to his lack of moral earnestness, his frequent digressions and "flat" characters will seem to be invalidated. It will now be helpful to make a survey of the plot in "epic" terms.

The parallel between Fielding's work and Homer's Odyssey is obvious. In The Odyssey Telemachus decides to venture on the high seas in search of his father, and Odysseus himself encounters numerous dangers and temptations before he is finally able to return home, avenge himself on his wife's suitors and be reunited with his family. Sexual integrity and the sanctity of married life are at the heart of The Odyssey's values. In Joseph Andrews, Joseph and Mr. Adams are the "good men" who must journey through hostile lands, overcome dangers and temptations and recover their homes and families. At the end, Joseph Andrews discovers his long-lost parents, and Mr. Adams is reunited with his family. We can also see the influence of Virgil's Aeneid of Fielding's work, for The Aeneid is about the journey of Aeneas and his followers from Troy to found a city in Italy. But it is more than the story of a few refugees; it is an account of the transfer of an entire civilization from an area where the decadence of the inhabitants had brought about its final collapse, to an area where it could be established on much firmer foundations. In Joseph Andrews, we see in the wanderings of Parson Adams, Joseph and Mr. Wilson, the transfer of civilization from the corrupt city to found a better and more firmly based civilization in the country. This theme of the transfer of civilization, derived from The Aeneid, is fairly common in eighteenth-century English Literature; Pope makes use of it in The Dunciad, but since his work is a parody, he inverts the normal sequence and portrays the transfer of a decadent civilization from the outskirts of the

city to its centre. Fielding, like Pope, was always eager to contrast the virtues of the country with the vices of the city. The country, in his view, was the repository of all that was good and noble in the world and in human nature, whereas the city was the abode of vice and depravity.

We need not emulate Le Bossu and attempt to reduce the moral of Joseph Andrews to a single sentence. But it is clear that the novel has a moral purpose. Fielding says in the preface that his intention is to expose vanity and hypocrisy. But he is not just content with exposure; he offers us his own moral positives as an alternative to the follies and vices he attacks and as a standard by which those follies and vices could be judged. We can see how the teachings of the Latitudinarians whose philosophy Fielding endorsed, fit in here. Vanity and hypocrisy are modes of self-love, and are therefore the opposites of charity as the Latitudinarians understood the term. To these Fielding opposes the conduct of Mr. Adams and Joseph, the charitable gospel christians. Every single episode is seen as contributing to the main design — the good men must journey through hostile lands and demonstrate the true Christian virtues in contrast with the hypocrisy, vanity, covetousness and lack of neighbourliness they encounter, and finally they must recover their homes and families.

We start with the vanity, hypocrisy and sexual incontinence of Lady Booby and Mrs. Slipslop, the cupidity of Mr. Peter Pounce and the inhumanity of the passengers in the stage coach. Next we encounter the ignorance of Parson Barnabas whose conduct belies his holy office, and the inhumanity and hypocrisy of Mrs. Tow-Wowse. The story of The Unfortunate Jilt reveals vanity, hypocrisy and inhumanity in high places. Mrs. Slipslop appears next

and once more demonstrates not only her vanity and obsession with her own position in society, but also her unwillingness to be concerned about the welfare of those in lower stations, when her own interest is not involved. Then Parson Trulliber's lack of neighbourliness and Christian charity is emphasized; and now, in the middle of the work, it is time for Fielding to introduce the Wilson episode where all the vices encountered so far are concentrated in Mr. Wilson's story and made the hallmark of the city. The brutality of the squire, his sexual incontinence and his disregard of all the laws of hospitality, and Christian charity are next revealed. Finally, at Booby Hall, we see the affectation and hypocrisy of Lady Booby, Mr. Booby and Pamela.

Each of these episodes contains material which, in accordance with epic theory, contributes to the unity of the main design. Each of them contrasts the self-regarding vanity, hypocrisy, cupidity and lust of the participants with the good nature and Christian charity of the Wilsons, Mr. Adams, Fanny and Joseph. For, Parson Adams is the good-natured Christian gentleman -- the charitable man in the Latitudinarian sense of the word who cares for the welfare of his fellowmen and does his best to relieve their necessity. Joseph also demonstrates Christian charity, but in addition he manifests the other aspect of "Agape" -- "Eros", in his healthy love for Fanny. Eros, as opposed to selfish lust, is as much a part of charity as good nature itself. As Fielding says elsewhere,¹ sexual love at its very best involves not just a desire for physical gratification, but concern for the welfare of the loved one. It is this aspect of "Agape" that Joseph Andrews

¹ See T.J., Bk.VI, ch.i.

represents in the novel. Parson Adams represents the Church militant; he goes to the aid of the oppressed and champions the doctrines of the Church. Joseph goes through a process of education whereby he learns the value of decent sexual love and its place in Christian morality. Both men are the latitudinarians' "loving wanderers". In the end they arrive at their well-deserved home: the journey ends in the country, where those civilized Christian standards, which were scorned in the world of the city, are once more re-affirmed, and Joseph and Fanny are married by Parson Adams in the presence of the Wilsons.

At this stage it will be helpful to clarify why the novel is named after Joseph and not after Parson Adams. The weight of critical opinion has inclined to the view that Fielding intended to write a parody of Pamela under the title of Joseph Andrews, but became so engrossed with the commanding figure of Mr. Adams that he altered the direction in which the novel was moving. Yet if this were true, Fielding could just as easily have altered the title during revision to Parson Adams. The novel is called Joseph Andrews because it is about Joseph. It is about his education, and perfection in the Christian social virtues. Joseph obviously grows in this novel whereas Parson Adams does not. Indeed, many of the attitudes adopted by the old man are rejected while Joseph steadily develops into the mature young man. But perhaps the most important reason is that married love — "eros" — is at the heart of its values. This surely is where the Wilsons come in, and this is why Joseph and Fanny have to be married in their presence.

The episode in which the Wilsons figure has been denounced by some critics as irrelevant. This view stems from a failure to understand the

epic nature of the work and to grasp the novel's real meaning. For the Wilsons are as vital to the meaning of Joseph Andrews as the Old Man of the Hill is to that of Tom Jones. The Wilson episode occurs almost halfway through the novel and ought to be regarded as the keystone in the arch; it holds together all the strands that have so far gone into the novel's composition. Mr. Wilson himself blends the virtues of Parson Adams and Joseph. His past life is a record of all the vices Fielding has been at pains to ridicule, and his present is a demonstration of Christian charity. His entire history demonstrates the inadequacy or relevance of most of the religious or philosophical systems which have been debated in the novel. When, in his wayward younger days, he realized he was heading for disaster, he embraced the Deist philosophy but found it inadequate; for, although the members of the club he joined held exalted notions of the "rule of right" and "the eternal fitness of things", it soon became apparent that they neither practised what they preached, nor were there any sanctions to ensure that they did so. He finally found salvation in marriage to an honest, kind-hearted, God-fearing woman, appropriately called Harriet Hearty; he found salvation, that is, in "eros" -- married love, and retired to the serenity of the country, embraced the Christian ethic and practised acts of benevolence. Like Parson Adams he cares for the welfare of his fellowmen, but unlike Parson Adams he is able to and does relieve their distresses in a practical way. Like Parson Adams and unlike Parsons Trulliber and Barnabas he believes that practical Christianity is as essential as belief, and he therefore does all the good he can.

Mr. Wilson represents more than benevolence, though; he also embodies

the other half of "Agape" which Joseph represents, that is "eros". It is only after his marriage to a virtuous woman that he finds salvation. The importance of married love in Fielding's ethical scheme is emphasized again and again in Tom Jones, Jonathan Wild and Amelia. Here in Joseph Andrews the salient point to remember is that it is only when Mr. Wilson marries a virtuous woman that he becomes a benevolent man. In other words, married love leads to charity, agape, an opening of the heart. Married love has been the one missing segment in the "whole view of man" that Fielding wished to oppose to the world of self-love. Here in the episode of the Wilsons he is able to build it in. In the end, Fanny, Joseph, the Wilsons and Mr. Adams, representing married love giving rise to charity and benevolence, are set off against priggish snobbery and irreverence.

Joseph Andrews can thus be seen as a novel in the epic tradition in which the plot is deliberately designed by the author to embody specific moral points, and all the episodes and digressions contribute to the unity of the moral design. But it has also undergone a process of refinement by Fielding, who includes the theme of benevolence issuing from married love. In conformity with epic convention, the author shows little interest in the characters' psychological motivations, he only uses them as components of his moral design. The major characters, moreover, belong to the epic tradition of good men journeying through hostile lands to recover their homes and patrimony and showing their Christian charity on the way.

II

So far the novel has been surveyed in "epic" terms. But Joseph Andrews is also a comic novel and we fail to grasp its meaning unless we realize that the moral basis inherited from the Latitudinarians is being continually modified by the operation of Fielding's comic art. The novel is written in the "Cervantic" tradition and accordingly, it is rich in Cervantic comedy directed at the innocents -- Parson Adams and Joseph. But there is also Cervantic satire directed through the innocents at society.¹ Burlesque and farce are also present, and these may either be purely funny, or they may be morally directed. But there is little doubt that Fielding's final morality, and therefore his meaning, issues from the richness and complexity of the comic texture.

It is important to realize that Fielding's sympathy in this novel is not always with Joseph and Mr. Adams. We must dispel from our minds the widely-held view that Fielding started Joseph Andrews as a parody of Pamela in which the hero was to be a chaste Joseph, set against a hypocritical Pamela. This view implies that as the novel progressed, Fielding abandoned the parody for the much more interesting novel of the road. It also assumes that the author's portrayal of Joseph and Mr. Adams is entirely sympathetic. Martin Battestin unwittingly lends weighty support to this theory when he suggests that Joseph was meant to be the eighteenth-century counterpart of

¹ Professor A.A. Parker, op.cit., has brilliantly demonstrated the operation of Cervantic comedy and Cervantic satire in his study of Don Quixote. In the first part of the novel it is Don Quixote's self-deception and innocence which are exposed, but in the second half, Don Quixote is merely an instrument whereby the world's wickedness is revealed.

the biblical Joseph, the symbol of chastity, and that Mr. Adams was the counterpart of the biblical Abraham, the father of the faithful.¹

Yet there is a major objection to this reading. In the previous year Fielding had effectively parodied Richardson's Pamela in Shamela, and there would seem to be no reason why he should have wished to repeat the performance a year later in a full length novel. But perhaps the most important objection to the parody theory is that it does not fully account for our experience in reading the novel. If we pay attention to Fielding's comic art we cannot fail to realize that the Joseph and Adams of the early scenes are laughable characters and that Fielding distances them sufficiently for us to realize that he wants us to regard some of their actions critically. Until Mr. Adams and Joseph learn prudence and experience on the road they are figures of fun.

Fielding does hint in the first chapter of the novel that it is much more than a parody, although this is so tactfully stated that we must read carefully before we discover his meaning. He begins by saying that it is a trite but true observation that examples work more forcibly on the mind than precepts; life therefore seems preferable to books as a guide to virtuous action. If Fielding had left it at that there would have been no

¹ In the Introduction to his edition of Shamela and Joseph Andrews, Battestin does reject the parody theory, but he still holds that Parson Adams and Joseph were modelled entirely on the biblical figures and are therefore characters with whom the author sympathizes all along. Yet this supports the "parody" theory which requires a completely chaste Joseph who has the author's sympathy throughout, and a virtuous teacher -- Parson Adams, both set against a hypocritical Pamela. See Martin Battestin, Shamela and Joseph Andrews (London and Virginia, 1965), p.xxix.

problem, and generations of readers would probably not have continued to misread the novel.¹ But he could not resist the temptation to entangle his readers in a web of irony, so he changes his stance and suggests that the life of a good man is only of use within a narrow circle, whereas a book makes his life available to all. In the next paragraph he elaborates on this; the man may be little known, but the book publicizes his activities, hence the book and the writer are more important. Yet, when Fielding goes on to draw the conclusion that the writer may do a much more valuable service to the world than the man whose life originally afforded the pattern we feel he is talking with his tongue in his cheek and that he has changed his stance once more. But Fielding soon makes his position perfectly clear; the reference to those writers "little read today because they are so obsolete" could hardly be flattering, and the implication of the statement that "our language affords many of excellent use and instruction finely calculated to sow the seeds of virtue in youth....such as the history of 'John the Great'" is that these books were misleading, and that therefore books purporting to educate by presenting patterns of virtue are untrustworthy. Life is finally established as being of superior merit as a guide to conduct.

The reader is thus prepared for the attack on Cibber and Richardson. Referring to Pamela, Fielding says: "The authentic history with which I

¹ Battestin, for instance, supports his interpretation by referring to Fielding's claim that patterns of virtue derived from books were worthy and acceptable guides to human conduct. Fielding, in his view, would have accepted the Latitudinarian treatment of Abraham and Joseph as being such patterns.

now present the public is an instance of the great good that book is likely to do". This is the message of Joseph Andrews if we are looking for a message. In this sense, it is, in part, a reaction to Pamela but it was never meant to be a parody of Pamela, nor is it primarily about chastity at all. Fielding intends that his novel should demonstrate that the facts of life in general are not to be learnt from books, precepts or patterns of virtue, but from experience. Fielding is attacking Richardson and Cibber but this time he is attacking, not their morality, but rather their presumption in thinking that by presenting young people with their so-called patterns of virtue they can act as agents of reformation. Fielding suggests indeed that these books and precepts may even be dangerous and may hinder normal development. Joseph Andrews, therefore, is a reaction to Pamela, but it is not a parody; rather, it is an autonomous and independent demonstration of the value of experience.¹

We now encounter the figure of Joseph and observe that Fielding traces his ancestry from "Merry Andrews". It should be immediately apparent that Joseph is much more than the representative of chastity that Battestin derives from the sermons of the Latitudinarians. He is also the "Christian clown" and therefore an object of laughter and of ridicule. The picture of the young Joseph is too romantic and sentimental to be credible, and it is clear that we are expected to react to this picture with some degree of scepticism. Joseph is presented as the sweet-voiced youth who attracted

¹ There is a sense though in which the novel is a parody. But it is not a parody of Pamela; rather, it is a parody of histories and biographies in general. Whenever Fielding refers to these, it is usually with his tongue in his cheek. One of his aims, as we know, is to denigrate the value of lives and to subject the writers of histories and biographies to ridicule.

rather than terrified the birds he was supposed to ward off. The references to Priapus and Jack-o-Lent, both of them ridiculous figures suggest to us that Fielding is distancing himself from Joseph and that we must also do the same. Next we see Joseph the paragon of beauty and the high-spirited young man, and again Fielding's rhetoric harms him considerably. Joseph's feats of strength are described in too extravagant terms for the reader to take him seriously: "He soon gave proofs of strength and agility beyond his years and constantly rode the most spirited and vicious horses to water with an intrepidity which surprised every one".

The reader forms the impression that Fielding's portrait of the young man is exaggerated, and the exaggeration raises laughter at the idealized picture of the youthful paragon. By the end of the presentation the reader is left in little doubt that Joseph, at this stage at any rate, is a laughable innocent.

With the entrance of Parson Adams the "comedy of innocents" proper begins. It is important here, as with Joseph, that Fielding should communicate his attitude to the reader. It is also important that he should manipulate him into reacting to Adams in a certain way, once he enters on the scene. With Joseph, Fielding had done this by presenting us with tiny vignettes of the young man's activities, making us thereby regard him ironically and critically. With Parson Adams he gives us his own opinion immediately:

"He was, besides, a man of good sense, good parts, and good nature; but was at the same time entirely ignorant of the ways of this world as an infant just entered into it could possibly be".¹

¹ J.J.A., Bk.I, ch.iii

The most important word in that sentence is "but". The implication is that knowledge of the world is essential even for a man of good sense, good parts and good nature; his lack of it is a severe limitation in Parson Adams and his actions must be viewed in this light.

So the two innocents have been presented, and Fielding has indicated what our response to them is expected to be. We can now proceed with the development of Joseph. Joseph like Shamela, has been reading "good books". When we examine the list of good books, we discover that it includes The Whole Duty of Man, Thomas A. Kempis, The Bible and Baker's Chronicle — exactly the kind of books we would expect to find on the shelves of any lower-middle class household of the time. These were the books read by people who wanted guides to conduct and thought that "good things" were to be found in such books; they could also exert a beneficial influence on the minds of the young. Fielding thus re-emphasizes the point that books are no substitute for experience in the preparation of the young for life itself. The early pictures of Joseph in London are not flattering either; they give the impression of a young man who becomes increasingly narcissistic. Although Joseph refuses to be drawn into the town vices, he devotes considerable attention to his dress and hair, affects a knowledge of music, and leads the opinion of the footmen at performances of plays. But it is when we come to the seduction scenes in Lady Booby's bed-chamber that it is established beyond all doubt that Fielding's sympathy is not entirely with Joseph in these early scenes.

In chapter five we discover Joseph in Lady Booby's room. The lady has done all in her power to tempt him to seduce her. She has exposed her

lovely white neck and insinuated that should he wish her to grant him the last favour, she might not be averse to doing so. Joseph, however, behaves as though he has no idea of what Lady Booby has been talking. Lady Booby says, "ha, I have trusted myself alone with a man naked in bed; suppose you should have any wicked intentions upon my honour, how should I defend myself?" Joseph answers that he has not the least evil design against her. This answer is completely unrelated to Lady Booby's real question, and when she tells him shortly afterwards that he is either a fool or pretends to be one, the reader is tempted to agree. His next statement not only reveals his ignorance of the ways of the world, but also his lack of tact. For the reference to his master, though an innocent one on his part, is precisely the kind of remark likely to enrage Lady Booby who at that moment was endeavouring to seduce a young man, some weeks after her husband's death. But Joseph apparently has no idea of the Lady's real intentions, and thus fails to see the sting in his remark.

Immediately after this, there is his letter to Pamela.¹ It begins with a startling revelation of naivety; Joseph seems genuinely to believe that Lady Booby's peculiar behaviour is entirely due to her grief. Next we see him behaving like a simple young gossip anxious not to be found out, but proceeding all the same to give away the family's secrets. It is the kind of behaviour expected from a young maid-servant or a boy turned fifteen, not from a mature young man. Yet there is a hint that Lady Booby's conduct has made a slight impression, but he is not quite sure of her real intentions

¹ J.A., Bk.I, ch.vi.

and states his suspicions hesitantly. ("I think my lady has a mind to me".) Apart from this glimmer, all the evidence suggests that Joseph does not know what the Lady really wants, and therefore what the evil implied in her suggestions is. This is why the scene is funny. The portrait of a chaste young man rebuking a woman for incontinence is hardly funny (c.f. the scene with Betty), but that of a young simpleton completely ignorant of the way he is expected to respond to a seductive woman is; indeed it can provide suitable material for farce. We laugh at Lady Booby, but we laugh even more at Joseph's simplicity for we feel that at this stage he ought to have known what was involved even if he did not succumb to Lady Booby's enticements. Joseph guesses subsequently what she intends, but he still does not know what is involved and therefore what the problem is. He only knows fully what it means, when he discovers what it feels like "to have a mind for her". So what is ridiculed in these scenes is not Joseph's chastity, but his ignorance of the problems involved in the whole question of sex and chastity.

In the second seduction-scene Joseph's naivety is even plainer, but this time his arrogance alienates sympathy from him. When the lady says:

"'Would you be contented with a kiss? Would not your inclinations be all on fire rather by such a favour?'
—'Madam', said Joseph, 'if they were, I hope I should be able to controul them without suffering them to get the better of my virtue'".¹

This is no longer the voice of innocence but of arrogance. It is the statement of a man who already thinks himself morally superior, not only to such ladies in general but to his mistress in particular. Hence the

¹ J.A., Bk.I, ch.viii.

enraged tone of Lady Booby's reply. When Joseph says, "I can't see why her having no virtue should be a reason against my having any", he is fundamentally right, but the declaration is made with an air of such priggish self-assurance that Joseph begins to do himself some harm in the eyes of unbiased readers. The lady asks further, "Can a boy, a stripling, have the confidence to talk of his virtue?" And we are tempted to reply on Joseph's behalf, "Why not?"; but he spoils his case when he says, "That boy is the brother of Pamela, and would be ashamed that the chastity of his family which is preserved in her should be stained in him".

Quite apart from his own arrogance, any reference to Pamela's virtue is clearly meant to show Joseph in an unfavourable light. We know what Fielding's attitude to Pamela's chastity is, and Joseph's reference to her here can hardly be meant to enlist our sympathy. The implication is that Pamela's letters have left Joseph quite incapable of dealing tactfully with a delicate situation, even if they may not have made him a prude.

Next we have Joseph's second letter to his sister. The events of the last few hours are seen through Joseph's eyes but he is sufficiently distanced by Fielding for us to realize that we are not expected to accept everything he says. Referring to the attempted seduction he remarks, "But I hope I shall have more resolution and more grace to part with my virtue to any lady upon earth". He then mentions Parson Adams and says: "Indeed it is owing entirely to his excellent sermons and advice together with your letters that I have been able to resist a temptation which he says, no man complies with but he repents in this world or is damned for it in the next; and why should I trust to repentance on my deathbed since I may die in my

sleep?" This is the naive response of a man who has accepted quite uncritically all that has been communicated to him in the letters of his sister and the sermons of Mr. Adams. Fielding's meaning here is evidently that the letters of Pamela and the sermons of the triumphant Parson Adams have combined to produce a ridiculous prig instead of a normal young man. Joseph has not rationalized his attitude to chastity at all, and he is completely ignorant of the problems and issues involved. Because of the influence of Parson Adams and Pamela, sexuality for Joseph is simply a matter of words and ideas. He is not merely chaste, he is ignorantly so. A young man who decides to remain chaste fully conscious of the problems and temptations involved is an object of admiration; but one who is chaste as a result of his uncritical acceptance of the advice of a hypocritical self-regarding sister and a dogmatic parson, is less admirable. Yet there is hope that Joseph may be saved, for towards the end of his second letter to his sister, he reveals the presence of normal sexual feelings. "But I am glad she hurried me out of the bedchamber as she did, for I had once almost forgotten every word Parson Adams had ever said to me".

This is the first sign that Joseph is growing up, and that he may be rebelling against the kind of teaching that Mr. Adams stood for. For the first time also he seems to know what the problem of sexuality is, and he comes to know it through experience, whereas in the past it had all been a matter of words and ideas to him. Later in the novel Fielding demonstrates how Joseph pursues this self-regarding chastity to ridiculous lengths, even at the expense of his own health. For when the occupants of the coach finally decide to admit him, Joseph advances to it in a state of semi-nudity,

and seeing a lady who held the sticks of her fan before her eyes, "he absolutely refused, miserable as he was to enter unless he was furnished with sufficient clothing to prevent giving the least offence to decency". Up to this point it is the ridiculous hypocrisy of the lady rather than Joseph's prudery which has been exposed. Any modest young man in Joseph's position would probably have acted in the same way, although Fielding maintains the balance of his double vision in such a way that we may be justified in thinking that, in choosing to lie there in the cold rather than give offence to a young lady, who had the sticks of her fan before her eyes in any case, Joseph was being unnecessarily scrupulous. But almost immediately Fielding shifts the focus on to Joseph and we begin to look at him critically. Fielding comments:

"So perfectly modest was this young man; such mighty effects had the spotless example of the amiable Pamela, and the excellent sermons of Mr. Adams, wrought upon him".¹

Plainly, Joseph pushes modesty to extremes. Pamela's example, as far as Fielding was concerned, could be anything but spotless. Once again Fielding reiterates the point that the combination of the letters of Pamela and the sermons of Mr. Adams have resulted in an unhealthy influence on the development of Joseph.

Further on in chapter eighteen of the first book, Betty the maid, having tried unsuccessfully by various devious means to suggest to Joseph that she would be quite willing to make love to him if he were so inclined, finally loses her self-control and throws herself at him; and so, Joseph contrary to his inclinations, is forced to use some violence and push her out

¹ J.A., Bk.I, ch.xi.

of the room. Once more it is essential that we should be able to discern what Fielding's attitude towards Joseph is during this scene, and he aids us by giving beforehand a fairly sympathetic portrayal of Betty. Although Betty seems to have behaved indecently, and although we might feel that Joseph is perfectly justified in throwing her out, yet when we recall the care with which Fielding had set the scene and established Betty's character in our minds, before going on to describe the encounter with Joseph, we cannot help feeling that it was, on the whole, a sympathetic portrayal. Fielding must have painted Betty's picture in this way because he wanted us to sympathize with her to a certain extent and to react critically to Joseph. When we come to the scene, therefore, our attitude has already been conditioned and we are prepared for comments such as this: "How ought man to rejoice that his chastity is always in his own power, that if he hath sufficient strength of mind he hath always a competent strength of body to defend himself and cannot like a poor weak woman be ravished against his will". The last poor, weak woman we saw was Betty herself and in all probability she had been seduced by the ensign of foot. Her kindness to Joseph before the incident had been prompted by genuine generosity of spirit, and even after the event the passion prevalent in her mind was not thought of revenge but a desire to take Joseph up in her arms and smother him with kisses. By contrast Joseph's priggishness repels us as he tells her, "he was sorry to see a young woman cast off all regard to modesty". His action in thrusting her out of the room is, at best, unkind. In the light of this and the description of Betty that had preceded, we can only interpret Fielding's comments as being directed against Joseph and his

prudery.

In the earlier scenes, therefore, Fielding demonstrates that the business of living cannot be learnt from letters, sermons or books. Both Joseph and Parson Adams are made objects of ridicule because neither of them, like Don Quixote, has so far, much knowledge of the world or of what the business of living is about. It is thus necessary for Fielding to start his "comedy of innocents" in the "manner of Cervantes", and to put his innocents on the road where they will learn about life. They will be satirized and ridiculed by the world, and at times Fielding himself will join in the laughter. But they will also satirize the world because, being innocents, they do possess some untarnished qualities, and these will shine by contrast with the world's corruption.

III

From now on Fielding's "cervantic" innocents are used as catalysts by means of which the world's vanity and hypocrisy encountered on the road are exposed and satirized. The author's method here is to present a series of episodes, each one contributing to the elucidation of the central theme. In each of these the innocents are ranged against the others, and the others are accordingly satirized.

The first episode which brings out the world's corruption and selfishness is that in which Joseph lies almost dead in a ditch and groans for assistance.¹ Fielding communicates his attitude by introducing the incident as an analogue

¹ J.A., Bk.I, ch.xi.

of the parable of The Good Samaritan. Joseph, like the victim in that parable has been beaten, stripped and left for dead, half-naked in the ditch. A coach comes by containing people from various walks of life, and we the readers are forced to ask "which one of these" is Joseph's "neighbour"? Fielding knew that there could be only one answer when the question was framed in this way. If he wanted us to react differently, or if his responses were different from ours, he would not have introduced the scene in the form of the parable of the Good Samaritan; by doing so he has manipulated us into reacting in one, and only one, way towards the occupants of the coach.

The way in which Fielding exposes the hypocrisy and inhumanity of the passengers is quite masterly. For various reasons they express the view that Joseph ought to be left lying in the ditch, the gentleman for fear of being robbed himself, and the lady because she could not bear to be in the same coach as a naked man. In the end they agree to take Joseph, not for any humanitarian motive, but because the lawyer tells them that if Joseph should be found dead, they would be held responsible for his murder. But now another problem arises; offence must not be offered to the lady's delicacy by allowing Joseph to enter the coach naked, and so a coat must be found for him. No one in the coach is willing to lend a single piece of clothing, and it is the postilion (a lad who was afterwards "transported for robbing a hen-roost") who strips off his greatcoat, "his only garment, swearing that he would rather ride in his shirt all his life than suffer a fellow-creature to lie in so miserable a condition." The callousness of the passengers, the affectation of the lady and the generosity of the postilion

are thus brilliantly brought out. Both James Sutherland and Mark Spilka note the symbolism of this stripping scene. It is not only Joseph and the postilion who are being stripped but the occupants of the coach as well, to reveal their lack of Christian charity and generosity. In a sense the scene is a comic scene; the various posturings, evasions and equivocations of the occupants of the coach are ridiculous because they do not conform to our own standards of decency and humanity. So there is laughter generated here, but it is morally directed.

Let us next take a look at Parson Adams' interview with Parson Trulliber.¹ Once more it is important to know what Fielding's attitude is and what our response is expected to be. In this episode he makes skilful use of imagery, analogy and the art of distancing. We discover that Parson Trulliber looks after hogs instead of his flock and he wears an apron instead of a parson's frock. This immediacy highlights the contrast with Mr. Adams. The whole scene is very funny but Fielding makes use of our laughter to stress his moral points all the more effectively. Farce abounds in the scene, and it is used to emphasize Mr. Trulliber's most repulsive qualities such as gluttony, greed and inhumanity. There is irony operating here, too, for part of our amusement and therefore of our moral condemnation stems from the difference between what Parson Trulliber is and says and what we expect a minister of religion to do and say. Throughout the scene therefore various comic devices are employed which, far from inhibiting moral judgements, do in fact, promote them. We see also how satire works through thematic episode: Parson Adams' Christian charity, innocence, and

¹ J.A., Bk.II, ch.xiv.

devotion to duty, expose Trulliber's uncharitableness, covetousness and vanity.

Another scene worth considering is the hunting scene in which the dogs of a certain squire, having caught and torn a hare into pieces fall on Adams.¹ The episode is tremendously farcical and is certainly one of the funniest in the novel; but, again, the farce emphasizes the brutality of the hounds and the callousness of their master. The point is insinuated all the more subtly because it is shrouded in laughter. Ian Watt is of the opinion that the events in episodes such as this are told in this particular manner in order to deflect our attention from the events themselves to the way in which Fielding narrates them, and to the epic parallels involved. He implies that the comic note enables Fielding to strip such scenes of their brutality. But if we are honest about our reactions we must surely admit that the brutality is not stripped from such scenes nor our attention diverted from the events. The comic atmosphere which is created emphasizes rather than alleviates the brutality, and Fielding's moral points are made all the more convincingly. He uses various comic devices without lessening in the least the brutality of the hounds and their master. Moreover, by juxtaposing the conduct of Parson Adams with that of his tormentors Fielding ensures that their wickedness is kept in focus. To be certain that this is true, we only have to consider the remarks of the huntsman:

"Upon this the huntsman declared, 'T was well it was no worse; for his part he could not blame the gentleman, and wondered his master would encourage the dogs to hunt Christians; that it was the surest way to spoil them, to make them follow vermin instead of sticking to a hare".

¹ J.A., Bk.III, ch.vi.

This is perhaps the funniest thing in the whole scene, but it is also the most damning statement made. The mention of Christians reminds us that this is a basically Christian novel in which Christian values are to be upheld. The embodiment of these values — Parson Adams is set against men such as the huntsman whose nimrodism is thus revealed. The huntsman's statement is the more damaging because he first lures us into believing that he is about to propound sound Christian sentiments; instead he proceeds to rank Christians lower than vermin. The picture presented of him is of a man whose standards and values have been completely overturned.

The tyranny of the master in his hunting is also exposed. Fielding gives us a list of his most popular sports — the chase, the shooting match, the race, cock-fighting and bear-baiting — most of them blood sports. It now transpires that he enjoyed the chasing of Adams much more than any of these. If Joseph appears tigerish and Adams foolish on this occasion, the master is brutal and ghoulish. The next role we see him in is that of seducer, and this rounds off his portrayal as a predatory animal. In this scene, therefore, we once more see the operation of Cervantic satire. The discomfiture of the innocent Adams serves to emphasize the brutality of the master and his hounds, and therefore his uncharitableness and lack of concern for his fellow human beings. Satire is seen to be operating in an episode which brings out the central themes of the novel, setting off Parson Adams' innocence against the wickedness of his worldly opponents.

We now come to the "roasting" scene.¹ This is the episode in which Mr. Adams' Christian virtues are most sorely tried and his opponents' motiveless malignity most emphatically highlighted. Joseph had said, earlier,

¹ J.A., Bk.III, ch.vii.

that it was impossible for goodness to be ridiculed. This is itself an "affectation" on Joseph's part and Fielding seems to show here that the good can be ridiculed without in the least compromising the goodness.

First, in conformity with his previous practice, Fielding sets the scene in order to manipulate our responses even before the events we are about to witness are described. We are presented with an account of the squire's companions, and our first response might well be to compare them with the companions of Volpone in Ben Jonson's play. Each of them is a failure and a social outcast; the master of the house shows a perverted interest and delight in the grotesque and odious. We only have to put this impression side by side with the judgements formed during the hunting scene and the implications of his projected designs on Fanny to see what our reaction to him and his friends is expected to be during the scene to come. Yet, again, the element of farce predominates, and the farce is hilarious; no matter how much we sympathize with Adams we must be prepared to admit this. Adams tumbling on the floor, Adams the subject of a ribald poem, Adams with soup in his breeches and Adams in the water-tub is ridiculous. The good has been made to look ridiculous, but the goodness has not been compromised. The comic atmosphere does not inhibit moral judgement; if anything, it reinforces it. The dignity with which Mr. Adams replies to his tormentors and the readiness with which he is prepared to forgive and forget bring us completely to his side.

These scenes then show how Cervantic satire works through thematic episode. The innocents who were themselves the object of ridicule in the earlier scenes are used in these later scenes to precipitate the vices and

follies of the world. Their conduct is juxtaposed with that of the people they encounter and as a result, the world's uncharitableness is exposed. The scenes are all comic scenes, but the comedy neither inhibits moral judgement nor does it gloss over moral depravity and brutality. Indeed, by its means the moral points are made all the more effectively.

IV

So far the epic nature of Joseph Andrews has been analysed and it has been seen how the latitudinarian ethic endorsed by Fielding fits into the novel's pattern. This simple moral-epic reading, as we have seen, does not fully account for our experience in reading the novel, and so a study has been made of Cervantic comedy directed at the innocents -- Parson Adams and Joseph, whose ignorance and naivety are thus exposed in the early scenes. But in the later scenes there is Cervantic satire, and the innocents are used to expose the weaknesses of the sophisticated world whose conduct is juxtaposed with theirs. In both cases Fielding achieves his effects through his style. He employs various comic devices such as irony, burlesque the mock-epic, farce and rhetoric to manipulate the reader's responses and thence to expose the ignorance of the innocents on the one hand, and the vanity and hypocrisy of the sophisticated world on the other. It is now time to examine how all these interact in the comic texture and how the final morality issues from its richness and complexity.¹

¹ Although the various comic devices used will be studied in isolation, it is obvious that Fielding does not restrict himself at any one time to the use of one of them. In several scenes several devices are used together, e.g. the Trulliber scene.

First, since we are now talking about the various methods open to the author by means of which he can manipulate the reader's responses and ask for his judgement, it would be useful to consider the role of the narrator in promoting moral judgement. His role is indeed of the first importance; not only must he manipulate us so that we react in a certain way, he must also indicate where he himself stands and whether the judgements we or his characters make correspond to his own. There are two ways in which the narrator can communicate his judgements; he can either do it by commenting directly in his own person, or he can do it indirectly by resorting to various literary devices such as irony, rhetoric and burlesque.

Fielding has often been accused of intruding too much in his novels in his own person. It is the present writer's view that whenever Fielding uses the first person in Joseph Andrews, it is not necessarily because he wishes to state his own view or compel the reader to accept it, but because he is, in a sense, writing a parody of certain histories and biographies, and in order to call necessary attention to the parody feels that the first person must be used. A more serious allegation sometimes made is that Fielding often gives direct accounts of the lives and characters of the people he portrays instead of leaving the reader to form his own judgements. There are two replies to this; one, which has already been stated, is that Fielding is writing a unique kind of novel; he is not writing a "Richardsonian" novel in which the characters apparently develop almost of their own accord without much help from the author, nor is he writing a "Jamesian" novel in which the author himself may have no idea how the events of his novel will

end. (James is often as much a spectator in his house of fiction as the reader himself). Fielding is writing an epic novel and the most important point about the epic novel is that it is an artefact, a unified moral analysis deliberately constructed. Fielding had planned it all before he started to write, and as such, he is wise in knowledge of the characters and interpretation of events, and therefore, whenever there is ambiguity or uncertainty, he is himself the best guide. The second reply is that very often Fielding uses direct account or direct commentary as a form of literary shorthand. From time to time there are bits of information which are vital to our understanding of and response to certain characters. Some of these would need several pages of demonstration to convey.¹ To help the reader, and to save time, Fielding gives them directly in three or four short sentences. In certain cases these bits of information are necessary even before particular episodes begin, so that the reader may be certain what his response to the ensuing events ought to be. In order to be sympathetic to Betty, for instance, we need to know that she had been seduced in her youth; in order to grasp fully that Joseph's uncritical acceptance of Parson Adams' teaching is dangerous, we need to know about Parson Adams' complete ignorance of the ways of the world; in order to make the correct moral judgements during the "roasting" scene we need to be told that each of Adams' tormentors is a social outcast. So there are certain occasions when, in order to ensure that the correct judgements are made, the

¹ W.J. Harvey, The Art of George Eliot (1961), p.76, maintains, in my view, quite rightly, that superbly handled, analysis is a literary mode in no way inferior to full dramatic representation.

author must give us short direct accounts.¹

In any case it is unrealistic to claim that the narrator should not manipulate the reader's responses. He has a duty to communicate his meaning, his insights and his judgements to the reader, and he can only do so if he uses certain devices to condition the reader's reactions. Henry James probably succeeded more than most novelists in effacing himself completely from the events of his novels, but even his hand could be discerned at times. The real question at issue is whether the manipulation should be done directly by means of straight commentary or indirectly by the use of devices such as irony or imagery. It may be generally assumed that the most intelligent novelists are free to use the latter method. Fielding is equally adept at both.

Commentators are usually critical of Fielding's direct addresses to the reader in his prefaces and introductory chapters. Both Ian Watt and Andrew Wright believe that this spoils the fictive illusion. It is true that in reading the preface to Joseph Andrews we may form the impression that the work is being deliberately constructed. But once we do plunge into the body of the novel we experience the fictive illusion. Also, whenever we stop to read the introductory chapters to the succeeding books we may feel that the fictive illusion is being broken and the story is being held up. But once we begin to read the books which follow, the illusion is recaptured. The whole "Jamesian" idea that the fictive illusion is destroyed by digressions or authorial comment, ignores the flexibility of the reader

¹ For a full discussion of these and other narrative techniques, see Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, 1961). For a different approach to the problem of the omniscient author see Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (1921).

who is able to immerse himself into the world of the novel after a digression, and recapture the fictive illusion.

But the question arises why Fielding finds it necessary to write introductory chapters at all. It may be that he is conscious of the novelty of the kind of work he is undertaking and is anxious that his readers should understand what he is doing. It seems more plausible, though, that in these introductory chapters Fielding is trying to establish a personal relationship with his readers. He often starts by teasing them in a friendly way. It is a way of making friends with them, of getting them to trust him, so that they may be sure that the judgements he makes are right. In the introductory chapters also, Fielding at times lays down his norms; an instance of this is his declaration of his aversion to vanity and hypocrisy. Having discovered what Fielding's norms are the reader can proceed with his reading of the novel, certain that he would be able to make the correct responses. In the introductory chapters the narrator is, in fact, building up a picture of himself as the decent, moderate, reliable man, and it is against the norms that he posits that the characters of the novel should be judged. He also presents himself as the urbane man of the world, sufficiently detached and knowledgeable to be trusted. Fielding's introductory chapters and his direct comments are therefore some of the direct methods he uses to promote moral judgements. But of course these are not the only methods, and he is just as, if not more adept at the use of indirect ones such as irony, burlesque, farce and imagery.

Lst us first examine Fielding's use of farce in Joseph Andrews. It is in the nature of farce to exaggerate and blow up certain traits in certain

characters to the most absurd proportions. The presence of these traits is thus underlined affectively. It is easy to see how this is demonstrated in Fielding's portrayal of Parson Trulliber. An actual Parson Trulliber is inconceivable, but no doubt, there are vain and uncharitable parsons. By putting Parson Trulliber in the centre of a farcical scene and thus blowing up his basic uncharitableness and vanity, these qualities are emphasized and exposed.

Fielding begins the description of the encounter between Adams and Trulliber by relating an exceptionally unreasonable and anti-social act on Trulliber's part.¹

"Upon which he laid violent hands on Adams, and dragged him into the hogs-stye, which was indeed but two steps from his parlour window. They were no sooner arrived there, than he cried out, 'Do but handle them, whether dost buy or no'. At which words, opening the gate, he pushed Adams into the pig-stye, insisting on it that he should handle them before he would talk one word with him".

Clearly Fielding does his best to inflate Trulliber's most vicious qualities. In a sense, Fielding cannot help exaggerating them because the scene is farce, and farce inflates. Trulliber for instance, uses violence and pushes Adams into the hogs-stye. Adams falls in the mire, and Trulliber, instead of helping him as anyone reasonable would have done, bursts out laughing, and asks Adams contemptuously: "Why, dost not know how to handle a hog?" A smile at Adams' misadventure might have been permissible, but laughter is cruel. There is also irony operating here, for Fielding deliberately inserts the words "with some contempt" to call our attention to Trulliber's scale of values. Handling hogs is an

¹ J.A., Bk.II, ch.xiv.

accomplishment as far as he is concerned.

One moment, therefore, we see the ridiculous figure of Mr. Adams in the sty, but before we have finished laughing at him, Fielding changes the focus and makes us look at Trulliber, a parson, contemptuously rebuking his fellow Parson for his ignorance of pigs, and proposing to teach him how to do it. We are thus presented with the picture of a man who should be offering hospitality, gloating at his colleague's discomfiture; and we are already prepared for Mr. Adams' retort, "Nihil habeo cum porcis". I am a clergyman, sir, and am not come to buy hogs". As the episode continues our reaction to Trulliber becomes more hostile even without Fielding's assistance. But Fielding does assist us to make moral judgements by blowing up Trulliber's most anti-social and repulsive qualities. He makes Trulliber do things which no reasonable man would agree with, and thus effectively distances him and indicates that we, like him, must regard Trulliber with some measure of disapproval. Trulliber's dishonesty is shown as he tries to shift the blame for Adams' ill-luck on to his wife; he sends Adams to the pump and prevents Mrs. Trulliber from bringing him a bowl of water. He fastens the parlour door, leads Adams into the kitchen and whispers his wife to bring a "a little of the worst ale". Then comes the reference to Mr. Adams' cassock, and Trulliber the ignorant parson is contrasted with Adams who tore his gown ten years previously but still wears it as a badge of his office. In a stroke we see the inhumanity and injustice of the world, but also the diligence and worthiness of Mr. Adams. Trulliber is next seen in ironic light, championing the dignity of the cloth, but falling far short of that dignity himself. He has completely inverted the true nature of the

marriage relationship, so central to Fielding's ethical scheme; for his wife, far from being a partner, has become his slave whom he treats little better than his pigs. Trulliber's lack of courtesy is next exaggerated and thus emphasized when he snatches the cup his wife had offered to Parson Adams saying, "I caal'd vurst".

Now the purely religious aspect of the episode is demonstrated. Adams is seen as the Christian traveller, the shepherd of his flock asking for hospitality and assistance from another Christian. His Christian qualities are then contrasted with Trulliber's greed and concern for things of the flesh. Trulliber's inflated sense of his own importance and his lack of humanity are also exposed: "Though I am but a curate, I believe I am as warm as the vicar himself or perhaps the rector of the next parish too; I believe I could buy them both". In opposition to this Adams' solid Christianity is demonstrated, but so are his naivety and ignorance of the ways of the world. Fielding makes use of the farce to exaggerate and highlight Adams' ingenuousness and forthrightness. He asks for help in Christian terms, but also as if he thinks he is entitled to the money by right. The epic similes which Fielding uses to describe Trulliber's reaction to Mr. Adams' request also illustrate his technique. They exaggerate Trulliber's real behaviour and thus emphasize his moral weaknesses in spite of the comic atmosphere generated. Moreover, the second half of each comparison reveals a not very worthy member of a particular profession indulging in a mean or anti-social act. The lawyer, the doctor, the lord, the swearing captain, and the man of fashion are seen in rather unfavourable lights and our laughter is directed at them. By the time we come to Trulliber therefore, we have already been conditioned to react to him

unfavourably, and our laughter, derived in part from the epic similes, is now entirely directed at him. So, when he replies, "what matter where a man's treasure is whose heart is in the scriptures?" we realize he is merely inventing a dialectic for opting out of his obligations as a Christian. His religious sincerity is hypocritical; it is a belief which entitles and enables him to call himself a Christian without practising the Christian's virtues. The irony is enforced even more strongly because Parson Adams in his simplicity is completely deceived by Trulliber; we the audience, however, who have after all been under Fielding's rhetorical guidance, are not. Fielding has made Trulliber's reference to treasure deliberately ambiguous so that the worldly reader will perceive his real meaning, but the unworldly Parson Adams will not. Adams, therefore, goes on in a very naive way to demand the money immediately, and thus brings the rage of Trulliber on his head.

Yet much as we may sympathize with Parson Adams' values and conduct, we have to admit that the episode is hilarious. Farce is always funny, but Fielding, as has been demonstrated in this Trulliber scene, uses farce to promote moral judgement by blowing up Trulliber's vices to the most absurd proportions so that they cannot fail to register on the reader's mind.

Farce is even more brilliantly exploited in the "hunting" scene and in the scene of "roasting" which follows. In order to create an episode which is explosively funny, Fielding exaggerates the traits of almost all the participants -- the hounds, the master, Parson Adams and Joseph. But as a result of the exaggeration these traits are rivetted in the minds of the readers and underlined. Fielding begins with the hounds and takes great care

to portray their cruelty and the hare's helplessness. "The hounds were now very little behind their poor reeling staggering prey, which, fainting almost at every step, crawled through the wood". If we are tempted to agree with Joseph that the hare was killed fairly and that the hounds should therefore be cleared of the charge of brutality, we soon change our opinion as Fielding shifts the focus to Parson Adams and the hare-killing hounds become man-chasing hounds. Their brutality is thus being continually blown up by Fielding. He drives the points home: "They must certainly have tasted his flesh which delicious flavour might have been fatal to him". The brutality is not minimized by the ridiculous sight of Parson Adams taking to his heels, for the reference to the homeric heroes reminds the reader that Hector and Turnus, in the most savage wars of ancient mythology, turned and fled because their enemies were after their lives.

With the arrival on the scene of the master of the hounds the moral implications of the farce are made much clearer:

"This gentleman was generally said to be a great lover of humour; but, not to mince the matter, especially as we are upon this subject, he was a greater hunter of men; indeed, he had hitherto followed the sport only with dogs of his own species; for he kept two or three couple of barking curs for that use only. However, as he thought he had now found a man nimble enough, he was willing to indulge himself with other sport, and accordingly crying out, stole away, encouraged the hounds to pursue Mr. Adams, swearing it was the largest Jack-hare he ever saw; at the same time hallooing and hooping as if a conquered foe was flying before him; in which he was imitated by those two or three couple of human or rather two-legged curs on horseback which we have mentioned before".¹

Once more, it is impossible to conceive of a master of the hounds as tyrannical and animalistic as this; he could only exist in farce because his basic qualities have been blown up. Yet the exaggeration serves

¹ J.A., Bk.III, ch.vi.

Fielding's purpose for it calls attention to qualities which the master does possess even if they may not, in reality, be as vicious as the farce makes out. His inhumanity is underlined by the reference to him as a hunter of men, and his animalism comes out as he assumes the characteristic of his hounds and halloos and hoops after Parson Adams. Fielding also employs imagery and irony to reinforce his moral points in this episode. Not only is the master referred to as a hunter of men, his followers are called "dogs of his own species" and "barking curs". These are strong terms, but they help to manipulate our response to the master and his friends. The reference to Mr. Adams as the "largest Jack-hare" may be funny, but it takes on a sombre quality when we recall that it has been made by the "hunter of men". By these means Fielding continually manipulates the reader's responses during this episode, and his responses need to be manipulated, because he must see the master's and his friends' inhumanity and uncharitableness set against Parson Adams' charity and innocence.

In the subsequent "roasting" scene farce is used again to exaggerate and highlight the "cur-like" qualities of the squire's companions. Before the episode commenced Fielding had given tiny sketches of the characters of the participants. All he needed to do in the roasting scene was to blow these up and underline them, and he does so brilliantly as each of the sycophants comes forward with his own practical joke. We laugh at Mr. Adams' simplicity as he replies gently to the apologies of the poet who overturned a plate of soup into his breeches, and as he declares the waiting-man's mixture of gin and ale to be the best liquor he'd ever tasted, but in spite of this we are repelled by the squire's disregard of all the laws of hospitality and the grotesque buffoonery of his followers. The extempore

poem composed by the poet is, we admit, funny at Mr. Adams' expense, but at the end of the recital "the bard whipt off the player's wig and received the approbation of the company rather perhaps for the dexterity of his hand than his head". Once more we see inflated childish behaviour. The same is true of the dancing master's stupidity and grotesqueness. By making use therefore of the inflationary potential of farce, Fielding underlines the clownishness and simplicity of Mr. Adams, the inhumanity and animalism of the squire and the grotesque buffoonery and unfriendliness of his sycophants.

Finally there is the scene in which Mr. Adams, Mrs. Slipslop, the host and hostess, become involved in a ferocious fist-fight.¹ The scene begins with an argument between the host and Mr. Adams:

"The bell then happening to ring, he damned his wife, and bid her go in to the company, and not stand rubbing there all day; for he did not believe the young fellow's leg was so bad as he pretended; and, if it was, within twenty miles he would find a surgeon to cut it off. Upon these words, Adams fetched two strides across the room; and snapping his finger over his head, muttered aloud, He would excommunicate such a wretch for a farthing; for he believed the Devil had more humanity".

Obviously Fielding exaggerates the behaviour of both Mr. Adams and the host, but this does not matter as long as it permits him to underline Mr. Adams' pugnacity and friendly devotion, and the host's inhumanity and materialism. The exaggeration continues in the fight which ensues, thus confirming our impression of Mr. Adams's pugnacity, the host's quarrelsomeness, the hostess' marital devotion and Mrs. Slip-slop's ferocity. The whole episode is rounded off beautifully at the end with the host laying the blame on his innocent wife and Mrs. Slip-slop standing over her in triumph with the

¹ J.A., Bk.II, ch.v.

hostess' hair in her hand.

Fielding is thus seen to use farce morally in Joseph Andrews. In spite of the comic atmosphere which is generated, he exploits the inflationary potential of the farcical episode to underline the qualities of the various characters; and by so doing, manipulates the attitudes and responses of the readers. But farce is not the only comic device Fielding exploits in this way; burlesque and the mock-epic are used with the same intention and with equal success.

The most celebrated "burlesque" passage in Joseph Andrews is the description of Joseph's fight with the hounds. Fielding begins his account of the episode with a parody of the epic invocation:

"Now, thou, whoever thou art, whether a muse, or by what other name soever thou choosest to be called, who presidest over biography, and hast inspired all the writers of lives in these our times: thou who didst infuse such wonderful humour into the pen of immortal Gulliver; who hast carefully guided the judgement, whilst thou hast exalted the nervous manly style of thy Malet:...Do thou introduce on the plain, the young, the gay, the brave Joseph Andrews, whilst men shall view him with admiration and envy, tender virgins with love and anxious concern for his safety".¹

It is possible that Fielding intended to ridicule certain contemporary works by means of this burlesque invocation, but its most discernible effect is its impact on our attitude towards Joseph. It may not condition the reader into reacting critically and sceptically towards Joseph at this stage, but it certainly isolates the young hero on the plain as a figure of fun. The burlesque technique, especially when applied to the epic framework, forces the reader to compare the characters of the "burlesque" to homeric characters and the result of this is that the inferiority of the former is emphasized. Joseph on the plain is therefore seen, not as a hero, but a

¹ J.A., Bk.III, ch.vi.

clowmish figure. The effect Fielding achieves here is the same as that he contrived in the earlier chapters of the novel, when he gave accounts of Joseph's youthful activities. Here in the hunting scene, we are presented with the "paragon of beauty and manliness" all over again. As in his younger days, Joseph inspires men with envy and admiration, and girls with love and concern. As in the former case, the picture is much too idealized to be taken seriously and the reader responds to Joseph, not with admiration, but with laughter.

In the ensuing battle with the hounds it is not Fielding's intention to portray Joseph simply as the loyal friend going to the defence of the harrassed Parson Adams, nor, as the invocation indicates, does he mean to isolate or underline Joseph's bravery. If this were so, he would not have used a burlesque framework. Fielding rather wants to continue his portrayal of Joseph as the merry Andrews, the Christian clown. For in all these scenes Fielding's double vision still operates. He does his best to expose the wickedness of society but at the same time he laughs at the innocence, clumsiness and (one might almost say) boorishness of his Christian clowns, Parson Adams and Joseph. It is his intention in this scene, therefore, to manipulate the reader's attitude so that he responds to Joseph, not as a brave young man, but as a laughable, clumsy, country innocent, and the burlesque produces precisely this effect:

"No sooner did Joseph Andrews perceive the distress of his friend, when first the quick-scenting dogs attacked him, than he grasped his cudgel in his right hand; a cudgel which his father had of his grandfather, to whom a mighty strong man of Kent had given it for a present in that day when he broke three heads on the stage. It was a cudgel of mighty strength and wonderful art, made by one of Mr. Deard's best workmen, whom no other artificer can equal,

and who hath made all those sticks which the beaus have lately walked with about the Park in a morning; but this was far his masterpiece. On its head was engraved a nose and a chin, which might have been mistaken for a pair of nutcrackers."¹

Instead of Vulcan plying his mysterious craft to provide the Gods and Homeric heroes with arms, we have Mr. Deard who normally makes walking-sticks for beaus. Instead of a broadsword we have a cudgel; and the donor of the cudgel is not some illustrious god, but a mighty strong man of Kent, who had used it, not to kill his enemies in battle, but to break three heads on the stage. The juxtaposition of these ordinary people and implements with heroes and their weapons emphasizes the ordinariness of the former even further. The reader is thus left in no doubt that he is being presented, not with heroes, but with country bumpkins. So when Joseph enters the scene wielding the cudgel, the reader's attitude towards him has already been partly conditioned:

"No sooner had Joseph grasped his cudgel in his hands than lightning darted from his eyes; and the heroic youth, swift of foot, ran with the utmost speed to his friend's assistance. He overtook him just as Rockwood had laid hold of the skirt of his cassock, which being torn, hung to the ground. Reader, we would make a simile on this occasion, but for two reasons: the first is, it would interrupt the description, which should be rapid in this part; but that doth not weigh much, many precedents occurring for such an interruption: the second, and much the greater reason, is, that we could find no simile adequate to our purpose: for, indeed, what instance could we bring to set before our reader's eyes at once the idea of friendship, courage, youth, beauty, strength, and swiftness? All which blazed in the person of Joseph Andrews. Let those therefore that describe lions and tigers, and heroes fiercer than both, raise their poems or plays with the simile of Joseph Andrews, who, is himself above the reach of any simile".²

No doubt Joseph is a courageous and loyal friend, but these are not the

1 *ibid.*

2 *ibid.*

qualities to which Fielding by means of his style, draws the reader's attention. Indeed, Fielding consistently mocks Joseph's courage, youth, beauty and swiftness as he had done in the earlier chapters. Fielding seems to insist that, whatever he is, Joseph is not a hero in the Homeric sense of the term. The epic analogy, on the contrary, reinforces and underlines Joseph's rusticity. He is an ordinary country bumpkin behaving like a Homeric hero, as such he is a figure of fun. We follow Joseph's ferocious activities, over the plain, therefore, not with admiration but with laughter. He certainly does not attain the dignity of a Hector and a Sampson to whom it was permitted to scatter death and destruction over the field. Their conduct was commensurate with their innate heroic worth. Joseph, dealing a handful of dogs to death with the ferocity of a hero is in a different category. The hint of ferocity and savagery is brought out in the sentence, "Let those therefore that describe lions and tigers, and heroes fiercer than both, raise their poems or plays with the simile of Joseph Andrews, who is, himself above the reach of any simile". It is surely not to Joseph's advantage to be compared to "lions and tigers and heroes fiercer than both".

Yet, although the spectacle of Joseph mauling Rockwood, Ringwood, Thunder, Plunder, Wonder and Blunder is gruesome, it is not this aspect of the scene that Fielding emphasizes; rather it is the ridiculous figure of Joseph himself. Perhaps he makes fun of Joseph because he wishes to insinuate that Joseph was too enthusiastic in his defence of Parson Adams. It seems more plausible, though, that Fielding makes Joseph the object of ridicule because he wishes to be consistent with his treatment of Joseph so

far. In many ways Joseph is still the naive country simpleton. In this sense he does not have Fielding's complete endorsement as Battestin's interpretation would imply. He still has to go through a process of education and development and does not become the perfectly mature man until his marriage with Fanny.

We must therefore reject Ian Watt's suggestion that Fielding's mock-epic descriptions are solely designed to divert the reader's attention from the events of the episode to the way in which Fielding is handling it and therefore to other epic parallels involved. If we do consider other epic parallels, it is in order to compare the behaviour of the characters in those parallels with those in Fielding's mock-epic episodes and therefore to make judgements about them. Our attention is not diverted from the events of the hunting scene. If, for a moment, we think of Hector or Sampson, we soon return to Joseph Andrews and compare Joseph's behaviour with theirs. We are thus forced to make judgements about Joseph.

This same technique can be seen in operation in the mock-epic description of Parson Trulliber's response to Adams' peremptory demand for money:

"A while he rolled his eyes in silence; sometimes surveying Adams, then his wife; then casting them on the ground, then lifting them up to heaven. At last he burst forth in the following accents: 'Sir, I believe I know where to lay up my little treasure as well as another'".¹

By being deliberately elevated to the status of the homeric Gods, Trulliber's inferiority to them is stressed. The gap between his status and theirs emphasizes his lowness, crudity and unworthiness, and the incongruity between his actual status and the style in which his response is described

¹ J.A., Bk.II, ch.xiv.

produces laughter which is directed against him. Such behaviour in a heroic personage may be regarded as consistent; but in Parson Trulliber it is malevolent. So that even before he replies to Adams' request we are being manipulated and conditioned towards reacting to him critically.

Farce, burlesque and the mock-epic work by exaggeration, inflation or distortion. There is another literary device which works in the same way; this is (for want of a better word) hyperbolic rhetoric, and Fielding uses it quite often in his novels as one of the means of manipulating the reader's response and attitude to certain characters. In order to produce this result, Fielding forces the characters in question to speak in a stilted, artificial, unnatural or disjointed manner. The reader therefore forms the impression that there must be something wrong with such a character and he is prepared to make moral judgements.

Lady Booby's soliloquies furnish admirable examples of the operation of this technique:

"What am I doing? how do I suffer this passion to creep imperceptibly upon me! How many days are past since I could have submitted to ask myself the question? — marry a footman! Distraction! Can I afterwards bear the eyes of my acquaintance? But I can retire from them; retire with one, in whom I propose more happiness than the world without him can give me".¹

Fielding uses the artificial hyperbolic style here to distance Lady Booby and render her conduct slightly absurd so that we can pass judgement on her. His intention is not to give a realistic portrayal of what is going on inside Lady Booby's mind. The style is much too formal to be used for a "Richardsonian" probing of Lady Booby's soul, but because of its artificiality

¹ J.A., Bk.IV, ch.xiii.

it can help to manipulate the reader's attitude to Lady Booby at this stage.

Perhaps the most effective of all the comic devices Fielding uses in this novel is the device of irony. It is mostly by its means that Fielding reveals the ambivalence of his attitude to Parson Adams and makes the reader realize that, although he is one of the chief embodiments of the novel's positive values, yet he should not be accepted always at face value. Very often Adams and his views are subjected to rigorous criticism. It will now be useful to analyse some scenes in which Parson Adams features in order to see the operation of Fielding's irony.

The first scene to be discussed is that in which Adams, having heard contrasting accounts of a local squire's personality from two gentlemen, turns to the host for clarification and the discussion soon turns on religious questions:¹

"Adams asked him why he went to Church, if what he learned there had no influence on his conduct in life? 'I go to Church', answered the host, 'to say my prayers and behave godly'. — 'And dost not thou then tremble', cries Adams, 'at the thought of eternal punishment?' — 'As for that master', said he, 'I never once thought about it; but what signifies talking about matters so far off? The mug is out; shall I draw another?'"

Mr. Adams' position is fundamentally correct. The host's religion is only skin-deep, and he is obviously in need of some spiritual guidance. But Adams' questioning of him is too rigorous and patronising. The severity and absurdity of statements such as "dost not thou then tremble at the thought of eternal punishment," indicate to the reader that Adams must be viewed critically.

Mr. Adams' unreasonableness in argument is one of the characteristics

¹ J.A., Bk.II, ch.iii.

which are exposed in Fielding's description of his encounter with another host who had quite generously offered to waive aside the debt that Parson Adams had incurred, as a result of a practical joke.¹ In the argument Mr. Adams continues to insist on the superiority of books to life as a guide to human conduct. The host, on the other hand, has seen life and studied it, and, quite calmly, he states his belief that there is no substitute for life as an educator. During the exchanges with Adams, he reveals himself, not only as a charitable man, but also as a reasonable one whose views are well-balanced and sound. His judgement on the perfidious practical joker certainly proves more accurate than Mr. Adams'. With the knowledge of a man of affairs, he says:

"'Ah, master,' says the host, 'if you have travelled as far as I have, and conversed with the many nations where I have traded, you would not give any credit to a man's countenance. Symptoms in his countenance, quotha! I would look there, perhaps, to see whether a man had had the small-pox, but for nothing else.' He spoke this with so little regard to the Parson's observation that it a good deal nettled him; and taking his pipe, hastily from his mouth, he thus answered: 'Master of mine, perhaps I have travelled a great deal farther than you, without the assistance of a ship. Do you imagine sailing by different cities or countries is travelling?'"

It may appear on the surface that the host is at fault for not paying much regard to what Parson Adams had just said. But the host's statement, though blunt, is fundamentally true, and Fielding's irony operates in such a way that the reader realizes it is Mr. Adams who is at fault. The words, "with little regard to the Parson's observation," are not really intended as a rebuke to the host for his disrespect, rather they indicate that Parson Adams thought so highly of himself and his opinions that he could brook neither

¹ J.A., Bk.II, ch.xvii.

criticism of nor indifference to them. He was therefore nettled by the host's remark; the point being stressed is surely that Mr. Adams the clergyman who ideally should be a model of humility, regards the host's remark as an affront to his authority, and a blow to his ego. He is visibly annoyed and hastily takes his pipe out of his mouth in order to reply. As the argument progresses, it becomes clear that although the host may have been tactless, Parson Adams is unreasonable and thin-skinned. His ignorance of the world, his pugnacity and impatience of the views of others are thus exposed. Fielding conditions the reader to react critically to Adams in this episode by treating him ironically. He inserts words and phrases into his statements which suggest to the reader that although much of what the parson says is true, and although he is basically a good-natured and charitable man, yet he does possess some unpleasant characteristics of which the reader should be aware.

It is not only Parson Adams' character which is subjected to rigorous testing in the above episode by means of Fielding's irony; one of his most fundamental beliefs also comes under attack. The host clearly has the better of the argument on the relative merits of books and life as guides to human conduct. This is one of the main themes of the novel and Fielding clearly intends to demonstrate that books, sermons, and letters may be useful, but they are not necessarily the best guides to life. The best guide to life is life itself. Parson Adams' ignorance of the world and the strangeness of his views are due to his failure to grasp this fact. This is why he and Joseph have to be thrown into the world.

In the episode therefore, we see the beginning of a process whereby

Parson Adams and his opinions are subjected to very close scrutiny by means of Fielding's irony. This process is continued in the episode in which Joseph and Mr. Adams engage in a debate on schools.¹ Again Fielding uses irony to manipulate the reader towards adopting a critical stance to the Parson and his views. He does this by making Adams use intemperate words and arguments, thus gradually revealing the absurdity of some of his opinions and the irascibility of his temper. When, for instance, the Parson declares that public schools are the nurseries of all vice and immorality, he obviously overstates his case. The phrases he uses are too extreme and their effect is to alienate the reader's sympathy and convince him that although some of the Parson's utterances may contain a measure of truth, yet it is far from being the whole truth and he himself must be viewed ironically. It is probably true that some of the King's scholars Mr. Adams met at university were wild and wicked fellows. But when he says he would rather see a boy a blockhead than a presbyterian or an atheist, or that a lad of eighteen should be considered immoral because he could not say his Catechism, it may seem that his views border closely on bigotry. Adams' vanity is also revealed by means of irony. Joseph remarks, for instance, that Mr. Adams is "the best teacher... in all our county" and Adams replies, "Yes, that I believe is granted me; that I may without much vanity pretend to -- nay, I believe I may go to the next county too -- but gloria non est meum". Parson Adams boasts even while he says that it is not for him to boast, and his vanity is exposed even while he claims to be free from vanity.

¹ J.A., Bk.III, ch.v.

Joseph meanwhile keeps up the dispute on schools; he takes an example from life — the example of Sir Thomas Booby himself, who "was bred at a public school" and who "was the finest gentleman in all the neighbourhood". Joseph's line of argument seems to be corroborated later when we are told that the "Parson-hunting" squire had been educated at home "under the care of his mother by a tutor who had orders never to correct him". Again it is Fielding's irony which informs us that he is on Joseph's side. What Joseph says is, of course, quite reasonable and may have been accepted as the correct attitude even without the assistance of irony. But his views may appeal more to modern minds than it would have done to eighteenth-century Englishmen. The reader must therefore be furnished with further clues other than the rationality of Joseph's arguments, and he can only get these clues by observing the way in which the irony operates; there is little doubt that it is directed against Mr. Adams. Joseph is sweet reasonableness and humility whereas Mr. Adams is a picture of vanity and arrogance. Mr. Adams would keep boys in innocence and ignorance rather than let them loose in the world. He does not seem to realize that it is possible to combine knowledge of the world with virtue.

It seems, however, that to a certain extent the irony operates in the other direction, for Joseph's statement does not seem to have Fielding's complete endorsement either. He seems to believe that if a boy is "of a mischievous, wicked inclination", no school, "though ever so private will ever make him good"; and, on the other hand, if he has a good disposition he can be trusted to London without danger of corruption. Joseph also overstates his case, revealing his naivety in the process. He himself is

a walking example of a good-natured boy, who was to a certain extent corrupted by London life. It seems that Fielding is suggesting that the decisive factor in moulding a boy's character is less the nature of the school than the quality of the teachers.

Next let us consider the scene in which Mr. Adams and Joseph are discovered tied to a bed-post.¹ In this, as in the other episodes, Mr. Adams and his views are regarded ironically. Fanny, we remember, has just been abducted by the followers of the "hunting-squire" and Joseph and Mr. Adams are left behind, tied to a bed. Joseph laments his misfortune, and Mr. Adams attempts to console him and reason him out of his grief, by suggesting that grief is unmanly and un-Christian. Once more, the absurdity of the position the parson adopts is revealed by means of irony, and Fielding creates his ironic effects by making Adams resort to hollow and untenable arguments. Far from comforting Joseph, Mr. Adams succeeds in intensifying the young Man's grief by painting, in the most horrible colours, the possible consequences of Fanny's abduction. Secondly, his speech, though essentially Christian, is too pedantic and sententious to be of any use in such a delicate situation. Thirdly, the Parson scales new heights of tactlessness and naivety when he tells Joseph that his misfortune may be a punishment for his sins. This is surely not the way to reason a man out of his grief. We can compare Mr. Adams' speech to Mr. Allworthy's oration to Jenny in Tom Jones. In that scene Mr. Allworthy is also viewed ironically and critically, because he is too pedantic and sententious, and because the consequences which he claims would follow Jenny's misdemeanor

¹ J.A., Bk.III, ch.xi.

are too inhuman: this alienates our sympathy. Our attitude to Parson Adams in this episode is the same. We agree with Joseph when he remarks, "You have not spoke one word of comfort to me yet". Parson Adams has, in fact, delivered a homily derived from books, and this has little relevance to the present situation or indeed to the human condition; when Joseph quotes from Macbeth and says he must also feel his sorrows like a man, we feel that he is making a very human plea.

Finally, irony can also be seen in operation in the episode in which Adams is discovered giving a lecture to Joseph on continence, when someone enters and announces that his son has been drowned.¹ Throughout the speech to Joseph, Fielding indicates that the Parson must be regarded critically because of the brutality of the words and phrases he uses and the uncompromising nature of the position he holds. He proposes to read Joseph and Fanny a sermon on the subject of continence: "I shall demonstrate how little regard ought to be had to the flesh on such occasions. The text will be, Matthew the 5th, and part of the 28th verse, Whosoever looketh on a woman, so as to lust after her. The latter part I shall omit, as foreign to my purpose." Like Dr. Faustus, Adams decides to omit the most significant part of the text. Fielding deliberately calls attention to this, thus manipulating us into regarding the parson ironically. The full text reads, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart". The text is about adultery and extra-marital relations. It does not have the slightest relevance to man and wife. By omitting the vital part Adams leaves himself

¹ J.A., Bk.IV, ch.viii.

open to the charge of intellectual dishonesty and Fielding focuses our attention on the fact. Finally, Adams refers to Abraham's coolness when asked by God to sacrifice his son. At this point the parson is informed that his son has been drowned; immediately the myth of continence, restraint and stoicism is exploded and Adams mourns his loss. It now falls on Joseph to console him with the same precepts he himself had used so often. Later, after the boy had been found safe and sound, Adams continues his lecture to Joseph, urging him to control his passions. Joseph loses patience and reminds Parson Adams of his own loss of control when he thought his son had died. This of course touches Adams on a sore spot, and he loses his temper. Again Fielding distances him and forces the reader to regard him in a slightly unfavourable light.

It is therefore by means of irony that Fielding manipulates the reader into realizing the unpleasantness of some aspects of Adams' character and the absurdity of some of the beliefs he holds. Batestin may be right in assuming that Adams was based on the biblical Abraham. But all the evidence shows that he does not have Fielding's complete endorsement. The reader is aware that Fielding's irony and other aspects of his comic art substantially modify the picture he inherited from the liberal divines. Parson Adams' pugnacity, vanity, impatience of the views of others, irascibility and complete ignorance of the ways of the world are exposed. In various episodes aspects of his fundamental doctrine that books and precepts are preferable to experience are also exposed. In the encounter with the second host he dogmatically states his preference for books rather than travel; in the debate with Joseph on schools he is in favour of

educating boys in the cloistered atmosphere of the home where precepts can be drilled into their heads, rather than the broader atmosphere of the public school, where they will come into contact with life as it is lived. In the "bed-post" scene he is shown delivering precepts which have little relevance to the actual situation. In all these scenes Parson Adams is exposed not only because of his ignorance of the world and his adherence to books and precepts, but because he shows a stubborn reluctance to become acquainted with the world and come to grips with it.

It is for this reason that Adams is made the target of Fielding's ridicule by means of irony. Fielding's main purpose in Joseph Andrews is to demonstrate that there is no substitute for life and experience in the education of the young. Adams is, in some ways, a bad tutor because he relies too much on books and precepts. It seems as if there is a great need for someone to emerge from Ben Jonson's play Bartholomew Fair and say to Mr. Adams "remember thou art but Adam flesh and blood, you have your frailty". For Adams is not only the biblical Patriarch, Abraham, he is also the man Adam and should therefore have recognized the human aspect of his personality. He should have paid less attention to precepts and more to human experience and the human situation. When he breaks down and mourns the loss of his son, we feel he is the better for it, for his humanity is underlined.

It is important that Joseph, the pupil, who is undergoing a process of education in the novel, should eventually come to see things differently from Parson Adams. It has already been seen how in his younger days his ideas and behaviour had been warped by a slavish adherence to Adams' doctrines.

As the novel progresses and he becomes acquainted with the world he gradually challenges and rejects the Parson's doctrines. He challenges him on schools and openly rejects his precepts about restraint during the bed-post scene. Finally, he laughs at Adams for not practising what he preached and throws his precepts in his teeth.

Fielding employs irony to show the gradual development of Joseph and the rejection of some of the tenets Parson Adams stands for. Irony is therefore the comic device that he uses to bring out the central message of his novel — the superiority of life and experience to books and precepts. But, as has been demonstrated, other comic devices — burlesque, mock-epic, farce, hyperbolic rhetoric and imagery are also used morally to manipulate the reader's responses and point to Fielding's meaning. The art and the morality cannot be separated; the art modifies the moral basis inherited from other sources, and through its operation reveals Fielding's own morality and therefore his meaning.

Joseph Andrews is a progress not a statement. Fielding has not written a tract in which his moral points are stated overtly or demonstrated by examples or one-dimensional patterns of virtue. There is development and change in these examples themselves and in Fielding's attitude to them. Accordingly the hero is seen to go through a process of education and development during which he rejects certain doctrines and accepts others, and his mentor's doctrines are exposed to the test of experience, and some of them rejected. In conformity with "epic" convention, Fielding set out to write a unified moral analysis with two heroes in the epic tradition. But his novel is also a comic novel and by employing certain comic devices

he continually changes the focus so that his heroes' weaknesses and limitations are exposed as well as their opponents' vices and follies. Values in the novel are thus communicated by a comic adjustment of vision and the result is a balanced view with the innocents satirizing the world but exposing their naivety at the same time. The final morality is thus seen to issue from the operation of the comic art; they cannot be separated.

CHAPTER FIVE

Jonathan Wild — An Exploration in Irony

I

In preceding chapters it was seen how Fielding used several comic devices to condition the reader's responses and make his moral points. In Jonathan Wild Fielding relies almost entirely on one device — that of irony. Irony is used consistently in the work to expose Wild and assert the values of the Heartfrees. Fielding seems to have started with a simple allegorical plot according to which the villain Wild was to be destroyed and the generous-hearted Heartfrees were to be vindicated. But, during the process of composition, it appears that he became aware of the complexities of both Heartfree and Wild and he attempted to suggest these by complicating his ironic pattern. He had not, however, perfected the device of double irony which would have enabled him to achieve this purpose satisfactorily. Therefore, the reader is left in a state of some uncertainty about Fielding's final attitude to the villain Wild, and Heartfree.

The result is that the manipulation of the texture points to a different meaning and a different conclusion from that suggested by the simple allegorical plot. Yet, before going into details about the technique of the work, it will be useful to consider the background and study the elements that went into the composition of Jonathan Wild.¹

¹ For an exhaustive study of all these elements see William R. Irwin, The Making of Jonathan Wild (New York, 1941).

By the time Fielding published Jonathan Wild in 1743, the man who bore that name had already been fixed in the popular imagination as the embodiment of villainy and hypocrisy; and had become something of a legend.¹ Jonathan Wild, thief taker, was born in Staffordshire in 1683, and subsequently found his way to the metropolis where, like many other poor and ill-educated young men of the time, he began to eke out a meagre existence in the London underworld. Eventually, he organized a gang of thieves, and set up a bureau where anyone whose goods had been stolen could report and enlist his assistance in recovering them. Many of the culprits were members of Wild's own gang, and he could therefore assure the victims of theft that in return for a certain sum of money, usually the same as their original value, the goods would be returned. He also made the condition that the owner should

¹ For the purposes of this work the 1754 revised edition, on which the Murphy text is based, is used throughout as representing Fielding's final intention. The differences between the 1743 and 1754 editions are not very relevant for this discussion. It is true that in the 1754 edition the political references were toned down and "Prime Minister" altered to "Statesman". But even in 1743 "Prime Minister" was evidently representative of the Great Man, and Fielding was still going beyond his personal attacks on Walpole to the idea of greatness. As far as the date of composition is concerned, it seems to me that Digeon and Homes Dudden have not conclusively proved their case for two stages of composition — (the earlier travel and rogue biography section in 1740, the Wild-Heartfree episodes in 1742 and the general polishing of the whole in 1743). Their solution is a very neat compromise between the divergent views of those who place the work before Joseph Andrews and those who place it after. But there is nothing in their arguments to prove that the whole could not have been written in continuous sittings in 1743. This idea of a 1743 revision in which Fielding toned down references to a Walpole whom he now admired and who was now out of office seems to accord very ill with the revision of 1754. For if Fielding had revised these sections in 1743, why did he not complete the revision then and change "Prime Minister" to "Statesman"? Why did he have to do it all over again in 1754?

ask no further questions and the thief be protected from prosecution.

From Wild's point of view this was an excellent scheme, for he was able to retain a fairly high percentage of the money given for the return of the articles, although he himself took no part in the robbery, and was therefore in no danger of being convicted for felony. The thief also gained because he received a part of the takings and was protected from conviction. For the victim of the theft it was at least possible to retrieve something which might be of sentimental value. The scheme also enabled Wild to pose as a law-abiding public-spirited citizen who was quite legitimately performing a public service by arranging for stolen goods to be restored; but, above all, it gave him almost absolute power over the members of his gang. He was the only person who knew what robberies they had committed, and he therefore had it in his power to give them up to justice. Since he never took part in the robberies himself, no one could accuse him of theft. The members of his gang realized therefore, that Wild held in his hands the power of life and death, and thus they feared and respected him.

Wild also realized this, and so, whenever any member of the gang became a liability because he was either too dangerous or useless, Wild arranged for the thief's conviction and execution. The advantages of this were threefold. Firstly, it was financially profitable, for Wild was able to collect forty pounds due to him for information leading to the conviction of a thief. Secondly, the members of the gang were overawed into submission; and, thirdly, Wild's reputation as a public servant was strengthened even further. Before long he acquired the title of thief-taker. In an age when the security services were either non-existent or deplorably

inefficient, the thief-taker was apt to be very highly regarded by the public. Wild was therefore confident that he could enlist the support of society on his side. But in this he misjudged his contemporaries in certain ways, for the eighteenth-century Englishman had not lost all regard for humanity and justice even though he lived in a brutal era.

By all accounts it was a callous age; crime^{me} was rife, and the public was not likely to show much leniency to those who persistently flouted the law. The number of capital offences was still high, and public executions numerous. The eight hanging days at Tyburn acquired the character of national holidays, and crowds turned out to witness the executions. Life for most of the poor was a harsh struggle in which they had become hardened by and accustomed to suffering and violence, so that they took death in their stride as part of the normal order of things. Yet eighteenth-century Englishmen were not so callous that they were likely to go on ignoring anyone who, even in the pursuit of thieves, threw to the winds all considerations of decency and humanity. Moreover, the populace for its part, had a soft spot for its rogues. They expected the convicted thief to put up a brave show on the scaffold; and, by and large, the rogues lived up to this expectation. Fielding, himself^f, and many other eighteenth-century moralists, complained that the glamour which surrounded the ceremony of execution was hardly conducive to making the death penalty an effective deterrent. The procession from the prison to Tyburn was treated almost as a royal progress, as Mrs. Peachum in The Beggar's Opera reminds us:

"The youth in his cart has the air of a lord,

And we cry, There dies an Adonis".¹

On the gallows itself it was traditional for the thief to show no sign of fear but to make a brave speech confessing his crimes and exhorting other young men to virtue.

Generally, there was a tendency towards the glorification of the rogue, and a manifestation of this was the popularity of the rogue biography as a literary form during the first half of the century. On the morning after the execution of any notable rogue, a number of biographies and ballads recording his exploits were brought out for sale; and the Ordinary of Newgate, whose privilege it was to publish the confessions of condemned men, was compelled to times to bring out his version even before the execution, in order to beat his many competitors. The most important rogue biographies had two main features. Firstly, they had a moral purpose; many of these, for example, in Alexander Smith's collection of The Lives and Exploits of The Most Notorious Robbers, Pirates and Highwaymen begins by saying that the rogue in question was born of respectable parents, but was led into vicious habits through a bad education and bad company,² A good many of them end with the convict's confessing his sins, affirming his faith in God and consigning his soul to his maker. Secondly, there was always an element of sympathy for the rogue, and care was often taken to ensure that he or she made a good end.

When Wild commenced his career as thief-taker he underestimated his

¹ John Gay, The Beggar's Opera, 3rd. edition (1729), Act I, Sc.iv.

² Alexander Smith, The History of the Lives of the most Noted Highway-Men, Foot-Pads, Housebreakers, Shop-Lifters and Cheats of both Sexes (1714).

contemporaries' regard for fairness and decency, and misjudged this tendency to glamourize and sympathize with the rogue. The public conscience was outraged by the number of executions he contrived; these culminated in his relentless pursuit of John Sheppard, alias Blueskin, one of his lieutenants. Sheppard, an example of the eighteenth-century good-natured rogue, quarrelled with Wild, and so became a security risk as far as Wild was concerned. He was, therefore, "impeached" by the thief-taker and convicted. By a remarkable combination of geniality and an incredible ability at escaping from prison, he succeeded in endearing himself to the public; and his biography was undertaken by a number of authors, some of whom, such as Defoe, were eminent writers. It is told of him that, having broken out of prison for the last time, he treated his mother and friends to drinks and instead of escaping to some distant part of the country, paraded the streets of the capital dressed in the height of fashion.¹ A woman was heard wishing that the hand would be cursed which had the courage to hand him over to justice.² Defoe's biography of Sheppard is written in the first person; and, on the whole, the picture which emerges is of a genial, warm-hearted young man, who freely confessed his sins, exhorted other young men not to follow in his footsteps, and died confiding in his maker.

Sheppard thus became something of a hero, and when Wild relentlessly pursued him after each of his escapes from prison, the public saw a drama being enacted between a warm-hearted if profligate young man and a calculating villain. When this kind of conflict occurs there is little

¹ See Daniel Defoe, A Narrative of all the Robberies, Escapes, etc. of John Sheppard (1724), pp.28-29.

² Ibid., p.27.

doubt on whose side the sympathy of the populace will be. There was a universal uproar; Wild became a hated man, and a law was eventually passed making it a capital offence for anyone to return stolen goods without revealing the thief's identity. It was obviously directed at Wild, and on the strength of evidence submitted he was arrested, convicted and executed. The populace, contrary to its usual practice, showed extraordinary malevolence on the occasion of his execution, and pelted his cart with stones. The biographies which were published afterwards included one by Defoe; none of them glamourized him; on the contrary each portrayed Wild not only as a thief, but also as a cunning hypocrite and a villain.¹

II

Some of the materials that went into the composition of Fielding's Jonathan Wild were therefore already established popular lore. Yet, Jonathan Wild differs quite substantially from rogue biographies, such as those of Defoe and Alexander Smith; for, as will be seen later, it is much more than a mere biography. The only work which comes near Jonathan Wild, in scope and tone, is Gay's Beggar's Opera. In order, therefore, to see what Fielding was trying to do, we must turn for a moment to Gay's portrayal of London low-life.

The Beggar's Opera (1728) was the most popular dramatic production of the early eighteenth century; and it is interesting for our purpose because,

¹ For a particularly vehement description of Wild's end, see Alexander Smith, Memoirs of the Life and Times of the Famous Jonathan Wild (1726), pp.18-19.

for the first time, the element of satire was introduced into the portrayal of the rogue; and for the first time also, we encounter a work in which both the hero and the villain are rogues. Moreover, The Beggar's Opera was one of the first works to point to the similarity between high life and low life, between the statesman and the thief. Peachum, a thief-taker and receiver of stolen goods after the style of Jonathan Wild, approaches his task with professional detachment. At the approach of every sessions he calmly decides which of his thieves he can afford to hang, which can wait until the next sessions, and which must be spared because of their usefulness. If any one person can be regarded as the villain of the piece it is Peachum. Macheath, on the other hand, is the eminently likeable, good-natured rogue. It is true that his relations with Polly Peachum and Lucy Lockit come under satiric fire; but, even so, the satire is directed not so much against him as against Walpole, or even the King. Macheath may be a profligate libertine, he may be even a highwayman, but like Sheppard he is warm-hearted, loved by all the women, and admired by the members of his gang. Moreover, he endears himself to everyone all the more because he is the victim of the machinations of Peachum. The satire is applied directly to Peachum as the villain; it is never applied directly to Macheath, but indirectly through him to Sir Robert Walpole. However, the satirical effects of The Beggar's Opera are much more wide-ranging than this; indeed they extend to all levels of society, particular care being taken to show that high life is just as corrupt as low. Peachum sings:

"Through all the employments of life
 Each neighbour abuses his brother;
 Whore and Rogue they call Husband and Wife;
 All professions be-rogue one another.

The priest calls the Lawyer a cheat,
 The Lawyer be-knaves the Divine;
 And the Statesman, because he's so great,
 Thinks his trade as honest as mine."¹

And he goes on:

"A lawyer's is an honest employment, so is mine".

Later Jenny Diver sings:

"The gamesters and lawyers are jugglers alike,
 If they meddle your all is in danger:
 Like Gypsies, if once they can finger a souse,
 Your pockets they pick, and they pilfer your house,
 And give your estate to a stranger."²

Throughout the work Doctors, Divines, Lawyers, Lords, Ladies and Statesmen are satirized in general; and in the quarrel between Lockit and Peachum, Walpole's quarrel with Townshend is exposed in particular.

In The Beggar's Opera we can thus see a significant advance on the rogue biographies. The rogue as villain and the rogue as hero are found in the same work; through the rogue the statesman is satirized and the pretensions of the upper classes are exposed. Like The Beggar's Opera, Fielding's work also differs from the rogue biographies in that the element of satire is introduced. There is, therefore, a basic similarity between the two works; but in spite of this, there are important differences. The tone of Gay's opera is definitely more light-hearted. It is much nearer Joseph Andrews in atmosphere than Jonathan Wild. For though Gay set out to laugh at follies, vices, and hypocrisy, he also meant to entertain. However much we may laugh at Mr. and Mrs. Peachum, we never condemn or despise them. The mood is festive, and there are some occasions when the Mercenary

¹ The Beggar's Opera, I, i.

² The Beggar's Opera, II, iv.

Peachums endear themselves to us. A pointer to the opera's atmosphere is that our moral sense is not outraged when at the very last moment there is a reprieve for Macheath, and Peachum is allowed to live on — presumably to continue to practise his profession as a thief-taker.

In The Beggar's Opera there is also an element of Romanticism absent from Jonathan Wild. Not only do we seem to have been transported to the world of pantomime where realism is not expected, there is also a definite glamorization of the hero Macheath. Gay handles his art in such a way that he forces us to forget that Macheath is a highwayman and a bigamist, and our sympathies are with him almost entirely. Jonathan Wild on the other hand, is not romantic; Fielding's work is much harsher than Gay's, and the tone is more satiric than comic. In The Beggar's Opera the roles of villain and hero were shared between Macheath and Peachum, both of them rogues. In Jonathan Wild the villain is the hero. All this means that different stylistic devices had to be applied to Jonathan Wild; for since the villain is the hero, irony now becomes the dominant mode.

Jonathan Wild also differs from The Beggar's Opera in another way. For the first time in a major work of fiction the idea of roguery was related to the idea of greatness as something to be consistently attacked. Wild had been shown as a villain by some writers such as Swift; he had even been seen as the symbol of the great man. In The Beggar's Opera, itself, the relation between thieves and statesmen had been spotlighted and passing shots had been fired at Walpole as the "Great Statesman". But all these works were concerned with particular "great men". Before Jonathan Wild the idea of greatness, as distinct from the great man, had never been studied, analysed and satirized so consistently in a major work. Jonathan Wild is

a political satire on the "great man", but it goes much further than this.¹

Perhaps, at this stage, it will be of interest to consider why eighteenth-century writers attacked greatness so readily. The minds of men in the early eighteenth century were preoccupied with the idea of greatness. Charles XII of Sweden, within living memory, had bestrode the Northern World like a Colossus, conquering for the sake of conquest, and leaving devastation and suffering in his wake. Johnson, in The Vanity of Human Wishes, mentions his folly, and other references are to be found in many works of the time. The Swedish King's exploits led men to think of Alexander and Caesar; and though the sheer mastery of these men held a certain fascination for ordinary people, the tendency was to summarize their careers (as Johnson did) as "all is but vanity".

The idea of greatness, therefore, had acquired certain displeasing connotations, and for the Englishman of the time it was especially associated with the career of Sir Robert Walpole.² Walpole had established complete supremacy over all his ministerial colleagues and complete dominance of Parliament.³ It was an age of fierce political antipathies, and the

¹ See above. My contention is that even if the 1743 edition contained personal references to Walpole, there is enough evidence in it that Fielding was thinking of "greatness".

² See J.E. Wells, "Fielding's Political Purpose in Jonathan Wild", PMLA, XXVIII (1913), 1-55.

³ Walpole was in all probability a brilliant and efficient administrator. It is significant that most of his major literary enemies (Pope, Fielding and Dr. Johnson) changed their minds about him later. But at the height of the political controversies of the thirties they saw Walpole as a corrupt politician. According to them he turned the art of politics into the art of bribery; and corruption became rife as candidates struggled for place and preferment.

opposition had gone to the extent of conducting a literary war against Walpole with the aid of paid literary hands. Invariably, whenever these writers set about their tasks, they singled out as their targets certain aspects of Walpole's life and policies:

- i. the corruption in high places;
- ii. the personal relations between Walpole, his wife and his mistress;
- iii. and the brutal way in which he got rid of associates such as Townshend in order to establish complete supremacy.

These writers all saw Walpole as the "Great Man" par excellence.

In a parody, for example, called The Statesman's Progress, or A Pilgrimage to Greatness, the author falls asleep and dreams of a Mr. Badman who is making a pilgrimage to Greatness Hill. Numerous characters appear such as Mr. Take-Bribe, Mr. Patriot, Mr. Worthy, Mr. No-Bribe, Mr. Prodigal and Queen Vice. Walpole's Excise Bill is portrayed as a monstrous beast with which Mr. Badman intends to terrify the people into submission. In the end he achieves Greatness Hill, triumphs over his enemies and the people murmur. The relation between the statesman and the rogue is brought out in the following passage:

"So Badman followed Truth a very little way, but was soon tired with the Ruggedness thereof; for it had been long disused; and asked Truth if there was not a nearer and easier way to Greatness-Hill? Truth answered and said, there was, and it was called Vice-Road; but no traveller, who valued his Reputation, cared to be seen to go that way; for it was the Road that all Pickpockets and highway-men, and people who had neither regard for Honour and Conscience took."¹

Again, in The Fatal but Deserved Death of Haman, the emphasis is laid on Haman's relentless and malevolent pursuit of Mordecai whom he nearly sends to the gallows. This is also a political satire on Walpole, and the

¹ John Bunyan, The Statesman's Progress (Dublin, 1741), p.4.

reference may be either to his replacement of Townshend or to his struggle with Pulteney. Of course, we can also recognize a parallel here with Wild's persecution of Heartfree as described in Fielding's work.¹

Such pamphleteers thus seized upon the great man's alleged corruption, immorality and ruthlessness in dealing with his associates and manipulating his tools. All these aspects are present in Fielding's work, which is also in part a political satire on the "great man", Sir Robert Walpole. Yet it is still different from such tracts and pamphlets; for, whereas they satirize greatness in order to hit at Walpole, Fielding was ultimately interested, not so much in Walpole "the great man", as in the idea of greatness itself. It is therefore not of particular relevance in his work whether Wild stands for Walpole, Wilmington or Pulteney, Charles the Great, Caesar or Alexander; the important point is that Fielding reaches beyond the actual Wild to the abstract idea of greatness. The entire work was obviously planned from the start as a study of greatness — something much bigger than the conventional rogue biography.

Yet Aurelian Digeon, in his Novels of Henry Fielding, argues that Fielding intended originally to write a biography of Wild along the same lines as the other rogue biographies, and that the work as originally planned would have comprised the first book and only a few incidents from the other books; the entire confrontation with Heartfree would have been omitted:

"The most violent political allusions are to be found in this original nucleus of the novel, or rather in what remains of it in the final version. But in the meantime Fielding's talent was maturing, he was developing into the author of Joseph Andrews.

¹ A. Webster, The Wicked Life, and Fatal but Deserved Death of Heman (Edinburgh, 1741).

And the pages which remain to be described are undoubtedly the work of the hand which produced Joseph Andrews.

It was the new Fielding who feared to weary his readers by such continuous villainy, such unrelieved and inexorable irony. The moment has come when he discovers his true genius. Onto the picaresque biography which he had begun, he now grafts a novel according to his own fashion. And this is why, parallel to the fate of Wild, we are told the story of his victim, Heartfree".¹

There are several objections to Digeon's theory. In the first place it depends partly on the assumption that Jonathan Wild was started before Joseph Andrews, then suspended while that novel was being written, and finally taken up again after its completion. This latter theory itself has certainly not been proved beyond doubt. The plot and construction of Jonathan Wild is not as admirable as some critics have claimed,² but it is still hard to believe that its composition was suspended while that of Joseph Andrews was undertaken. Stylistic evidence does not help, either. In tone and style Joseph Andrews is very different from Jonathan Wild because the subject matter is different. Furthermore, there is no evidence of any stylistic progression from Jonathan Wild to Joseph Andrews and back again; so stylistic evidence does not help us at all to place the works chronologically. But even if it could be proved that Joseph Andrews interrupted the composition of Jonathan Wild, there is still little evidence in the book that Fielding had at first meant to write a rogue biography along conventional lines, but grafted a picaresque novel on to it simply out of

¹ A. Digeon, op.cit., p.116.

² It has been claimed that the structure of Jonathan Wild is so perfect that it must have been written at one sitting. A considered view of the plot and structure must be that it is neither good nor bad — just mediocre, for while the sections fall logically into place there is considerable padding; e.g. Mrs. Heartfree's narration of her adventures at sea. Nor is the work particularly fluent.

consideration for his readers' feelings and because he had discovered his true talent as a novelist. When Digeon refers to Fielding's fear of wearying his readers with "such a tale of villainy and inexorable irony" he surely does not take account of the fact that the irony is sustained throughout the book and is, in fact, applied to Heartfree, even if it is applied in reverse. He also seems to have forgotten that Wild's villainy is even more blatantly revealed in the Heartfree episodes.

There is ample evidence, on the other hand, that right from the start of the work Fielding's mind was preoccupied with the ideas of greatness and goodness as antithetical qualities. There is also weighty evidence in the first chapter that Fielding was interested not so much in roguery as the authors of the other rogue biographies, but in greatness, and not merely the corruption that may go with political greatness, but the suffering and devastation that such greatness causes. This is the relevance of the references to Caesar and Alexander. When, therefore, Fielding introduces Heartfree in the second book, he does so, not because he is afraid of wearying his readers "with such a tale of unrelieved villainy and inexorable irony", not because he is "developing into the author of Joseph Andrews", but because his study of greatness would be incomplete unless it were seen as showing itself in the relentless persecution of innocent goodness.

The construction of the work bears this out. Fielding tells us at the start what it is about -- about greatness and goodness. Then he gives an account of Jonathan Wild's education for his role as a great man; he has acquired his technique, worked out his philosophy and set up his gang. This brings us to the end of Book One. In Book Two the Heartfrees (the

representatives of goodness) are introduced and the scene is set for the confrontation with Wild. This goes on for the next two books, Wild's fortunes rising as Heartfree's decline. But the beginning of Book Four sees a change; both men are now in prison. Now Wild's fortunes decline as Heartfree's rise, and we are led to the eventual conclusion.

III

Jonathan Wild then is about greatness and goodness as antithetical qualities, and the development and exposure of Wild and the assertion of the Heartfree's values forms its allegorical pattern. Wild must be portrayed as a great man and, accordingly, the sections dealing with him are composed in a heroic or at least noble style. Yet Wild's roguery is revealed in a few sections and so the petty thief is set against the heroic style, and to this extent the style is mock-heroic. But for most of the time, Wild is treated as a great man. The idea of greatness is heroic and Wild does behave with a style and logic appropriate to greatness; the style in these sections is thus heroic, not mock-heroic. The mock-heroic shows a discrepancy between the high style and the actions and values of the characters who speak in or are described by the high style. The heroic arouses in our minds certain expectations of values and standards and we expect the characters to live up to them. It is the duty of the mock-heroic device to show that they do not. The satire is then directed, not at the heroic, nor at noble values and standards, but at the characters. Wild, as thief is, therefore, given mock-heroic treatment. But when he displays the qualities of great men, he is given heroic treatment for we must

see Wild on these occasions as the representative of greatness. There is no discrepancy between his "great" values and the heroic style in which they are described; the object of the satire in this case is not Wild, but greatness itself, and this greatness must be recognizable as greatness even if it is anarchic. We, therefore see a similarity between greatness and the style in which it is portrayed. However, we do keep in mind the association with roguery, and this does tend to diminish the great, or, at least, to set it in a very disadvantageous light, so that while showing greatness as greatness, Fielding does expose its wickedness.

A study of the opening sections of the work should demonstrate that Fielding intended Wild to be the representative of greatness in a literal sense. The work begins like the biography of an eminent man. In such a biography the author was expected to extol the illustrious person's virtues, but he was also trusted not to gloss over his failings. The great man's genealogy was also given. Both of these are done in Wild's case.¹ We therefore see him as a great man even if the concept of greatness he represents is destructive. Wild, the noble hero, also has a noble friend, Count La Ruse, and a lover described in the noble style, Miss Laetitia Snap. Miss Molly Straddle, the prostitute whom Wild encounters after robbing Heartfree, is not walking the streets, but "taking the air". When Wild addresses the convicts at Newgate he does so in the heroic manner and instead of a prison society, we are presented with a democratic state with Wild at its head. He refers to the inmates as "fellow-citizens" and is

¹ It is of course easy to see these opening sections as burlesque, but they are burlesque only if we keep thinking of Wild as a thief. And there is no reason why we should, for he is seldom shown engaged in the act of stealing.

anxious to defend their liberties.

Like the world of great men this world of rogues has its own philosophy and its own codes of conduct and honour. It also has its own semblance of legality. The reader is reminded of the world of rogues in Ben Jonson's The Alchemist, but there is an important difference here; for, whereas the philosophy of the rogues in Ben Jonson's play is nothing but jargon, the philosophy of Wild, the Count and their friends does make sense and is quite consistent. Let us take the speech of Count La Ruse to the young Wild at the beginning of the work as an example. It is argued with impressive logic:

"Is it less difficult by false tokens to deceive a shopkeeper into the delivery of his goods, which you afterwards run away with, than to impose upon him by outward splendour, and the appearance of fortune, into a credit by which you gain, and he loses twenty times as much."¹

The entire speech reads like that of a person in command — a company director or a Colonel addressing a junior member of his staff. Similarly, when Wild discovers Fireblood in the arms of his lovely Laetitia he talks at great length, in lofty terms, of his honour which has been sullied:

"— Man of honour! Doth this become affriend? Could I have expected such a breach of all the laws of honour from thee, whom I had taught to walk in its paths? Hadst thou chosen any other way to injure my confidence I would have forgotten it; but this is a stab in the tenderest part, a wound never to be healed, an injury never to be repaired; for it is not only the loss of an agreeable companion, of the affection of a wife, dearer to my soul than life itself, it is not this loss alone I lament: this loss is accompanied with disgrace, and with dishonour".²

There is something wrong with this notion of honour because it is

¹ J.W., Bk.I, ch.v.

² J.W., Bk.IV, ch.x.

thought of only in sexual terms. Honour becomes equated with the wife's chastity and the husband's self-respect. It has nothing to do with religion and with one's obligations to one's fellow-men. Yet having said this, one must concede that within the context of eighteenth-century society there is logic in Wild's statement. Many men in high life would have spoken in much the same terms. Elsewhere Wild refers to honour as the deference paid by members to the leader of a gang. At first we might tend to reject this, until we realize that it also includes the concept of loyalty to one's leader.

In this world, too, the members try to give the impression that they are honourable and law-abiding citizens. When the Count discovers that he has been robbed he "animadverts on the carelessness of the watch" and the scandal it was to the laws that honest people could not walk the streets in safety. Wild, in his argument with Blueskin, can even talk of the laws of the gang and set them against the laws of a legal society:

"... Where the chief magistrate is always chosen for the public good, which, as we see in all the legal societies of the world, he constantly consults, daily contributing, by his superior skill, to their prosperity, and not sacrificing their good to his own wealth, or pleasure, or humour: but in an illegal society or gang, as this of ours, it is otherwise; for who would be at the head of a gang unless for his own interest? And without a head, you know, you cannot subsist".¹

Further evidence that Fielding intended Wild's greatness to be taken literally is provided by the fact that unlike the works of Defoe and others Fielding reduces Wild's activities as highwayman, thief and receiver of stolen goods to the minimum, whereas the other works concentrate on them. In the early sections of the novel we do see Wild cheating at cards or arranging for travellers to be waylaid and robbed. But, as the work

¹ J.W., Bk.III, ch.xiv.

progresses, less and less of this tends to happen. Only once, indeed, do we see Wild actually returning stolen goods, the role he was supposed to have been famous for. It may be that Fielding omitted references to Wild's career as a thief because theft to him, might have seemed almost sensible, and because he realized that most ordinary readers did not find theft morally outrageous. He therefore had to find another aspect of Wild's character which would provoke the reader's moral condemnation. In any case the relevant point is that Fielding concentrates on the almost diabolical energy with which Wild contrives to bring Fierce, Marybone and Blueskin to the gallows, and on his attempts to ruin Heartfree. Also given prominence is the skill with which he organizes the members of his gang and then subjugates them to himself. Since the work is a study, not of a rogue, but of "greatness", the qualities concentrated on are those associated with "greatness" in everyone's mind -- the diabolical energy and destructive will which impell men like Charles of Sweden, Caesar and Alexander.

Yet throughout these scenes, it must be realized that Fielding's irony and satire are directed not so much against Wild, as against Wild the "great man"; not against the person, but what he stands for. This is brought out clearly in the following extract:

"But when I behold one Great Man starving with hunger, and freezing with cold, in the midst of fifty thousand who are suffering the same evils for his diversion; when I see another, whose mind is a more abject slave to his own greatness, and is more tortured and racked by it than those of all his vassals; lastly, when I consider whole nations rooted out only to bring tears to the eyes of a Great Man, not indeed because he hath extirpated so many but because he had no more nations to extirpate, then truly I am almost inclined to wish that nature hath spared us this her MASTERPIECE, and that no GREAT MAN had ever been born into the world."¹

¹ J.W., Bk.I, ch.xiv.

Wild, therefore, is built up as a great man and the society within which he operates is represented as "great society"; but his exposure, and the exposure of the anarchic concept of greatness he embodies, goes on simultaneously. Like Swift in The Tale of a Tub, Fielding wished to hit at his object indirectly. So the work had to be ironic and allegorical; and this meant that he had to portray a lower level of society which reproduced the features of a higher society of "great men".

The same degree of corruption prevailed in both societies, and as Wild himself points out, the qualities which made a successful statesman were the same as those which made a successful thief. Fielding could therefore satirize the world of great men by satirizing the world of thieves. In order to expose Wild himself, Fielding subjects him to sustained irony, and the method used is that of the simple "praise/blame inversion". On the surface the author appears to be on Wild's side; he appears to commend the qualities Wild possesses, but manages to suggest to the reader that, in order to ascertain his exact attitude to Wild, the judgements made on the surface must be reversed. For instance, Mr. Wild the elder decides to send Wild Junior on his travels, not to Europe, but to America:

"For travelling, he said, was travelling in one part of the world as well as another: it consisted in being such a time from home, and in traversing so many leagues; and appealed to experience, whether most of our travellers in France and Italy did not prove at their return that they might have been sent as profitably to Norway and Greenland?"

According to these resolutions of his father, the young gentleman went aboard a ship, and with a great deal of good company, set out for the American hemisphere. The exact time of his stay is somewhat undertain; most probably longer than was intended".¹

On the surface, Fielding appears to be seriously giving an account of

¹ J.W., Bk.I, ch.vii.

a young man's going on his travels, but the reader is made to realize that Wild has, in fact, been transported to the American colonies for theft. The use of words such as "uncertain" and "most probably" reinforces the irony. Whenever Fielding uses terms such as these, it is in order to condemn the object of the irony all the more. On the surface, one has the impression that the author is reserved, that he is being fair, and that he wants to make sure that all his facts are correct; he is, as it were, giving Wild the benefit of the doubt. But usually the effect of this device is to condemn the object of satire more strongly. Fielding also controls his rhetoric in such a way that the irony applies not only to Wild, but beyond him to the upper classes and high society which, after all, are the real objects of Fielding's satire. For, the irony does contain a germ of truth; many of the sons of the nobility who go to France and Italy could, in Fielding's view, just as profitably have gone to Norway and Greenland. Yet this aspect of the truth does not exonerate Wild. The irony applies also to him, though Fielding makes use of it to reach beyond Wild and attack high society.

The technique is seen again in the lecture that Wild gives to Bagshott:

"Is not the battle joined by the sweat, and danger of the common soldier? Are not the honour and fruits of the victory the general's who laid the scheme? Is not the house built by the labour of the carpenter, and the bricklayer? Is it not built for the profit only of the architect, and for the use of the inhabitant, who could not easily have placed one brick upon another?"¹

Once more the argument is stated so cogently and with such impressive logic that on the surface it appears for a moment that Fielding is on Wild's side

¹ J.W., Bk.I, ch.viii.

until we grasp the implications and realize that Wild has been distanced by Fielding who is viewing him ironically. Yet, once more, there is substantial truth in what Wild has been saying. Society is unfair and unjust, and the victory for which the general takes credit is won at the expense of his soldiers who remain unknown. But the truth implicit here does not excuse Wild: the irony applies to him for accepting this logic and acting upon it, although it reaches beyond him to society in general and great men in particular, for taking all the glory to themselves and giving no credit where it is due.¹

Fielding also uses irony to expose the insincerity and vulgarity which characterized Wild's marital and extra-marital relationships. Fielding set great store by the marriage bond and the role of love in the life of man, and it is part of his plan in Jonathan Wild to show Wild's love life as despicable. But, consistent with his practice in this work, he reaches beyond Wild to satirize marital relationships among the upper classes. This is how Fielding describes Wild's "passion" for Laetitia:

"Let it suffice then that the wit, together with the beauty of this young creature, so inflamed the passion of Wild, which, though an honourable sort of a passion, was at the same time so extremely violent, that it transported him to Freedoms too offensive to the nice chastity of Laetitia..."²

Laetitia is anything but witty and beautiful, and though it is true that Wild's passion has been inflamed, the very word "inflamed" has such overtones

¹ See also Bk.III, ch.iii.

"...what think you of private persecutions, treachery, and slander, by which the very souls of men are in a manner torn from their bodies? It is not more generous nay, more good-natured, to send a man to his rest, than, after having plundered him of all he hath, or from malice or malevolence deprived him of his character, to punish him with a languishing death, or what is worse, a languishing life?"

² J.W., Bk.I, ch.ix.

of licence that we immediately understand that his passion is dishonourable. Wild is violent, and again we see at once that this is not the ardour of a true lover, but of a man who begins with an "offensive freedom", which even Laetitia feels compelled to reject. Her chastity is referred to as "nice", the implication being that it is not real chastity, but merely a concern for her reputation. Fielding goes on:

"He was indeed so very urgent in his addresses, that had he not with many oaths promised her marriage we could scarce have been strictly justified in calling his passion honourable".

Once more it might seem on the surface that Fielding is being scrupulously fair; he gives the impression that he has scrutinized Wild's intentions most carefully and would certainly not have described his advances as "honourable" if he had not satisfied himself that they were. But it is the word "scarce" which gives the clue that all this must be seen ironically; and there are a wealth of implications in his kind of promise of marriage. For,

"...he was so remarkably attached to decency, that he never offered any violence to a young lady without the most earnest promises of that kind, these being, he said, a ceremonial due to female modesty, which cost so little, and were so easily pronounced, that the omission could proceed from nothing but the mere wantonness of brutality..."¹

In case the first and last statements leave us with the impression that Wild is a decent and humane lover, Fielding loads the passage with words and phrases full of ironic meaning. The grandiloquent adverb "remarkably" is used to reinforce the irony, and "decency" is weighted with more than the usual amount of sarcasm. "Ceremonial" and "pronounced" suggest that Wild's declarations do not even have the force of oaths, but

¹ J.W., Bk.I, ch.ix.

were a mere formality in order to reassure the "young lady". But the irony works against women too, for the implication is that all they require is a token promise; they hardly care whether it is meant to be kept. There is also ironic slur on "modesty"; for the suggestion again is that "modesty" here does not mean chastity or virgin bashfulness, but a pretended concern for one's reputation.

Yet the satire embraces much more than Wild's relations with women. The function of the matrimonial scene between Wild and Laetitia is not only to point to the Wilds' disastrous married life, but also to show the similarity between high and low life in marital affairs and, indeed, to present the reader with a picture of married life among the upper classes. If we compare this scene with accounts of married bliss in some of Fielding's plays such as Love in Several Masques, The Different Husbands, or The Modern Husband, we discover that there is little basic difference. In the end Wild and Laetitia agree to live amicably together as long as neither hinders the affairs of the other. This, we recall, is precisely the arrangement Colonel and Mrs. James come to in Amelia. Fielding's irony in the portrayal of Wild's sexual relations is thus ultimately directed not at Wild, but at marital relations in high society.

Yet, it is in his descriptions of Wild's dealings with his associates and his victims, that Fielding's irony is most telling. On one occasion, after being rescued from the sea by a French ship, Wild contrives to board an English fishing vessel and asks his countrymen to chase and capture the French. Fielding comments:

"so nobly and greatly did our hero neglect all obligations

conferred on him by the enemies of his country, that he would have contributed all he could to the taking of his benefactor, to whom he owed both his life and his liberty".¹

Though the phrase "enemies of his country" may suggest to the reader that Wild's conduct is justified, yet the irony speaks for itself; it does not depend on any subtleties but on the operative force of words such as "obligation", "benefactor" and "neglect", and on the sneer on "nobly" and "greatly".

In another section of the work, Wild, having persuaded Bagshott to rob the Count, and having taken by far the greater share of the booty himself, contrives to wrest the remainder from Bagshott by threatening to expose him. Fielding's comment is:

"Thus did our hero execute the greatest exploits with the utmost ease imaginable, by means of those transcendent qualities which nature had indulged him with, viz., a bold heart, a thundering voice, and a steady countenance".

Ironic stress is laid on "utmost", "greatest" and "transcendent", and this gives a clue to Fielding's attitude. He then goes on:

"...For such were his great abilities, and so vast the compass of his understanding, that he never made any bargain without over-reaching (or, in the vulgar phrase, cheating) the person with whom he dealt..."²

The sneer on "great" and "vast" shows that the irony is directed against Wild; but both statements do contain elements of truth. Wild does possess a keen intelligence, and some of the qualities he is credited with in these passages are shared by great statesmen, and others would like to possess them. But Wild applies them to the wrong ends, and the irony is therefore all the more telling.

¹ J.W., Bk.II, ch.xiii.

² J.W., Bk.II, ch.ii.

From the examples considered so far it is clear that Fielding treats Wild ironically, but seizes every opportunity to reach beyond Wild to censure high or great society to whom his comments sometimes apply literally. For it is as a great man that Wild is developed and exposed, and the qualities condemned in him are characteristic of the mighty.

In opposition to this diabolical world of greatness, Fielding asserts, also by the method of irony, the values of the Heartfrees. They constitute the model Christian family — a God-fearing husband and a dedicated wife. Heartfree is guileless, humble and benevolent; he relieves the distresses of the insolvent, even though this means disaster for his business in the long run. His wife, a model of chastity, is subjected to numerous temptations and lascivious attacks, but remains true to her marriage vows. Both husband and wife express the correct Christian sentiments. Heartfree's reaction to the various proposals of Wild are those of a Christian gentleman. But, above all, the entire work seems to have been planned on the belief expressed by Mrs. Heartfree and written by Fielding in capitals, that:

"PROVIDENCE WILL SOONER OF LATER PROCURE THE FELICITY OF THE VIRTUOUS AND INNOCENT".

Heartfree is innocent and Wild is guilty; therefore, the former deserves to be spared and the latter to be hanged. In the end, goodness is shown to be vindicated and greatness rejected. The work thus reaffirms Fielding's belief in the power of divine providence to come to the aid of the innocent.

IV

This is, at least, the kind of interpretation that one would most probably give after a first reading of the novel. But, as so often with Fielding, it becomes apparent on further readings, and on a more careful analysis of his methods and effects, that such a straightforward reading in "moral" terms is too simple, that it does not fully account for our experience in reading the novel, and that it misses the complexity of texture and ironic experience. Fielding's irony, especially, demands careful attention, for it is by means of this that we are able to ascertain his attitude to Heartfree and Wild.

Jonathan Wild has often been praised as Fielding's masterpiece in the use of irony. Whenever Fielding's irony is discussed reference is usually made to this as his greatest achievement with this device.¹ It is certainly true that Jonathan Wild is the work in which Fielding's irony is most sustained. What compels admiration is the consistent ironic treatment which is given to the hero throughout. But this does not mean that the irony is more subtle or more artistically contrived than in his other works. Indeed, ironic technique in Jonathan Wild is largely confined to the simple "praise/blame inversion". This is the method which is consistently applied to Wild himself. Since it must be shown that Wild stands for diabolical greatness and that the effects of this are devastatingly harmful, and since

¹ See Professor A.R. Humphreys, "Fielding's Irony, its Methods and Effects", RES, XVIII (1942), 183-196. The article is devoted almost entirely to Jonathan Wild. Humphreys reaches the conclusion that Fielding's irony in comparison with Swift's lacks philosophical and verbal complexity, because it represents the social stability of the age, and instead of undermining, reinforces orthodox morality.

there can be no argument about this, there would seem to be no need for a more complex ironic form. Fielding could simply "damn" Wild whilst appearing to praise him.

But there are difficulties when this form of irony is applied consistently and sustained throughout an entire work as it is in Jonathan Wild. It tends to become tedious and at times appears naive. Moreover, the author seems to underline his points much too heavily. If we look at the chapter headings in Books Two and Three, for instance, we find these:

- Great examples of GREATNESS in Wild....
- Containing many surprising adventures, which our HERO, with GREAT GREATNESS achieved.
- In which our hero carried GREATNESS to an immoderate height.
- More GREATNESS in Wild.
- The Great and Wonderful behaviour of our hero in the boat.
- More and more GREATNESS, unparalleled in History or Romance.
- Observations on the foregoing dialogue, together with a base design on our hero, which must be detested by every lover of GREATNESS.

Clearly it was an effort for Fielding to sustain this irony, and the labour is too obvious, even though he often makes his points well.

A good example of the use of the "praise/blame inversion" technique is provided by the following:

"With such infinite address did this truly great man know to play with the passions of men, to set them at variance with each other, and to work his own purposes out of those jealousies and apprehensions, which he was wonderfully ready at creating by means of those great arts which the vulgar call treachery, dissembling, promising, lying, falsehood, etc., but which are by great men summed up in the collective name of policy, or politics, or rather politrics; an art of which, as it is the highest excellence of human nature, perhaps our great man was the most eminent master."¹

¹ J.W., Bk.II, ch.v.

Fielding's points could not possibly be missed. He almost seems to underline the words "treachery", "promising", "falsehood", "wonderfully" and "great arts". There is sarcasm here as well as ironic sneer, and on the whole Fielding communicates his attitude effectively.

But when this is sustained consistently it loses its force. One reason for the impact of Mark Antony's funeral speech was that the ironic phrase "honourable men" was inserted at strategic points; if it had been repeated in almost every line the speech would have lost its satiric power. This is what happens to Fielding's "praise/blame inversion" type of irony in Jonathan Wild. The technique is repeated so often that it ceases to move us. The trouble, in fact, with the irony in this work is that it is much too "sustained". Indeed, after a time, we are more impressed by passages giving us direct accounts of Wild's villainy than by Fielding's ironic method. We may take the following as an example:

"No sooner was Wild got safe aboard the fisherman, than he begged him to make the utmost speed into Deal; for that vessel which was still in sight, was a distressed Frenchman, bound for Havre de Grace, and might be made a prize, if there was any ship ready to go in pursuit of her."¹

This piece of direct reporting reveals Wild's ingratitude and villainy just as powerfully as the ironic comment Fielding adds to it. It is the same impression we have when Wild "impeaches" and hangs Marybone and Fierce. The episodes are described directly, but they are just as powerful as ironic descriptions would have been.

Yet this ironic technique has even more obvious weaknesses. As Professor Humphreys has pointed out, it will not work in reverse.² Irony, by its very nature, is disruptive; it works by undermining and unsettling;

¹ J.W., Bk.II, ch.xiii.

² Humphreys, p.189.

it cannot therefore be used to build up. It is true that at times the author may imply some positive values in spite of the force of his irony, but the object to which irony is applied always comes off badly whether the irony is applied in reverse or not. It is thus difficult to build up a picture of virtue by the application of irony. Fielding did not, unfortunately, realize this during his composition of Jonathan Wild. He wanted to present the Heartfrees as the perfect picture of married bliss (Mrs. Heartfree, to an even greater degree than Amelia, is the most purely ideal picture of wifhood that Fielding ever painted) yet he still wanted to sustain the irony he had begun to use in the portrayal of Wild. Therefore, the "praise/blame inversion" technique had to be applied to the Heartfrees in reverse. The following is an example of the result:

"In this manner did this weak, poor-spirited woman attempt to relieve her husband's pains, which it would have rather become her to aggravate, by not only painting out his misery in the liveliest colours imaginable, but by upbraiding him with that folly and confidence which had occasioned it, and by lamenting her own hard fate, in being obliged to share his sufferings.

Heartfree returned this goodness (as it is called) of his wife with the warmest gratitude, and they passed a whole hour in a scene of tenderness, too low and contemptible to be recounted to our great readers. — We shall therefore omit such relations, as they tend to make human nature low and ridiculous."¹

In order to see Fielding's attitude we reverse the judgements being made on the surface. It thus becomes apparent that Fielding believes that this scene of tenderness between husband and wife is commendable and that Mrs. Heartfree was right in supporting her husband under his afflictions. Yet we do not feel the force of it, for although hypocrisy and wickedness treated ironically may produce some brilliant results, goodness treated in

¹ J.W., Bk.II, ch.vii.

such a way may not. Professor Humphreys thinks that this is one of the reasons for Heartfree's colourlessness:

"The reason why Heartfree is an artistic disappointment is, it seems, that the irony will not work in inverse. If villainy is acclaimed as excellence and strength, virtue must be disparaged as stupidity and weakness; but though to undermine by sarcastic praise is easy, to eulogise by sarcastic disparagement is another matter".¹

This is largely true. It is in the nature of irony to demolish, and presumably the author wishes to demolish villainy. Therefore irony is an appropriate device. But it is almost impossible to build up virtue by treating it ironically. However, there seems to be another reason for Heartfree's colourlessness; it may be that although Fielding had started with a simple moral pattern as outlined above, he was, nevertheless, moving towards a greater complication of this plan as the work advanced. The texture thus becomes much more complex than the simple plot would suggest, and Wild and Heartfree become much more interesting than the impression the simple denotations of "villain" and "goodman" would seem to convey. This view is reinforced when we consider Fielding's attitude towards uniformity of character. He says:

"But besides the two obvious advantages of surveying, as it were, in a picture, the true beauty of virtue, and deformity of vice, we may moreover learn from Plutarch, Nepos, Seutonius, and other biographers, this useful lesson, not too hastily, nor in the gross, to bestow either our praise or our censure; since we shall often find such a mixture of good and evil in the same character, that it may require a very accurate judgement and a very elaborate inquiry to determine on which side the balance turns: for though we sometimes meet with an Aristides or a Brutus, a Lysander or a Nero, yet far the greater number are of the mixed kind; neither totally good nor bad: their greatest virtues being allayed and obscured by their vices, and these again softened

¹ Humphreys, p.189.

and coloured over by their virtues."¹

A similar view is stated in Tom Jones and in several articles in The Champion with every intention of seriousness; indeed, it is crucial for a correct understanding of the meaning of Tom Jones.² When, therefore, it is expressed in Jonathan Wild we must take it seriously; at any rate we must bear it in mind when we consider the characters of Wild and Heartfree.

It would be easy to brand Wild as a thorough villain, yet when the texture of the work and the operation of its irony are examined, it is difficult to deny that there is a certain double-sidedness about Wild as we experience him. In spite of his villainy he does possess qualities which are not entirely despicable. Indeed, it often seems that Fielding has a grudging admiration for him. First of all we cannot but admire the power of his logic and the clearness of his thinking; it has been pointed out that Wild, like the alchemist in Ben Jonson's play has his own philosophy. It is cogently argued:

"The art of policy is the art of multiplication; the degrees of greatness being constituted by those two little words more and less. Mankind are first properly to be considered under two grand divisions, those that use their own hands, and those who employ the hands of others. The former are the base and rabble; the latter, the greatest part of the creation."³

Wild then proceeds to give a second classification; he subdivides the employers of hands into those who employ hands for the benefit of the community in which they live and those who employ hands merely for their own use without any regard for the benefit of society. To the former class

¹ J.W., Bk.I, ch.i.

² T.J., Bk.VII, ch.i.

³ J.W., Bk.I., ch.xiv.

belong the yeoman, the manufacturer and the merchant; to the latter belong conquerors, absolute princes, statesmen and prigs:

"Now all these differ from each other in greatness only, they employ more or fewer hands. And Alexander the Great was only greater than a captain of the Tartarian or Arabian hordes, as he was at the head of a larger number. In what then is a single prig inferior to any other great man, but because he employs his own hands only; for he is not on that account to be levelled with the base and vulgar, because he employs his own hands for his own use only. Now, suppose a prig had as many tools as any Prime Minister ever had, would he not be as great as any Prime Minister whatsoever? Undoubtedly, he would. What then have I to do in the pursuit of greatness, but to procure a gang, and to make the use of this gang, centre in myself. This gang shall rob for me only, receiving only moderate rewards for their actions; out of this gang I will prefer to my favour the boldest and most iniquitous (as the vulgar express it); the rest I will, from time to time, as I see occasion, transport and hang at my pleasure; and thus (which I take to be the highest excellence of a prig), convert those laws which are made for the benefit and protection of society to my single use."

The speech reveals intelligence, clarity of thought and a knowledge of men's motives; and, on the whole, it is an impressive performance. One of the reasons why Wild is not as repellent as Fielding probably intended him to be is that we admire his intelligence and powers of debate and persuasion. We even tend to compare him with another diabolical intellect, Richard of Gloucester, wicked, but in his way, admirable, if only because he seems to be the only intelligent man on the stage. As John Danby points out in his book Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, Richard is the only man who has the courage to go to the heart of the matter and the intelligence to get to grips with it. He sees a corrupt state and a weak king, and he realizes that the reality of order will only be restored if and when the king is replaced by a stronger man. He knows that all the other barons, either out of self-interest, or out of regard for the national

interest, are thinking along the same lines, but that they lack the courage to push their thoughts to the logical conclusion. It is only Richard who sees the futility of being hemmed in by such outmoded concepts as the sanctity of kingship, and it is only he who has the courage to kill the king.

Wild's position is basically the same. He possesses the intelligence to discover the secrets of success of many great statesmen and conquerors. The secret lies partly in the method of organization of subordinates. Wild realizes this and decides to apply it. Walpole, according to his critics, was able to achieve much by using his tools efficiently and by making them so dependent on him that defection would occur only in the most desperate circumstances. Wild, by impressing on the minds of his dependents that it was in his power to have them hanged, also kept them efficient and loyal. He is the man who has learned the secret of how society works; he has seen through the hypocrisy of people in high places, and realized that the ideals of the moralists remain only ideals. As Danby says of Richard, the Machiavel:

"If pity, love, and fear have become socially irrelevant, then are they true, or do greybeards merely say they are divine? If they are not true, then the whole facade of society is a mask. The man conscious of this will be the hypocrite — a man superior in degree of consciousness to his fellows: one able to convince his fellows by his mere existence that they are the mask and he the reality. Behind the mask there is not an angel but a devil and notwithstanding a more reliable and efficient regulator of Res Publica. This man, aware of how things really work, aware of the mockery of moral claims, aware of what men really are motivated by as opposed to what they pretend to themselves, will kill the king."¹

¹ John Danby, Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature (1949), p.62.

"The Machiavel's is a highly expert social performance. Wearing the social mask he is not detectably different from his neighbour. Being, behind the mask, the deliberate calculator of social means and ends, he is an infallible master of men".¹

Of course, the circumstances are different, but Danby's judgement of Richard can, to a very large extent, be applied to Wild. Fielding certainly shows grudging admiration for Wild and some of the qualities he possesses. There is even the implication that the thief must not be too heavily censured for indulging in the same fraudulent practices as men in higher stations of life who never run the risk of detection and punishment. Jonathan Wild as a person has only discovered and decided to apply to his own use the methods applied by greater men without being called to account for them. As thief and man Wild does not really arouse the reader's indignation and censure; it is as a "great man" demonstrating the qualities of a "great man" that we condemn him. When at last, Wild appears as a thief, and confronts the Ordinary of Newgate, there is little doubt that Fielding's sympathy and ours are on his side and not on the clergyman's. The clergyman is obviously incompetent and Wild makes some telling points:

Jonathan: Faith, Doctor, well-minded. What say you to a bottle of wine?

Ordinary: I will drink no wine with an atheist. I should expect the devil to make a third in such company; for, since he knows you are his, he may be impatient to have his due.

Jonathan: It is your business to drink with the wicked, in order to amend them.

Ordinary: I despair of it; and so I consign you over to the devil, who is ready to receive you.

Jonathan: You are more unmerciful to me than the judge, Doctor. He recommended my soul to heaven; and it is your office to shew me the way thither.²

¹ John Danby, p.63.

² J.W., Bk.IV, ch.xiii.

We may also admire Wild's calmness in the face of disaster. When he discovers the loss of the nine hundred pounds, Fielding describes his reaction like this:

"However, as he had the perfect mastery of his temper, or rather of his muscles, which is as necessary to the forming a great character, as to the personating it on the stage, he soon conveyed a smile into his countenance, and concealing as well his misfortune as his chagrin at it, began to pay honourable addresses to Miss Letty".¹

There is double irony here, for at one level Fielding suggests that hypocrisy and deceit are worldly qualities characteristic of great men, but on another he also seems to be saying that self-control is not an entirely irrelevant quality to possess if one wishes to get to the top. Also, we cannot but admire Jonathan Wild's deft, if diabolical, skill in the manipulation of his victims and his tools. For instance, he arranges for the Count to rob Heartfree, then he arranges for the Count to be robbed. On another occasion he arranges for Bagshott to rob the Count, then he robs Bagshott and gives the Count the impression that Bagshott is responsible for the robbery. On the strength of this supposition he terrifies Bagshott, threatens him with exposure and succeeds in wresting a substantial sum of money from him. In our own natural perverseness we must admire the intellect that can contrive all this. Wild surely is a man who knows how to handle men — a not entirely despicable quality. It is when he uses his skill in order to play with the passions of men, when he contrives Blueskin's execution and overawes the other members of the gang, and when he sends Fierce to the gallows for a robbery in which they had all participated, that we start to despise him. It is, in fact, when he begins to demonstrate

¹ J.W., Bk.II, ch.iii.

those qualities which are associated with the diabolical great men, when he begins to manifest treachery, deceit, malevolence and a cold-blooded desire for revenge and destruction, that he finally forfeits our sympathy.

Lastly, we note that Wild, calculating and hard-headed though he may be, has a capacity for feeling; at least he is capable of momentary flashes of conscience. We recall his conduct on learning of the arrival of Heartfree's death warrant; Wild breaks down completely, is filled with remorse and tears appear in his eyes. This is a dimension to his character we never expected, and Fielding wants us to take it quite seriously; there is nothing ironic about it.

It is clear then, that although Wild is treated as a villain, he does possess some qualities which, as Fielding implies, are worthy of admiration. Fielding's attitude to him, therefore, becomes increasingly ambivalent as the work progresses. Of this there is plenty of evidence. Similarly, there is sufficient evidence for the criticism of Heartfree. The kind of goodness he represents is a not very exciting goodness. The Heartfrees of this world are colourless, ineffective creatures, and it is doubtful whether they would conform to Fielding's idea of goodness. It is quite possible that in his portrayal of Heartfree Fielding was moving towards a complication of his simple plan, and that he wished to expose Heartfree's limitations without in any way disparaging his goodness. In his first description of the Heartfrees, Fielding says:

"These persons are of that pitiful order of mortals, who are in contempt called Good-natured; being indeed sent into the world by nature with the same design with which men put little fish into a pike-pond, in order to be devoured by that vocarious water-hero".¹

¹ J.W., Bk.II, ch.i.

There is eulogy of the Heartfrees by "sarcastic disparagement" here. We are meant to reverse the surface judgement and realize that they are indeed good-natured in a praiseworthy sense. But Fielding's comments in the second half modifies our view; it could hardly redound to the credit of the Heartfrees. The point about the little fish in the pond is that they are harmless, and the point about the pike is that if little fish are put in his way he cannot avoid eating them. The little fish can do little to defend themselves or promote their own well-being. On the whole, the impression they leave is one of brainless innocence and passivity, and this tends to "rub off" and on to the Heartfrees. Moreover, there seems to be a greater degree of sarcasm laid on the words "pitiful" and "little fish" than the "irony in reverse" would warrant. So that the irony is working both ways; those who devour the Heartfrees of this world are condemned, but at the same time there is an implication that people like the Heartfrees can be pitied, but certainly not admired.

The portrait Fielding paints of the young Heartfree reinforces the point. It is a picture of an exceptionally timid lad who has more concern for his skin than for his money. The traits of character he displayed in youth are carried over into manhood:

"Mr. Thomas Heartfree then (for that was his name) was of an honest and open disposition. He was of that sort of men, whom experience only, and not their own natures, must inform, that there are such things as hypocrisy in the world; and who, consequently, are not at five and twenty so difficult to be imposed upon as the oldest and most subtle".¹

This can surely not be in Heartfree's favour. There is once more a shift in attitude between the first and second sections of the passage. We do

¹ J.W., Bk.II, ch.i.

accept literally that Heartfree is of an open and free disposition, and there is no hint of irony or sarcasm. But in the second half the tone has changed from that of direct description to that of sarcasm. There is implied criticism of Heartfree's lack of penetration into the motives of other human beings, and his ignorance of the world and the way it works. The reader tends at this stage to compare Heartfree with another harmless innocent, Parson Adams, who also had to be taught by experience that there were such things as hypocrisy and deceit in the world. Parson Adams' innocence was ridiculed in Joseph Andrews, and it seems that the same is true of Heartfree's here.

As the work progresses Fielding continues to expose Heartfree's innocence. When Wild first meets him, and proposes his scheme about the jewels, Heartfree accepts, and Fielding comments:

"I am sensible that the reader, if he hath the least notion of Greatness, must have such a contempt for the extreme folly of this fellow, that he will be very little concerned at any misfortune which may befall him in the sequel; for, to have no suspicion that an old school-fellow, with whom he had, in his tenderest years, contracted a friendship, and who, on the accidental renewing of their acquaintance, had professed the most passionate regard for him, should be very ready to impose on him; in short, to conceive that a friend should, of his own accord, without any view to his own interest, endeavour to do him a service, must argue such weakness of mind, such ignorance of the world, and such an artless, simple, undesigning heart, as must render the person possessed of it the lowest creature and the properest object of contempt imaginable, in the eyes of every man of understanding and discernment".¹

It soon becomes apparent to the reader that there is much more in this passage than straightforward "irony-in-reverse". It is true that we are not contemptuous of Heartfree and are concerned at the outcome of his

¹ J.W., Bk.II, ch.ii.

fortunes. To this extent the first section of the extract is "irony-in-reverse". But in the second section, a change seems to have occurred in Fielding's attitude. This must be the reason why he goes to such lengths to argue his case. It is almost as though he is heaping up arguments to show that Heartfree should have been more careful. Heartfree's conduct looks a bit like folly; he does show weakness of mind and ignorance of the world, and does possess an "artless, simple, undesigning heart". It is true that this does not make him an object of contempt, but it does not make him the ideal good man either. Once more there seems to have been a shift from an ironic statement to one which is literally true, and Fielding does suggest that Heartfree lacks something.

Pre-eminently, Heartfree lacks business acumen and a sense of discrimination. Somehow, he reminds us of Mr. Boncour, in Fielding's play The Fathers or The Good-Natured Man. Boncour, like Heartfree, is good-natured, as the title and his name imply. But in the course of the play he is shown to be generous to the point of stupidity. His is a brainless generosity which hands out money regardless of desert or worth. He supports the extravagance of his children, either because he derives vicarious pleasure from their outlandish enjoyments, or because he is too simple to realize what is going on. His goodness knows no discrimination, and Fielding is at pains to emphasize this point. The reader, for his part, is convinced that Mr. Boncour's goodness is anything but ideal. Heartfree, like Boncour, is unworldly, and makes no discrimination in the objects of his generosity. He has little idea of the management of financial and business matters, and takes risks which, even in the

adventurous world of commerce, must be regarded as considerable.

Moreover, instead of taking steps to ameliorate his own condition, Heartfree seems to depend almost entirely on Divine Providence. What stands out during his various verbal encounters with Wild is that he is, before anything else, a Christian gentleman with a solid faith in the possibility of a future life. Therefore, he feels that, left to Providence, everything will turn out right in the end, and even if it does not, his sufferings in this world are of no importance as long as he is assured of happier things hereafter:

"If the proofs of Christianity be as strong as I imagine them, surely enough may be deduced from that ground only to comfort and support the most miserable man in his afflictions. And this I think my reason tells me, that, if the professors and propagators of infidelity are in the right, the losses which death brings to the virtuous are not worth their lamenting; but, if these are, as certainly they seem, in the wrong, the blessings it procures them are not sufficiently to be coveted and rejoiced at"¹

This, at first glance, reads like sound Latitudinarian doctrine; the words could easily have come from any of the Liberal divines. But even they stressed the importance of the good man's actions in this world. He is charitable, but he is also prudent and active. Heartfree relies too much on his religious beliefs and too little on his exertions to extricate him from trouble. His religious devotion borders closely on fanaticism. This seems to be the point Fielding is trying to stress when he says:

"In this low manner did this poor wretch proceed to argue, till he had worked himself into an enthusiasm, which by degrees soon became invulnerable to every human attack; so that when Mr. Snap acquainted him with the return of the writ, and that he must carry him to Newgate, he received the message as Socrates did the news of the ship's arrival, and that he was to

¹ J.W., Bk.III, ch.ii.

prepare for death".¹

The mention of the word "enthusiasm" rivets our attention rather critically on Heartfree. This surely was the word associated in the eighteenth century with religious fanatics, and we recall Parson Adams' famous condemnation of Whitefield for calling enthusiasm to his aid. In some of the essays in The Champion also, Fielding states his views on enthusiasm very clearly, and, by and large, they are similar to those of Parson Adams. The truth is that Heartfree overdoes his religious devotion. When he moralizes, he becomes much too sententious and pompous, and there is a pharasaical quality about his sentiments. When, for instance, he is informed by his maidservant that Mrs. Heartfree has left with Wild, he launches into a lengthy soliloquy which Fielding ironically describes as full of "low and base ideas, without a syllable of greatness". The speech is truly a Christian one, but Heartfree is too full of a consciousness of his own worth. He links himself with those of a "more refined and elevated temper", and says:

"...How soon do they retreat to solitude and contemplation, to gardening and planting, and such rural amusements, where their trees and they enjoy the air and the sun in common, and both vegetate with very little difference between them".²

These are the sentiments of a man who is convinced that he is of a higher moral order than other mortals. We may question whether it is so commendable for a man to vegetate in the same way as his trees.

At this stage, a very important question can be put: Is Heartfree really Fielding's idea of the good-natured man? Allan Wendt, in a very interesting essay on "The Moral Allegory of Jonathan Wild", devotes much

¹ J.W., Bk.III, ch.ii.

² J.W., Bk.III, ch.ii.

care to an examination of eighteenth-century conceptions of the good-natured man as seen in the writings of essayists, theologians and philosophers, and comes to the conclusion that Fielding agreed with men like Hoadly that good nature was not a passive but an active quality.¹ We have ample evidence, in the miscellaneous writings, of Fielding's views on the good-natured man. He was generous, forgiving and charitable, but he was not soft and inactive. Fielding's good man was a practical and, above all, a prudent man. If we use these as criteria for seeing whether anyone fits Fielding's conception of the good man, then, undoubtedly Heartfree fails to qualify. Moreover, in the Miscellanies Fielding gives his own opinion of Heartfree, "I do not conceive my good man to be absolutely a fool or a coward; but...he often partakes too little of parts or of courage to have any pretensions to greatness".²

Conversely, it would seem that Fielding did not entirely disapprove of some of the "great" qualities Wild possesses. Indeed, all the evidence shows that he admired some of them. He certainly did not discount ambition, self-interest and a penetrating intelligence as components of virtue. Also, in the Essay on Conversation Fielding discussed greatness, and said that real greatness was the union of a good head with a good heart. It therefore seems that in Jonathan Wild he implies that neither Heartfree nor Wild qualifies as a great man. Heartfree has a good heart but lacks a good head; he also lacks ambition, energy and a proper regard for his family's interest. Wild has a good head, and certain other qualities of leadership. But he lacks a good heart.

¹ Allan Wendt, "The Moral Allegory of Jonathan Wild", ELH, XXIV (1957), 306-322.

² Fielding, Miscellanies, Preface.

As we know, Jonathan Wild is about greatness. In it Fielding exposes certain popular notions of greatness and tries to demonstrate or, at least, to imply what true greatness ought to be. In spite of what he says in his opening chapter, he is trying to show that goodness and greatness are not necessarily antithetical qualities and that they could be combined in the same person provided he has both a good head and a good heart.

It thus becomes increasingly obvious that the "greatness-goodness" antithesis is too simple to account for Jonathan Wild. Never, in all his major works, does Fielding present the reader with two alternatives, one of which must be automatically rejected and the other accepted. He always presents two views of life or habits of thought both of which are seen to be extreme and limited, and he always indicates a healthy middle way which is indeed, not just a compromise, but the real truth lying somewhere between two extreme positions. The technique of double irony was specially developed by Fielding to point to this complexity in human affairs. We do not choose between a Thwackum and a Square; we see by means of double irony that the attitudes to life of both these gentlemen are inadequate, and that the truth lies somewhere between them. We do not even choose initially between Tom and Blifil; if Blifil is wicked, Tom has his weaknesses too; he certainly lacks prudence, and quite often the irony is directed as much against him as against Blifil. Parson Adams is not labelled absolutely white nor are Lady Booby and the world absolutely black; good though the parson is, he too has his many limitations, and these are clearly underlined. The truth about sexual ethics, for

instance, lies midway between the attitudes of Parson Adams and Lady Booby.

In most of his works, then, Fielding always maintains a balance; this is no less true of Jonathan Wild. Even if the allegorical pattern suggests that Wild should be condemned and Heartfree vindicated, the texture certainly pushes the reader toward making a more complex response. One is therefore tempted to agree with Allan Wendt's suggestion that the irony of the work points to limitations not only in Wild but also in Heartfree:

"If these two concepts of greatness and goodness can be reconciled it will be possible to read Jonathan Wild as a doubly ironic portrait of human nature. Not only Wild, but Heartfree as well, may then be taken as a portrait of unsatisfactory temperament, and Heartfree's designation as 'silly' becomes a double-barrelled weapon — the deliberate truth ironically concealed in a passage which is full of truths-in-reverse".¹

V

In order to demonstrate this complexity in Jonathan Wild, which Wendt hints at, we must investigate the operation of Fielding's irony in some detail. Professor Humphreys has pointed to one of the most important features of this irony:

"Swift tends relentlessly and unremittingly in one calculated direction; Fielding leaps from posture to posture. Swift has the inner and outer consistency of unruffled logic; Fielding the brilliant manifold brandishings of cut-and-parry debate — One never detects him in the same stance two sentences running."²

This is quite true; it has already been seen in the analysis of Heartfree's

¹ Allan Wendt, p.307.

² Humphreys, op.cit., p.186.

character that Fielding tends to shift from literal to ironic positions and from description to sarcasm in order to reveal the complexity of the man. But to say that Fielding's irony consists entirely of this constant shifting of stance is to state only a part of the truth. At his best he could handle the more subtle device of double irony with as consummate a skill as Swift the acknowledged master himself. This is shown by the celebrated passage on "prudence and circumspection" in Tom Jones, where in one single sentence he manages to hold in tension various interpretations of the nature of prudence. But it seems that when he was writing Jonathan Wild, Fielding had not yet perfected the device of double irony, and in order to expose the limitations of alternative systems and contrasted characters he had to resort to shifting his position in alternate sentences. In this regard, his introductory remarks on greatness, goodness and the uniformity of character are worth considering:

"But before we enter on this great work we must endeavour to remove some errors of opinion which mankind have, by the disingenuity of writers, contracted: for these, from their fear of contradicting the obsolete and absurd doctrines of a set of simple fellows, called in derision, sages or philosophers, have endeavoured, as much as possible, to confound the ideas of greatness and goodness; whereas no two things can possibly be more distinct from each other: for Greatness consists in bringing all manner of mischief on mankind, and goodness in removing it from them. It seems therefore very unlikely that the same person should possess them both;...."¹

The words "obsolete" and "absurd" are ironic, and although there is a touch of sarcasm on "simple" which would seem to suggest that Fielding does believe that some philosophers are simple, yet the whole passage conforms to the "praise/blame inversion" type of irony. The simple fellows are

¹ J.W., Bk.I, ch.i.

therefore, in reality, wise men who know that ideally it ought to be possible for greatness and goodness to be fused in the same person. At the same time Fielding manages to imply that in practice those who are generally regarded as great are those who have occasioned great suffering. The irony therefore contains a grain of truth.

Fielding continues:

"....And yet nothing is more usual with writers, who find many instances of greatness in their favourite hero, than to make him a compliment of goodness into the bargain; and this, without considering that by such means they destroy the great perfection called uniformity of character."¹

The first part of this statement is literally true for goodness is incompatible with the kind of greatness these writers describe. Fielding has thus changed his stance from the ironic to the literal. In the next part of the statement he changes again to the ironic for he is obviously making fun of the great perfection called "uniformity of character". If the doctrine of uniformity of character is ridiculous then the writers who break the convention must be right in mixing greatness with goodness. It is, therefore, ideally possible for the same person to be both great and good. Fielding then goes on:

"In the histories of Alexander and Caesar, we are frequently, and indeed impertinently, reminded of their benevolence and generosity, of their clemency and kindness. When the former had with fire and sword overrun a vast empire, had destroyed the lives of an immense number of innocent wretches, had scattered ruin and desolation like a whirlwind, we are told, as an example of his clemency, that he did not cut the throat of an old woman, and ravish her daughters, but was content with only undoing them. And when the mighty Caesar, with wonderful greatness of mind, had destroyed the liberties of his country, and with all the means of fraud and force had placed himself at the head of his equals, had

¹ J.W., Bk.I, ch.i.

corrupted and enslaved the greatest people whom the sun ever saw, we are reminded, as an evidence of his generosity, of his largess to his followers and tools, by whose means he had accomplished his purpose, and by whose assistance he was to establish it".¹

Clearly, in this instance, the writers who mixed greatness and goodness were wrong to do so. Hence Fielding's original statement (that greatness and goodness were distinct) applies here literally, not ironically. There has once more been a change of stance. But, later, he returns to the ironic, and calls these "good" qualities sneaking qualities, which are to be bewailed as imperfections. In Jonathan Wild, it is by this "shifting" nature of his irony that Fielding exercises and conditions our judgement, and points to the inadequacy of simple propositions. In the passage discussed above, for instance, he demonstrates that ideally goodness and greatness could be combined in the same person, but in practice they are not.

For another example of the operation of Fielding's irony in Jonathan Wild we may look at the scene in which Count La Ruse tries to persuade Wild to make better use of his powers, and Wild replies:

"Permit me to say, though the idea may be somewhat coarse, I had rather stand on the summit of a dunghill than at the bottom of a hill in Paradise; I have always thought it signifies little into what rank of life I am thrown, provided I make a great figure therein; and should be as well satisfied with exerting my talents well at the head of a small party or gang, as in the command of a mighty army; for I am far from agreeing with you, that great parts are often lost in a low situation; on the contrary, I am convinced that it is impossible they should be lost. I have often persuaded myself that there were not fewer than a thousand in Alexander's troops capable of performing what Alexander himself did."²

¹ J.W., Bk.I, ch.i.

² J.W., Bk.I, ch.v.

Fielding's overall attitude to Wild here is ironic although literal and ironic statements once more alternate with each other. Wild's preference for the summit of a dunghill rather than the bottom of a hill in Paradise is not calculated to enlist the reader's sympathy. But it is literally true that one's rank in life does not matter provided one makes the best of it. On the other hand, Wild obviously oversimplifies when he disagrees with the Count that "great parts are often lost in a low situation", but Fielding appears to be suggesting that he is literally correct when he insists that there were at least a thousand in Alexander's army capable of performing what Alexander himself did. It was only the accident of birth which gave Alexander such a flying start. Fielding thus manages to force us into reacting both critically and sympathetically to Wild's statements. As a result, we despise the lowness of his mind, but we also condemn the unfairness and presumption of the great, and the widespread desire to acquire greatness.

Yet, in spite of this, the general drift of the passage is clearly ironic at Wild's expense. In the very next section, however, Wild makes comments which are literally true and with which Fielding himself would have agreed:

"In civil life, doubtless, the same genius, the same endowments have often composed the statesman and the prig for so we call what the vulgar name a Thief. The same parts, the same actions often promote men to the head of superior societies, which raise them to the head of lower; and where is the essential difference, if the one ends on Tower-Hill, and the other at Tyburn?"¹

This is evidently regarded as true; Fielding does believe that there is

¹ J.W., Bk.I, ch.v.

no essential difference between the thief and the statesman. Indeed, to a certain extent the statement reflects favourably on Wild who is shown to possess certain qualities of leadership. But Wild is viewed ironically when he says that only the vulgar would call a prig a thief. Yet Fielding moves again to the literal when he makes Wild declare that there is no essential difference between hanging at Tyburn and at Tower Hill.

The same process is seen at work in Fielding's comment on Wild's decision to visit the Count after robbing him:

"...From which base and pitiful temper many monstrous cruelties have been transacted by men, who have sometimes carried their modesty so far as to the murder or utter ruin of those against whom their consciences have suggested to them that they have committed some small trespass, either by debauching a friend's wife or daughter, belying or betraying the friend himself, or some other such trifling instance. In our hero there was nothing ~~not~~truly great: he could, without the least abashment, drink a bottle with the man who knew he had the moment before picked his pocket; and, when he had stript him of everything he had, never desired to do him any further mischief; for he carried good nature to that wonderful and uncommon height that he never did a single injury to man or woman by which he himself did not hope to reap some advantage. He would often indeed say that by the contrary party men often made a bad bargain with the devil and did his work for nothing...."¹

There is ironic sneer on "base" and "pitiful"; Fielding implies that the truly "great" would regard such a temper as stemming from cowardice and an apprehension at being detected. They, in other words, would put on a bolder face and perpetrate their wickedness much more openly. There is also sarcasm on "modesty" and "consciencess", while "small trespass" and "trifling instances" are deliberate ironic understatements. Yet it is

¹ J.W., Bk.I, ch.xi.

often true that guilty men will seek to do away with those they have injured or who know of their guilt. It seems, therefore, that in visiting his friend in his affliction Wild is being magnanimous and is thus behaving differently from other guilty men. But soon after, we come to the ironic phrase "truly great" which suggests that Wild's behaviour has been dictated not by considerations of humanity but of policy. We are later informed that Wild could pick a man's pockets and still drink a bottle with him. This is literally true, and there is a certain amount of perverse admiration for the man whose coolness enables him to contrive this. But an ironic statement follows; it seems that, at the end of all this, Wild is unwilling to do his victim any further injury, not out of compassion, but because he has stripped him of all he had. In the end he leaves his victim alone because harming him any further will not serve his purpose. The sentences following this are literally true, but they merely reinforce the ironic tone which is being adopted towards Wild. The remark about "good nature" carried to an "uncommon height" is ironical because Wild is not good-natured; but it contains a germ of literal truth for there are occasions when men like Heartfree do carry good-nature to an "uncommon height". In the last statement we have moved again to the entirely literal, for it is true that Wild would not commit an injury unless he hoped to gain from it. So that, in a series of shifts within the same passage, Fielding has managed to indicate both Wild's diabolism and his cleverness and tact. He has also exposed the timid malevolence of certain guilty men, and the disadvantages of extravagant goodness.

Finally, it will be helpful to see how this technique is applied to

Heartfree:

"He was possessed of several great weaknesses of mind; being good-natured, friendly, and generous to a great excess. He had indeed too little regard to common justice, for he had forgiven some debts to his acquaintance, only because they could not pay him; and had entrusted a bankrupt on his setting up a second time, from having been convinced, that he had dealt in his bankruptcy with a fair and honest heart, and that he had broke through misfortune only, and not from neglect or imposture. He was withal so silly a fellow, that he never took the least advantage of the ignorance of his customers, and contented himself with very moderate gains on his goods;...."¹

The first statement is literally true but it reflects unfavourably on Heartfree; he is good-natured and generous to excess. The next is "irony-in-reverse", and it reflects creditably on Heartfree whose compassion is thus spotlighted. The sentence which follows this is literally true (Heartfree did help the bankrupt to set up a second time) but the tone is ironic at Heartfree's expense. Fielding does suggest that it was stupid of him to put so much faith in the bankrupt's words. The last statement is literally true and in general reflects Heartfree's fairness, although there is a hint of sarcasm on "silly". So that Fielding has done the same with Heartfree as he did with Wild. By shifting his stance in alternate sentences he has revealed Heartfree's compassion, his extravagant and misguided generosity, his fairness, and his naivety and gullibility.

It seems from this shifting nature of Fielding's irony that he is gradually feeling his way toward the development of double irony as a means of articulating a complex conception. It is this which points to some of the inadequacies of Heartfree, to some of Wild's commendable qualities and through him to the hypocrisy of great society and the true nature of greatness.

¹ J.W., Bk.II, ch.1.

It makes us aware of the limitations of the "good heart" but it also points to the fact that, popular conceptions of greatness notwithstanding, greatness itself is a laudable state provided it combines the "good head" with the "good heart".

This device of "shifting irony" is obviously a meaner art than the fully developed technique of double irony which we shall see Fielding employ in Tom Jones; it is no more than a half-way stage. Whenever Fielding wished in that novel to show that no single view was right, he employed the device of double irony within the same unit. Both views were held in suspension simultaneously and shown to be inadequate. This was done, at times, by the insertion of a single word which modified the meaning, or by a sudden shift in the tone of voice, not by changing posture in consecutive sentences or paragraphs. The device of double irony has the advantage that both views are held together for the reader to examine; he is therefore in no doubt that Fielding is questioning both. "Shifting" from the ironic to the literal on the other hand, has the drawback that the reader is never quite sure what the author's ultimate judgement is. If the device of double irony had been applied to Heartfree we would have seen clearly that Fielding is saying "He is good, but he is also naive". As it is, Fielding seems to be saying, "He is good; he is naive; he is good; he is weakhearted", without making any final judgement. The reader is therefore uncertain of his ultimate attitude to Wild and Heartfree.

In a sense, although the ironic method of Jonathan Wild is a half-way stage to Tom Jones, it is an advance on Joseph Andrews for it is less simple and more unsettling. It questions Heartfree's goodness which most

people would have accepted, it shows that some of Wild's qualities are not so despicable, and it calls for a greater degree of literary experience in order to exercise judgement. However, it is a harsher work than Joseph Andrews which was rich in comedy derived from the use of farce, the mock-heroic and burlesque. The author showed to the full his powers of invention and his mastery of a variety of styles in the latter novel. Moreover, Joseph Andrews was full of good humour even when the satire was most telling. In Jonathan Wild all this has disappeared.

The weakness of Jonathan Wild lies in the fact that the author, having formulated an almost allegorical plot with goodness and greatness seen as antithetical qualities and goodness winning in the end, becomes aware of Wild's attractions and Heartfree's limitations in the course of writing, and therefore works towards a complication of his plan without perfecting an adequate device for revealing this complexity.¹ He decides, in effect, to point to the complexity by making use of a form of double irony. But double irony, even when highly developed is the most treacherous of forms unless the reader is assured of the author's ultimate design. (This seems to have been the fate that befell Book Four of Swift's Gulliver's Travels). In Jonathan Wild there is no assurance because the allegorical plot points in a different direction from the texture of the work. Also the device of double irony is only imperfectly realized and therefore the attempt to demonstrate Wild's double-sidedness and Heartfree's inadequacy does not

¹ It is almost certain that Fielding did not start with a fully complex conception already in mind, because the conclusion would then have been different. Heartfree like Tom Jones would have had to do more to rouse himself out of the situation in which his own ineptitude and Wild's malevolence had landed him, and at the end he would have been a different man; for one thing, he would have learned prudence.

entirely succeed. As far as Wild is concerned Fielding seems to be saying that the qualities we admire in great men are the same as those they have in common with thieves, and our admiration reflects a certain perverseness in us. In order to have done this properly Fielding should have shown clearly that great men and their qualities were both admirable and despicable, and that thieves had some redeeming features. With regard to Heartfree, Fielding seems to be saying that some of the qualities normally associated with good men are irrelevant for the conduct of affairs, although goodness should not be despised. Fielding attempts to make a very complex statement in Jonathan Wild, but the device he uses is inadequate to the task. The result is that, even if we feel that the plot is playing against the texture, and that the irony points in a direction other than that suggested by the allegorical plot, we are not quite sure what that direction is. It is only when Fielding has mastered the technique of double irony, when he knows from the start that he is going to articulate a complex conception, and when he is determined to manipulate the texture in order to give expression to this complex conception and point to a logical conclusion, that he reaches the height of his achievement in the use of irony. We shall subsequently see how this is achieved in Tom Jones.

CHAPTER SIX

A "Moral" Approach to Tom Jones

I

It is universally agreed that Tom Jones is Fielding's masterpiece. It is the novel which has ensured his immortality and earned him a place among the ranks of the world's greatest novelists. Coleridge, Scott and Stendhal are not the least among the eminent men of letters who have extolled the perfection of Fielding's plot, the richness of the novel's texture and the scope of its panoramic view of English life and manners which it gave in a way that had never been done before and that has seldom been attempted since.

Tom Jones is the quintessence of Fielding's art because here, at last, morality and art are most superbly blended. The plot and structure, which Coleridge admired so much, do not exist per se, but were deliberately designed to meet the needs of the moral points that Fielding wished to make. In this novel, character and scene, plot, structure and texture, are brilliantly interrelated. If the morality does not obtrude, it is only because the hand of the artist is very much in control, making use of all the comic devices Fielding had developed to portray his morality; he manipulates the texture and structure in such a way that morality is controlled by art.

There can be little doubt that the novel is concerned with questions of morality. Tom Jones is Fielding's most comprehensive statement of his

own moral, religious and philosophical position.¹ It is moreover, far more probing and philosophical than Joseph Andrews ever claimed to be, for it asks fundamental questions about human conduct, about virtue and good nature, and it therefore examines opposed world views on these questions. These problems were of considerable interest to eighteenth-century writers, and in attempting to resolve them, the intellectuals were responding to a great public need.

Professor Bonamy Dobrée has shown how preoccupied the first half of the eighteenth century was with the question of human conduct.² It was the period which saw the rise of the novel and the growth in popularity of the essay and the magazine. It also coincided with the rise of the new mercantilist middle-class who formed the bulk of the reading public. These people, conscious of their new position in society, were anxious to discover what good conduct consisted in and what were the guides to human actions and the motives underlying them. Essayists, such as Addison and Steele, did their best to provide answers; and, in Tom Jones, Fielding gives a detailed statement of his own views. He calls the work a "history" and not a system. This is significant: the work, in other words, is not a system formulated to describe the state of human nature, or the condition of a particular human being; it is not a work about "being"; it is,

¹ See Digeon, p.132, who argues that Fielding knew of the progress of Richardson's Clarissa and of its contents. He was therefore moved to write a novel in which Tom and Sophia were conceived of as antidotes to Lovelace and Clarissa. This view holds good only if one supposes that the most important theme in Tom Jones is Sophia's attempt to thwart the designs of her father and marry Tom. But, all the evidence shows that Fielding's novel is much more wide-ranging in its philosophical implications than such a simplification would suggest.

² Bonamy Dobrée, English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century (Oxford, 1959), p.10.

rather, a history about becoming; and by history here Fielding means, not simply the record of a young man's activities, but an account of his moral and intellectual growth. The novel is, therefore, about progress, education and reformation.

Fielding's young hero begins his education by being exposed to diametrically opposed intellectual influences, both of which he rejects. His process of education is then continued on the road; and, once he goes out into the world, his basic good-nature acts as a touchstone to expose the hypocrisy of the people he meets. Yet he, himself, has glaring weaknesses. In order to portray these clearly, and to universalize his theme so that it applies to the whole of human nature, Fielding resorts to Biblical mythology and makes use of the doctrine of the Fall with its attendant themes of temptation, expulsion, reformation, redemption and final recognition. Man, though basically good, possesses some crude instincts, and when he succumbs to them he falls, and is only restored to favour after repentance, when he is granted the grace of God. The novel thus becomes more probing and fundamental than anything Fielding had written before. Not only the "Man-hero", but also the "Deus-figure", are tested and found to be inadequate. The position is further complicated by the presence of Evil (the devil) in the world; but eventually both "positives" acquire heavenly wisdom, and at the end there is reformation followed by redemption and forgiveness.

II

Fielding selects his hero, Tom Jones, from the society of ordinary men; and, in fact, as his name implies, he is the representative of the ordinary man. He comes into the world naked, weeping, and even illegitimate; and he has to be educated in the ways of the world and in his duty towards God and man. Education, therefore, sets the scale of the world views presented in the novel.

The novel is concerned with the question of the virtuous man, and what should be accepted as guides to human conduct and its motives. How does man discover what his obligations are and what are the forces which guide him and ensure that these obligations are fulfilled? These questions were thought to be basic, and it happened that strong antipathies were aroused and opinions clashed violently when men attempted to answer them.

Fielding's solution is to take an ordinary man and demonstrate the process of his education and perfection in virtue. The man is then exposed to various influences, and the reader is shown what effect, if any, these have on his character, and how he himself learns the correct path to virtue. In order to begin to grasp the novel's meaning, therefore, we must take a look at those two learned men, Thwackum and Square, into whose hands Tom's education is first entrusted.

Thwackum and Square represent two extreme and diametrically opposed positions. Tom is placed between the two, and the ethical position Fielding maps out for him, and therefore for the ordinary man, is not a

reconciliation of these two opposed world views. It represents the truth as lying somewhere between the two, but qualitatively different from either and transforming both.

Square and Thwackum were at the opposite ends of a broad spectrum of writers who joined in the contemporary religious and philosophical fray. Square is a more than usually obstinate representative of the Deist position, and Thwackum an equally bigotted representative of the Anglican High-Church party. The former, like many other Deists, adopted the optimistic view of human nature. He believed that human nature was the perfection of all virtue and that vice was just a deviation from human nature. Goodness was the original beauty of virtue, and all actions were to be judged, by reference to the unalterable rule of right and the eternal fitness of things. So that as far as conduct was concerned, Man, whose nature was so perfect, simply needed to consult it in order to discover what was right and what was wrong.

Thwackum, on the other hand, believed that the human mind since the Fall was a sink of iniquity until purified and redeemed by Divine Grace. Goodness, and virtue, therefore, did not consist in man's own noble exertions; (as a depraved being his exertions could hardly be virtuous). It was the Divine power of Grace. Whereas Square referred everything to the unalterable rule of right and the eternal fitness of things, Thwackum decided everything by authority: the strict letter of the law had to be obeyed, and mercy was to be left to heaven. The Deists were thus optimistic about man and his innate potentiality for virtuous actions, whereas the High Church Anglicans were pessimistic. It will be instructive

to examine in some detail the views held by these two groups of men, and to try to demonstrate how Thwackum and Square derive from them.

Wilbur Cross suggests that Square was modelled on Thomas Chubb, a well-known Deist who lived in Salisbury. Yet there is no need for us to believe that each of Fielding's major characters was modelled on a particular individual, even if there may be considerable evidence for assuming that Ralph Allen was the prototype for Allworthy.¹ Square, as Fielding informs us, represents the worst elements of his school. Thomas Chubb, though not a very learned upholder of the Deist cause, was certainly a reasonable man with a keen, if untutored, intellect. According to Leslie Stephen, he would have proved a formidable antagonist had he enjoyed the formal education his opponents had. Yet, in fact, he could not have been Square's prototype; for Square's philosophy appears to be a conglomeration of snippets from the works of various Deist philosophers, carefully selected to include those sections which were most anti-religious in tone and to ignore those which emphasized man's social obligations.

The Deist controversy which raged in England for a century and more, was at its height during the period spanning Fielding's life. The number of articles devoted to the subject in the magazines, and the fact that ordinary men, as well as theologians and philosophers, participated in the debate, shows the importance of the subject for every one. Men appeared to want to know more about the nature of their obligations and how they were to be discharged.

¹ I have since discovered that Miriam Allott in "A Note on Fielding's Mr. Square", *MLR*, LVI (1961), 69-72, shares this view. She thinks that Square is intended to show how the arguments of the "Christian DEISTS" can be distorted.

In their attempt to face this problem, the Deists suggested that it was unnecessary to listen to the dictates of revealed religion in order to discover what man's moral obligations were. These were clearly discernible if, firstly, he studied nature and nature's laws and perceived the fixed and unalterable relations in which things stood to each other; or, secondly, if he consulted his reason. In either case, it should be possible for a man to learn what was right or wrong for himself, and so to see where his duty lay towards his fellow men. Man was therefore innately and potentially virtuous, and so needed no external sources to indicate what virtue was. Revealed religion, the central point of which was God's Commandments to man, was therefore superfluous.

In order to demonstrate what they meant by the eternal and unalterable relations which things had to each other, the Deists frequently resorted to quasi-mathematical arguments. The relations between things, they claimed, were as fixed as the relation between two halves of a mathematical equation, or theorem. If these were fixed, applications based on them would be true. If, therefore, man ensured that his actions conformed to this immutable relationship which he discovered in things, these actions would conform to reason; they would be in accordance with nature, and they would therefore be virtuous. It is from this method of reasoning that Square derives his name. We recall that, on one occasion, he declared he would be unwilling to call any action virtuous which did not quadrate with the unalterable rule of right and the eternal fitness of things.

The mathematical method of argument is easily discernible in William Wollaston's The Religion of Nature Delineated (1722):

"And, beside this, they bear certain respects to things, which are not arbitrary, but as determinate and immutable as any ratio's are in mathematics. For the facts and the things they respect are just what they are, as much as any two given quantities are; and therefore the respects interceding between those must be as fixt as the ratio is which one of these bear to the other: that is, they must remain the same, and always speak the same language, till things cease to be as they are".¹

In another section of the work, several phrases usually employed by Square during his arguments, can also be recognized:

"Those propositions, which are true, and express things as they are, express the relation between the subject and the attribute as it is; that is, this is either affirmed or denied of that according to the nature of that relation. And further, this relation, (or, if you will, the nature of this relation) is determined and fixed by the natures of the things themselves. Therefore nothing can interfere with any proposition that is true, but it must likewise interfere with nature (the nature of the relation, and the natures of the things themselves too), and consequently be unnatural, or wrong in nature. So very much are those gentlemen mistaken, who by following nature mean only complying with their bodily inclinations, tho in opposition to truth, or at least without any regard to it. Truth is but a conformity to nature; and to follow nature cannot be to combat truth".²

Wollaston believes that the perception of the immutable relations between things is the perception of truth, and moral good consists in the conformity of one's actions to truth — things as they are in nature. Moral good therefore consists in ensuring that actions conformed to the laws of nature.

It is clear from Wollaston's writings also that he lays emphasis on the use of reason. "Right reason" is that faculty which enables man to discern the immutable relations between things:

"They who place all in following nature, if they mean by that

¹ William Wollaston, The Religion of Nature Delineated (1726), p.13.

² Wollaston, p.13.

phrase acting according to the natures of things (that is, treating things as being what they in nature are, or according to truth) say what is right. But this does not seem to be their meaning....They who make Right Reason to be the law, by which our acts are to be judged...say something more particular and precise. And it is true that whatever will bear to be tried by Right Reason, is right and that which is condemned by it is wrong".¹

Having, as he thinks, proved that man can discern the nature of moral good and evil by the application of right reason and an examination of the laws of Nature, Wollaston draws the inference that this discovery should lead men to live virtuous lives; and he goes on to declare that if moral good and evil are distinguishable as he has outlined them, then there must be religion. This religion he refers to as natural religion, and he defines it as nothing more than an obligation to do what ought not to be omitted, and to forbear what ought not to be done. Wollaston then relates this religion to human happiness. He thinks that the pursuit of truth, the deliberate attempt to ensure that our actions conform to truth and the fitness of things, is conducive to human happiness: "To live virtuously, is to practise reason and act conformably to truth; he who lives so must be ultimately happy".

It can be seen that some of Square's views are derived from Wollaston. Square's "eternal fitness of things" is the same as Wollaston's "immutable relations between things"; Square's "unalterable rule of right" is the same as Wollaston's "right reason". Square talks of the nature of things and the law of nature, in the same way as Wollaston does.

Yet Square's favourite phrase, "the eternal fitness of things", occurs most often, not in the works of Wollaston but in those of Matthew Tindal.

¹ Wollaston, p.22.

Tindal's most important contribution to the Deist controversy is Christianity as Old as The Creation (1730). In it he set out to demonstrate that revealed Christianity added nothing whatever to the religion of Nature, and that the principles inculcated by it had been practised by heathens and adherents of other religious faiths long before Christianity was revealed. According to Tindal it was the height of conceit to imagine that God, who had made everyone in his own image, should, nevertheless, have chosen a small band of nomads as the only people to whom his will should be revealed. Man's nature has always been the same, and God has always been the same, therefore it is reasonable to suppose that the law which God has given man for the regulation of his conduct has always been the same. Man, from the very first, had shown himself capable of leading a virtuous life, and of regulating his conduct according to all the laws of morality. Since, for Tindal, Christianity is no more than morality, it follows that Christianity is as old as the Creation.

Tindal's opponents claim (in Tindal's view) that Christianity is the perfect and immutable religion. He concedes this, and then goes on to suggest that it must always have been perfect and immutable:

"Can therefore a religion absolutely perfect, admit of any alteration or diminution and not be as immutable as the author of it? Can revelation, I say, add anything to a religion thus absolutely perfect, universal, immutable?"

He continues:

"B. I grant you, that God was always willing that all men shou'd come to a knowledge of True religion; and we say, that the Christian Religion, being the Only True, and Absolutely Perfect Religion, was what God, from the Beginning, designed for all mankind....

A. If so, it follows that the Christian Religion has existed from the Beginning and that God, both then and ever since, has

continued to give Mankind sufficient Means to know it; and that 'tis their duty to know, believe, profess, and practise it; so that Christianity, though the Name is of later Date, must be as old, and as extensive as humane nature; and as the law of our creation must have been then implanted in us by God himself".¹

Tindal thus believes that there has always been a universal law of nature and therefore a religion of nature as old as man himself. This law has always been promulgated by various means to men in all ages, and no one could plead ignorance of it. It is easily discernible, as it is based on the nature of things and the relation men stand to God and to each other. By perceiving this law, men could learn what their moral obligations were, independent of revealed religion. But how does man perceive the nature of things and the relation they hold to each other? Tindal explains:

"As God, whose infinite Wisdom sets him above being deceiv'd, or influenc'd by any wrong Affections, acts in constant Conformity to the Reason and Nature of things; and 'tis a contradiction to his nature to do anything that is not fit, and Reasonable; so he wou'd have fram'd our nature in contradiction to his own Nature, or require us to do what he himself abhors to do. The end for which God has given us Reason, is to compare things, and the Relation they stand in to each other; and from thence to judge of the Fitness and Unfitness of Actions; and could not our Reason judge soundly in all such matters, it cou'd not have answer'd the End for which infinite Wisdom and Goodness bestow'd that excellent Gift;² and for which we can't enough adore the Goodness of God".²

Reason, therefore, is the test which, if applied, will discover the law of nature, a law which, according to Tindal, is common to all rational creatures; like its author, it is absolutely perfect, eternal and unchangeable. God requires from men no more than is founded on the nature of things, and the "immutable" relations they bear to each other.

¹ Matthew Tindal, Christianity as Old as The Creation (1732), pp.4-5.

² Tindal, p.26.

Like Hollaston and Shaftesbury before him, Tindal suggests that if there is a law of nature, and man is capable of discovering it, he will go on to put into effect the moral obligations which the law dictates. These obligations imply that man is meant to be a social animal:

"...God has endowed them [men] with Reason, Speech and all other Faculties, evidently fitted to enable them to assist each other in all the matters of life;...Men by their nature were fram'd to be useful to one another..."¹

"In a word, a most beneficent Disposition in the supreme Being is the source of all his Actions in relation to his Creatures; so he has implanted in Man, whom he has made after his own image, a love for his species; the gratifying of which in doing acts of Benevolence, Compassion and good Will, produced a pleasure that never satiates: as on the contrary, actions of Ill-Nature, Envy, Malice etc. never fail to produce Shame, Confusion, and everlasting Self-Represch..."²

Many of Tindal's sentiments are eminently reasonable. Neither Fielding, nor Shaftesbury himself would have disagreed violently with his main points. His view of human nature is as optimistic as theirs; and he, too, emerges as a disciple of the doctrine of benevolence. Many of these opinions could also have been echoed by some of the Anglican Divines. For Clarke, Hoadly and Tillotson believed there was nothing in revealed religion which conflicted with the tenets of natural religion. Indeed, Tillotson, in a preface to Wilkins' Of Natural Religion, had said, "For where there is no law of nature there can neither be obedience, nor transgression". Tindal quotes this in his margin, and we recall that Square makes use of a similar phrase when he says, "If there is no law of nature, there is neither right, nor wrong".

The truth is that although Tindal was branded as a Deist, and although

¹ Tindal, p.18.

² *ibid.*, p.19.

he certainly believed in the religion of nature, he did not wish to undermine the Church, and his outlook was similar to that of many low-Church clerics. There were, however, other Deists who were obviously determined to attack the fundamental bastions of established religion, although they strenuously maintained that their main intention was to point out the similarities between natural and revealed religion. One such writer was Toland.

Toland's Christianity not Mysterious (1696), was one of the earliest of the genuinely "Deistical" pamphlets. Its main point was that nothing in Christianity, or in revealed religion was contrary to reason. From this it was a logical step to suggest that every aspect of modern Christianity which appeared to contradict reason must be regarded as dubious. So, everything in the Bible, and each of the Christian tenets, must be subjected to the test of reason. Everything which was genuine could be given a rational explanation; and there was, therefore, no mystery in Christianity:

"On the contrary, we hold that Reason is the only foundation of all Certitude; and that nothing reveal'd, whether as to its Manner or Existence, is more exempted from its Disquisitions, than the ordinary Phenomena of Nature. Wherefore, we likewise maintain, according to the Title of this Discourse, that there is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, nor above it, and that no Christian doctrine can be properly called a mystery."¹

Toland's position would have been unassailable had he stopped here. But he went on to attack many of the supposed mysteries of the Christian Religion, and it soon became obvious that his object was not to demonstrate the similarity between natural and revealed religion, but to attack and attempt to demolish the fundamental bases of Christianity.

¹ John Toland, Christianity not Mysterious (1696), p.6.

Thomas Chubb, on whom Wilbur Cross thinks Square was modelled, is a relatively minor figure. His most memorable contribution to "Deist" literature was a pamphlet called A Discourse Concerning Reason, which is, in reality, a short, but lucid synthesis of most of the arguments of the more prominent Deists. Chubb repeats the usual cliches, his main point being that human conduct, and thus morality, should be based on conformity with the eternal rules which result from the "natural and essential differences of things". Like the other Deists, he asserts that reason must be applied to everything and every action must be seen to conform to the rule of "right reason".

We thus see whence Square derives his name and character. Of course, Fielding emphasizes that he represents the most extreme views of a group whose misguided ideas were not altogether repellent, and who formed a considerable body of enlightened eighteenth-century opinion. It can be seen that Square ignores Wollaston and Tindal's emphasis on benevolence and man's social obligations.

For the best of the Deists held "respectable" opinions. If they stressed the religion of nature, they went on to point out that the moral obligations it imposed on man were not significantly different from those imposed by revealed religion. In the light of this the reaction of the High-Churchmen seems unduly violent. But there were great issues at stake. To concede that men were capable of leading virtuous, and even religious lives without the assistance, instructions, threats, penalties and sanctions of revealed religion, was to accept that that religion had no raison d'etre. And, although the Church was in a parlous state internally, it was still a

force to be reckoned with in the eighteenth century. Bishops enjoyed great prestige, and influence, and so were not likely to be kindly disposed toward anything which seemed subversive. For, the logical conclusion of the Deists' position would have been to call in question the authority of priests and bishops and to revile them for imposing superstitions on mankind; this tendency was already apparent in Toland's work, and even the moderate Tindal was unusually violent in his attack on priestcraft and enthusiasm. Moreover, some of the defenders of the orthodox position were Tory Jacobites for whom the High Church and the Jacobite cause usually went together. These men saw a strong connection between Church and State and therefore interpreted any attack on the Church as an attack on all established authority and forms of ordered government. They were also usually pessimists, believing that human nature was depraved. Man thus depraved and fallen could not be left to himself to discover moral truths; authority must tell him what to believe and authority must be obeyed. It is these extremely bigoted High-Churchmen that Thwackum represents.

Once more it must be said that it is not necessary for us to identify any one man as the "original" of Thwackum. Thwackum stands for an obstinate attitude rather than a particular individual. His name suggests that the quality uppermost in Fielding's mind was his readiness with the rod, although it is also probably associated with his aggressiveness in argument; and this view seems to be borne out when one considers the methods and opinions of the group of men he represents. These men were convinced that one need not spend much time on the Deists, whose arguments, in their view, were so untenable that they could be easily disposed of.

Indeed, there was one short and easy method with the Deists and that was to "thwackum".

This attitude can be seen in the works of the leading champion of the Anglican High Church, Charles Leslie, whose arrogance and intellectual aggressiveness would make him a fitting prototype for Thwackum. Leslie Stephen says of him:

"He was, in fact no despicable master of the art of expressing pithy arguments in vigorous English. His honourable independence of character attached him to the fortunes of a small and declining party; whilst his pugnacity plunged him into controversies with almost every section of the majority. Besides numerous political skirmishes, he found time to carry on operations against Quakers, Deists, Socinians, Jews and Papists."¹

Leslie's main contribution to anti-Deist literature was A Short And Easy Method with the Deists, which, according to Stephen, was intended to extirpate the whole accursed generation with a single blow. Leslie always insisted that the Deists were lightweights. Some of their arguments were so unreasonable that they scarcely merited reply. The truth of Christianity (for him the only religion worth talking about) was so plain, that to indulge in lengthy arguments and reasons to demonstrate it, was clearly unnecessary. Therefore, only a short, simple method was needed to convert the Deists. He proposed, accordingly a simple test, a kind of touchstone, consisting of four rules by which the truth of religion (by which he meant the Anglican faith) would be proved. Leslie selects his tests so as to ensure that Christianity emerges unscathed. Christianity was a matter of fact, because the miracles and other mysteries which were

¹ Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 3rd ed. (1876), I, 195.

supposed to confirm it were seen and heard by several men, and attested by several others. The institutions and ceremonies which commemorate these mysteries, were set up at the same time as the mysteries themselves occurred, and their record in the Bible was also simultaneous. Therefore Christianity and its miracles must be true.

The weakness of Leslie's case is that he maintains that the records were contemporaneous with the mysterious events. There is nothing to prove this. Instead of wasting so much time on a naive vindication of the miracles on the ground of historical authenticity, Leslie should have devoted more attention to rebutting the Deists' claim that a code of conduct could be derived from the religion of nature without the aid of revelation. The point at issue was not whether revelation was a fact, but whether there was a need of revelation, and therefore, of the Christian religion. Yet for Leslie, the fact of Christianity was as plain as it could be, and so there was no point in discussing whether it was necessary or not. In his view the Deists were questioning, not just the doctrines of Christianity, but its authenticity, so he had nothing but abuse for them. They were cheats, impostors, blasphemers, an abomination before God, and according to the law in the scriptures, they would be condemned to be stoned. Passages such as this (in which we can almost hear Thwackum's accents) are typical:

"Therefore, if the Deists would avoid the mortification (which will be very uneasy to them) to yield, and submit to be subdu'd, and Hew'd down before the Priests; whom of all Mankind they Hate and Despise; if they would avoid this, let them confess, as the Truth is, that Religion is no invention of Priests, but of Divine Original".¹

¹ Charles Leslie, A Short and Easy Method with the Deists (1727), p.48. See also a letter on p.52 to a Deist who had been converted.

In another work, of Private Judgement and Authority, Leslie shows that, like Thwackum, he is an upholder of "authority", but that he would like to leave himself room for manoeuvre in order to disown the authority claimed by the Jews and the Roman Catholic Church. So he concedes that he receives the scriptures, not upon the authority of the Church, but upon Evidence. Nevertheless, there must be some authority, for the greater part of mankind were ignorant and must depend on the judgement of others. The Church therefore has authority as a witness and a keeper of the Holy Writ: "It is the interpreter of the scriptures as the judges are of the law, and they have authority so to interpret and they judge authoritatively".

It can thus be seen that Thwackum and Leslie hold similar views. Both believe in the need for "authority"; both mean the Christian religion, whenever they mention the word "religion", and not only the Christian religion, but the Church of England. (Leslie thinks that Mohamedanism, Judaism and Roman Catholicism would not stand up to his four tests). Both are intellectually arrogant and aggressive, and believe that the Deists can be dealt with in a short and easy way.

Another defender of the High Church position was Prideaux, whose Letter to a Deist appeared in 1697. He has attracted less attention than Leslie, perhaps because his manner is much less aggressive. His case, however, is much more intelligently argued. Yet Prideaux, like Leslie, fails to meet the Deists' main contention that revelation was unnecessary. He sets out to prove, instead, that revelation was a fact and could not have been an imposture. Like Leslie, he chooses tests designed to ensure that Mohamedanism is condemned and Christianity vindicated.

A much better defence than Leslie's or Prideaux's was Bishop Gastrell's The Certainty and Necessity of Religion in General. In it Gastrell sets out to prove the existence of God and the need for religion. But even this defence is inadequate, for all it does is demonstrate the existence of God and show that man owes him certain obligations. Some of the Deists would have readily agreed with this. But they would not have accepted the claim that revelation was necessary to inform man of God's will. However, for Gastrell, as for Leslie, the question did not arise, for revelation was a fact. In his view the Deists (whom he genuinely believed were atheists) were questioning, not so much the necessity of revelation, as its authenticity. If they could be convinced that there was a God, and that revelation was true, the entire question would be resolved.

Like the other High Church divines, Gastrell has something to say about authority. If there were no God and no revealed religion, and every man acted according to the dictates of his own conscience and reason, then two things would result. First, all men would be equal and there would be no such thing as superiority, right or authority of any kind. Secondly, everyone would act in the way he thought best for himself. Like Leslie, Gastrell has nothing but scorn for the Deists whom he regarded as wicked anarchists:

"And if God should suffer this to be the Result of the bold Talk and Arguing of the present Atheists of this Nation; they would then repent that they did not keep their Atheism to themselves, and make their advantage of other people's Credulity: for if all the People, or any considerable Number of them were of their Opinions, they would soon overturn Government, and bring all things to an Equality; and then farewell to all the Pleasures, Enjoyments and Conveniences of living, when every Man must labour to maintain his OWN life and be in continual Fear of having it taken away by others".¹

¹ Francis Gastrell, The Certainty and Necessity of Religion in General (1697), p.174.

Gastrell accordingly dismissed all Deists and atheists as lechers, fools and ignorant men, who were incapable of formulating schemes or hypotheses. It is this intellectual arrogance of the High Church leaders which blinded them to the real points being made, and left them incapable of putting a plausible case in reply.¹

Finally, there is the arch nonjuror, the great Doctor Sacheverell himself. For Sacheverell, Church and State were interconnected, and any attack on the Church was to be interpreted as an attack on all legally constituted authority. One is not, therefore, surprised to find him making a contribution to the debate. In the Sermon, The Perils of False Brethren both in Church and State, he asserted that:

"Her Holy Communion [referring to the Church] has been Rent, and Divided by factious, and schismatical impostors; Her Pure Doctrine has been corrupted, and Defil'd; her Primitive Worship and Discipline Prophaned and abus'd; Her sacred orders Deny'd and Vilify'd; Her Priests and Professors (like St. Paul) Calumniated, Misrepresented, and Ridiculed; Her Altars and Sacraments prostituted to Hypocrites, Deists, Socinians, and Atheists; and this done, I wish I could not say, without Miscouragement, I am sure with Impunity, not only by Our Professed Enemies, but which is worse, by Our Pretended Friends and FALSE BRETHREN."²

Sacheverell would not even pay the Deists and others the compliment of engaging in argument with them. He branded them as fifth columnists within the bosom of the Church, and subjected them to vilification and abuse. Bishop Burnett said of him:

"Dr. Sacheverell was a bold insolent man, with a very small measure of Religion, Virtue, Learning or Good sense, but he resolved to force himself into Popularity and Preferment, by the most Petulant Railing at Dissenters, and Low Churchmen,

¹ See also Revd. P. Berault, Discourses on the Trinity. A very simple-minded defence of miracles, revelation and the Trinity.

² Henry Sacheverell, The Perils of False Brethren (1709), pp.7-8.

in several sermons and Libels, wrote without either Chasteness of Stile, or Liveliness of Expression: All was one unpractised Strain of indecent and scurrilous Language."¹

We can judge for ourselves by reading such works as Sacheverell's sermon,

The communication of Sin:

"When men out of a time-serving Fear, sycophantysing Flattery, or mistaken Complaisance, shall fall in with the damnable Humours, or Debauched Opinions of lewd sots and Atheists, smile at their smutty and prophane jests, tamely hear those Holy Oracles, by which we expect to be sav'd, scoft at and Derided, and impudently criticis'd upon, and give an approving laugh to that Excellent Drollery, for which the Speaker's tongue ought to be cut out, lest they should displeas a crew of ignorant and Profligate infidels, by shewing unseasonably before Brutes and Buffoons, that they themselves are Men, that is Creatures, endued with Reason, and Reflection, that are not ashamed of the God that made them, and have so much gratitude as to own and vindicate the Saviour that Redeem'd them. Not to rebuk such Daring impieties, (which fly in the Face of Heaven and call aloud for speedy Vengeance, for Thunder and Earthquakes to Blast and swallow such accursed Miscreants, who thus provoke, and, as it were, anticipate their damnation) notwithstanding the most powerful and dangerous oppositions in the World, is, in the Apostle's Language, to have Fellowship with the Works of Darkness."²

The High-Church champions thought that unless men were brought to believe in revelation, in the authority of the scriptures and of priests, in the miracles and other mysteries, then the foundations of Christianity would be sapped. So, in order to secure its position, they insisted that belief, above all things, was the essential prerequisite for salvation. Faith in God as revealed through Christ and the prophets, not works or conduct, was what would count on the Day of Judgement. The Deist controversy thus degenerated into a sterile argument about authority, and

¹ Gilbert Burnett, A History of our Own Times (1734), II, 537.

² Henry Sacheverell, "The Communications of Sin," in Sermons and Tracts (1709), pp.8-9; see also, pp.14-15.

the nature and authenticity of the Trinity and of miracles. In this kind of atmosphere it is not surprising that the point of the original debate was lost. The truth is that neither side was wholly right nor wholly wrong. The orthodox defenders should have realized that by making a small concession to the Deists, they could have gone on to rout them on their own ground, as Clarke and Butler were later to do. But for men like Sacheverell and Leslie, concessions were out of the question.

The Deists undoubtedly proved their point that from a contemplation of the laws of nature and the application of reason, a religion of nature could be derived, embodying a moral code which was antecedent to revealed religion. A Tom Jones and a Mr. Allworthy did possess innate generosity and goodness of heart and knew what their duty was, independent of religion. Even a Blifil was capable of distinguishing right from wrong. But it is after this point that the weakness of the Deists' case is exposed. For though a man could be intelligent enough to see what his duty ought to be, there was no guarantee that he would go on to do it. Also, a man might use his reason and discover which acts were anti-social and which were not, but in the face of passions or temptations, reason might be powerless. It is in this kind of situation that religion becomes effective. The potential culprit might be deterred if he realized that a certain act had been forbidden by God and would be regarded by him with disfavour. But on the other hand, to insist as the High Church party did that one only needed to affirm one's faith in order to be saved, was to absolve everyone from the responsibility of doing virtuous acts.

Both the Deist position, represented in Tom Jones by Square, and the

High Church position represented by Thwackum, are thus seen to be inadequate and extreme. In Tom Jones, Tom is the ordinary man going through a process of education, and Fielding is intent on finding out what set of principles would best equip him for living virtuously. It is obvious from the above survey that neither Square's deism nor Thwackum's High Anglicanism is an acceptable solution; and Fielding seems to endorse this view when he says that both men represent extreme viewpoints, and are therefore the objects of ridicule. It is interesting, therefore, to examine the nature of the same middle way that Fielding presents as the positive and acceptable answer, and to see who were the men on whose works the morality of Tom Jones was based. It is widely believed that the moral basis of the novel derives from Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury; so, before proceeding further, the validity of this claim must be substantiated.¹

Shaftesbury's views on morals, religion and virtue are set out in his Characteristics of Men, Manners and Opinions(1711). In it we find the familiar Deist views: that it is possible to derive the presence of a deity in nature without the aid of revelation, and no less possible to derive a code of conduct from the laws of nature. Yet Shaftesbury goes beyond this, and shows exactly how the process works, whereby the individual is able to perceive nature's laws and therefore, his own obligations. For, virtue, according to Shaftesbury, depends on the individual's ability to perceive the sublime, the beautiful, the orderly and the symmetrical in the nature of things. The perception of this beauty he calls the moral sense:

¹ Sir Walter Raleigh, The English Novel (1894). He regards the morality of Tom Jones as Shaftesbury's philosophy vulgarized.

"As in the sensible kind, Species or Images of Bodies, Colours, and Sounds, are perpetually moving before our eyes, and acting on our Senses, even in sleep,... so in the moral and intellectual kind, the Forms and Images of things are no less active and incumbent on the mind.

In these vagrant Characters or Pictures of Manners, which the Mind of Necessity figures to itself, and carries still about with it, the Heart cannot possibly remain neutral; but constantly takes part one way or other. However false or corrupt it be within itself, it finds the difference, as to Beauty, and Comeliness, between one Heart and another, one Turn of Affection, one Behaviour, one Sentiment and another; and accordingly, in all disinterested Cases, must approve in some measure of what is natural and honest, and disapprove what is dishonest and corrupt".¹

In Shaftesbury's view it is evident that man possesses a natural sense of the sublime and beautiful. The ability to apprehend this beauty he equates with the moral sense or taste; virtue thus consists in ensuring that actions and inclinations conform to this "supreme sense and symmetry of things".

Shaftesbury's opinions here are very similar to those of the Deists whose works have been reviewed above. What he refers to as the "beauty and symmetry of things", Toland, Wollaston and Tindal would call "the eternal and immutable relations between things". Shaftesbury goes on to describe what virtue involves when translated into terms of human conduct. He asserts that in order to deserve the epithet "virtuous" every creature should ensure that his inclinations and affections, and his dispositions of mind and temper, agree with the good of his kind or of the system in which he is included and of which he constitutes a part:

"To stand thus well-affected, and to have one's affections right and intire, not only in respect of one's self, but of Society and the Public; this is Rectitude, integrity, or VIRTUE".

¹ Anthony Ashley-Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, The Characteristics of Men, Manners and Opinions (1711), II, 29-30.

In this Shaftesbury is not markedly different from Wollaston and Tindal who also stressed man's fulfilment of his social obligations as the proof of his virtue. He also asserts, as they do, that the fulfilment of these obligations is conducive to happiness, and carries with it an intrinsic delight:

"THAT TO HAVE THE NATURAL AFFECTIONS (such as are founded in Love, Complacence, Good-Will, and in sympathy with the kind of species) IS TO HAVE THE CHIEF MEANS AND POWER OF SELF-ENJOYMENT: And THAT TO WANT THEM IS CERTAIN MISERY AND ILL...."

"Now, in the first place, to explain, 'How much the natural Affections are in themselves the highest pleasures and enjoyments, there should, methinks, be little need of proving this to anyone of human kind, who had never the condition of the Mind under a lively Affection of Love, Gratitude, Bounty, Generosity, Pity, Succour, or whatever else is of a social friendly sort. He who has ever so little knowledge of human Nature, is sensible what pleasure the Mind perceives when it is touched in this generous way".¹

All these beliefs, then, Shaftesbury shares with the other deists. If this is true, on what grounds is it normally assumed that Fielding was indebted to him and not to men like Tindal and Wollaston for his moral basis? The answer is that in spite of the similarities, Shaftesbury differs from the other Deists in some significant respects. The most important is that he did not dismiss the efficacy of religion and of rewards and punishments for ensuring that frail human nature kept to the correct paths.

"The principle of fear of future punishments and Hope of future Reward,...is yet, in many circumstances, a great Advantage, Security and Support to Virtue...notwithstanding there may be implanted in the Heart a real sense of Right and Wrong, a real Good Affection towards the species of Society; yet by the violence of Rage, Lust, or any other counter-working Passion, this good Affection may frequently be controul'd and overcome. Where therefore there is nothing in the Mind capable to render such ill Passions the objects of its Aversion

¹ Shaftesbury, II, 99,101.

and cause them earnestly to be oppos'd, 'tis apparent how much a good Temper in time must suffer, and a Character by degrees change for the worse. But if Religion interposing, creates a Belief that the ill Passions of this kind,...are the objects of a Deity's Animadversion; 'tis certain that such a Belief must prove a seasonable Remedy against Vice, and be in a particular manner disadvantageous to Virtue".¹

In this respect, then, Shaftesbury is fundamentally different from Tindal and Wollaston and approaches Fielding's own position. Indeed, on reading sections of the Characteristics one cannot help recording how closely the sentiments expressed fit into the ethical pattern of Tom Jones.

For Tom has a sense of right and wrong and fulfils his social obligations, but at times passion gets the better of his reason; and Fielding suggests, as Shaftesbury does, that when this happens only a religion which definitely asserts that the resulting acts of wickedness are "the objects of the deity's animadversions", can be of any use as a deterrent from vice and an incentive to virtue. Shaftesbury, like Fielding, also stresses that the good man shares in the sorrows and delights of his fellowmen.

In spite of these similarities, it is not really likely that it was Shaftesbury's teaching which formed the moral basis of Tom Jones. Shaftesbury was not the only thinker who stressed the need for benevolence and religion, and there are some other thinkers who could adduce claims on these grounds as well. But the most important reason why one tends to reject Shaftesbury's claim is that the God in whom he seems to believe is not Fielding's God, and his religion is not Fielding's religion. The deity that Shaftesbury refers to does not seem to be the Christian deity. It looks rather like an all-immanent deity, whom, in certain parts of his work,

¹ Shaftesbury, II, 60-61.

Shaftesbury equates with the cosmos. But it is not the Christian God, and there is no mention of the value or the need for revelation. The truth is, that although he pays lip-service to Christianity, Shaftesbury is a Deist.

Now, Fielding was not a Deist, certainly not at the time of writing Tom Jones. If the views expressed about Deism in Joseph Andrews and Amelia are anything to go by, he was not a Deist at the time of writing those novels either. In many articles in The Champion he derides the Deists, and affirms his faith in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, in revelation, and in the necessity of rewards and punishments. Throughout Shaftesbury's writings, on the other hand, it is philosophy and nature which are stressed; whenever he refers to religion, it is usually with a touch of scepticism. Statements such as this are typical:

"When a sceptic questions whether a real theology can be raised out of philosophy alone without the help of revelation, he does no more than pay a handsome compliment to authority and the received religion. He can impose on no one who reasons deeply, since whoever does so, will easily conceive that at this rate theology will have no foundation at all. For revelation itself, we know, is founded on the acknowledgement of a divine existence and 'tis the province of philosophy alone to prove what religion only supposes".¹

The second objection to Shaftesbury's claim is that he incorporated self-interest into his system. Nature, in his view, demands that the individual retain some of the self-interested affections. Everyone must possess a certain urge towards self-preservation and anyone who lacks this urge is vicious and defective in virtue. Seeing that Fielding devoted so much skill to the exposure of self-love in his novels, it is doubtful whether he would have agreed with Shaftesbury here.

¹ Shaftesbury, II, 268.

Thirdly, together with many other eighteenth-century philosophers, Shaftesbury also subscribed to the popular doctrine of "plentitude". Since this was the best of all possible worlds everything that occurred in it was bound to be conducive to its perfection. So things which may in themselves seem evil may be necessary even for maintaining the good. Fielding did recognize the presence of villainy and misery in the world, but he always thought that through an appropriate process of education, the seeds of vice which might be inherent in human nature could be eradicated. A Blifil was probably born with a malevolent temperament, but if he had received the right kind of education, he might have become a different man. Fielding the magistrate could not lightly accept and be resigned to evil. Society could be ameliorated by a deliberate process of education; if this failed, then evil would have to be sternly dealt with and rooted out.

It is for these reasons that it seems likely that the philosophy which went into the making of Tom Jones is not necessarily or simply Shaftesbury's. Although Shaftesbury, like Fielding, laid emphasis on good nature, on virtue, and on the need to cultivate the benevolent affections, he is not the only writer who does so. As we have seen, Tindal and most of the Latitudinarian Divines made them the cardinal points of their teaching. Indeed, taken as a whole, Fielding's moral and religious position in Tom Jones is much nearer Clarke's than anybody else's; it is necessary to see what was Clarke's role in the Deist controversy.

It was Clarke¹ who charted the middle path between the extreme positions adopted by men like Toland and Leslie. He was intelligent

¹ And later Butler.

enough to realize that in order to refute the Deists he had, as it were, to meet them on their own ground, and concede some of the points they had made; in doing so, he was not making "concessions", but stating what he believed to be the truth. He took great pains, therefore, to prove the truth of natural religion, and even made use of the Deists' quasi-mathematical method of reasoning.

So perfectly did he follow their line of reasoning that, at first glance, it might appear that Fielding was much more indebted to Clarke for his portrayal of Square than he was to Tindal and Wollaston. Clarke repeats the Deists' point that there is a law of nature and an eternal fitness of things, and that by the application of Right Reason, man can discover this law of nature and therefore what his moral obligations are:

"These things are so notoriously plain and self-evident, that nothing but the extremest stupidity of Mind, Corruption of Manners, or perverseness of Spirit, can possibly make any man entertain the least doubt concerning them. For a man endued with Reason, to deny the truth of these things; is the same thing, as if a man that has the use of his sight should at the same time that he beholds the sun deny that there is any such thing as light in the world; or if a Man that understood Geometry or Arithmetick should deny the most obvious and known proportions of lines or Numbers, and perversely contend that the whole is not equal to all its parts, or that a Square is not double to a triangle of equal base and height".¹

Clarke goes on to suggest that it can be deduced from the abstract and absolute reason and nature of things that all rational creatures ought to ensure that their wills and actions are constantly determined and governed by "The Eternal Rule of Right and Equity":

¹ Dr. Samuel Clarke, "Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion," in A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God — The Boyle Lectures (1724), pp.31-32. See also p.65.

"Now that the case is truly this; that the eternal difference of Good and Evil, the unalterable Rule of Right and Equity, do necessarily and unavoidably determine the judgements, and force the Assent of all Men that use any consideration, is undeniably manifest from the universal Experience of Mankind: For no man Willingly and deliberately transgresses this Rule, in any great and considerable instance; but he acts contrary to the judgements and Reason of his own Mind, and secretly reproaches himself for so doing".¹

Having shown that a moral code could be derived from Nature's laws, Clarke goes on to describe the nature of the conduct imposed on man by this code. It imposed on every one a duty towards God and man. Every human being must hold God in the highest possible esteem and honour, and give the same treatment to his fellows that he himself would like to receive from them. A due regard must always be had for equity, benevolence and love. Everyone should also try to see that he keeps a disposition that will help him to perform his duty at all times. Man should be temperate, diligent, contented and benevolent. So far, these views are like Tindal's. But, from this point on, Clarke proceeds to show the inadequacy of the Deists' case, and argues that although moral obligations could be discerned without the aid of revelation, there is still a need of revelation for three reasons. Firstly, it is impossible for everyone to be gifted with the intellectual power necessary to discover what these obligations were; and so most men were in need of teaching buttressed by authority.²

¹ Clarke, p.44.

² Clarke, pp.123-124.

"By these means it comes to pass, that though the great obligations and the great motives of morality are indeed certainly discoverable and demonstrated by right reason; and all considerate men when those motives and obligations are fairly proposed by them, must of necessity (as has been fully proved in the foregoing heads) yield their assent to them as certain and undeniable truths; yet under these disadvantages now mentioned; (as 'tis the case of most men to fall under some or other of them) very few are of themselves able, in reality and effect, to discover those truths clearly and plainly for themselves, but most men have great need of particular instruction, not without some weight of authority, as well as reason and persuasion".

Secondly, men are too prone to succumb to the influence of lusts and passions:

"Though the necessity and indispensableness of all the great and moral obligations of Natural Religion, and also the Certainty of a future state of Rewards and Punishments be thus in general deducible, even demonstrably, by a chain of clear and undeniable reasoning; (yet in the present state of the world by what means soever it came originally to be corrupted)...such is the carelessness, inconsiderateness, and want of Attention of the greater part of Mankind; so many the Prejudices and false Notions taken up by evil Education; so strong and violent the unreasonable Lusts, Appetites, and Desires of the sense; and so great the Blindness introduced by Superstitious Opinions, vitious Customs, and debauched Practices through the world; that very few are able in reality and effect, to discover these things clearly and plainly for themselves".¹

Thirdly there is definitely a need of sanctions to ensure that having discovered what virtue was, men go on to practise it.

Thus, it was Clarke who at last met the Deists' "head-on" and refuted them. It can be seen that the system he evolves is much nearer that enunciated by Fielding in Tom Jones than that of any philosopher so far considered. For Tom has innate moral sense à la Shaftesbury; he is also capable of reasoning and discovering what correct conduct ought to be à la Tindal. But under the influence of the passions (especially sexual passion) reason and moral sense prove ineffective. These are forces against which reason cannot contend. Clarke gets to the heart of the matter when he suggests that the only things that could make a man act contrary to the rules of justice, equity, righteousness and truth are negligent misunderstanding and wilful passions and lusts. In the face of these, something external is needed and Fielding seems to imply as much when Mr. Allworthy tells Tom that if he were to add religion to his innate generosity

¹ Clarke, pp.122-123.

and goodness of heart he would be happy; Tom, in other words, would then have discovered the perfect recipe for a virtuous life.

This then seems to be the morality of Tom Jones, and it is modelled on that of the Latitudinarians in general and Clarks in particular. Fielding accepted, with Square, that one could discover the nature of one's moral obligations independently of religion. But he goes further and stresses the need to fulfil these obligations. Unlike Square, Fielding followed Clarke and recognized the power that the passions could have over the mind of man; he also recognized that in order to counter the pull of these passions, religion and not reason, was needed. In this, he agreed with High Church teaching, although he disagreed with their view that good acts and virtuous conduct was not important. Tom, therefore, has to acquire religion in order to become the fully virtuous man. This is why he must ultimately marry Sophia ~~whose~~ name means "Heavenly Wisdom". The path that Fielding charts is a middle way between the positions of Thwackum and Square, but it is not a compromise. It is a representation of the truth which is qualitatively different from each and transforms both.

III

We can now see how the contrast between the characters of Tom and Blifil brings out the criticism of the two extreme systems of education to which the boys are exposed. Tom, Fielding's representative, rejects both. He scoffs at Square's "unalterable rule of right", "beauty of virtue", and "eternal fitness of things"; and he does so because he must have realized that virtue^{he} does not consist in the formulation of abstract

systems but in practical acts of benevolence. Tom also laughs at Thwackum's doctrine of faith alone, for he realizes that it ignores man's potentiality for virtuous conduct and has nothing to do with human nature or generosity. Both Thwackum and Square, operating from opposite angles, ignore the human condition and so, Tom, like Fielding, rejects the tenets of both mentors.

Blifil, for his part, manages to accept them both. But as neither lays any stress on human conduct and social obligations, he remains a malevolent and ungenerous young man. Following the teaching of Square, Blifil understands what virtue is without feeling any obligation to practise it. Thwackum's doctrines on the other hand, absolve him from the practice of virtue as long as he affirms his faith. So neither of his tutors prepares Blifil for a virtuous life and he accordingly remains unreformed.

The role that education and intellectual influences play in the novel is gone through once more, and "fixed" in the crucial digression of the Old Man of the Hill. Many critics have dismissed this episode, as irrelevant. But so essential is it to the moral pattern of the novel that one wonders how its significance could have escaped their attention. Usually the episode is explained away as being one of the relics of the Cervantes, Le Sage, and Marivaux tradition. It seems, however, that there is a much more important reason for Fielding's inclusion of this "digression". In the first place, hills in Fielding's work always have a symbolic significance; we recall that Mr. Allworthy's house stood on the south-east side of a hill, but nearer the bottom than the top. It is thus sufficiently distinguished from the others in the neighbourhood by being on a side of the

hill from which he could survey his neighbours beneath, but it is not entirely cut off from them. The Old Man, on the other hand, is completely isolated from his neighbours. Although his house is not on the top of the hill, he still spends most of his time wandering about it, and he denies himself all contact with human endeavour. We notice, moreover, that the room into which Tom and Partridge are ushered is adorned with a number of "knick-knacks" and curiosities which might have appealed to someone with a nostalgia for the past, but have little relevance to the present. In order to realize the Old Man's limitations we only have to remind ourselves of the view held by Tindal, Shaftesbury and Clarke that man is a social animal who needs to cultivate the social affections. The old man says:

"Certain it is, that great philanthropy chiefly inclines us to avoid and detest mankind; not on account so much of their private and selfish vices, but for those of a relative kind; such as envy, malice, treachery, cruelty, with every other species of malevolence".¹

Such a remark could have been made by Hobbes or Mandeville. The Old Man cannot bring himself to believe that there are some human beings who are capable of acting unselfishly; and when Tom comes to his aid, he is just as suspicious of his deliverer as he was of his attackers: "You are a human creature then?" he asks, "Well, perhaps you are, ... you have been my deliverer indeed". It is almost as though the Old Man has to convince himself that he has been saved by a human being, and that there are such things as goodness and virtue in human nature.

The Old Man's recital of the events of his life is like that of Mr.

¹ T.J., Bk.VIII, ch.x.

Wilson in Joseph Andrews, but the new element of betrayal by a cherished friend has been added which helps to explain his bitterness and misanthropy. Just as Mr. Wilson gave a catalogue of London vices, the old man provides Tom with a preview of the world of London he is soon to enter. But, whereas Mr. Wilson found redemption in marriage and became the philanthropic man, the old man is twice betrayed — once by his mistress, and then by his dearest friend. He has, therefore, abjured the company of his fellowmen, and has withdrawn into seclusion.

But, in spite of the effect of the old man's early experience, Fielding suggests that his present misanthropy is largely due to the intellectual influences to which he has been exposed. His progress is like Mr. Wilson's — from debauchery to gambling and then to philosophy. His philosophical studies start with the works of Plato and Aristotle — philosophers on whom Square bases his doctrines — and it is apparent that he learns nothing from this study of philosophy about his duty to his fellow-men. He has learnt, instead, the art of despising the highest acquisitions of riches and of worldly power. From them he has also derived the stoic outlook, the capacity to steel the mind against the capricious invasions of fortune. Yet there is not a word in the Old Man's account about virtue or man's social obligations. Soon, however, he becomes tired of philosophy and goes to the opposite extreme to embrace the dictates of revealed and authoritarian religion. Philosophy, in his view, is now little less than a dream, and is full of vanity. Yet, like Thwackum, his espousal of revealed religion does not result in any concern for human beings or interest in human conduct. He is obsessed instead, with the awe

of the divine presence, divine authority and divine grace. The mistake the old man makes is to move from one extreme to the other without discovering the true middle way. This is why he remains a misanthrope.

Here, indeed, in the world of the old man, the threads that have so far gone into the making of the novel are firmly pulled together. Most of the elements that were present in the Allworthy world in Somerset are also present here. The Old Man himself recalls Blifil, in a sense. Blifil accepts both extreme world views at the same time, and never feels under any obligation to practise the truth. The old man simply swings from one to the other without discovering the truth. Because of this, he fails to see that his brother has a claim on his affections and good will, even though they may not share the same tastes and pastimes. The old man's brother is another Squire Western; he is fond of his hunting and of good living. No doubt, he is rather selfish, but he is also "down-to-earth" and very human. Allworthy manages to live at peace with Squire Western because the morality he embraces requires him to be kind to his fellowmen whoever they may be. But the old man accepts no such system and sees no need to concern himself with the well-being of his brother.

Here, then, halfway through the novel, the themes that have so far been dealt with are concentrated. We are shown the result of an abrupt and thoughtless movement from an abstract philosophy to an authoritarian religion. What results is a dehumanized being; and, like Rousseau, disgusted with his fellow-creatures, the old man goes on his travels to converse with nature:

"My design, when I went abroad, was to divert myself by seeing the wondrous variety of prospects, beasts, birds, fishes,

insects, and vegetables, with which God has been pleased to enrich the several parts of the globe; — a variety, which as it must give great pleasure to a contemplative beholder, so doth it admirably display the power, and wisdom, and goodness of the Creator. Indeed, to say the truth, there is but one work in his whole creation that does him any dishonour, and with that I have long avoided having any conversation".¹

It is at this juncture, more than anywhere else in the novel, that we see Tom acting as Fielding's spokesman. Fielding, like Shaftesbury and Clarke, lays the emphasis on man. Like Milton and Swift he was of man's party and he knew it. Indeed, there is a very close parallel with Gulliver's Travels here. Gulliver, revolted by what he thought was man's pettiness and depravity, goes to the opposite extreme and embraces cold abstract reason. But Swift did not agree with him. In his view, the truth lay somewhere between the two, and the solution he gave was, like Fielding's, a human one.

Like Gulliver, who shunned his family, the old man refused to have any contact with human beings, even during his travels. The only people he has any regard for are the Turks because they deny themselves the use of their most human faculty, the power of speech. In Tom Jones Fielding in this scene, assigns to Tom a role similar to that played by the Portuguese Captain in Gulliver's Travels. Like the Captain who saved Gulliver, Tom saves the Old Man. The Captain also, as it were, saved Gulliver from himself by persuading him to think of the rest of humanity kindly; and Tom does the same for the Old Man by telling him the truth about man and human nature:

"Indeed, you have fallen into an error, which in my little

¹ T.J., Bk.VIII, ch.xv.

experience I have observed to be a very common one, by taking the character of mankind from the worst and basest among them; [Compare Gulliver and the Yahoos .] Whereas, indeed, as an excellent writer observes, nothing could be esteemed as characteristic of a species, but what is to be found among the best and most perfect individuals of that species. This error, I believe, is generally committed by those who, from want of proper caution in the choice of their friends and acquaintances, have sustained injuries from bad and worthless men; two or three instances of which are very unjustly charged on all human nature".¹

The truth, as Swift implied, and as Fielding states it now, is that man is neither a perfect being (like the Houyhnhnms) who only had to consult his own nature or use his reason in order to discover how to behave virtuously, nor is he (like the Yahoos) a naturally depraved and incorrigible creature. Fielding's solution is embodied in Tom. There are seeds of goodness in man which could be cultivated and put to good use after an appropriate process of education in true religious principles. Had the old man undergone the right process of education he, too, like Tom, might have been a benevolent human being. The episode of the Old Man of the Hill is thus seen to be crucial to the understanding of the novel's central theme of virtue and benevolence.

The centrality of Fielding's ethic, with its stress on virtue, is much more openly stated than ever before in the preface to Book Six, entitled "Of Love". In it Fielding attacks those philosophers who have come to the conclusion that there are no such things as virtue and goodness existing in human nature. He concedes that the minds of many of these philosophers may be entirely free from all traces of the passion of love. Secondly, he is careful to distinguish between true love and lust. Thirdly, he admits

¹ T.J., Bk.VIII, ch.xv.

that the kind of love he refers to does seek its own satisfaction as much as man's grossest appetites. Finally, he accepts that when true love is directed towards a member of the opposite sex, it may well involve physical desire. It becomes increasingly obvious, as we read on, that the kind of love Fielding refers to is much bigger in scope than sexual love:

"I desire of the philosophers to grant, that there is in some (I believe in many) human breasts, a kind and benevolent disposition, which is gratified by contributing to the happiness of others. That in this gratification alone, as in friendship, in parental and filial affection, as indeed in general philanthropy, there is a great and exquisite delight. That if we will not call such disposition love, we have no name for it. That though the pleasures arising from such pure love may be heightened and sweetened by the assistance of amorous desires, yet the former can subsist alone, nor are they destroyed by the intervention of the latter."¹

Fielding's love can thus be seen to approximate to "Agape" which includes charity, good nature and benevolence, and also includes "eros" — sexual love. In Tom Jones, then, Fielding lays the stress on virtue and the need for man to fulfil his moral and social obligations. These are discernible from the laws of nature, or they may be innate in the man himself. But they need to be reinforced and sanctioned by strong religious principles. Thus it is only education in the correct and proper principles that can ensure that a man keeps to the path of virtue and benevolence.

¹ T.J., Bk.VI, ch.i.

IV

Tom's benevolence must be shown, not in isolation, but by contrast with the anti-social qualities of the world around him, and so Fielding fixes the roots of his second novel, like those of the first, not only in the works of the eighteenth-century religious and philosophical writers, but also in the classical epic, and he composes an Odyssey where the good journey through life and also act as touchstones to expose hypocrisy, vanity and selfishness. Jones, like Joseph, is engaged in a quest for his loved one, at the end of which he not only wins his bride, but also discovers his real parentage and comes into his inheritance. The novel is thus firmly set within the epic tradition of the virtuous wanderer displaying his virtue as he journeys on his quest. For Jones is kind-hearted, and Partridge, his companion, is essentially well-meaning. It is these qualities which, by contrast, expose the selfishness and vanity of the world through which they grope.

Indeed, were it not for the presence of Sophia, Tom, Mr. Allworthy and Mrs. Miller, the novel would have left us convinced of the truth of the theories of Hobbes and Mandeville that human beings are depraved by nature and act only from selfish motives. The world through which these good people pass is inhabited by thieves and knaves, by innkeepers and landladies who vary their welcoming curtesies strictly according to the probable size of the client's purse. Even the formidable Mrs. Honour herself puts her own interest before all else. We recall that when Sophia took her into her confidence and told her of her plans to escape,

she weighed in her mind whether it would be more profitable to betray Sophia to her master or to wait till Jones would be in a position to reward her. Partridge, for his part, accompanies Tom, not out of any altruistic desire to serve, but because he hopes he'll be able to persuade the young man to return to Mr. Allworthy, in which event a substantial reward may be offered for the return of the lost prodigal. Mrs. Fitzpatrick hopes that by betraying Sophia she will be able to make her peace with her aunt and uncle; and Lady Bellaston provides Tom with the necessaries of life in order to satisfy her own lust. Black George, for whose sake Tom had undergone such suffering, and whose family he had saved from destruction, rewards him by stealing his five hundred pounds. Mrs. Western is preoccupied with ennobling her family, and Mr. Western with increasing the size of his daughter's estate. Thwackum, Square, Mrs. Wilkins, Captain Blifil, Blifil, Nightingale Senior, and Lawyer Dowling, are all engaged in the same process of promoting their own interests. In the midst of all this self-seeking, the charitableness of Mr. Allworthy, Tom and Sophia, shines out. But for them we might think that Fielding despaired of humanity.

The truth of all this is borne out by the sequence of scenes describing Tom's adventures with the officers in whose regiment he enlists as a volunteer. Jones, raw and fresh from the country, proposes a toast to his love. Not being accustomed to the kind of raillery which passes for wit among supposedly civilized gentlemen, he is offended when the vain Northerton declares that Sophia is little better than a courtesan. Jones may have been ignorant of the ways of the world, but his very ignorance highlights the

recklessness and vanity of Northerton and his friends. In the fray which ensues Jones is knocked out and taken to bed. The good landlady now comes into the picture, and Fielding's art rises to the occasion as he describes the skill with which the lady veers round and changes her tune on learning that Jones is, in fact, a gentleman. In spite of Tom's serious condition, the landlady had laid the blame on him, and regretted that he had not behaved as he should to his superiors. Had he been killed, she ~~had~~ thinks, he would have had his deserts. But then the lieutenant tells her that Jones seems to be a much better gentleman than the ensign; so she changes immediately, and is suddenly concerned for Jones' health.

Fielding does not confine his satire to the lesser officers, and the landlady; the lieutenant himself becomes a target. This is brought out in the discussion on "honour" between him and Tom, in which the lieutenant suggests that Tom's honour will be called in question unless he demands satisfaction from Northerton, for his "injury". In reply, Tom expresses the gravest doubts about killing another man in cold blood, and in doing so, he speaks like a Christian gentleman, who believes that his Christian principles should govern all his actions, and that these principles specifically forbid killing another human being. Tom does not emerge unscathed from the scene, for in the end he accepts the lieutenant's suggestion. Also it seems that his innocence and ignorance of the ways of men of honour make him a laughable figure at this point. But this simplicity and ignorance are used to precipitate the lieutenant's religious insincerity and his disregard for human life and human worth.

Fielding next focuses on the landlady, who has apparently been bribed

by Northerton into setting him at liberty:

"But lest our readers, of a different complexion, should take this occasion of too hastily condemning all compassion as a folly, and pernicious to society, we think proper to mention another particular, which might possibly have some little share in this action. The ensign happened to be at this time possessed of the sum of fifty pounds, which did indeed belong to the whole company; for the Captain having quarrelled with his lieutenant, had entrusted the payment of his company to the ensign. This money, however, he thought proper to deposit in my landlady's hand, possibly by way of bail or security that he would hereafter appear and answer to the charge against him; but whatever were the conditions, certain it is, that she had the money and the ensign his liberty".¹

In spite of the twists and turns of Fielding's irony, we can, nevertheless, detect the severe condemnation of the landlady for her avarice and dishonesty. Fielding appears to be making excuses for her, but in fact, piles up arguments against her, which condemn her all the more severely.

Fielding's exposure of the world's vanity and selfishness would be incomplete unless extended to include the upper classes. Accordingly in the latter sections of the novel, he concentrates his fire on the clique of Lady Bellaston, Mrs. Fitzpatrick and Lord Fellamar. When, for instance, Jones calls upon Mrs. Fitzpatrick in London to ask about Sophia, he is treated with characteristic rudeness and lack of consideration by Lady Bellaston, the Noble Peer and Mrs. Fitzpatrick. They ignore him completely and indulge instead in what Fielding ironically refers to as "brilliant" conversation. When at last Mrs. Fitzpatrick condescends to take notice of Jones, it is only to ask him to leave his address with the servants.

Fielding comments:

"Jones had natural, but not artificial good-breeding.
Instead therefore of communicating the secret of his

¹ T.J., Bk.VII, ch.xv.

lodgings to a servant, he acquainted the lady herself with it particularly, and soon after very ceremoniously withdrew".¹

Jones' simple but decent country manners serve to expose the vanity, affectation and snobbery of the aristocratic world into which he has blundered.

Finally, let us consider in some detail the episode in which Partridge, Jones, Mrs. Miller and her daughter go to the theatre. We must bear in mind that at this stage Jones has become involved in the affectation and vanity of the world of high society. Only Partridge remains the natural man and it is he who by his "naturalness" reveals not only the vanity and condescension of his superiors, but also their slavish adherence to convention and the opinion of the town. The episode has seemed irrelevant to most critics; indeed only Maurice Johnson² seems to have realized that it has some significance although even he misses the real point. He points out the similarities between Tom Jones and Hamlet; (The play Tom's party see is Hamlet); each is dogged by his father's shadow, each is an unheroic hero, who acts impulsively, and each is horrified at the thought of incest. But it is unlikely that these are the similarities Fielding tries to direct the reader's attention to. The points Johnson lists are not the most important in Tom Jones; Tom Jones is not really concerned with incest at all, and Tom's parentage is of minor importance as far as the motivations of the events of the novel are concerned. Moreover, the comparison between the characters of Hamlet and Tom is rather forced. If we examine the episode in the theatre carefully,

¹ T.J., Bk.XIII, ch.iv.

² Maurice Johnson, pp.95-106,

we find that the elements Fielding stresses are not those connected with Judith's incest, but the deceptiveness of appearances, and hypocrisy.

It is Partridge who points to the real significance of the episode:

"Well', said he, 'how people may be deceived by faces? Nulla fides fronti is, I find, a true saying. Who would think, by looking at the king's face, that he had ever committed a murder?'"

Then later:

"Turning to Mrs. Miller, he asked her if she did not imagine the king looked as if he was touched; 'though he is', said he, 'a good actor, and doth all he can to hide it. Well, I would not have so much to answer for, as that wicked men there hath, to sit upon a much higher chair than he sits upon. No wonder he run away; for your sake I'll never trust an innocent face again'.¹

It is worth considering why Partridge lays so much stress on not trusting an innocent face again; in the novel, the person who has consistently put on an innocent and pious face is, of course, Blifil. Blifil's relation to Tom is almost exactly the same as Claudius' to Hamlet. He, like Claudius, is the villain who dissembles artfully. He attempts to deprive Tom of his rightful inheritance as Claudius deprives Hamlet of his, and then he attempts to murder the deprived heir. The entire episode, in fact, is a preview of what is about to happen to Tom, and it stresses, as Partridge indicates, the deceptiveness of appearances; and this it does in two senses. First, it implies that people with sober countenances should not always be trusted; and, secondly, that although things may seem to be going well for Tom on the surface, there is serious trouble on the way.

That this interpretation is right is confirmed by another remark of

¹ T.J., Bk.XVI, ch.v.

Partridge. Jones asks him which of the actors he likes best, and he replies:

"'The King, without doubt'. — 'Indeed, Mr. Partridge', says Mrs. Miller, 'You are not of the same opinion with the town; for they are all agreed, that Hamlet is acted by the best player who ever was on the stage'. 'He the best player!' cries Partridge, with a contemptuous sneer, 'Why I could act as well as he myself. I am sure, if I had seen a ghost, I should have looked in the very same manner, and done just as he did....The King for my money; he speaks all his words distinctly, half as loud again as the other. — Anybody may see he is an actor'".¹

Mrs. Miller and the others are thinking of the play on the stage — the performance itself. Partridge on the other hand, is thinking of the play (as it ought to be considered) as an enactment of the events of real life. The King, in this scene from life, is acting a part; he is indulging in an elaborate exercise of pretence and deception, and even his words do not sound sincere. They are too "affected" — "he pronounces his words distinctly, half as loud again as the other". Jones, Mrs. Miller and the others, laugh at Partridge's simplicity. But what he says in the theatre has a very real relevance to what is going on in the world outside. At this particular point of time, Blifil, the villain with the innocent face, is busy plotting Tom's downfall in the same way as Claudius plots Hamlet's: Partridge's exclamations are a warning to us and to Jones of impending disaster, in spite of the outward placidity of events. Jones would have done well to heed Partridge's remarks, just as Mr. Allworthy would have been wise to adhere to the precept so simply stated here by Partridge, that outward appearances are not to be trusted. Partridge may be simple, but his simplicity exposes the affectation of his superiors with all its

¹ T.J., Bk.XVI, ch.v.

dangerous consequences.

The episode also teaches that there is a very strong connection between the stage and the world, between art and life. Sophisticated people in Fielding's day went to the theatre, either because it was the thing to do, or because they wished to admire the leading actor — not because they were particularly interested in the play itself. Tom has now become a part of this sophisticated world, and so he too goes to the theatre for the wrong reasons and draws the wrong conclusions. It is Partridge, the natural man, from whom Tom, in his condescension, expected the simple dictates of nature unimproved indeed but, likewise unadulterated by art, who draws the correct conclusions, because he alone sees the connection between the events of real life and the play on the stage.

In this instance, therefore, it is Partridge, who acts as the agent of exposure because Tom has compromised his position with the hypocritical section of society. Normally, however, Partridge, Tom and Sophia all act as catalysts by means of which the hypocrisy, vanity and selfishness of the people they encounter in their journeys are precipitated and satirized.

V

It can be seen from the foregoing surveys that the scope of Tom Jones is clearly much wider than that of Joseph Andrews, and the issues it raises are more fundamental. But the new novel not only has a wider range than the former, it is also more searching and less confident about the positives

that are held up for our admiration. There is a new and depressing sense of danger and insecurity, and in order to demonstrate this more clearly Fielding uses a basic mythos which is no longer classical, but Biblical. In the new novel we are taken to the world of Genesis, or of Milton's Paradise Lost, and find ourselves in a modern Garden of Eden.

The description of Mr. Allworthy's house suggests this clearly.¹

(I, iv). The idyllically pastoral scene might seem sentimental in another context. It is somehow reminiscent of descriptions of the golden age, with its plentiful cascading spring, fir-covered rocks, grove, a lake, beeches, elms, meandering river, sheep and beautiful plain. But, as we read on, we realize that Fielding is not trying to revive the golden age, but to evoke an impression of the earthly Paradise -- The Garden of Eden. Mr. Allworthy's house, we are told, was built in the "Gothic style" and had "an air of grandeur" which struck everyone "with awe"; and we recall that the Gothic style was the supreme embodiment of the aspirations of the Church in medieval days. It represented the Church triumphant, and the whole edifice was an offering to the glory of God. On entering a Gothic cathedral one's first impulse is to look upwards towards heaven and towards God. If we realize this, then we realize that Mr. Allworthy assumes something of the significance of a "deus figure" within Paradise. His house, we remember, is called "Paradise Hall". It is, moreover, built on a hill from which he

¹ D.S. Bland in "Endangering the Reader's Neck: Background Description in the Novel", Criticism, III (1961), 121-139, sees some significance in the description of Mr. Allworthy's house, but sees in it only an intention on Fielding's part to place Mr. Allworthy on the social map and display his character -- that of a quiet-living man of taste. (See p.126).

could survey mankind beneath. When Mr. Allworthy himself walks on to the terrace, the impression created is of a majestic figure striding forth:

"It was now the middle of May, and the morning was remarkably serene, when Mr. Allworthy walked forth on the terrace, where the dawn opened every minute that lovely prospect we have before described to his eye. And now having sent forth streams of light, which ascended the blue firmament before him, as harbingers preceding his pomp, in the full blaze of his majesty, up rose the sun; than which one object alone in the lower creation could be more glorious, and that Mr. Allworthy himself presented...."¹

Mr. Allworthy then, outshines the sun in glory and assumes "godlike" characteristics. This analogy with Paradise Lost and Genesis helps us follow the movement of the story; for we can now see that as a result of the schemes of the "devil's representative", the "Man-hero" is expelled from Paradise by the "deus-figure". But the "man-hero" contributes to his own fall by succumbing to sexual temptations. Subsequently he goes through a process of reformation and acknowledgement of his misdeeds; then comes redemption and, eventually, forgiveness. In the end, the devil's representative is expelled from Paradise. Fielding thus uses an analogical method to express his belief that man, though innately good, can succumb to the force of passions, and that only heavenly grace and guidance can enable him to withstand temptations. This conforms to the Christian doctrine of the fall and atonement, and subsequent repentance and forgiveness. The novel is thus an analogy of man's spiritual journey through this life and the possibilities held out to him of repentance and forgiveness.

All this means that inevitably the conduct of the "man-hero" must be questioned. But it is not only the "man-hero" who is put to the test;

¹ T.J., Bk.I, ch.iv.

the "deus-figure" is also rigorously scrutinized. A novel which probes so deeply into the springs of human conduct and the complexities of human nature is bound to be much less confident about its positives. Accordingly, these positives are found to be less than perfect. There are forces over which neither the "deus-figure" nor the "man-hero" seems to have any control, and with which both are inadequately equipped to deal. Such an assertion may sound strange to those who have always regarded Mr. Allworthy as Fielding's most "perfect" character. Most critics believe that he was modelled on Ralph Allen, an acclaimed philanthropist whom Fielding admired without reservations. Also, Fielding's descriptions of Mr. Allworthy's conduct and of his various acts of generosity, seem likely to arouse the admiration and respect of the reader. But, in spite of all this, there can be little doubt that if we paid sufficient attention to Fielding's irony we would discover that Allworthy is regarded at times with as critical an eye as Tom himself. He is all-worthy, but not all-wise, and he makes some serious errors of judgement with catastrophic results.

Firstly, Allworthy is very vulnerable to the world of appearances. He does not seem to possess the intelligence and judgement necessary to penetrate beneath the surface of the world of "seeming", to the very nature of things, and the motives which govern men's actions. This in itself may not be a grave error, but it leads to errors of judgement. That this must be Fielding's opinion can be proved by reference to a remark of his in An Essay on the Characters of Men:

"But however cunning the disguise be which a masquerader wears; however foreign to his age, degree, or circumstance, yet if closely attended to, he very rarely escapes the discovery of an accurate observer; for nature, which unwillingly submits to the imposture, is ever endeavouring

to peep forth and show herself; nor can the cardinal, the friar, or the Judge long conceal the sot, the gamester or the rake."¹

Fielding then goes on to discuss the deceptiveness of appearances in a way which suggests he has characters like Blifil much in mind, and he quotes the verse from Juvenal we have just noticed Partridge use — "Fronti nulla fides". An austere countenance is no sign of purity; it can well be the reverse.

Fielding must feel, therefore, that Mr. Allworthy should not have allowed himself to be deceived by Blifil. When Blifil reports Tom's drunkenness on the occasion of their uncle's illness, a proper inquiry into the circumstances and an impartial examination of all the witnesses, could surely have revealed the truth. Instead, Jones is summarily expelled from Paradise Hall. Allworthy's pronouncement against Partridge too, when the latter is accused by his wife of infidelity, is, to say the least, unjust, and unwarranted. He is also mistaken in deciding to retain both Thwackum and Square in the hope that their opinions will cancel each other out.

Another point against Mr. Allworthy is that he can be insufferably pompous. When Jenny Jones confesses she was Tom's mother, he reads her a lecture which, apart from being very sententious, is brutal in its implications. He suggests that Jenny has committed a crime for which she deserves to be rooted out of society. There is also a sense in which Mr. Allworthy's idealism is excessive and out of touch with the realities of life. Even his intended benevolence at times smacks of theoretic idealism. His views on love and chastity, too, do not take into account the facts

¹ Works, IX, 407.

of the human condition. When he reads his lecture to Jenny, for instance, we feel he is remote from real life. He fails to understand the force of human passions and the intensity of sexual love. At times like these his blindness and theoretic idealism are funny. But there are occasions when they become positively harmful and lead to disaster. This happens when he banishes Partridge on a false charge, and turns Tom out of doors.

Fielding, in this new novel, is far more acrid and probing than he was in Joseph Andrews. In his inquiry into the motives of human conduct and the nature of virtue everyone will be tested; no one will be able to avoid having his or her actions and personality held up for scrutiny, not even the so-called "admirable" characters will escape unscathed.

This applies especially to Tom who, as the "man-hero" has to go through the process of reformation, redemption and eventual recognition; and so his actions are brought directly into the focus most of the time. Undoubtedly he possesses a good heart which disposes him towards acts of benevolence. He is not only innately virtuous, he can also use his reason and judge what is "right" or "wrong". Nevertheless, most of the novel is devoted to the exposure of the insufficiency of a good heart. Fielding never thought that the good heart on its own is enough to ensure that a man can overcome the tribulations of the world. He exposed its limitations in Jonathan Wild, and in The Miscellanies he had stressed the need for the good head to exert some influence on the impulses of the good heart. In Tom Jones it even seems that something more than the correcting influences of the good head is required. The good head can bring the influence of reason and wisdom to bear on problems, but even this may not be enough to

restrain the passions. Fielding suggests that religion should be added, and that the kind of wisdom which is needed is not worldly wisdom but heavenly wisdom. In other words, the good heart needs reason and heavenly guidance provided by God's grace and commandments.

Now it is clear that most of Tom's indiscretions are either sexual or committed while he is under the influence of an ungovernable passion such as anger. In the face of the onslaught of the passions (especially sexual passion) the good head or reason may not be enough to protect the individual. It is at this point that heavenly wisdom becomes relevant.

Yet, during the course of the novel, Tom is lacking in heavenly wisdom and so he plunges into error. In Joseph Andrews we were presented with a comedy of errors in which two innocent, but well-meaning, men blundered through society. In Tom Jones we move from a comedy of errors to a comedy of real error caused by the inadequacies of the "good heart" when under the influence of the passions. We can therefore detect a difference in atmosphere. The first novel, though satiric, is still very good-humoured. The second, though still comic, reveals far more sinister implications. We are dealing here not simply with mistakes, but with real error and wrongdoing which come close to disaster. Towards the end, the novel almost assumes the qualities of tragi-comedy. For there are two directions in which the "heart" can move. When properly regulated the "heart" can lead to eros, Agape and charity; but it can also lead to indiscretion, loss of control, lust, violence, murder and incest. Fielding shows how, in this modern paradise the good heart succumbs to temptation and falls. From now on there is a darkening progression.

Tom's first serious lapse is his drunken brawling on the night of Mr. Allworthy's illness, when the occasion of Mrs. Blifil's death would have demanded a more sober deportment. But, more seriously, it leads him to his encounter with Molly in the grove.

Although Fielding suggests that Tom's drunkenness should be an acceptable excuse for his conduct, it seems that this is meant to be taken ironically; for, shortly before the incident, Fielding had claimed that drunkenness only brought out qualities already latent in an individual; it did not impel him to act in a manner contrary to his normal nature. Tom's drunkenness, therefore, merely reveals latent passions such as anger and lust which he has not then succeeded in controlling. When Tom launches into his apostrophe of Sophia we are meant to regard his tirade as the effusion of a drunken man who is, moreover, suffering from "sex-in-the-head". Under the influence of drink and lust he throws decency to the winds, forgets about his love for Sophia, and retires with Molly into the thickest part of the grove.

Yet in spite of his sexual indiscretions (which Fielding does not condone) Tom is not a libertine; the "good heart" falls only after being subjected to strong temptation. Fielding takes care to persuade the reader that, far from being the seducer, Tom was, in fact, seduced. His great generosity and irresistible good looks render him vulnerable to the wiles of women, and being tempted, he easily falls.

In the affair with Mrs. Waters the same trend can be seen. Jones is once more the innocent who gives way to the temptation of an artful woman. In his sexual relations with women he shows an innocence almost

reminiscent of Joseph Andrews. His offer to walk ahead of the half-naked Mrs. Waters recalls Joseph's refusal to enter the stage coach because he did not wish to offend the "young lady's" modesty; but it also puts the reader in mind of Orpheus and Eurydice, and this emphasizes Tom's innocence still further. For, Orpheus, we remember, failed to restrain his desire and to honour his undertaking not to look back. Jones, to his credit, does not look back. Moreover, like Molly before her, it is Mrs. Waters who makes the first advances.

Fielding thus continues to emphasize that Tom is not lecherous by nature, but lacks the spiritual equipment necessary to enable him to withstand temptation. Once these are thrown in his way, he falls and plays his part with relish. Therefore, although Tom is more sinned against than sinning, Fielding suggests that his conduct should not be condoned.

Tom's affair with Lady Bellaston is the most reprehensible. With Molly he committed an indiscretion with a young girl; with Mrs. Waters he had a liaison with someone else's "wife"; but in the affair with Lady Bellaston he becomes a "kept" man. At first, Fielding seems to lay the blame entirely on Lady Bellaston by suggesting that Tom had no inclination to an amour at the time. But if Fielding were looking for acceptable excuses, it surely would have been a much better one to have suggested that Jones could not afford to antagonize Lady Bellaston at this stage, or because he depended on her for information about the whereabouts of Sophia, and for the very possibility of success in his love. It might have been even better if Fielding had merely suggested that Jones considered it polite to accede to the lady's demands. As it is, however, it seems that Fielding's

"excuses" are meant to be taken ironically and that Jones should be seen to be in part responsible for the sequence of events.

Finally, Tom touches the depths of degradation when he finds himself in the cell where he is held accountable for murder, the blackest of crimes, and is confronted with the possibility that he may have committed incest with his own mother. If murder is the blackest criminal offence, incest is probably the most sordid social offence. Tom, as we know him, could hardly fall further.

Yet the novel remains comic because of the nature of the genre in which Fielding has chosen to write and because of his basic optimism. But, compared with Joseph Andrews, there is still a sense of danger and insecurity. Both Mr. Allworthy and Tom need something to ensure that the impulses of their good hearts are channelled in the right directions. Fielding seems to think this need is prudence — but it is not very clear what he means by "prudence". Many commentators have taken it to mean "worldly wisdom"; but, as William Empson has pointed out in his essay on Tom Jones, this is much too facile an interpretation of the novel's meaning. Though the kind of prudence Fielding refers to (VII, iii), does resemble "worldly wisdom", it is closely related to "decency", "decorum" and other "ornaments" of virtue, and we know that Fielding disapproved of mere "decorum" and "outward ornaments". In one issue of The Champion (January 24, 1740), he had written:

"And yet, if we examine this matter thoroughly, if we strip virtue and vice of all their Outward Ornaments and Appearances, and view them both naked, and in their pure, native simplicity, we shall, I trust, find Virtue to have in her everything that is truly valuable, to be a constant Mistress, a faithful friend, and a pleasant companion".

It seems as if Fielding does not believe that virtue needs ornaments and appearances of any kind. In The Champion of March 4, 1740, he said:

"True Virtue is of a retired and quiet Nature, content with herself, not at all busied in courting the Acclamations of the Crowd; she is plain and sober in her Habits, sure of her innate Worth, and therefore neglects to adorn herself with those gaudy Colours which catch the Eyes of the giddy Multitude".¹

It is thus clear that the prudence Fielding advocates is not the kind that cloaks virtue with decorum and ornaments. This view seems confirmed when we remember that Blifil was described as a prudent, discreet and sober young man who ensured that all his actions seemed worthy, even though they were, in reality, dishonest. It will be shown in the next chapter that Fielding's "prudence" is, in fact, "heavenly wisdom", as represented by Sophia. The pattern of the novel also suggests that this interpretation of "prudence" is correct, for Tom sets out on his journey, and in the process, pursues Sophia who is "heavenly wisdom".

Sophia is, perhaps, the most nearly perfect person in the novel. Like Tom, who has to forge a middle path between abstract philosophy and authoritarian religion, Sophia has to tread a "via media" between the country Tory boorishness of her father, and the "citified", corrupt worldly Whiggishness of her aunt. Indeed, what goes on at the home of the Western's is related to the events at Mr. Allworthy's home. The Western family are not just meant to be funny. Our capacities for moral judgement are expected to be equally alert whether confronting Mr. Western, Tom, or Mr. Allworthy.

¹ See also Addison, The Spectator, no.104, for similar views on "decency" and "decorum".

Ian Watt seems to believe that the comic atmosphere of the episode in which Squire Western ill-treats Sophia is deliberately created by Fielding to dull the edge of our moral criticisms.¹ Yet on reflection it may seem that the point Fielding tries to emphasize is a moral one. Just as at Paradise Hall we saw a basically good-natured person being persecuted by two diametrically opposed people, each of whom wants the victim to conform to his own views, so at the home of the Westerns we see Sophia being persecuted by her father on the one hand, and her aunt on the other, and we are meant to react against the brutality and senselessness of it all. Just as Tom refused to bow to the abstract and authoritarian creeds of Square and Thwackum, and demanded instead to be allowed to cultivate his natural affections, so too Sophia refuses to be coerced by the narrow, self-interested principles of her father and aunt, and determines to marry for love. Mrs. Western is the representative of corrupt town life; she believes that one does not marry for love, but according to the dictates of "prudence" (that hated word) and self-interest. Her inflated notions of herself as a negotiator, and of the illustrious ancestry of her family, are just as divorced from reality as Square's "rule of right". On the other hand, Squire Western's demands for unquestioning obedience from Sophia, and his narrow views about the place of women, are as bad as Thwackum's rigid authoritarianism. Between these two people stands the good-natured

¹ Ian Watt, The Rise of The Novel (1957), p.264.

"It is probably an essential condition for the realization of Fielding's comic aim, that the scene should not be rendered in all its physical and psychological detail; Fielding must temper our alarm for Sophia's fate by assuring us that we are witnessing, not real anguish, but that conventional kind of comic perplexity which serves to heighten our essential pleasure at the happy ending without in the meantime involving any unnecessary expenditure of tears on our part".

Sophia whose heart counsels her to marry for love and not for money. She, like Tom, rejects the principles of her two mentors and takes to the road.

Like Tom, Sophia also develops. For having charted her via media she moves towards an alliance of good country virtue with worldly experience and loving forgiveness. It is only right that at the end she should marry Tom and so complete the moral pattern.

Tom's and Sophia's problems are made all the more intractable because they also have to contend with the vicious and malevolent, symbolized in the person of Blifil. Blifil is the devil's representative in this "Paradise". (It is partly as a result of his schemes that the rightful heir to Paradise Hall is expelled). His name is probably meant to suggest "belief in evil", and as such, he is the opposite of faith and godness. His attitude to love is strongly contrasted with that of Tom. Tom is capable of demonstrating love in the widest sense of the word; but Blifil's naturally perverse disposition, because of mis-education, has not been prepared for the cultivation of those natural affections from which universal love might have sprung. Love for him, therefore, does not include a wish to contribute to the happiness of the loved one. He is anxious to marry Sophia only in order to satisfy his lust, avarice and desire for revenge:

"The charms of Sophia had not made the least impression on Blifil; not that his heart was pre-engaged; neither was he totally insensible of beauty, or had any aversion to women; but his appetites were by nature so moderate, that he was able, by philosophy, or by study, or by some other method, easily to subdue them; and as to that passion which we have treated of in the first chapter of this book, he had not the least tincture of it in his whole composition."¹

¹ T.J., Bk.VI, ch.iv.

Later Fielding says of him:

"He was indeed perfectly well satisfied with his prospect of success; for as to that entire and absolute possession of the heart of his mistress which romantic lovers require, the very idea of it never entered his head. Her fortune and her person were the sole objects of his wishes, of which he made no doubt soon to obtain the absolute property;..."¹

Yet, in spite of the presence of the evil and malevolent in the world of this novel, the tone is still comic. By comparison with Joseph Andrews, however, there is a new dimension. More sinister implications are revealed in Tom Jones than in the earlier novel, and these accentuate the need for the "good-heart" to be regulated by the influence of "heavenly wisdom".

VI

After his fall from grace, and his conflict with the forces of evil, Tom, the "man-hero", goes through a process of reformation and redemption. This process is actually foreshadowed early in the novel by the young Tom's acts of kindness. It begins with his selfless attempts to rescue Sophia's bird which Blifil, in a fit of malevolent spite, has set free. Blifil defends his action in very learned and earnest terms, and gains the praises of both Thwackum and Square. But Squire Western remarks:

"'So between you both', says the squire, 'the young gentleman hath been taught to rob my daughter of her bird. I find I must take care of my Partridge-mew. I shall find some virtuous religious man or other set all my partridges at liberty'".

Later, he says:

¹ T.J., Bk.VI, ch.vii.

"'Poz! You have neither of you mentioned a word of that poor lad who deserved to be commended: to venture breaking his neck to oblige my girl was a generous spirited action! I have enough learning to see that. D-n me, Here's Tom's health. I shall love the boy for it the longest day I have to live'"¹.

It is Squire Western then, the blunt country realist, ignorant of either religion or philosophy, who sees Tom's inherent goodness of heart. He can recognize virtue when he sees it.

The process of redemption is continued in Tom's various attempts to relieve the distresses of Black George's family, in his spontaneous decision to go to the assistance of Mrs. Waters and his equally spontaneous decision to abandon her on hearing of Sophia's visit to the inn at Upton. His goodness of heart is most clearly demonstrated in his generosity to the highwayman and his family, and his selfless attempts to obtain the consent of the elderly Mr. Nightingale to his son's marriage with Nancy. When Tom meets Mrs. Miller's cousin and the gentleman realizes that the man who had saved his family is the same person as Jones, he says:

"'This is he to whom, before I saw you, I owed the preservation of my Peggy. He it was to whose generosity every comfort, every support, which I have procured for her was owing'".

Tom replies:

"'If by the trifle you have received from me, I have preserved a whole family, sure pleasure was never bought so cheap'".

When Mrs. Miller says that Tom will receive his reward in heaven, he answers that he has been rewarded already:

"'Your cousin's account, Madam', said he, 'hath given me a sensation more pleasing than I have ever known. He must

¹ T.J., Bk.IV, ch.iv.

be a wretch who is unmoved at hearing such a story; how transporting then must be the thought of having happily acted a part in this scene! If there are men who cannot feel the delight of giving happiness to others, I sincerely pity them, as they are incapable of tasting what is, in my opinion, a greater honour, a higher interest, and a sweeter pleasure, than the ambitious, the avaricious, or the voluptuous man can ever obtain".¹

Tom's benevolent disposition demonstrated here, conforms almost exactly with the Latitudinarians' description of the good-natured man.

The moment of truth comes for Tom when, acting on Nightingale's suggestion that he send a proposal of marriage to Lady Bellaston, he receives her impertinent reply and the scales gradually drop from his eyes. Shortly, before the despatch of the letter Fielding had commented:

"Indeed, he began to look on all the favours he had received, rather as wages than as benefits, which depreciated, not only her, but himself too in his own conceit, and put him quite out of humour with both".²

This is Tom's first full realization of the true nature of his liaison with Lady Bellaston, and of the enormities he has been committing. From this point onwards he never knowingly puts a foot wrong, and his reaction to Mrs. Hunt's proposal attests to the truth of this. The temptation to accept the proposal must have been very strong; he has lost Lady Bellaston's support, and there does not seem to be much prospect of his marrying Sophia. Yet, he decides to reject Mrs. Hunt's honest and lucrative offer and remain faithful to Sophia.

Finally, comes the moments of self-realization as Tom lies in prison and the dreadful consequences of his irresponsible indulgence in lust are brought home to him. On his release, the process of self-realization is

¹ T.J., Bk.XIII, ch.x.

² T.J., Bk.XV, ch.ix.

completed in the mirror scenes with Sophia, and finally there is repentance and forgiveness, and the marriage of the good-heart with heavenly wisdom.

This then is the moral pattern of Tom Jones. It can be seen that Fielding's attitude in the novel is unquestionably Christian. He has demonstrated allegorically man's fall from Grace as a result of Temptation and capitulation to the lusts of the flesh, but he also holds out the Christian hope of pardon, and of victory over the forces of evil. The novel is also a triumphant affirmation of man's inherent goodness and his potentiality for benevolence, provided his impulses are regulated by religious principles.

But although the basic moral pattern is there, this outline does not completely account for our total experience of the novel; for it is as a literary, not a moralistic work, that we experience it. In Tom Jones, Fielding makes brilliant use of the techniques he had developed in Joseph Andrews and explored in Jonathan Wild, and he brings them to their fullest perfection. The inadequacy of his positives, the need for the alliance of the "good-heart" with heavenly wisdom, have to be demonstrated, projected, tested, and perhaps, created by a literary experience which also exercises our judgement and conditions our responses. Fielding's art is now more unsettling, more probing and questioning, and it is through this art that the nature of virtue, goodness, the good-heart, prudence and wisdom are all scrutinized. The basic ancestry of this kind of work is no longer Cervantes, as with Joseph Andrews, but Swift, who subjects popular misconceptions to searching and devastating irony. In the next chapter, we shall see exactly how Fielding accomplishes this.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Comic Epic in Ironic Prose

I

It is with Tom Jones that Fielding's art reaches its highest level of perfection. It is in this novel that he makes the most masterly use of the comic and other literary devices he had discovered and perfected in order to elucidate his morality. It is here that art and morality are most completely interrelated and interdependent. The mock-epic, irony, burlesque, rhetoric, hyperbole and other devices, as we have seen them used in Joseph Andrews, are once more employed by Fielding to manipulate the reader's responses and to indicate the qualities and characters which are laudable or reprehensible.

Tom Jones, as already noted, is much more probing and philosophical than Joseph Andrews. It displays various views on life, religion and morality for the reader's examination, and, somehow, Fielding must not only indicate that none of these is adequate, but must also show a true and acceptable compromise. The hero himself is a "mixed" character, neither wholly good, nor wholly bad, and both aspects of his character must be held in suspension for the reader's judgement. In order to do this, Fielding develops the technique of "double irony", a device which can most effectively bring out the complexities in human nature and human affairs, and which can therefore be used by the author to subject even his positives to rigorous questioning.

In order, therefore, to see the true nature of Fielding's morality in Tom Jones, one must analyse the means by which he conveys his judgements and manipulates the reader's responses, and in any such analysis the stance of the author, the relation between the author and his characters, and the relation between the author and the reader must be given some prominence.

The charge that Fielding intrudes too often in his novels to communicate his judgements directly to the reader has already been dealt with.¹ It has been seen that the panoramic view of life he presents was planned before he began, and so if apparently ambiguous, he is the best guide the reader can have. Fielding, however, intrudes, not only to clarify issues, but also to establish a particular kind of relationship with the reader. He does not simply address us directly, but in a way as to leave the impression that he is determined to win our approval and make himself accepted as a friend. He thus establishes a relation which is intimate but teasing, as the following extracts illustrate:

"Matters of a much more extraordinary kind are to be the subject of this history, or I should grossly misspend my time in writing so voluminous a work; and you, my sagacious friend, might with equal profit and pleasure travel through some pages, which certain droll authors have been facetiously pleased to call The History of England".²

This is the tone, not of a conceited man, but of one who has sufficient humour to laugh at himself and the voluminous work he is about to write. It is the tone of the joker or teaser, of the man who is anxious to establish a playful and familiar relationship with the person he is addressing. Fielding thus adopts an attitude calculated to ingratiate

¹ See ch. Four above.

² T.J., Bk.I, ch.iii.

himself with the reader. It is the same impression that Fielding's comments convey after his glowing description of Mr. Allworthy's house:

"Reader, take care. I have unadvisedly led thee to the top of as high a hill as Mr. Allworthy's, and how to get thee down, without breaking thy neck, I do not well know. However, let us e'en venture to slide down together".¹

Once again, we recognize the novelist who is big enough to laugh at himself. There is mock-ridicule of the grandiose style used to describe Mr. Allworthy's house, pretended concern for our well-being, and the assurance that we are involved in the enterprise together. All of these are deliberately calculated to ensure that the reader will come to regard Fielding as a friend.

Yet some critics, while resigning themselves to the inevitability of Fielding's frequent intrusions as he goes along, are not as ready to accept the personal stance he adopts in the introductory chapters. They claim that these chapters destroy the fictive illusion and call attention to the way in which the work has been too deliberately "constructed". They also argue that most of these chapters are, in any case, irrelevant to the books they introduce and sometimes to the work as a whole. Whether the introductory essays destroy the fictive illusion or not is questionable.² Yet it is true that they call attention to the fact that the work has been deliberately constructed. But there is nothing wrong in this, for Tom Jones is a deliberately constructed novel. It is an artefact in which the characters are used as components of a moral design already planned in the novelist's mind. This robs the work of neither meaning nor power. The

¹ T.J., Bk.I, ch.iv.

² For a discussion of this point see ch. Four above.

presence of the novelist in the prefaces shows that he can also be above his material rather than involved in it; so that the reader is confident that the author is sufficiently detached to be able to make the right judgements.

It is not true, however, that the prefaces are irrelevant to the work as a whole. Even if it is conceded that some of them are irrelevant to the books they precede (Fielding himself suggests this) yet, taken together, they are all entirely relevant. The prefaces can be divided into two main groups. To the first belong those which are thematically and generically relevant to the novel, and to the second those which are relevant to Fielding's views and norms. It will be of interest to examine some of the thematically relevant prefaces to see how they help elucidate the central themes. In this connection, we may look at what is, perhaps, the most important preface, the preface to Book VI, "Of Love". Here Fielding expounds an ethical doctrine which is central to the novel's meaning; for he outlines a conception of love which is much wider than mere sexual love. It is "agape", that Christian charity and benevolence which Tom, Sophia and Mr. Allworthy possess in abundance, and Blifil, Thwackum and Square lack.¹

The preface to Book VII acquaints the reader with Fielding's ironic method, and gives him an insight into the author's attitude towards his characters in particular and human nature in general. The subject under discussion is the response of various classes of people to Black George's theft, and Fielding holds in suspension various interpretations of George's motives and so of his character. The perceptive man, however, will, in

¹ For a fuller discussion of the implications of this preface see ch. Six above.

Fielding's view, realize that no single interpretation is correct. Human nature is complex, and every character has several facets. Outright condemnation is, therefore, as wrongheaded as complete approval. As Fielding puts it:

"A single bad act no more constitutes a villain in life, than a single bad part on the stage....The man of candour and of true understanding is never hasty to condemn. He can censure an imperfection, or even a vice, without rage against the guilty party".¹

If this remark should be kept in mind for a correct assessment of Black George, it is even more essential for an assessment of Tom's character. Fielding's ironic method is such that he usually presents the various (and at times contradictory) aspects of his character for the examination and judgement of the reader. So that as a result of Fielding's theory of the complexity of human nature, and by means of his handling of his "ironic" art we are enabled to say that in many respects Black George is a scoundrel without devaluing him as an example of human nature.

In the preface to Book XVI, Fielding gives a definition of virtue which again helps to elucidate his novel's meaning. Virtue, he says, is not the "stay-at-home" quality that keeps all the rules at home and never ventures outdoors. Virtue is, in fact, demonstrated in action and contact with the world. It is the practical benevolence demonstrated by men like Tom, Parson Adams and Mr. Allworthy.

The second group of prefaces, though not thematically relevant, is still important, because they continue the process of establishing a friendly relationship between the author and the reader. In these prefaces he

¹ T.J., Bk.VII, ch.i.

takes the reader into his confidence and shares with us his ideas on such subjects as history, morality, literature, and the stage.

A remarkable process, therefore, is going on in these prefaces. The author projects a persona of himself, and very soon we begin to feel we know him and are prepared to accept him as a friend. The image we have is of an intelligent, cultivated, tolerant, and humane man whose ideas on art and life are fundamentally sound. We are thus content to rely on him as a guide, and to accept the judgements he makes. Also, the more crucial prefaces may call our judgement into question and test our response to the characters and events of the novel. Both they, and Fielding's intrusive comments, are some of the devices Fielding develops in his bid to find ways of communicating his judgements and affecting his readers.

Yet, generally, Fielding draws on the same comic devices he used in Joseph Andrews. Simple irony, the mock-heroic, burlesque, rhetoric and hyperbole, are developed in Tom Jones, and given an additional bite commensurate with the magnitude and complexity of the task in which they are now employed. It is now necessary to proceed to a detailed examination of the use of these devices, and it is, therefore, best to start with simple irony.

II

Irony is one of the most effective weapons in the hands of the satirist. Its essence is disparity between what is known and what is said, between what really is and what seems to be. The moralist is very often

often preoccupied with this difference between things as they are and things as they seem, with the deceptiveness of appearances, and the hypocrisy, affectation and superficiality which conceal the really bad qualities underneath. He is usually also preoccupied with genuine virtue obscured and misrepresented by the false "seeming" world. Irony, therefore, can be a powerful instrument in his hands, for unmasking the vicious and vindicating the good. Most satirists are expert in irony, and Fielding is no exception; though not such a master as Swift, he can claim in his own right to be an accomplished "ironist". In a work such as Tom Jones, in which various moral positions are challenged and defended, it is important for the author to indicate what he approves of without seeming too partisan; it is also essential for him to show which characters he disapproves of without resorting to direct attack. In order to do this, Fielding makes use of irony in all its forms. To demonstrate his versatility and skill in the use of irony, therefore, it may be useful to categorize simple irony and show how Fielding deploys the various types in Tom Jones.

The simplest form of irony is that whereby the author says the exact opposite of what he means. As readers, we reverse the surface meaning, and what on a first reading appears complimentary becomes derogatory and vice versa. For this reason, this form of irony can be referred to as the "praise/blame inversion".¹ It is most suitable for the portrayal of characters whom the author believes are either unquestionably good or bad. For this reason it is used to best advantage in Jonathan Wild where it is consistently applied to Wild and the Heartfrees.² In Tom Jones, the

¹ It seems to be this same kind of irony which Eleanor Hutchens refers to as "denotative irony". See Eleanor Hutchens, Irony in Tom Jones (University of Alabama Press, Alabama, 1965), p.89.

² See ch. Five above.

character to whom it is most often applied is Blifil.

But the "praise/blame inversion" is a dangerous kind of irony, because (as seen in the discussion of Jonathan Wild) it can easily become monotonous. The best satirists, therefore, use this form very sparingly indeed, and it only occasionally occurs in Tom Jones. For instance:

"Young Blifil was greatly enraged at it. He had long hated Black George in the same proportion as Jones delighted in him; Not from any offence which he had ever received, but from his great love to religion and virtue".¹

A much commoner and more subtle form of irony is what may be called "tonal" irony, for in this case, it is a certain shift in the author's tone of voice which tells us that the author's meaning is different from his actual statement. We imagine that we see and hear the author talking; we watch his lips and listen to the cadences of his voice, and we feel we can detect a slight sneer, and a heavy accentuation of certain key words. Although the author may sound perfectly serious and sincere, we can still detect the tone of a man with his tongue in his cheek.

The following is an example of the operation of "tonal" irony:

"Miss Bridget Allworthy (for that was the name of the lady) very rightly conceived the charms of person in a woman to be no better than snares for herself, as well as for others; and yet so discreet was she in her conduct, that her prudence was as much on the guard, as if she had all the snares to apprehend which were ever laid for her whole sex".²

When the speaker pronounces "very rightly", "discreet", and "prudence", there is sufficient alteration in the tone of voice to indicate that the interpretation meant by Fielding is different from the surface meaning. We are not asked to reverse the meaning (as we are with "praise/blame inversion"). Miss Bridget is neither indiscreet nor imprudent; on the

¹ T.J., Bk.IV, ch.v.

² T.J., Bk.I, ch.ii.

contrary, we are meant to realize that she is much too discreet and much too prudent — much more so than her looks and attractiveness warrant. Her discretion and prudence are only two aspects of an excessive puritanism which gives her and Mrs. Wilkins the excuse to dictate morality and virtue to other women.

This kind of irony is often applied to Blifil also:

"Mr. Blifil visited his friend Jones but seldom, and never alone. This worthy young man, however, professed much regard for him, and as great concern at his misfortune; but cautiously avoided any intimacy, lest, as he frequently hinted, it might contaminate the sobriety of his own character; for which purpose he had constantly in his mouth that proverb in which Solomon speaks against evil communication. Not that he was so bitter as Thwackum; for he always expressed some hopes of Tom's reformation; 'which', he said, 'the unparalleled goodness shown by his uncle on this occasion, must certainly effect in one not absolutely abandoned:' but concluded, 'if Mr. Jones ever offends hereafter, I shall not be able to say a syllable in his favour'".¹

On the surface, Blifil is presented as a sober charitable, young man. But if we pay attention to the author's cadences we cannot fail to notice the sneer on words and phrases such as "sobriety", "worthy young man", "contaminate", and "evil communication". This shift of tone compels us, not to reverse the meanings of the phrases, but to modify them. It is not Fielding's intention to suggest that Blifil is a libertine, or a giddy youth; his intention is rather to imply that Blifil's sobriety stems, not from Christian piety, but from a desire to impress his guardian and tutors.

Tonal irony is thus seen to work, not by reversing the meanings of words, but by indicating levels of meaning. This can be seen in another

¹ T.J., Bk.V, ch.ii.

passage on Blifil:

"The Charms of Sophia had not made the least impression on Blifil; not that his heart was pre-engaged, neither was he totally insensible of beauty, or had any aversion to women; but his appetites were by nature so moderate that he was able, by philosophy or by study, or by some other method, easily to subdue them; and as to that passion which we have treated of in the first chapter of this book, he had not the least tincture of it in his whole composition".¹

The key word here is "moderate" and the key phrase "by some other method". Fielding does not wish to imply that Blifil's appetites are immoderate: they are, on the contrary, too moderate. There is a suggestion that we are concerned here either with frigidity or an artificially induced moderation, which is itself the result of religious zeal, or an overpowering desire to impress superiors. Nor must we overlook a hint of perversion implied in "by philosophy, or by study, or by some other method".

Fielding also applies "tonal" irony to certain qualities which, in his view, have acquired connotations much more sinister than their normal surface meanings. Two of these are "prudence" and "decency".²

"He Blifil therefore disbursed the said half-price himself; for he was a very prudent lad, and so careful of his money, that he had laid up almost every penny which he had received from Mr. Allworthy".³

¹ T.J., Bk.VI, ch.iv.

² Eleanor Hutchens has made "a case study" of "prudence". She seems to imply that Fielding always holds both connotations of "prudence" in suspension thus suggesting that whereas prudence itself is a good thing, the prudence of people like Blifil is pretended. It seems to me that with Blifil, Miss Bridget and Mrs. Wilkins, there is no tension. Fielding merely points to the sinister connotations without implying that prudence is good. He only does the latter whenever Mr. Allworthy is talking, or when he himself describes Tom's behaviour. Then he makes a distinction between heavenly prudence (admirable) and Worldly prudence (despicable). The two are held in tension by means of "Double irony"; but that is another matter.

³ T.J., Bk.III, ch.ix.

Again, there is no suggestion that Blifil is an imprudent lad, nor that he is careless with money. Fielding directs our attention to the other connotations which "prudent" and "careful" have. Blifil's prudence is not that of a man who wishes to ensure that his conduct is right; it is rather the prudence associated with those people who arrange marriages for financial reasons and whose eyes are always on the money-market. The care Blifil takes of his money, is not that of a youth who wishes to live within his means; it is the care of a miser.

Similarly, we may look at Fielding's treatment of "decent":

"And glad should we be, could we inform the reader that both these bodies had been attended with equal success; for those who undertook the care of the Lady succeeded so well, that, after the fit had continued a decent time, she again revived, to their great satisfaction".¹

The "decency" referred to here is that imposed by the rules of the society of which Mrs. Blifil formed a part. It has nothing to do with goodness or politeness. The implication is that Mrs. Blifil had a fit because it was customary to have a fit on these occasions and that she allowed the fit to continue for a period of time that society would have considered "decent". "Tonal" irony, therefore, indicates the insincerity and artificiality of Mrs. Blifil's behaviour. Her insincerity is further exposed, again by means of "tonal" irony in another passage:

"Upon which the other lady, who was one of her most intimate acquaintance, and who well knew the true state of her affections, endeavoured all she could to pacify her, telling her — To be sure she could not help being uneasy; but that she should hope the best".²

This happens when Captain Blifil fails to return from a walk, and after

¹ T.J., Bk.II, ch.ix.

² T.J., Bk.II, ch.ix.

Fielding had given an account of the couple's matrimonial felicity. The passage could be read without any change of intonation, and we might miss the point. But a shift of tone on "the true state of her affections" would be enough to expose Miss Allworthy's insincerity and reveal that the other lady's condolence could not have been genuine.

The phrase — "well-bred" is also treated by Fielding in the same way as "decent" and "prudent". Talking about Mrs. Whitefield, the hostess, he says:

"...but Mrs. Whitefield, to do her justice, had a much more liberal way of thinking. She was perfectly well-bred, and could be very civil to a gentleman, though he walked on foot".¹

Good breeding here, has nothing to do with politeness, or good behaviour. It is no more than the artificial standards of conduct dictated by a certain section of society, and here, Fielding reveals that it lacks any real connection with anything that could be considered good.

The next type of irony can be called (for want of a better name) "linguistic irony".² This is like "tonal" irony in so far as it depends for its effect, on one or two key words and phrases. But whereas with tonal irony there is a shift of tone which directs attention to layers of meaning other than the surface meaning, with linguistic irony there is no shift of tone, and the effect is produced by the literal meaning of the key word or phrase inserted. Fielding takes care to ensure that the effect of these

¹ T.J., Bk.VIII, ch.viii.

² I am conscious of the fact that this is not the most suitable name, for in a sense all irony is linguistic, since it is due to manipulation of words. But I call this "linguistic" as opposed to "tonal" irony because it depends on the obvious surface meaning of a single key word and not on shifts of tone to reveal layers of meaning.

is to jolt the reader into attention and force him to pay closer attention to what is going on. The author may sound perfectly serious, and his voice may be remarkably steady and consistent throughout. We may in fact be mistaken about the meaning unless we pay attention to these key words. It is almost essential for this kind of irony, that the surface meaning should seem sane, reasonable and acceptable. The flow of the rhetoric itself leads to this response until we are suddenly brought up short against a carefully placed word or phrase, and are made to realize that our response should be more complex. This kind of irony thus lends itself very readily to highlighting flaws in the conduct of people whose behaviour would otherwise seem quite rational.

We can take, as an example, Fielding's comments on Mr. Allworthy's attitude towards the opinions of Thwackum and Square:

"These apparent errors in the doctrine of Thwackum served greatly to palliate the contrary errors in that of Square, which our good man no less saw and condemned".¹

It would be very easy to accept this as a perfectly reasonable statement and pass on. There seems to be no shift of tone, and no hint of sarcasm or of irony. But there is just a chance that readers might be alerted by the word "palliate" and examine its implications. Then we realize that Mr. Allworthy seems to have refrained from checking the errors of Thwackum because he feels they would help to alleviate those of Square. Mr. Allworthy, in other words, attempts to play off one tutor against the other in the hope that their views neutralize each other. We may well ask whether anyone who had ever heard these views could reasonably suppose they would. In any case, even if they did succeed in doing so, the pupils would be left with

¹ T.J., Bk.III, ch.v.

no doctrine to hold on to. "Palliate", therefore, forces us to realize that Mr. Allworthy is playing a very dangerous game, and that he has, at least, committed an error of judgement.

Later, Mr. Allworthy, realizing that Mrs. Blifil paid more attention to Tom than to her own son, decides to redress the balance by showing more affection for Blifil than for Tom:¹

"When therefore he plainly saw Master Blifil was absolutely detested (for that he was) by his own mother, he began, on that account only, to look with an eye of compassion upon him; and what the effects of compassion are, in good and benevolent minds, I need not here explain to most of my readers.

Henceforward he saw every appearance of virtue in the youth through the magnifying end, and viewed all his faults with the glass inverted, so that they became scarce perceptible... but the next step the weakness of human nature along must excuse; for he no sooner perceived that preference which Mrs. Blifil gave to Tom, than that poor youth (however innocent) began to sink in his affections as he rose in hers".²

Viewed as the response of a compassionate man toward one in Blifil's situation, Mr. Allworthy's conduct seems, on the surface, commendable. Yet, when the reader considers the full implications of "appearance", "magnifying", "inverted" and "scarce perceptible", he realizes how misguided Mr. Allworthy's conduct is. He not only mistakes "the appearance of virtue" for virtue, he magnifies it out of all proportion to its apparent worth. Then he deliberately minimizes Blifil's faults and finally turns a blind eye to them. Fielding thus underlines Mr. Allworthy's partial responsibility for what subsequently happens at Paradise Hall. Yet Fielding's double vision works in such a way that he does so without alienating our sympathy from Mr. Allworthy.

¹ There is also dramatic irony here because Fielding knows, as we do not, that Mrs. Blifil is Tom's mother.

² T.J., Bk.III, ch.v.

Although linguistic irony is ideally suited for exposing flaws in "near-perfect" characters, its use is not, of course, confined to them. Fielding uses it on several occasions for the exposure of Mrs. Western's values as can be seen in this extract where she cautions Sophia on the folly of pursuing a headlong passion:

"No, no, Sophy', said she, 'as I am convinced you have a violent passion, which you can never satisfy with honour, I will do all I can to put your honour out of the care of your family: for when you are married, these matters will belong only to the consideration of your husband. I hope, child, you will always have prudence enough to act as becomes you; but if you should not, marriage hath saved many a woman from ruin'".¹

This, on the surface, seems a perfectly reasonable position for anyone to adopt. Mrs. Western, concerned about the honour of her family, contemplates a speedy marriage for Sophia as the only means of preventing her from acting rashly. Yet, "marriage" and "ruin" imply that Mrs. Western is thinking of marriage as a cover should Sophia commit any sexual indiscretions. It should be obvious that this is a dangerously immoral position to adopt.

And now briefly, a few more examples of the operation of linguistic irony:

"But, lest the virtuous reader may condemn her for showing too great regard to a base-born infant, to which all charity is condemned by law as irreligious, we think proper to observe, that she concluded the whole with saying, 'since it was her brother's whim to adopt the little brat, she supposed little master must be treated with great tenderness'".²

"Irreligious" highlights the heartlessness and hypocrisy of society's attitude to illegitimate children.

¹ T.J., Bk.VI, ch.v.

² T.J., Bk.I, ch.v.

"Whether, as the lady had at first persuaded the physicians to believe her ill, they had now in return persuaded her to believe herself so, I will not determine; but she continued a whole month with all the decorations of sickness". (Bk.II, ch.ix).

"Decorations" indicates that Mrs. Blifil's illness was a pretence.

"But afterwards the eldest sister acquainted him, with a malicious smile, that she was above stairs a-bed. Tom had no objection to this situation of his mistress, and immediately ascended the ladder which led towards her bedchamber". (Bk.V, ch.v.).

"No objection" and "situation" show that in spite of his decision to remain loyal to Sophia, Tom can still relish the thought of a sexual encounter with Molly.

"At her entry into the room, she found Sophia standing motionless, with the tears trickling from her eyes. Upon which she immediately ordered a proper quantity of tears into her own eyes...." (Bk.VI, ch.vi.).

"Ordered" and "proper" expose the artificiality of Mrs. Honour's conduct.

She weeps simply because she feels this is expected of her on such an occasion:

"The Squire, to whom that poor woman had been a faithful upper-servant all the time of their marriage, had returned that behaviour by making what the world calls a good husband". (Bk.VII, ch.iv).

The reference to "upper-servant" indicates the brutality of Western who distorts the marriage relationship and treats his wife as an inferior being.

"World" and "good" suggest that he was, in fact, an intolerable husband who appeared "good" only in the eyes of "the world".

Linguistic irony may not be as subtle as tonal irony, since it does not point to any nuances or shades of meaning, but it is just as effective, if only because we are surprised and alerted into realizing that our response should be contrary to that suggested by the even flow of the rhetoric.

Next, we must consider Fielding's use of rhetorical irony. This

form of irony is usually associated with Swift, but Fielding can also show remarkable competence in its use. It is called rhetorical irony because it consists in the attempt to expose certain concepts, ideas or positions by making use of analogies, examples and arguments which are seemingly designed to defend such positions and concepts; and we recall that the art of rhetoric was regarded as the art of persuasion by means of logic, examples and analogies. But, in rhetorical irony, the analogies and arguments are in themselves so absurd that the author ends by discrediting the position he originally set out to defend. Swift's Modest Proposal is probably the best example that could be cited of competent use of rhetorical irony, but Fielding also has claims to merit in this regard.

Commenting, for instance, on Sophia's decision to avoid Jones, when she discovers the intensity of her feelings for him, Fielding says:

"The diseases of the mind do in almost every particular imitate those of the body. For which reason, we hope, that learned faculty, for whom we have so profound a respect, will pardon us the violent hands we have been necessitated to lay on several words and phrases, which of right belong to them, and without which our descriptions would have been often unintelligible.

Now there is no one circumstance in which the distempers of the mind bear a more exact analogy to those which are called bodily, than that aptness which both have to a relapse. This is plain in the violent diseases of ambition and avarice. I have known ambition, when cured at court by frequent disappointments (which are the only physic for it), to break out again in a contest for foreman of the grand jury at an assizes; and have heard of a man who had so far conquered avarice, as to give away many a sixpence, that comforted himself, at last, on his deathbed, by making a crafty and disadvantageous bargain, concerning his ensuing funeral with an undertaker, who had married his only child:

In the affair of love, which out of strict conformity with the stoic philosophy, we shall here treat as a disease, this proneness to a relapse is no less conspicuous. Thus it happened to poor Sophia; upon whom, the very next time she saw young Jones, all the former symptoms returned, and from that time, cold and hot fits alternately seized her heart".¹

¹ T.J., Bk. IV, ch. xii.

The absurd proposition, veiled though it is behind the argument, is that it is possible to cure distempers of the mind. Fielding begins by accepting it. But when the question arises: if these diseases can be cured, why do they break out again? Fielding thinks they do so, because they bear a close resemblance to diseases of the body and are therefore subject to a relapse. We thus encounter the first absurdity. Fielding then goes on to give examples of these relapses: ambition, cured by disappointment at court, breaks out again in the rivalry to be the foreman of the grand jury, and avarice has been known to break out once more in a miser when arranging for his own funeral. Both examples are absurd. Ambition was not cured by disappointment at court, and the miser who gives away sixpences is no less a miser for doing so. The analogy and examples, therefore, expose the absurdity of the original proposition, instead of supporting it. When the reader comes to the statement on Sophia he realizes that her love was never cured, and is as alive as ever.

In one passage in which Fielding uses rhetorical irony, he actually tells the reader that he is conducting an argument:

"And hence, I think, we may very fairly draw an argument, to prove how extremely natural virtue is to the fair sex; for though there is not, perhaps, one in ten thousand who is capable of making a good actress; and even among these we rarely see two who are equally able to personate the same character; yet this of virtue they can all admirably well put on; and, as well those individuals who have it not, and those who possess it, can all act it to the utmost degree of perfection".¹

The author's intention, as he says, is to prove that virtue is natural to women. But the examples he gives demonstrate conclusively that women merely act the part. The implication clearly is, that virtue, as it is

¹ T.J., Bk.X, ch.ii.

commonly known, is not natural to women. Fielding thus ends up by disproving what he seemed to set out to prove.

Rhetorical irony can also take the form of a pretended defence of individuals. The same procedure is followed; several reasons are given as excuses for the individual's conduct, but these are so absurd that at the end the individual is condemned rather than excused. Commenting for instance on Square's incontinence, Fielding says:

"But to confess the truth, this inconstancy is rather imaginary than real. Philosophers are composed of flesh and blood as well as other human creatures; and, however sublimated and refined the theory of these may be, a little practical frailty is as incident to them as to other mortals. It is, indeed, in theory only, and not in practice, as we have before hinted, that consists the difference: for though such great beings think much better and more wisely, they always act exactly like other men. They know very well how to subdue all appetites and passions, and to despise both pain and pleasure; and this knowledge affords much delightful contemplation, and is easily acquired; but the practice would be vexatious and troublesome; and, therefore, the same wisdom which teaches them to know this, teaches them to avoid carrying them into execution".¹

Our first impression is that Fielding means to defend philosophers. They are, he says, composed of flesh and blood like other creatures. No other statement could be more likely to win the reader over to the philosophers' side. But then comes the masterly understatement, "a little practical frailty is as incident to them as to other mortals". Understatements usually heighten and expose, and this one is no exception, for it highlights the philosophers' sensuality. Fielding then remarks innocently that the difference between them and other mortals lies only in theory and not in practice, but the implication of the remark is damaging, for he insinuates that philosophers do not practise what they preach. From

¹ T.J., Bk.V, ch.v.

this point onwards every new comment is more devastating. The philosophers are ridiculed for claiming superiority over other men because, as they claim, they are able to subdue their appetites and passions, whereas, in reality, they are just as subject to desires and passions as others. Finally, there is the most damaging comment of all. "The same wisdom which teaches them to know this, teaches them to avoid carrying it into execution". The above extract demonstrates a marked characteristic of rhetorical irony — it works by gradual and progressive demolition, and this is again illustrated in Fielding's account of Mr. Western's brutal treatment of Sophia:

"Western beheld the deplorable condition of his daughter with no more contrition or remorse, than the Turnkey of Newgate feels at viewing the agonies of a tender wife, when taking her last farewell of her condemned husband; or rather he looked down on her with the same emotions which arises in an honest fair tradesman, who sees his debtor dragged to prison for 10*l.* which, though a just debt, the wretch is wickedly unable to pay. Or, to hit the case still more nearly, he felt the same compunction with a bawd, when some poor innocent, whom she hath ensnared into her hands, falls into fits at the first proposal of what is called seeing company. Indeed this resemblance would be exact, was it not that the bawd hath an interest in what she doth, and the father, though perhaps he may blindly think otherwise, can, in reality, have none in urging his daughter to almost an equal prostitution".¹

In order to expose the immorality of Western's attitude, Fielding proceeds by a series of analogies each one graver than its predecessor. The Turnkey may be demonstrating professional detachment. The tradesman's attitude on the other hand, is much less excusable. But if his is inexcusable, the bawd's is disgusting and criminal. We thus proceed from the professional Turnkey, to the tradesman who quite legitimately demands his money, but refuses mercy, and finally we encounter the bawd,

¹ T.J., Bk.XVI, ch.ii.

endeavouring to force a young innocent to commit a loathsome act. Yet, Fielding goes even further. Mr. Western in his view is worse than the bawd, for while the bawd has some financial interest in prostituting the innocent, Western tries to "prostitute" his daughter with no apparent motives of profit to himself.

These then are the main categories of simple irony Fielding uses. But they do not by any means exhaust the list. Fielding can achieve astonishing ironic effects in all sorts of minor ways. He is, for instance, very skilful at inserting concessive clauses, explanatory clauses and parentheses in the second half of sentences so that the impression derived from the first half is completely reversed. This device is all the more effective because the reader is bound to react to the change of direction with a sense of shock. It will be of interest to examine a few examples:

"Indeed, he very often made her such presents; and she, in complacence to him, spent much time in adorning herself. I say, in complacence to him, because she always expressed the greatest contempt for dress, and for those ladies who made it their study".¹

It is the explanatory second sentence which exposes Miss Allworthy's hypocrisy in so far as dress is concerned.

"Eight months after the celebration of the nuptials between Captain Blifil and Miss Bridget Allworthy, a young lady of great beauty, merit, and fortune, was Miss Bridget, by reason of a fright, delivered of a fine boy".
(Bk.II, ch.ii.)

It is quite possible that the reader may have missed the full significance of the phrase "eight months" at the beginning of the paragraph. Fielding ensures that the point is not overlooked by inserting the explanatory phrase "by reason of a fright".

¹ T.J., Bk. II, ch.iv.

Later, Fielding gives an account of Captain Blifil's plans for improving the Allworthy estate:

"He at last completed a most excellent plan; and very sorry we are, that it is not in our power to present it to the reader, since even the luxury of the present age, I believe, would hardly match it. It had, indeed, in a superlative degree, the two principal ingredients which serve to recommend all great and noble designs of this nature; for it required an immoderate expense to execute, and a vast length of time to bring it to any sort of perfection".¹

Fielding reserves the most devastating part of his comment for the very end, and puts it in the form of a short, shabby unexpected explanatory clause.

The effect of this device derives partly from the shock we experience on encountering a sentiment we had not expected, as can be seen in Fielding's final comment on Captain Blifil's plans.

"But while the captain was one day busied in deep contemplation of this kind, one of the most unlucky as well as unseasonable accidents happened to him. The utmost malice of fortune could, indeed, have contrived nothing so cruel, so mal-a-propos, so absolutely destructive to all his schemes. In short, not to keep the reader in long suspense, just at the very instant when his heart was exulting in meditations on the happiness which would accrue to him by Mr. Allworthy's death, he himself — died of an apoplexy".²

The shock of this revelation is all the greater for being left to the very end. The same is true of the following passage describing Partridge's misfortunes:

"Partridge having now lost his wife, his school, and his annuity, and the unknown person having now discontinued the last-mentioned charity, resolved, to change the scene, and left the country, where he was in danger of starving with the universal compassion of his neighbours". (Bk.II, ch.vi).

¹ T.J., Bk.II, ch.viii.

² T.J., Bk.II, ch.viii.

Fielding can also insert his ironic comment in a consecutive clause, or in the second half of a balanced antithetical sentence:

"Indeed she was so far from regretting want of beauty, that she never mentioned that perfection (if it can be called one) without contempt". (Bk.I, ch.i.).

Whatever we may have expected as a consequence of the first half of the sentence it is certainly not the information Fielding gives us. The shock thus reinforces the irony.

Finally, a word on Mrs. Wilkins' behaviour on being summoned by Mr. Allworthy to take care of the newly-found babe:

"She had indeed given her master sufficient time to dress himself; for out of respect to him, and regard to decency, she had spent many minutes in adjusting her hair at the looking-glass, notwithstanding all the hurry in which she had been summoned by the servant, and though her master, for ought she knew, lay expiring in an apoplexy, or in some other fit".¹

There is, first of all, the balanced antithetical statement in which the unexpected ironic comment is inserted in the second half of the antithesis — ("for out of respect....she had spent..."). Then there is the unexpected concessive clause, all the more ironic because unexpected: "and though her master for ought she knew, lay expiring in an apoplexy, or some other fit".

The ironic effects so far considered have been largely achieved by Fielding speaking directly to the reader. We can thus see why the relationship established between the author and the reader is important. It is vital for the operation of these kinds of irony. Fielding is quite capable also, of achieving ironic effects by allowing the characters to expose themselves. He sets the scene, puts the characters, as it were, on

¹ T.J., Bk.I, ch.iii.

the stage, and allows them to talk or act, and, in so doing, to reveal their unpleasant qualities. The characters are thus sufficiently distanced from the author and the reader for both to regard them critically and dispassionately, and the ironic effect is created by the disparity between what the characters think of themselves and their conduct, and what the reader thinks of them. Since the success of this kind of irony depends largely on the author's manipulation of a certain situation and scene, it can be referred to as "irony of situation".

The best examples of its use in English Literature are possibly provided by the portrayals of Mrs. Norris in Mansfield Park and Mrs. Bennett in Pride and Prejudice. Both of these women exaggerate their importance, and the impression the reader has of their personalities and conduct is the opposite of their opinions of themselves. Mrs. Norris and Mrs. Bennett condemn themselves each time they attempt to speak or act.

In Tom Jones the character who is most consistently exposed by means of irony of situation, is Mrs. Western. Let us consider her reaction to Sophia's account of Lord Fellamar's indecent behaviour:

"I am astonished and confounded", cries the aunt, "No woman of the name of Western hath been ever treated so, since we were a family. I would have torn the eyes of a Prince out, if he had attempted such freedoms with me. It is impossible; sure, Sophia, you must invent this to raise my indignations against him". "I hope, madam", said Sophia, "You have too good an opinion of me, to imagine me capable of telling an untruth. Upon my soul, it is true". "I should have stabbed him to the heart, had I been present", returned the aunt. "Yet surely he could have no dishonourable design; it is impossible! he durst not; besides his proposals shew he had not; for they are not only honourable, but generous. I don't know; the age allows too great freedoms. A distant salute is all I would have allowed before the ceremony. I have had lovers formerly, ... though I never would consent to marriage, and I never encouraged the least freedom. It is a foolish custom, and what I never would agree

to. No man kissed more of me than my cheek. It is as much as one can bring oneself to give lips to a husband; and, indeed, could I ever have been persuaded to marry, I believe I should not have soon been brought to endure so much".¹

Much that is characteristic of Mrs. Western is exposed in this scene. First there is the inflated importance she attaches to her family. Then Fielding skilfully highlights her attempt to move away from the real point — Lord Fellamar's indecency — to more trivial matters. Then she attempts to swing the focus from Lord Fellamar to Sophia by accusing her of falsehood. When this fails, she refuses to admit that Lord Fellamar could have acted dishonourably. His proposals are generous, therefore his motives and his conduct must be honourable. Honour, in Mrs. Western's eyes, has nothing to do with conduct, and everything to do with money. Next she tries to minimize the seriousness of the charge, by referring to it as a "freedom", but even so, she does not dwell on it. She shifts the focus on to herself, the offers of marriage she received in her youth, and her aversion to love-making. Her vanity, her materialism and her puritanical opposition to anything which could be regarded as a genuine expression of love, are thus revealed. Expressions of tenderness are "freedoms" as far as she is concerned, and should not be encouraged; marriage is primarily a financial matter. As the scene progresses we see how Fielding continues to manipulate it to reveal Mrs. Western's vanity, and we see how Sophia skilfully plays on this vanity to gain her ends.

Mr. Allworthy may not belong to the same class as Mrs. Western, but, as we have seen, he is not the "all-white" character that some critics think him, and Fielding often distances him and forces us to react critically

¹ T.J., Bk.XVII, ch.iv

toward him. His deathbed scene provides another example of the operation of irony of situation. Mr. Allworthy acts and speaks in a way which convinces us that he is deliberately acting a part — that of the good man on his deathbed. Referring to other men's fear of death, he says:

"But those who are taken away earlier, have only lost a few hours, at the best little worth lamenting, and much oftener hours of labour and fatigue, of pain and sorrow". (Bk.V, ch.vii).

Such a sentiment would, no doubt, be accepted by the philosophers, but the ordinary man is unlikely to be convinced that the early years of his life are not worth lamenting. Allworthy also exposes his gullibility in accepting his physician's pronouncements uncritically and Fielding's ironic parenthesis "(which I take very kindly of him)" indicates that Mr. Allworthy should not have taken the physician at his word. The suspicion that Mr. Allworthy is "playing at death" is again reinforced by his words: "Bless you all, I am setting out a little before you". The artificiality of the elaborately constructed charade is finally exploded when we are brought face to face with actual death: "Here a footman came hastily into the room...."; it is to announce that Mr. Allworthy's sister has indeed beaten her brother; she is actually dead.

Mrs. Wilkins, like Mrs. Western, is also very susceptible to exposure by means of irony of situation. She also, has an inflated sense of her own importance and we, quite often find her exulting in her own virtue and in her own worth. This, for instance, is her response to Mr. Allworthy's bequest:

"I suppose he hath left me mourning; but, i'fackins!
If that be all, the devil shall wear it for him, for me.
I'd have his worship know I am no beggar. I have saved three
hundred pound in his service, and after all to be used in this
manner. — It is a fine encouragement to servants to be

honest; and to be sure, if I have taken a little something now and then, others have taken ten times as much; and now we are all put in a lump together. If so be that it be so, the legacy may go to the devil with him that gave it. No, I won't give it up neither, because that will please some folks. No, I'll buy the gayest gown I can get and dance over the old curmudgeon's grave in it".¹

Cupidity, dishonesty, vanity and arrogance, these are the main qualities of Mrs. Wilkins, and all are revealed in this scene.

It can be seen from this survey of Fielding's use of simple irony, that, although in subtlety and complexity, he cannot match the perfection of Swift, in range and variety he can stand up to comparison with all other ironists.

III

Yet irony is only one of many rhetorical devices that Fielding developed in his earlier days and brought to perfection in Tom Jones. Burlesque, the mock-epic and hyperbolic rhetoric are all used with an astonishing degree of success. In order, therefore, to be fully aware of the richness of texture of Tom Jones, it is necessary to examine the operation of all these devices.

It is difficult to make a distinction between burlesque and the mock-epic when one is concerned with burlesque of the epic form. Yet it may be said that the mock-epic retains, as nearly as possible, the form and style of the epic, but makes an alteration in the status of the characters, whereas burlesque distorts the nature of style, form and characters.

¹ T.J., Bk.V, ch.viii.

Burlesque usually reveals the absurdity of a particular style and seldom goes further. Fielding, as has been demonstrated, is one of the first writers to use burlesque morally.¹ By inserting crudities into the mouth of a character, or by using vulgar or cruel language to describe his actions, the novelist can call attention to the crudity or cruelty of the character himself. We may take, as an example, the description of Mrs. Western's reaction to Sophia, when she declares her aversion to Blifil:

"As a bailiff, when well-authorized by his writ, having possessed himself of the person of some unhappy debtor, views all his tears without concern; in vain the wretched captive attempts to raise compassion; in vain the tender wife bereft of her companion, the little prattling boy, or frightened girl, are mentioned as inducements to reluctance. The noble bumtrap, blind and deaf to every circumstance of distress, greatly rises above all the motives to humanity, and into the hands of the gaoler resolves to deliver his miserable prey.

Not less blind to the tears, or less deaf to every entreaty of Sophia was the politic aunt, nor less determined was she to deliver over the trembling maid into the arms of the gaoler Blifil"²

The fact that Fielding composes a heroic simile with colloquial expressions (bailiff, bumtrap) does not in any way detract from the dignity of the Homeric simile; it is not Fielding's intention to do so. But the cruelty and heartlessness of the bailiff and the callousness of the gaoler do rub off on to Mrs. Western and Blifil.

The scene in which Tom encounters Molly in the grove has been the subject of much discussion. More will be said about this later. In the meantime, it is worth studying the way in which Fielding uses burlesque in setting the scene and giving the reader an insight into Jones' emotional condition:

¹ See chapter One above.

² T.J.. Bk.VII. ch.iii.

"It was now a pleasant evening in the latter end of June, when our hero was walking in a most delicious grove, where the gentle breezes fanning the leaves, together with the sweet trilling of a murmuring stream, and the melodious notes of nightingales, formed all together the most enchanting harmony. In this scene, so sweetly accommodated to love, he meditated on his dear Sophia. While his wanton fancy roved unbounded over all her beauties, and his lively imagination painted the charming maid in various ravishing forms, his warm heart melted with tenderness; and at length, throwing himself on the ground, by the side of a gently murmuring brook, he broke into the following ejaculations:...."¹

There can be little doubt that Fielding is deliberately ridiculing traditional love settings. The delicious grove, gentle breezes, murmuring stream and melodious notes of nightingales all recall popular, sentimental romantic settings, and Fielding's reference to the scene as being "sweetly accommodated to love" confirms that his attitude is satiric. But it is not Fielding's primary intention to ridicule traditional love settings. He is more concerned with Jones' mental state and his attitude to love at this particular juncture. The sensuousness of the description mirrors the sensuality of Jones' disposition. Jones is indulging in a reverie, a dream about sex in the same way as the author rhapsodized on the luxuriant scene. His thoughts "rove unbounded" over all Sophia's beauties, he is obviously inflamed by drink, and he indulges in a sexual phantasy. Burlesque here has been used morally.

The same technique is used in Fielding's account of the attempt by Blifil and Thwackum to discover Tom and Molly:

"As in the season of rutting (an uncouth phrase, by which the vulgar denote that gentle dalliance, which in the well-wooded forest of Hampshire, passes between lovers of the ferine kind), if, while the lofty-crested stag meditates the amorous sport, a couple of puppies, or any other beasts of hostile note, should wander so near the temple of Venus Ferina, that the fair hind should shrink from the place...on the first hint given by the frightened

¹ T.J., Bk.V, ch.x.

hind fierce and tremendous rushes forth the stag to the entrance of the thicket; there stands he sentinel over his love, stamps the ground with his foot, and with his horns brandished aloft in air, proudly provokes the apprehended foe to combat.

Thus, and more terrible, when he perceived the enemy's approach, leaped forth our hero".¹

Again, the crudity of the language used "rubs off" on to the characters concerned. Love among the human species is seen here as "rutting", which Fielding himself admits is an uncouth phrase. The characters are regarded as animals; Jones is a stag, Molly a hind, and Thwackum and Blifil are like hostile puppies. The implication is that Molly and Tom have debased love to a merely animal function. Yet Thwackum and Blifil are no better. They behave like a couple of inquisitive dogs. The general impression is that four supposedly rational human beings are behaving more like animals.

The mock-epic is a comparatively easy device to use just because the difference between it and the epic lies only in the status of the characters. The author can therefore draw attention to the gap between his characters and the Homeric gods and heroes, to highlight their pretension, arrogance and cruelty. This is well brought out, for example, in the description of Mrs. Wilkins as she sets out to discover who is young Tom's mother:

"Not otherwise than when a kite, tremendous bird, is beheld by the feathered generation soaring aloft, and hovering over their heads; the amorous dove, and every innocent little bird, spread wide the alarm, and fly trembling to their hiding-places. He proudly beats the air, conscious of his dignity and meditates intended mischief".²

The kite is a noble bird and it is in its nature to prey on other birds. But there is nothing noble or important about the personality of Mrs. Wilkins.

¹ T.J., Bk.V, ch.xi.

² T.J., Bk.I, ch.vi.

The disparity between her personality and the nobility of the bird is comic, yet this does not inhibit the exposure of her arrogance, pretension and inflated sense of importance. The desire to terrorize lesser members of the species, natural to a kite, is cruel in Mrs. Wilkins.

The same point can be made of Mrs. Partridge's assault on her husband:

"As fair Grimalkin, who, though the youngest of the feline family, degenerates not in ferocity from the elder branches of her house, and though inferior in strength, is equal in fierceness to the noble tiger himself, when a little mouse, whom it hath long tormented in sport, escapes from her clutches, for a while frets, scolds, growls, swears; but if the trunk, or box, behind which the mouse lay hid, be again removed, she flies like lightening on her prey, and with envenomed wrath, bites, scratches, mumbles and tears the little animal. Not with less fury did Mrs. Partridge fly on the poor pedagogue. Her tongue, teeth, and hands fell all upon him at once".¹

Grimalkin may be a cat, but she belongs to the noble feline family, and it is in her nature to mutilate mice. Mrs. Partridge, on the other hand, is neither fair nor noble, and the disparity between her and Grimalkin is a source of comedy. But again, the episode is not just funny. It is not natural for a human being to attempt to mutilate another. When, therefore, Mrs. Partridge falls on her husband with "tongue, teeth and hands", we realize she debases herself to the level of predatory animals and her ferocity is underlined because it is unexpected of and unacceptable in a person of her station in life.

The most obvious mock-epic episode in Tom Jones is the battle in the Churchyard:

"As a vast herd of cows in a rich farmer's yard, if while they are milked, they hear their calves at a distance,

¹ T.J., Bk.II, ch.iv.

lamenting the robbery which is being committed, roar and bellow so roared forth the Somersetshire mob an halaloo, made up of almost as many squawls, screams, and other different sounds, as there were persons, or indeed passions, among them: some were inspired by rage, others alarmed by fear, and others had nothing in their heads but the love of fun; but Envy the sister of Satan, and his constant companion, rushed among the crowd and blew up the fury of the women; who no sooner came up to Molly, than they pelted her with dirt and rubbish".

The Battle commences, and:

"Molly then taking a thigh-bone in her hand, fell in among the flying ranks, and dealing her blows with great liberality on either side, overthrew the carcass of many a mighty hero and heroine.

Recount, O Muse, the names of those who fell on this fatal day. First Jemmy Tweedle felt on his hinder head the direful bone. Him the pleasant banks of sweetly winding Stour had nourished, where he first learnt the vocal art, with which, wandering up and down at wakes and fairs, he cheered the rural nymphs and swains, when upon the green they interweaved the sprightly dance; while he himself stood fiddling and jumping to his own music. How little now avails his fiddle! He thumps the verdant floor with his carcass".¹

Once more we recognize the comedy resulting from the disparity between style and characters. The style suggests Homeric gods and heroes; instead, we are presented with village yokels. But the comedy does not minimize the cruelty and brutality of the scene which is even more strongly emphasized because it is incompatible with the status of these combatants. It is in the nature of Homeric gods and heroes to fight; we expect it of them and are not necessarily shocked by Homer's bloody battles. Yet, when the same thing happens in a village churchyard, there is cause for concern. For what may be normal to ancient gods and heroes, seems brutal or cruel among ordinary mortals. Sampson, killing the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, is acceptable; Molly, belabouring her fellow villagers with a

¹ T.J., Bk.IV, ch.viii.

thighbone, is not. Fielding further stresses the point by the use of images and allusions. The battle, it seems, took place in the churchyard where there was to be a funeral that very evening, and so the precincts of the church, normally associated with peace and brotherly love, are converted into a battle ground where the most contemptible passions are unleashed. We might have expected the village to share in the mourning; but so far has communal love disappeared, that the energies of the mob are directed against a pregnant girl. Molly herself retires behind a newly-dug grave and arms herself with bones from the peaceful churchyard. The scene is hilarious, but Fielding makes his moral points just the same.

Another device which ought to be considered, is that of "hyperbolic rhetoric". This is similar to burlesque and the mock-epic because it also depends for its effect on inflation and distortion; Fielding seems to reserve this device in Tom Jones for his love scenes. One's impression, on reading these love scenes, may well be that Fielding is trying to describe the flutterings of the lovers' hearts without quite knowing how to do it. Yet, on further reflection, it seems plausible that Fielding uses hyperbolic rhetoric deliberately for two reasons. Firstly he may wish to parody the practice itself. We should be aware that this kind of rhetoric was very common in eighteenth-century England. Most writers of the day, Johnson, Gibbon, and Smollett among them, filled their pages with ringing phrases, and very often the emotions were described by means of clichés and stock phrases. Often also, the phrases used did not seem to match the emotions they were supposed to be describing. Fielding may have wished to ridicule the practice. Secondly, he uses hyperbolic rhetoric to direct attention to the mental condition of the characters concerned. We have

already noted Lady Booby's amorous passion; a comparable passage in Tom Jones is Tom's apostrophe of Sophia:

"O Sophia, would heaven give thee to my arms, how blest would be my condition! Curst be that fortune which sets a distance between us; was I but possessed of thee, one only suit of rags thy whole estate, is there a man on earth whom I would envy! How contemptible would the brightest circassian beauty, dressed in all the jewels of the Indies, appear to my eyes? But why do I mention another woman? Could I think my eyes capable of looking on any other with tenderness, these hands would tear them from my head. No, my Sophia, if cruel fortune separates us forever, my soul shall dote on thee alone....

At these words he started up, and beheld — not his Sophia — no, nor a Circassian maid richly and elegantly attired for the grand seignior's seraglio. No; without a gown, in a shift that was something of the coarsest, and none of the cleanest, bedewed likewise with some odoriferous effluvia, the produce of the day's labour, with a pitchfork in her hand, Molly Seagrim approached".¹

Tom's rhetorical explosion reveals the unreality and insincerity of his professions. He is obviously dreaming, and his head is full of ideas, not of love, but of sex. The outburst is funny because it is exaggerated and inflated. (Tom's words and visions bear no relation to actual life) and, from this disparity, comedy results. But there are also sinister implications. Molly Seagrim appears on the scene and Tom's infidelity is soon to follow. The implications go even further than this, for there is an element of bestiality in Tom's surrender to the filthy Molly.

All these devices so far analysed were used in Joseph Andrews, but in Tom Jones they seem to have acquired a new bite and pungency. This is due not only to technical maturity, but also to the fact that Tom Jones is more questioning and probing, and that several concepts, and a number even of its more sympathetic characters are severely tested. Hypocrisy is less easily detected than in Joseph Andrews, and we are confronted not only with

¹ T.J., Bk.V, ch.x.

affectation, hypocrisy, folly and vanity, but with malevolence and villainy. Fielding also seems momentarily to have lost confidence in the "good heart" and the "all-worthy". It is therefore understandable that the satire and irony are more biting. Villainy and malevolence must be exposed and the limitations of the "good heart" shown clearly. There is thus a difference in tone between the two novels which can be seen if we compare Tom's soliloquy on Sophia with Lady Booby's on the effects of her passion. Fielding used hyperbolic rhetoric in the latter episode in order to condition our attitude to Lady Booby's jealousy, snobbishness and inordinate desire. Beyond this there are no more sinister implications. When we turn to Tom's soliloquy, we see a definite change. The implications of bestiality, sensuality and infidelity could not be missed.

The difference in tone can be seen even more clearly if we compare Parson Adams' adventure with the dogs, with the battle in the churchyard. The satire is more "good-humoured" in Joseph Andrews than in Tom Jones, so that we can even join in laughing at Adams. This is not true of the scene in the churchyard. Tom raves like a madman, Molly uses the remains of the dead to assault her opponents, and the mob is vicious in its attack on the pregnant girl. The juxtaposition of images of, and allusions to, death, religion, madness and unneighbourliness, further underlines the seriousness of the implications.

Pre-eminently the difference in tone is demonstrated by Fielding's attitude to Blifil, for Blifil personifies villainy and malevolence which were hardly present in Joseph Andrews. We are much more aware of the presence of villains in this novel than in the former. Blifil is always in the foreground, and we are permitted to look at him from all angles and

in all perspectives, whereas in Joseph Andrews the "villains" only made brief appearances and then disappeared. Parson Trulliber was uncharitable, but he was not a villain; and during the description of Parson Adams' hilarious encounter with him the good-humoured atmosphere predominates, and though we look at Trulliber critically, we never look on him as a villain. Blifil, on the other hand, receives no quarter. Whenever he appears, humour seems to disappear and the irony becomes savage. The new bite that Fielding's satire has developed corresponds, in fact, to the difference between uncharitableness and villainy.

IV

Because of his loss of assurance about the good heart, and his consequent desire to subject even his positives to the most rigorous testing, Fielding must devise a means of demonstrating both the limitations and the virtues of his "good" characters. Also, since this is a novel in which rival philosophical and moral systems compete for acceptance, Fielding must show the weaknesses and strengths of each, and direct the attention of the reader to an acceptable solution. His task in Tom Jones therefore, is difficult and complex; and he solved it by perfecting the device of "double irony".

An important development in the criticism of Fielding, therefore, was William Empson's recognition of the operation of "double irony" in Tom Jones,¹ for it is only by studying the operation of this double irony that we realize that Fielding's attitude to his hero is double-sided. The weight

¹ William Empson, "Tom Jones", The Kenyon Review, XX (1958), 217-249.

of previous criticism had inclined to the view that Fielding lacked moral earnestness because he condoned the immorality of his hero. Those who, like Middleton Murry¹ defended Fielding, took the line that sexual ethics during the eighteenth century were not the same as those of today, and that numerous eighteenth-century young men either kept mistresses or were "kept" by older and wealthier women. So these defenders did not attempt to demonstrate Fielding's moral earnestness by showing that he disapproved of Tom's conduct. They simply asserted that his hero's behaviour conformed to eighteenth-century sexual ethics. This claim, by itself, assumed that Fielding did not criticize Tom's conduct, and so it left the question of moral earnestness unsolved. It was Empson who first pointed out that we do not need to make excuses for Fielding, and that if we studied his technique carefully we would discover that he does not always approve of Tom's conduct.² Fielding takes as much care to reveal his weaknesses as he does to portray his good qualities. In Empson's view this is mainly done by means of double irony.

Double irony is not substantially different from the other forms of irony already discussed; it might take the form of one or other of them, or it might be a combination of some of them. With normal irony, the author, while pretending to be on the side of one person, contrives somehow

¹ Middleton Murry, "In Defence of Fielding" in Unprofessional Essays (London and New York, 1956), pp.25-39.

² C.J. Rawson, "Professor Empson's 'Tom Jones'", N & Q, CCIV (1959), 400-404, accepts Empson's general approach, but says that Fielding's morality is openly stated, not conveyed by the devious method of irony. In reply one must say that while Fielding's morality (i.e. his views on virtue, benevolence etc.) is clearly stated, his attitude to Tom is not so openly stated. It is conveyed by means of double irony because Fielding must present the ambivalence of Tom's character and therefore the ambivalence of his own attitude.

to inform the reader that he is not. With double irony, the author appears to be talking to or about two people and somehow contrives to inform the reader that he is on the side of neither. Also, he may present two contradictory aspects of an individual's character, and show that neither aspect can fully account for him. Evidently, double irony is a difficult instrument to wield and demands great skill, for it depends on the author's ability to walk the tightrope between rival opinions and people, and at the same time convey to the reader what the correct attitude ought to be.

One of the most famous exercises in the use of double irony is Swift's Proposal for the Abolition of Christianity. So skilfully does Swift use the device that a reader may never be quite sure whether he is on the side of Christianity and the established religion, or in favour of Deists and atheists. The truth is that Swift is attacking two extreme positions, and endeavouring to direct the reader's attention to the real truth.

Before undertaking a detailed analysis of the operation of double irony in Tom Jones, it may be interesting to investigate its use as a structural device. For Tom Jones is designed on a system of parallel and contrasting patterns. First there are Mr. Thwackum and Mr. Square, each the champion of an extreme religious and moral position. They have been entrusted with the education of the two boys, and it is essential that Tom should chart his course very carefully between their extreme and diametrically opposed positions. We see this in Fielding's comments on them:

"This gentleman and Mr. Thwackum scarce ever met without a disputation; for their tenets were indeed, diametrically opposite to each other. Square held human nature to be the perfection of all virtue, and that vice was a deviation from our nature, in the same manner as deformity of body is. Thwackum, on the contrary, maintained that the human mind,

since the fall, was nothing but a sink of iniquity, till purified and redeemed by grace. In one point only they agreed, which was, in their discourses on morality, never to mention the word goodness".¹

Already the two contrasting positions have been stated and Fielding's irony is being directed against both. Later he says:

"Upon the whole it is not religion or virtue, but the want of them, which is here exposed. Had not Thwackum too much neglected virtue, and Square religion, in the composition of their several systems, and had not both utterly discarded all natural goodness of heart, they had never been represented as the objects of derision in this history; in which we will now proceed".²

More evidence of this deliberate patterning is provided by the fact that there is both an Allworthy household and a Western household, and within the Western household also, Mr. Western is represented as being diametrically opposite to his sister. One typifies the brash, uncouth and ignorant boor of the country; the other the sophisticated but arrogant, affected and hypocritical hanger-on about the Court. Sophia, like Tom, has to walk a wary path between them. Finally, Blifil, the villain, is set against Tom, the good-natured man. Yet, although Blifil is a villain, Tom has severe limitations, and it is the purpose of the novel to chart the course which the truly good man should follow.

Not only is Fielding's double irony shown in the patterning of the novel, we can also see its operation as a structural device in the way he manipulates the scenes. This can be demonstrated in many of the scenes involving Tom and Blifil, Thwackum and Square, Mr. Western and Mrs. Western. If we look again at the battle in the churchyard, we discover that Fielding, having taken great pains to depict the brutality of the mob, swings the

¹ T.J., Bk.III, ch.iii.

² T.J., Bk.III, ch.iv.

focus to highlight Molly's ferocity, as she deals blows to right and left with her thighbone. But this is not all. Jones arrives on the scene and goes to Molly's defence. At first his action seems right and we are on the point of approving it when Fielding directs his artillery against him:

"Tom raved like a madman, beat his breast, tore his hair, stamped on the ground, and vowed the utmost vengeance on all who had been concerned". (Bk.IV, ch.viii).

During Tom's illness, he is visited by Thwackum and Square, both of whom make pronouncements which they consider fitting on such an occasion. Fielding comments:

"In pronouncing these he was one day so eager, that he unfortunately bit his tongue: and in such a manner, that it not only put an end to his discourse, but created much emotion in him, and caused him to utter an oath or two: but what was worst of all, this accident gave Thwackum, who was present, and who held all such doctrine to be heathenish and atheistical, an opportunity to clap a judgement on his back. Now this was done with so malicious a sneer, that it totally unhinged (if I may so say) the temper of the philosopher, which the bite of his tongue had somewhat ruffled".¹

The philosopher's hypocrisy is exposed when he himself shows the very emotion he had been condemning. But the scene does not end here, for Fielding next directs our attention to his opponent Thwackum who betrays his malice and thirst for revenge by "Clapping a judgement on his back".

The scene depicting Tom's drunkenness after he had learnt of Mr. Allworthy's recovery, is one of those in which it is difficult to tell where the balance of judgement should lean.² Fielding manipulates the scene in such a way that we see the weaknesses of both leading participants, Tom and Blifil. Although we realize that Tom's drunkenness is partly due to his

¹ T.J., Bk.V, ch.ii.

² T.J., Bk.V, ch.ix.

joy at the news of Mr. Allworthy's recovery, we realize also that Fielding does not condone it. Tom does behave in an unseemly and irrational manner. Yet, in case we leave the scene with this view as the final judgement, Fielding turns the ironic focus on to Blifil's feigned and unnatural soberness and prudent reserve. Even so, the reader may think that Blifil's remonstrances were justified in view of the circumstances of his mother's death, but our attention is immediately drawn to Thwackum and his hypocritical seconding of Blifil's remonstrance although he himself has drunk even more than Tom.

Whenever Squire Western confronts his sister, Fielding resorts to the use of double irony as a structural device. Here, for example, is the description of one of their quarrels about Sophia's fate:

"Ho! are you come back to your politics?' cries the squire, 'as for those I despise them as much as I do a f—t'".

Mrs. Western's Hanoverian politics may have provoked the reader's contempt; now Fielding redresses the balance by calling attention to the Squire's equally repulsive country uncouthness. But this is not left as the final impression. Attention is now focussed once more on Mrs. Western:

"And whether it was this word, or the contempt exprest for her politics, which most affected Mrs. Western, I will not determine; but she flew into the most violent rage, uttered phrases improper to be here related, and instantly burst out of the house".¹

Thus Mrs. Western's ungovernable rage and arrogance are ridiculed, and Fielding retains the balance between the uncouth Squire and his bad-tempered and affected sister.

Yet, perhaps the scene which demonstrates most effectively the operation

¹ T.J., Bk.VII, ch.iii.

of double irony as a structural device is again that of Tom's encounter with Molly in the grove and their pursuit by Blifil and Thwackum. A close examination of Fielding's comments would reveal that Tom's drunkenness and incontinence are not condoned. Even so, Fielding ensures that the reader realizes that Tom is not the only one to blame. So he presents us with the reactions of Blifil and Thwackum:

"The parson and the young squire, who were taking a serious walk, arrived at the stile which leads into the grove, and the latter caught a view of the lovers just as they were sinking out of sight.

Blifil knew Jones very well, though he was at above a hundred yards distance, and he was as positive to the sex of his companion, though not to the individual person. He started, blessed himself, and uttered a very solemn ejaculation".¹

Blifil's swearing is seen by Fielding as religious hypocrisy, and the double irony is reinforced by the animal images used. So that while Tom's bestiality is underlined, Thwackum's and Blifil's "McCarthyism" is not overlooked. They are presented as hounds in pursuit of game, and there is a suggestion that Thwackum's desire to find Molly "sitting" is not entirely due to religious or moral zeal. Tom, however, decides to bar Thwackum's approach; there is little doubt that he behaves impertinently at this stage, but Fielding's little rime switches the focus again to Thwackum:

"Far hence be souls profane.

The Sybil cry'd, and from the grove abstain".

The reader is thus left with the impression that Thwackum is either bent on thwarting the enjoyment of young love, or wishes to pry into love's secrets, and to feast his eye on Molly's naked form.

Finally, on the field of "battle", Tom's impertinence and incontinence are ranged against Thwackum's aggressiveness and pugnacity and Blifil's

¹ T.J., Bk.V, ch.x.

hypocrisy. Throughout the scene the balance between all the offending parties is very skilfully held.

We can also see Fielding's duality of vision in the way he comments on certain characters and brings out their complexities. He is always careful to stress the need to take into account all aspects of people's characters; one-sided judgements are bound to be inaccurate. This is how he describes the reactions of various groups of people to Black George's theft:

"Those who sat in the world's upper gallery treated that incident, I am well convinced, with their usual vociferation; and every term of scurrilous reproach was most probably vented on that occasion. If we had descended to the next order of spectators, we should have found an equal degree of abhorrence, though less of noise and scurrility; yet here the good women gave Black George to the devil, and many of them expected every minute that the cloven-footed gentleman would fetch his own.

The pit, as usual, was no doubt divided: those who delight in heroic virtue and perfect character objected to the producing such instances of villainy, without punishing them very severely for the sake of example. Some of the author's friends cried, 'lookye, gentlemen, the man is a villain, but it is nature for all that'. And all the young critics of the age, the clerks, apprentices, etc., called it low, and fell a-groaning.

As for the boxes, they behaved with their accustomed politeness. Most of them were attending to something else. Some of those few who regarded the scene at all declared he was a bad kind of man; while others refused to give their opinion, till they had heard that of the best judges".¹

Later Fielding says:

"A single bad act no more constitutes a villain in life, than a single bad part on the stage....Upon the whole, then, the man of candour and true understanding is never hasty to condemn. He can censure an imperfection, or even a vice, without rage against the guilty party".²

Irony is directed against each of the groups Fielding refers to and their

¹ T.J., Bk.VII, ch.i.

² T.J., Bk.XII, ch.viii.

verdicts are thus shown to be unfair and inaccurate. In the second section of the extract, Fielding urges his readers to pay due regard to the complexities of human nature when forming their opinion about anyone.

This need to view all aspects of the argument and see the weaknesses as well as the strengths of everyone's characters is reiterated by Fielding in his comments on the "Upton " affair:

"For instance, as the fact at present before us now stands, without any commentary of mine upon it, though it may at first sight offend some readers, yet upon more mature consideration, it must please all; for wise and good men may consider what happened to Jones at Upton as a punishment for his wickedness, with regard to women, of which it was indeed the immediate consequence; and silly and bad persons may comfort themselves in their vices, by flattering their own hearts that the characters of men are rather owing to accident than to virtue".¹

The irony is again directed both at the silly and bad, and the wise and good; neither opinion is correct.

V

It is now necessary to demonstrate the operation of double irony in the texture of the novel, and this can be done by a detailed analysis of a selection of crucial scenes.

In Fielding's use of double irony in Tom Jones, we see a marked advance on the technique of Jonathan Wild. Instead of shifting his position from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph without giving the reader a clear indication of what the final position is, Fielding now holds

¹ T.J., Bk.XII, ch.viii.

the balance skilfully between people and ideas. The balance is achieved within the same unit, whether it be the sentence, the paragraph or the scene, and we know what Fielding's attitude is. In this novel he shows an awareness of the complexity of his characters and demonstrates this complexity. The uncertainty of Jonathan Wild is gone, and there is a new assurance. The author knows what he is doing and, even more important, we know that he knows, and we also know what response is expected of us.

In Tom Jones double irony acquires an undisputable importance because it is the technique which Fielding largely uses to question the characters whom readers have come to regard as his positives, namely Mr. Allworthy and Tom. William Empson has rightly pointed out that whenever Fielding refers to Mr. Allworthy he invariably makes use of double irony. This is necessary because Fielding must demonstrate Allworthy's sterling qualities while highlighting his inadequacies; he must reveal the complexity concealed behind the superficial surface simplicity, and this ambivalence comes out during the scene in which Allworthy gives Jenny a lecture on continence:

"It is the other part of your offence, therefore, upon which I intend to admonish you, I mean the violation of your chastity; — a crime, however lightly it may be treated by debauched persons, very heinous in itself and very dreadful in its consequences". (Bk.I, ch.vii).

Mr. Allworthy appears here as the guardian of public morality administering wholesome admonishment to the erring youngster. On the surface his sentiments sound overpoweringly true, and Jenny is seen as having committed a grave error. For it is true that violation of chastity can have dreadful consequences. Fielding thus seems to corroborate everything Mr. Allworthy has said, and to regard Jenny with disfavour. Yet, the words "crime" and

"heinous" suggest that irony is also being directed in the opposite direction. Violation of chastity is not necessarily a "crime"; certainly, not on the part of the girl, and even if it were, Mr. Allworthy surely stretches the meaning of words in describing it as a "heinous" crime. He continues:

"And here its consequences may well be argued to be dreadful; for what can be more so, than to incur the divine displeasure, by the breach of the Divine commands; and that in an instance against which the highest vengeance is specifically denounced? For by it you are rendered infamous, and driven, like lepers of old, out of society; at least from the society of all but reprobate persons; for no others will associate with you".¹

Again, Mr. Allworthy's statement does contain an element of truth; Jenny's conduct was imprudent, for its consequences will indeed be ostracism by so-called "decent" society. Yet the attitude of Society is also condemned. Mr. Allworthy moreover, exaggerates the nature of the punishment for loss of chastity. It is not quite true that the highest vengeance has been denounced against it, nor does it seem just to shun the violated girl like a "leper of old".^c Mr. Allworthy's words are too loaded. It is, however, quite possible, that some readers may think that Mr. Allworthy merely states society's position, not his own. Fielding therefore ensures that he is associated with the views of society by inserting the words, "none but reprobate persons will associate with you". Mr. Allworthy goes on:

"Love, however, barbarously we may corrupt and pervert its meaning, as it is a laudable, is a rational passion, and can never be violent but when reciprocal; for though the scripture bids us love our enemies, it means not with that fervent love which we naturally bear towards our friends; much less that we should sacrifice to them our lives, and what ought to be dearer to us our innocence. Now in what light, but that of an enemy can a reasonable woman regard ~~the man~~ who solicits her to entail on herself the misery I

¹ T.J., Bk.I, ch.vii.

have described to you, and who would purchase to himself a short, trivial, contemptible pleasure, so greatly at her expense". (Ek.I, ch.vii.).

The speech is pregnant with falsifications and illogicalities. Love is not a rational passion. Indeed, it is about the most irrational passion there is. Secondly, in this particular case love was reciprocal, and it is unrealistic of Mr. Allworthy to suggest that a girl could not reciprocate the love of a man with whom she has premarital relations. He has not proved that a man who "solicits" a girl is her enemy. Furthermore, there is no evidence in the scriptures to show that we are not intended to love our enemies with as great a love as we show our friends.

Mr. Allworthy indulges in a spate of rhetoric which helps reinforce the superficial truth of his views, and reveals Jenny's folly. The speech is full of rhetorical questions followed by neat generalizations. ("Now in what light..." "Can love which always seeks the good of its object...?" "If such a corrupter...ought not the woman..."). It seems as though Mr. Allworthy intends to pile up a wealth of arguments with all the force of logic and rhetoric at his command, in order to put up an unassailable case.

Yet the force of the rhetoric itself contains the irony, for every argument he uses to prove the false premise with which he starts, looks more and more untenable on closer examination, impressive as it sounds. The irony is not only rhetorical, it is also linguistic, for our sympathy is alienated by the violence of some of the expressions Mr. Allworthy uses. But, above all, it is double irony, for Fielding emphasizes the seriousness of Jenny's misconduct, and at the same time exposes the hypocrisy, puritanism and brutality of society's reaction. He shows Mr. Allworthy's solidity in standing up as the champion of public morality and decency, while

revealing his severity, mere idealism and failure to understand the reality of the power of the passions.

It is Fielding's intention to make us realize Mr. Allworthy's inadequacies in spite of his being one of the novel's "positives". He does take some unwise decisions, the consequences of which are obviously disastrous. It is by means of double irony that Fielding conditions us to responding to the complexity of Mr. Allworthy's character.

Tom Jones deals with concepts such as "prudence" and "honour", about which there are conflicting views. It is therefore important that Fielding should present us with the various alternative interpretations and then give an indication of the ones he himself accepts. How he does this is demonstrated by his comments on the nature of prudence:

"In recording some instances of these, we shall, if rightly understood, afford a very useful lesson to those well-disposed youths who shall hereafter be our readers; for they may find that goodness of heart and openness of temper, though these may give them great comfort within, and administer to an honest pride in their own minds, will by no means, alas! do their business in the world. Prudence and circumspection are necessary even to the best of men. They are indeed, as it were, a guard to virtue, without which she can never be safe. It is not enough that your designs, nay that your actions are intrinsically good; you must take care they shall appear so. If your inside be never so beautiful, you must preserve a fair outside also. This must be constantly looked to, or malice, or envy, will take care to blacken it so, that the sagacity and goodness of an Allworthy will not be able to see through it, and to discern the beauties within. Let this my young readers be your constant maxim, that no man can be good enough to enable him to neglect the rules of prudence, nor will virtue herself look beautiful, unless she be bedecked with the outward ornaments of decency and decorum".¹

The whole passage is a masterpiece of ironic construction. Almost every sentence is doubly ironic, with two attitudes held in suspension and shown

¹ T.J., Bk.III, ch.vii.

to be limited. Thus young men badly need a guard to virtue, but the guard suggested is unacceptable. In order to see the point of the novel it is essential to get the meaning of this passage right. For on the surface it seems as though Fielding is implying that Tom's difficulties will be solved if and when he learns prudence. Many critics have actually taken this to be the message of Tom Jones, because they have failed to recognize the operation of double irony. For Fielding forces us to ask questions about the nature of this prudence. There is little doubt that there is a sense in which prudence is a laudable quality and that Tom badly needs it — otherwise the passage would not have been doubly ironic. If young men can be careful and refrain from thoughtless actions, so much the better for their peace of mind. Fielding implies that this kind of prudence is commendable, and throughout the passage this view is one of those held in suspension. But it is not the only interpretation that can be gleaned from Fielding's commentary. "Circumspection" suggests a regard for the "world's" opinions. The other concept of prudence, therefore, seems to have little to do with the inherent goodness of the young man's actions. It is, in fact, a worldly and political quality. "Guards to virtue" and the "safety" of virtue are faintly reminiscent of ladies in Restoration Comedy who find it necessary to have their virtues artificially protected. Virtue thus becomes synonymous with reputation and also has little or nothing to do with inherent goodness, or real chastity.

It is also necessary to examine carefully the implications of the statement: "It is not enough that your designs, nay that your actions are intrinsically good. You must take care they shall appear so". Its meaning seems to be that evil actions and designs will also be regarded by

the world as good, provided sufficient care is taken to ensure that they appear so. The emphasis thus seems to be laid more and more on outside appearances and the "world's" reaction.

This is proved true by the next comment: "If your inside be never so beautiful you must preserve a fair outside also". Fielding goes on to talk about the rules of prudence which no man can afford to neglect. But "rules" reminds us of the artificial regulations of a hypocritical society, anxious to safeguard its ~~own~~ position. Again, this has nothing to do with real prudence or virtue. "Bedecked", "outward ornaments", "decency" — all suggest again the artificial beautification of something which is not in itself beautiful. All that is required, it seems, is that a young man should see that his actions conform to the artificial requirements of an affected and hypocritical society — whether these actions are good or bad.

The irony so far is mainly linguistic, the effect being created by the connotations of words such as "bedecked", "ornaments" and "fair outside". But it is also rhetorical for every argument is hollow and false. We may well ask: if designs and actions are intrinsically good, will they not appear so; and if, through the malice and envy of enemies, they do not, is there anything that "prudence" (in the sense we know it) and "circumspection" can do to make them appear good? Is it necessary to "bedeck" virtue (as we understand the term) with the "outward ornaments of decency and decorum" before it will appear beautiful?

The irony, moreover, is double irony, for Fielding does hold in tension two alternative interpretations of prudence. He implies that there is a kind of prudence which is necessary to all young men and which Tom needs. In this sense it seems that Fielding is arguing against Tom and

supporting the views of the world. It is true that Tom's "goodness of heart" and openness of temper are not enough to ensure his happiness. But then Fielding implies that the prudence Tom needs is not that described in the second half of the passage. It is not "worldly wisdom". Fielding has thus switched the focus and is arguing against the "world", and ridiculing the false conceptions of virtue and prudence that it accepts. If the prudence Tom needs is not "worldly wisdom" then it must be the heavenly wisdom represented by Sophia.

But the most significant aspect of Fielding's double irony is its application to the conduct and opinions of Tom himself. In order to understand fully the meaning of Tom Jones, it is important that the reader understands clearly Fielding's attitude to his hero. The moral worth of the novel depends on whether Fielding condones his hero's misdemeanors or whether there is an element of criticism; and to come to such an understanding it is necessary to examine Fielding's treatment of Tom's three sexual exploits.

Let us then start with the affair with Molly. Fielding is careful to emphasize that Tom does not make the first advances:

"And when she saw he had entirely deserted the house, she found means of throwing herself in his way, and behaved in such a manner, that the youth must have had very much or very little of the hero, if her endeavours had proved unsuccessful. In a word, she soon triumphed over the virtuous resolutions of Jones; for though she behaved at last with all decent reluctance, yet I rather choose to attribute the triumph to her, since, in fact, it was her design which succeeded.

In the conduct of this matter, I say, Molly so well played her part, that Jones attributed the conquest entirely to himself, and considered the young woman as one who had yielded to the violent attacks of his passion".¹

¹ T.J., Bk.IV, ch.vi.

It would seem, on a superficial reading, that blame is entirely laid at Molly's door and that Jones' behaviour is excused. Yet on closer analysis, we realize that double irony is so skilfully used that the apportionment of blame is quite evenly balanced. Molly behaves immodestly, but Tom's behaviour is not blameless, and in order to be sure that this is so, we need to clarify Fielding's meaning when he talks of "very much or very little of the hero". It seems as if he is referring to the frigidity of a Blifil on the one hand, and the puritanism of a Parson Adams on the other. The attitudes of both of these men to sex were clearly wrong. Fielding seems to imply, therefore, that Tom's reaction was the correct and normal one. But "hero" itself implies that Tom regarded the encounter as a contest; and so Molly's advances assume the nature of a challenge to his virility which must therefore be vindicated. In the second half of the passage the balance is maintained: Molly evidently played her part well, but Tom thought the conquest entirely due to himself.

Even more revealing is the account of Tom's encounter with Molly in the grove. It has been noticed already how Fielding sets the scene for the encounter by using a mock-sublime, romantic introduction.¹ The way is thus prepared for Tom's equally hyperbolic apostrophe of Sophia, and, as we have seen, Fielding makes use of this hyperbolic rhetoric to condition the reader's response to Tom. Imagery also plays an important role here. The most luscious picture Tom conjures up, is not one of Sophia, but of a bright Circassian beauty; in the course of his reverie he almost forgets Sophia and has to pull himself up short — "but why do I mention another woman?" Even when his thoughts revert to Sophia, he thinks only of

¹ See p. 323 above.

possession. He goes on to talk of "tender bosom", and "bright beauties", and it is quite obvious that he has been sexually inflamed. We are thus partly prepared for the infidelity which follows. The scene is comic, but the moral points are very heavily underlined.

Tom's infidelity and bestiality are further emphasized by the patterning of the scene. His mind swings over in rapid succession from Sophia in rags to the bright Circassian maiden and finally to Molly. He had intended to carve Sophia's name on a tree, but Molly turns up (she thinks the knife is intended for her) and Sophia's name remains unimmortalized, while Tom turns to more mundane considerations — he retires with Molly into the thickest part of the grove. Fielding comments:

"Some of my readers may be inclined to think this event unnatural. However, the fact is true; and perhaps may be sufficiently accounted for by suggesting, that Jones probably thought one woman better than none, and Molly as probably imagined two men better than one. Besides the before-mentioned motive assigned to the present behaviour of Jones, the reader will be likewise pleased to recollect in his favour, that he was not at this time perfect master of that wonderful power of reason, which so well enables grave and wise men to subdue their unruly passions and to decline any of these prohibited amusements".¹

The second half of the passage seems to suggest that the irony is directed, not against Jones, but the wise and grave philosophers. Yet we ought to remember Fielding's previous statement about drunkenness. We must remind ourselves also that Jones "probably" thought one woman better than none. Whenever Fielding uses the word "probably", it is to the detriment of the character whose action he appears to be excusing. Moreover, if Jones thinks one woman better than none, it implies that at this particular point love has disappeared from his mind, and lust, crude physical desire, has

¹ T.J., Bk.V, ch.x.

taken its place.

So, once more, we see the operation of double irony. Molly's immodesty is castigated but Tom's incontinence is not excused. The wise and grave philosophers are shown to be extreme and unreasonable in their attitude to sex. But Jones' animality is also highlighted. To sum up the whole scene then, it must be admitted that Fielding does not condone his hero's action. On the contrary, he makes very skilful use of double irony and imagery to balance the apportionment of praise and blame between Tom and Molly. His technique ensures that while recognizing that Tom's actions are reprehensible, our sympathy is not entirely alienated from him.

The same technique is employed by Fielding in his account of the incident at the inn at Upton, involving Mrs. Waters:

"Now it required no very blameable degree of suspicion, to imagine that Mr. Jones and his ragged companion had certain purposes in their intention, which though tolerated in some countries, connived at in others, and practised in all, are however as expressly forbidden as murder, or any other horrid vice, by that religion which is universally believed in those countries".¹

Irony once more becomes a double-barrelled weapon. There is contempt for those countries who tolerate, connive at and practise a vice which is denounced by the religion they accept. There is also a suggestion that in classing this vice with murder or "any other horrid vice", the moral codes of these countries are unnecessarily severe. Yet there is no attempt to condone the intentions of Jones and his partner. On the contrary, there is evidence in the passage to suggest that Fielding regards their motives as suspicious and immoral. As in the former case it is the lady who makes the first advances:

¹ T.J., Bk.IX, ch.iii.

"But whatever censures may be passed upon her, it is my business to relate matters of fact with veracity. Mrs. Waters had, in truth, not only a good opinion of our hero, but a very great affection for him. To speak out boldly at once, she was in love, according to the present universally received sense of that phrase, by which love is applied indiscriminately to the desirable objects of our passions, appetites, and senses, and is understood to be that preference which we give to one kind of food rather than another".¹

This is another way of saying that Mrs. Waters' new-found regard for Tom was not prompted by feelings of love, but by lust. Throughout this scene it will be observed that love is described in terms of eating and of duelling. The images of food and eating reinforce the impressions of lust.² But although Mrs. Waters seizes and retains the initiative, Jones is not altogether blameless:

"He then began to see the designs of the enemy, and indeed to feel their success. A parley now was set on foot between the parties; during which the artful fair so slyly and imperceptibly carried on her attack, that she had almost subdued the heart of our hero, before she again repaired to acts of hostility. To confess the truth, I am afraid Mr. Jones maintained a kind of Dutch defence, and treacherously delivered up the garrison, without duly weighing his allegiance to the fair Sophia. In short, no sooner had the amorous parley ended, and the lady had unmasked the royal battery, by carelessly letting her handkerchief drop from her neck, than the heart of Mr. Jones was entirely taken, and the fair conqueror enjoyed the usual fruits of her victory".³

Mrs. Waters may have been sly, but Jones' heart was almost subdued even before she resumed hostilities, and he surrendered to Mrs. Waters' temptations without duly considering his allegiance to Sophia. Had Fielding omitted all reference to Sophia we might have been able to put in

¹ T.J., Bk.IX, ch.v.

² Perhaps there is a parallel here with Adam and Eve.

³ T.J., Bk.IX, ch.v.

a plea for Jones. But Fielding deliberately mentions Sophia because he wants to rivet our attention on Tom's infidelity. Yet, Fielding's comment on his hero's conduct warns once more of the dangers of one-sided judgements and responses:

"But so matters fell out, and so I must relate them; and if any reader is shocked at their appearing unnatural, I cannot help it. I must remind such persons, that I am not writing a system, but a history, and I am not obliged to reconcile every matter to the received notions concerning truth and nature. But if this was never so easy to do, perhaps it might be prudent in me to avoid it".¹

Fielding goes on to give two extreme reactions to Tom's conduct. On the one hand are those who condemn him immediately without considering any extenuating circumstances; on the other are the more profligate who maintain that there is no such thing as virtue. Fielding implies that both views will be wrong. There is such a thing as virtue and Jones has fallen short of it and is not to be condoned. But the blame should not be laid entirely at his door, either, for the lady was as much to blame as he.

Finally, there is the most serious affair, the Lady Bellaston affair. Like Molly and Mrs. Waters before her, it is Lady Bellaston who makes the first advances:

"Jones had never less inclination to an amour than at present; but gallantry to the ladies was among his principles of honour; and he held it so much incumbent on him to accept a challenge to love, as if it had been a challenge to fight. Nay, his very love for Sophia made it necessary for him to keep well with the lady, as he made no doubt but she was capable of bringing him into the presence of the other".²

It appears on the surface that Fielding's criticisms are being directed

¹ T.J., Bk.XII, ch.x.

² T.J., Bk.XIII, ch.vii.

against the lady in the mask and that fault could not be found with Jones' conduct. We need, however, to pay closer attention to some of the words. "Gallantry" and "principles of honour" do not seem to go together, at least not in the accepted senses of the terms. We would normally expect that codes of honour would be linked with moral and religious principles and that "gallantry" would not be one of these. Tom's conception of honour is therefore seen to be mistaken. He regards the challenge to love as a challenge to fight; love, already seen in terms of eating, is now seen in terms of duelling; this conjures up the idea of conquest and the boost it gives to the masculine ego. The immorality of the affair is thus emphasized. The mere mention of Sophia's name also reminds the reader of Tom's infidelity to her. Later Fielding comments:

"Now though there are many gentlemen who very well reconcile it to their consciences to possess themselves of the whole fortune of a woman, without making her any kind of return, yet to a mind, the proprietor of which doth not deserve to be hanged, nothing is, I believe more irksome than to support love with gratitude only; especially where inclination pulls the heart a contrary way".¹

The picture of Jones presented in the earlier half of the passage is most sympathetic. The essential goodness of his heart is referred to, and the difference between him and other young men who marry for money is indicated. But Fielding changes his attitude in the second half. "Nothing", he says, "is more irksome to a good mind than to support love with gratitude only". Yet, the reader knows that Lady Bellaston's love is of such a nature that Tom would have been perfectly justified in returning it by gratitude only. The implication is that Lady Bellaston's favours are not merely gifts, but are meant to be paid for with something more than gratitude. In short,

¹ T.J., Bk.XIII, ch.ix.

Tom is being paid for "services" he renders to the lady. The affair thus assumes the character of a commercial transaction. Fielding tips the scales even more heavily against Jones, for it seems that even if he had wanted to "support" Lady Bellaston's love with gratitude only, inclination pulls the other way. Jones, in other words, is not only playing his part in a commercial arrangement, he is satisfying his lust as well.

"Such was the unhappy case of Jones; for though the virtuous love he bore to Sophia, and which left very little affection for any other woman, had been entirely out of the question, he could never have been able to have made any adequate return to the generous passion of this lady, who had indeed been once an object of desire".¹

It is no doubt reassuring to learn that Tom still bears virtuous love to Sophia, and that, in any case, he could never have been able to love Lady Bellaston completely. Nevertheless, the mention of Sophia reminds us of Tom's infidelity. Also, we realize that his interest in the affair with Lady Bellaston is commercial and not emotional.

"Though Jones saw all these discouragements on the one side, he felt his obligations pull as strongly on the other; nor did he less plainly discern the ardent passion whence those obligations proceeded, the extreme violence of which if he failed to equal, he well knew the lady would think him ungrateful; and, what is worse, he would have thought himself so. He knew the tacit consideration upon which all her favours were conferred; and as his necessity obliged him to accept them, so his honour, he concluded, forced him to pay the price. This, therefore, he resolved to do, whatever misery it cost him, and to devote himself to her, from the great principle of justice, by which the laws of some countries oblige a debtor, who is no otherwise capable of discharging his debt, to become the slave of his creditor".²

To Jones' credit, the relationship between him and Lady Bellaston is compared to that between the debtor and a creditor whose slave he becomes.

¹ T.J., Bk.XIII, ch.ix.

² T.J., Bk.XIII, ch.ix.

But this is not the whole picture. Jones does accept that in return for the money he received, he owes Lady Bellaston certain obligations. In his view, he would be guilty of ingratitude if he failed to equal the violence of the Lady's passion. The sentence which follows this is important, "what is worse, he would have thought himself so". So Tom's ethical code is such that he believes he has a duty to discharge the immoral services for which he is paid. His code of honour must be perverted indeed if he sincerely believes that it forces him to pay the price the lady demands. The word "price" itself emphasizes the commercial nature of the relationship. The most disturbing aspect of Jones' conduct, is not that he makes love to Lady Bellaston, but that he himself regards this as the fulfilment of his own share of a commercial arrangement. Double irony, therefore, while highlighting Lady Bellaston's immorality, and while indicating some of the more praiseworthy aspects of Tom's conduct, also emphasizes the sordid nature of the part he plays, and apportions him a considerable share of the blame and responsibility. The images of duelling, commerce and "service" also illustrate the nature of this love affair and the attitude of the participants towards it.

These analyses have shown how Fielding uses the technique of double irony to manipulate the reader's response to the hero. In the process Tom's complexity is revealed; we see that he is a good-natured, generous and sympathetic young man, but we also see that he possesses glaring faults and weaknesses which lead him to most serious indiscretions. It is also by means of double irony that we are made to see the ambivalence of Fielding's attitude to his hero. He applauds his more sterling qualities, but he does not condone his indiscretions; on the contrary, he subjects Tom and his conduct to the most rigorous questioning.

VI

If Tom Jones has been regarded as Fielding's most brilliant novel, it is because it is the pinnacle of his achievement as moralist and artist. Tom Jones deals with complex religious and moral problems, it examines alternative systems and it tries to find acceptable solutions. It also deals, to a much greater extent than any of Fielding's previous works, with the complexity of human nature and the need to question even the most apparently "approved" characters. Here at last is a full statement of Fielding's morality. His views on the "good man", the nature of the "good heart", the nature and role of love and marriage, and the place of religion in the life of man, are clearly defined.

But all this is done, not by explicit statement, nor by any form of didacticism, but by art. Allworthy's vulnerability to the world of appearances, the insufficiency of Tom's good heart, Blifil's malevolence, the vanity and hypocrisy of "the world" and the religious insincerity of Thwackum and Square, are all demonstrated by means of the literary techniques Fielding had so patiently and successfully developed. Were it not for these devices the moral points of the novel would have eluded us. Had these points been stated explicitly without the use of Fielding's art, they would have lost half their force and effect. The morality depends for its strength on the subtlety and effectiveness of the art. Were it not for Fielding's skilful use of double irony, we would not be sure of his attitude to Tom and we would not be aware of Mr. Allworthy's limitations. We would not know what kind of prudence Fielding believed Tom should acquire before he could become the perfectly virtuous man; in short, we would be at

a loss to discover the morality and meaning of the novel. One of the weaknesses of Amelia, Fielding's last novel, is that morality and art are not skilfully blended. Moral points are made explicitly; they are seldom demonstrated or cloaked by art. They thus lose their force, and validity. Also we respond half-heartedly to Booth and other characters, because we are never quite sure what Fielding intended our response to be.

This is not true of Tom Jones. In this novel, art and morality unite. The art has been perfected to demonstrate the morality, and the morality makes its impact because of the skilful use of art. Neither exists independently of the other. This is Fielding at his best, this is the craft of letters at its most perfect and most meaningful.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A "Moral" Approach to Amelia

I

In Amelia Fielding continues his enquiry into the nature of virtue and the motives underlying human conduct. Having shown in Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones that virtue and christian charity result from the marriage of a virtuous man with a virtuous woman, he pursues his enquiry a stage further in Amelia. He begins, this time, with a couple who are already married, and tries to show what happens when one of them lacks virtue.

Booth, the husband, believes that men do not act in accordance with their principles, but from the force of whatever passion is uppermost in their minds at the moment of action. It follows from this that "virtue" and "vice" are meaningless since men cannot help the way they act. Booth is therefore incapable of taking any steps to improve his family's condition or to put right the faults in his own character. He gradually slips into recklessness, libertinism, a reliance on fortune and general moral decline. Mrs. Booth, on the other hand, is the perfectly virtuous woman. She is an ideal wife who patiently submits to the blows of fate and gives every comfort to her husband. Whereas, in Tom Jones, Tom becomes the virtuous man by marrying Sophia, Booth has to be brought to Amelia's level by repentance and conversion to christian principles. The conversion is announced to Dr. Harrison, the clergyman, who acts as Fielding's representative in the novel. He is the centre of the book's moral positives, and it is he who on every occasion outlines the Christian attitude to honour, virtue, merit and chastity.

First of all then, Amelia is about a couple, both of whom are of equal importance in the ethical framework of the novel. This point is worth stressing, for several commentators have held the view that Amelia is the centre around whom the events of the novel turn. But unless we realize that Booth's character and conduct are just as important as Amelia's, we fail to grasp the novel's meaning. Homes Dudden, for example, says:

"No other of Fielding's characters — not Tom Jones,.... dominates the scene quite as absolutely as Amelia does.... In Amelia all the details are rigorously subordinated to the heroine. The incidents are important only for their direct or indirect bearing on Amelia's fortunes; the other characters revolve around her, and from their relation with her derive their values. Booth himself is only of consequence as Amelia's husband".¹

Yet, although it is true that the novel is named after Amelia and that one might therefore expect that the central figure would be Amelia, our experience in reading the novel does not agree with this expectation. Booth's lack of certain qualities is shown to have as profound an effect on the couple's destinies as Amelia's possession of them.

Another commentator who believes that Booth is relatively unimportant is Allan Wendt, who remarks:

"A significant aspect of Fielding's last novel — an aspect which is frequently overlooked by critics — is its title. Breaking the pattern of the classic epic which he had apparently been at pains to establish, Fielding calls the novel Amelia, after the heroine, instead of Billy Booth or The Boothiad, after the hero who begins in medias res to tell the story of his life to Miss Matthews-Dido. Moreover, the book ends with Amelia clearly stage center, and, if it does not begin with her, it begins with Booth's long story of his courtship and marriage, and hence with Amelia in her most important role. And both epigraphs which Fielding chose for his title direct at least the learned reader's attention to the author's interest in the heroine. The quotation from Horace, which may be translated, 'Thrice happy and more are

¹ F. Homes Dudden, Henry Fielding, His Life, Works and Times (Oxford, 1952), II, 819.

those held in unbreakable union', serves to emphasise Amelia's part in the marriage relationship which is the subject of the novel; the passage from Simonides, which may be translated, 'A man can possess nothing better than a good woman, nothing worse than a bad one', clearly continues the focus on Amelia. For these reasons it seems plain that to Fielding the heroine was the principal figure, and the ethical center of the novel".¹

Mr. Wendt argues strongly, but he has not succeeded in his attempt to prove that the epigraphs with which Fielding prefixes the novel point to the pre-eminence of Amelia. Surely the second statement — "a man can possess nothing better than a good woman, nothing worse than a bad one" — implies that the man, whose life may be made or marred by the goodness or wickedness of his wife, is just as important in the relationship. The first statement — "Thrice happy and more are those held in unbreakable union" — supports this view even more strongly, for the emphasis is clearly laid on "union". Moreover, we must recall that Fielding's first sentence in the novel reads — "The various accidents which befel a very worthy couple, after their uniting in the state of matrimony, will be the subject of the following history". This, once more, surely points to the centrality not of a single person, but of a couple.

It is important to establish who is at the centre of the events of the novel, because this affects the accuracy of our assessment of its meaning. If we feel that the novel is about the qualities of a good wife, or about "heroic, Job-like suffering" in the face of adverse fatality, then clearly Amelia is at the centre. But if we think that the novel not only celebrates the virtues of a model wife, but also continues Fielding's enquiry into the nature of moral virtue, then clearly Booth is as important as Amelia. Homes Dudden misses the moral points of the novel; and Allan Wendt, while seeing

¹ Allan Wendt, "The Naked Virtue of Amelia," ELH, XXVII (1960), 131.

greater depth and complexity in it than usually supposed, offers an interpretation which makes Booth himself unimportant. Wendt bases his case on the similarity between Amelia's suffering and Job's, although there is little evidence in the novel that Fielding had the book of Job in mind while writing it.

Wendt says:

"Like Job, Amelia faces afflictions that are unjust, inappropriate to her merit. Like Job, she is driven to despair and doubt — doubt of God, doubt of the moral order of the world. Her own husband throughout most of the book, acts like one of Job's false friends, tempting her with the dangerous doctrine that chance or Fortune rules the world. Some of the specific problems posed by the two stories are the same: Job's friends offer arguments familiar in the eighteenth Century when they insist piously that Job's afflictions are proof of his wickedness; Amelia's friends — and her wicked sister — are quick to view her troubles as proof of her iniquities. Yet Job and Amelia maintain, throughout most of their histories, a steadfast belief in their innocence and purity".¹

One is bound to question Wendt's comparison. It seems absurd to reduce the substantial Billy Booth to the level of one of Amelia's false friends. Booth cannot even be regarded as a false friend; it is true that his actions cause much unhappiness; but the quality of his love for Amelia cannot be in doubt. Again, when Job's friends express the view that his sufferings are a punishment for his wickedness, they do genuinely and piously mean this. When Amelia's sister and friends accuse her of wickedness they do so purely out of spite. It is difficult to sustain the comparison. Moreover, such a comparison does a disservice to Fielding, for, besides laying the emphasis on Amelia, absolving Booth of all responsibility, and lessening his importance in the ethical framework, it would put the responsibility for the couple's sufferings on Fortune. (Wendt does regard

¹ Wendt, p.134.

Fortune's role in the novel as "God's operative will on earth"). Yet, it is clear from Fielding's own comments, that Fortune must not be seen as a driving force in the novel, although Wendt thinks it is:

"Still, in the course of the 'history' which is presented, Fortune seems to play a dominant role, and, until the end, almost always on the side of evil. Fortune sends Booth to bed with Miss Matthews, as it had twice before sent him into the battles where he received his wounds".¹

Later he says:

"The interpretative problem posed by these situations can be resolved by reference to the book of Job, for Fortune in Amelia is not the goddess chance, but the direct operative factor of God's will on earth. Just as Satan is privileged in the Job story to test the hero with his utmost malice, Fortune in Amelia tries the heroine to the limits of its malicious ability".²

Yet, consider the implications of Wendt's claims. To regard Amelia as a patient, Job-like sufferer is to lay the entire blame for her mishaps on Fortune — "the operative factor of God's will on earth" — and to minimize the influence and direct consequences of Booth's conduct. But to stress the role of Fortune is to ignore Booth's potentiality for influencing the course of his family's destiny. Moreover such an interpretation does not agree with our experience in reading the novel. We do not really feel the predominance of Fortune. We do not really feel that Booth was sent to Miss Matthew's bed by Fortune; we do not feel that Fortune is the operative factor of God's will on earth, or that God allows Satan, represented here by Fortune, to tempt Amelia in order to test her faith and powers of endurance; nor do we feel that when Amelia finally breaks down in despair she casts doubts on God's providence. The more we liken Amelia to Job,

¹ Wendt, p.135.

² Wendt, p.136.

the more surely do we exaggerate Fortune's role and minimize Booth's. This is to put Amelia in the centre and Booth in the periphery, whereas they should both be in the centre.

The consequence of Wendt's "Job" theory is that he feels compelled to invent "transgressions" which Amelia, like Job, commits. Yet, in reading the novel we never seem to be aware that Amelia commits any "transgressions". It is worth looking into these "transgressions" carefully. The first supposedly occurs when Amelia tells Dr. Harrison the truth about Colonel James and says:

"Indeed, my dear Sir, I begin to be entirely sick of it', cries Amelia: 'for sure all mankind almost are villains in their hearts'. 'Fie, child', cries the doctor, 'Do not make a conclusion so much to the dishonour of the great creator. The nature of man is far from being in itself evil; it abounds with benevolence, charity, and pity, coveting praise and honour, and shunning shame and disgrace. Bad education, bad habits, and bad customs, debauch our nature, and drive it headlong as it were into vice'.¹

This is familiar "Fielding" doctrine; it is an idealistic account of man's potential goodness. But Fielding the magistrate knew, more than most people, that man in reality at times fell short of the standards he was capable of attaining. It is a pessimistic view, admittedly, but it is fundamentally true. Wendt, therefore, makes a gross exaggeration when he suggests that Amelia at this stage commits a "transgression" and casts doubts on God's providence. The next "transgression", he thinks, occurs when Amelia receives a letter written by Colonel James intimating that Booth is spending the evening with Miss Matthews instead of Amelia who had gone to such lengths to prepare a sumptuous repast. "'Mention him no more', cries Amelia, 'your papa is, — indeed he is a wicked man. He cares not

¹ Amelia, Bk.IX, ch.v.

for any of us'".

Wendt thereon comments:

"Amelia has long known about Booth's original infidelity, the reader finds out later, and long ago forgiven him. But the news that the affair has begun again is almost too much for her to bear. 'Why did I bring these little wretches into the world?'.....

Here Amelia once more lost her faith in the providential arrangement of the universe...."¹

We must remember, however, that at this particular moment Amelia has received news, not only of the reopening of the affair with Miss Matthews, but also of the impending duel in which her husband may well be killed, thus precipitating the ruin of herself and her children. In these circumstances Amelia may, perhaps, be excused for contemplating the possibility of long periods of hardship for herself and her family. According to Wendt, Amelia should have resigned herself to God's providence and taken the news calmly! Amelia would surely have seemed less of a human being had she done so. If we criticize Amelia at all it is not because she reacts emotionally to events, but because she takes things too calmly. A word of reproof to Booth might have altered the course of events. It is difficult to see how Amelia can be guilty of any of the "transgressions" for which Wendt blames her; it is equally difficult to take her seriously as a "Job".

There is another interpretation, closely related to this, which also lays the emphasis on Amelia, and suggests that she was meant to be a patient and obedient wife, because this was the eighteenth-century conception of wifehood. The most outspoken exponent of this view is A.R. Towers,² who claims that Amelia is about marriage, although he acknowledges that it is

¹ Wendt, p.138.

² A.R. Towers, "Amelia and the State of Matrimony", RES, V (New Series, 1954), 144.

about many other things besides. Towers thinks that Fielding's treatment of the marriage theme reflects eighteenth-century thinking on the subject.

Writers earlier in the century sought to glorify the marriage state as a reaction to the immoral ethos of the Restoration period. They were particularly anxious to stress the need for absolute obedience on the part of the wife. It is this vein of thinking which, Towers believes, shows itself in Amelia. This is why Amelia is so passive, so obedient and so devoted. Marriage is, of course, one of the most important themes treated in the novel; and Amelia is, without question, passive, obedient and devoted. Yet we have little evidence for believing that Fielding was merely reflecting eighteenth-century notions of the ideal wife. Amelia is a unique creation, perhaps a portrayal of Charlotte Fielding, but more probably a realization of Fielding's own ideals of womanhood, an ideal which may be quite independent of the dicta of the morality books. It is also quite possible that Amelia is not meant to be an absolute ideal, and that the reader is called upon at times to react critically towards her unquestioning passivity. We shall see later whether this is borne out.

The lesson to be learned from all this is that we must not concentrate our attention solely on Amelia to the virtual exclusion of Booth. The novel is about the fortunes of a married couple, and therefore the consequences of Booth's actions are just as important and as relevant as Amelia's "heroic Job-like endurance in the face of adverse fatality". As far as interpretation of the novel is concerned, therefore, it seems that George Sherburn comes nearest the truth when he suggests that in Amelia Fielding is a novelist of many intentions.¹ The novel is not only about marriage and endurance, it

¹ George Sherburn, "Fielding's Amelia: an Interpretation", ELH, III (1936), 1-14.

is also about virtue and religion. In it the fortunes of the patient, virtuous wife, and the husband who lacks virtue because he lacks religion, are set against a national background of corruption and vice. This view seems to be vindicated by Fielding's remarks in his first chapter. He says:

"But if men are sometimes guilty of laying improper blame on this imaginary being, they are altogether as apt to make her amends, by ascribing to her honours which she as little deserves. To retrieve the ill consequences of a foolish conduct, and by struggling manfully with distress to subdue it, is one of the noblest efforts of wisdom and virtue".¹

There, in brief, is the message of the novel if we are looking for one. Fielding absolves Fortune of all responsibility for the Booths' misfortunes and lays the blame on the husband for failing to rouse himself and struggle manfully to retrieve "the ill consequences" of his "foolish conduct". Booth plunges headlong into folly and fails to act to extricate himself from the consequences because he lacks virtue and does not subscribe to sound religious principles. It is the purpose of the novel to demonstrate his error and show him at the end converted to Christianity and safely placed once more on the paths of virtue and religion.

¹ Amelia, Bk.I, ch.i.

II

This novel, like the preceding two, can be firmly placed within the context of the intellectual ferment of the time. Here, as in Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews, Fielding, like many of his contemporaries, is conducting an enquiry into the nature of virtue and honour; and he is asking whether these can exist independently of religion or religious principles. Booth has lapsed in his religious observances; he does not believe that there is any correlation between religious principles and men's actions. The inference to be drawn from this is, that, according to Booth, virtue and vice are purely accidental. Indeed, it is irrelevant to make a distinction between the two. It is also unrealistic to demand that men behave virtuously, for they cannot help their conduct. Booth's problem is stated several times in the novel. After he has been listening to Robinson, in the prison, we are told:

"The sentiments which he Robinson had just declared very nearly coincided with those of Mr. Booth; this gentleman was what they call a freethinker; that is to say, a deist, or, perhaps, an atheist; for though he did not absolutely deny the existence of a God; yet he entirely denied his providence. A doctrine which if it is not downright atheism, hath a direct tendency towards it; and, as Dr. Clarke observes, may soon be driven into it. And as to Mr. Booth, though he was in his heart an extreme well-wisher to religion (for he was an honest man) yet his notions of it were very slight and uncertain. To say truth, he was in the wavering condition so finely described by Claudian,

labefacta cadebat

~~Religio, causaeque viam non sponte sequebar
 Alterius, vacuo (quae) currere sensus motu.
 Affirmat: magnamque novas per inana figuras
 Fortuna, non arte, regi; quae numina sensu
 Ambiguo, vel nulla putat, vel nascia nostri~~

This translated gives:

"Then in turn my belief in God was weakened and failed, and even against my own will I embraced the tenets of that other

philosophy which teaches that atoms drift in perpetual motion and that new forms throughout the vast void are shaped by chance and not by design — that philosophy which believes in God in an ambiguous sense, or holds that there be no Gods, or that they are careless of our doings".¹

Booth, it seems, has lost all faith in a divine providence. He is therefore inclined to think that the world is either ruled by chance, the atoms comprising it "drifting in purposeless motion", or that men's actions are regulated by forces inherent in their nature, over which neither God, nor they themselves have any control. He is thus driven to accept two philosophies which absolve both God and man from direct responsibility for events on earth. First, he takes the view that the power that rules the world is Fortune, and secondly he feels that men act, not in accordance with any fixed principles, but under the impulsion of a predominant or ruling passion.

Booth states his belief in the doctrine of the ruling passion several times. In the account of his conversation with Robinson we read:

"He Booth answered him, therefore, with great courtesy, as indeed he was of a very good and gentle disposition, and, after expressing a civil surprise at meeting him there, declared himself to be of the same opinion with regard to the necessity of human actions; adding, however, that he did not believe that men were under any blind impulse or direction of fate; but that every man acted merely from the force of that passion which was uppermost in his mind, and could do no otherwise".²

When he finds himself in prison a second time Booth engages in conversation with an old gentleman on the virtues of stoicism. He agrees that stoicism is an excellent philosophy, but he doubts "its efficacy in practice" because, in his view, men never act in accordance with their

¹ Translated by Platnauer for the Loeb Classical Library.

² Amelia, Bk.I, ch.iii.

principles:

"....We reason from our heads, but act from our hearts:

————— Video meliora, proboque;
Deteriora sequor.¹

Nothing can differ more widely than wise men and fools in their estimation of things; but, as both act from their uppermost passion, they both often act alike".²

Booth again repeats his belief during a discussion with Amelia on the fortunes of Bob Bound in which Amelia expresses the need for compassion and sympathy with the distresses of others:

"'I remember,' cries Amelia, 'a sentiment of Dr. Harrison's, which he told me was in some Latin book: I am a man myself, and my heart is interested in whatever can befall the rest of mankind. That is the sentiment of a good man, and whoever thinks otherwise is a bad one'.

'I have often told you, my dear Emily,' cries Booth 'that all men, as well the best as the worst, act alike from the principle of self-love. Where benevolence therefore is the uppermost passion, self-love directs you to gratify it by doing good, and by relieving the distresses of others; for they are then in reality your own. But where ambition, avarice, pride, or any other passion governs the man, and keeps his benevolence down, the miseries of all other men affect him no more than they would a stock or a stone. And thus the man and his statue have often the same degree of feeling or compassion'.

'I have often wished, my dear,' cries Amelia, 'to hear you converse with Dr. Harrison on this subject; for I am sure he would convince you, though I can't, that there are really such things as religion and virtue'".³

Finally towards the end of the novel, when Booth's conversion to Christianity is announced, we find this:

"My chief doubt was founded on this, that, as men appeared to me to act entirely from their passions, their actions could have neither merit nor demerit".⁴

¹ "I see and approve the better: I follow the worse".

² Amelia, Bk.VIII, ch.x.

³ Amelia, Bk.X, ch.ix.

⁴ Amelia, Bk.XII, ch.v.

This, then, was the crux of the matter. The theory of the ruling passion assumed that men had no control over their actions, whether good or bad. They did not act in accordance with any principles, religious or otherwise, but were impelled in whatever direction their ruling passion pointed. One could not, therefore, claim that God's commandments, which formed the basis of Christian teaching, had any effect on men's actions. Good actions sprang neither from inherent benevolence nor from a desire to obey God's commands. Conversely wicked actions did not necessarily stem from a malevolent disposition. This being accepted, the inference can be drawn that actions in themselves had neither merit nor demerit. It was thus meaningless to talk about virtue; and virtue and honour, in so far as they existed, were, in fact, quite independent of religion.

In order to understand Booth's position fully it is necessary to look at the doctrine of the ruling passion in greater detail. This doctrine, which was a commonplace in the early eighteenth century, was given its most popular expression by Pope in The Essay on Man. Pope is reputed to have derived his ideas from Bolingbroke, but the doctrine had been exhaustively treated earlier by Mandeville, and still earlier by the French philosopher Pierre Bayle. In fact it seems that the aspects of the theory treated in Amelia derive not from Pope and Bolingbroke, but from Mandeville and Bayle. Both of these men were concerned with the problem of virtue and religion, a problem which taxed the finest intellects of the age. In an attempt to resolve it the Deists as we have seen had upheld that virtue was antecedent to religion. Shaftesbury had claimed that by consulting his own nature which was in tune with the beauty and harmony of the universe, man could lead a virtuous life. Others, like Wollaston and Tindal, had suggested

that through the application of reason man could discover what his duty was and could then go on to do it. The Latitudinarians, while conceding that virtue was antecedent to religion, stressed the need for revelation, and, therefore, religion to ensure that men kept to the paths of virtue; and the extreme High Church divines asserted that man was by nature corrupt, and that virtue was not inherent in his nature, but was a mode of divine grace vouchsafed to those who affirmed their belief in God as revealed through Christ and the prophets. Now it was the turn of the sceptics — Hobbes, Mandeville and Bayle — to question whether there was any such thing as virtue, and to suggest that virtue was neither inherent in man's nature, nor would it result from the operation of man's reason; also, it did not stem from man's desire to bring his actions into line with religious or philosophical principles. Men's actions were, in fact, determined by whatever passions happened to be uppermost at the time of action.

Pierre Bayle was born in France, of Huguenot stock, in 1647, but was forced to flee the country because of the religious intolerance which characterized France for most of the seventeenth century. He spent the rest of his life in Holland where he was, for a time, Professor of History and Philosophy at one of the liberal institutions in Rotterdam, and he devoted most of his time to writing. His most important work was The Historical Dictionary, an encyclopaedia of knowledge, but also a repository of Bayle's views on history, philosophy and religion. For our purpose, however, the relevant work is his Miscellaneous Reflections on a Comet, which appeared in 1680. The title of the work might lead the reader to suppose that Bayle's intention was to explode popular superstitions about comets, and offer scientific explanations for these phenomena instead. It

soon becomes apparent, however, that Bayle was not interested in Comets, but in superstition, especially superstitions connected with religion. He takes great care, and goes to extreme lengths to explain miracles by reference to natural phenomena. He then devotes his energies to a scathing denunciation of idolaters of all sorts, and stresses that atheists and freethinkers are better than idolaters.¹

As the work progresses it begins to look more and more like an apology for atheism or a manifesto for a society of atheists. Bayle anticipates the objection that Christians exist who are not idolaters and who lead virtuous lives while holding on to the soundest Christian principles. His reply is such that it now becomes clear that he is arguing, not only against idolaters, but against Christian principles and in favour of atheism. It is now that he states the doctrine of the ruling passion, thus divorcing men's actions from the principles of Christianity from which they are supposed to spring.

Experience has shown, says Bayle, that men never act in accordance with their principles. There is always a gap between profession and practice. Awareness of God's existence neither corrects vicious inclinations, nor can good actions be attributed to it. If we consider the idea of a Christian and the qualities he is supposed to have, we might be led to think that he vies with his fellow-Christians in fulfilling God's commands. But when we actually see him, we are quickly compelled to change our opinion:

"You may call Man a reasonable Creature, as long as you please: still it's true, he hardly ever acts by fixt principles. In matters of speculation, he's so far Master as not to infer wrong Consequences; for here he errs much more thro a Facility in admitting Principles

¹ Pierre Bayle, Miscellaneous Reflections on a Comet, Translated from the French (1708), I, 258-9.

which are false, than in drawing false Conclusions. But the case is quite otherwise, where the Question is concerning Morality. Giving seldom or never into false Principles, his Conscience ever retaining the ideas of natural Equity, he yet almost always turns in favour of his inordinate affections".¹

Bayle thus sees a discrepancy which ought to be accounted for; and he does so in this way:

"Here's the true way of unfolding the Mystery. When one compares the Practice of a Man pretending to Religion, with the general Idea conceiv'd of such a Man's Manners, 'tis surprizing not to find the least conformity between 'em. The general Idea represents a Man, who, believing a God, a Heaven, and a Hell, cleaves to what he knows most pleasing to him, and shuns what he thinks displeasing. But the Man's life shews, he takes the quite contrary Cause. Wou'd you know the Cause of this Contradiction? 'Tis this; the Person is not determin'd to one Action rather than another, by the general Notices of Right or Wrong, but by his private judgement on the matter of the present Action. Now this private judgement may happen to suite with the general Ideas of his Duty, but for the most part 'tis otherwise. He almost always follows the reigning Passion of his Soul, the Bias of his Constitution, the Force of inveterate Habits, and his Taste and Tenderness for some objects more than others. The Poet who makes Medea say, I see and approve the Good, but the Evil I do, represents the difference exactly, between the light of Conscience, and the particular Judgement determining our Practice".²

Bayle at this stage inserts the quotation from Ovid which Mandeville also copies in his work and which Fielding quotes in Amelia.³

But although his Miscellaneous Reflections sounds like an apology for atheism, Bayle was neither an atheist, nor a Deist. He was a profoundly religious man, whose main intention was to make a plea for greater religious toleration. Although he postulated the theory of the ruling passion, he did believe in virtue as an ideal to which every human being ought to aspire.

¹ Bayle, I, 274.

² Bayle, I, 272.

³ Video Meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.

In his view, even the passions could be used for beneficial purposes. Bayle asserted, as Pope was to several decades later, that these irrational instincts were the basis of social order, the result of a providential order which saves us from the anarchy into which they might have precipitated us; human beings too, care greatly for their reputations and are much more concerned at the approval or disapproval which greets their actions. Bayle also believed that there was an innate moral sense in man, and that even if his abilities to discover moral truth was overwhelmed in some men by the force of irrational passion, yet a few men, with superior endowments, were capable of rising above the common lot, and following its precepts.

Bayle's ultimate conclusion, therefore, is not as pessimistic as his detailed defence of atheism would have led one to suppose. If he is, in the end, a sceptic, he is, at least, a cautious and a reasonable one. Bernard de Mandeville on the other hand is the sceptic par excellence. It is clear that his Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Public Benefits, owes a great deal to Bayle's Reflections.

Mandeville's work, which was published in 1714, followed Bayle's very closely, often merely paraphrasing it. But Bayle's final cautious optimism is gone. Instead, Mandeville pushes his arguments to their most absurdly pessimistic conclusions. We must also recall that Shaftesbury's Characteristics of Men, Manners and Opinions had been published in 1711. The main theme developed in that work was that man was innately virtuous and that he was in harmony with an order revealed in the world of nature and in himself. It is quite possible that Mandeville's work was a reaction against Shaftesbury's optimism; for he, like Hobbes, set out to demonstrate that man was corrupt

by nature, and that even his supposedly civilized actions were dictated by political rather than by social or religious considerations.¹

Mandeville's Fable of the Bees is a short poem in doggerel verse about a collection of bees who built up a flourishing organisation. But the paradox of their situation was that they succeeded precisely because each ministered to his or her private vice. The avaricious strove to enrich themselves even more; lawyers falsified cases in order to secure their clients' acquittal and increase the scope of their practices; Locksmiths were prosperous because thieves abounded; the vanity of certain classes led to the production of luxurious articles which kept a large section of the community in permanent employment; and the spendthrift put more money into circulation and thus helped to stimulate business activity. In short, the private vice of each was conducive to the public good. Yet when they raised an uproar and called for honesty, each became virtuous, and the once prosperous community declined.

Mandeville has been accused of being a sceptic, a cynic and an atheist. He, himself, claimed that he believed in virtue but merely represented the state of things as they appeared to him. The truth is that The Fable of the Bees is one of the most brilliantly ironic works produced in the eighteenth century, and underneath the layers of its irony there is scope for several possible interpretations.² Both in this work and in the later Origin of Honour and the Use of Christianity in War, Mandeville presents

¹ See John Hobbes, The Leviathan, Everyman Edition (1953), p.65. He had claimed that the life of man was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Life was, in fact, a perpetual state of war in which only the fittest survived. Man did not act according to religious principles but from the principles of self-love.

² See Irwin Primer, ed. The Fable of the Bees, by Bernard de Mandeville (New York, 1962), p.4.

himself as the realist who has seen through the idealism of philosophers and theologians to the real nature of society and the way in which it works. First, he tries to convince us that he himself believes in virtue but that he is in duty bound to present society as it really is. One cannot refute such a claim. Secondly, he points out that it is a fact that so many of the vices we condemn are conducive to sound economic health, and many of the virtues we applaud would lead to economic decline. And, thirdly, he implies that the presence of certain vices in society is essential for prosperity and conducive to the public good. Vice must not always be condemned nor must virtue be always applauded. Mandeville was, in effect, bringing his very keen intelligence to bear on the problem of a Christian society. He was asking whether it was possible to create a society which conformed to the principles of religion and philosophy and still remained prosperous and orderly, and he came to the conclusion that economic theory and religious teaching were incompatible. The profit-motive may be condemned by moralists, but it is essential for the solvency of any large economic unit, and, therefore, it is folly to continue denouncing avarice or the urge to make ever-increasing profits. Vanity and extravagance, too, may be unethical, but they help to create demand and, therefore, to keep employment and exports high.

Yet, for Mandeville, the problem was not just economic, it was pre-eminently a moral one, and so he put back into the melting-pot the whole question of virtue and religion. Did men, he seemed to ask, act in accordance with their principles or with some other motive in mind? Was it desirable that they should act in accordance with such principles? Was there such a thing as virtue and did it bear any relation to religion?

The answers to these questions were given by Mandeville in two works: first, in a series of remarks entitled An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue, written ostensibly to clarify difficulties and ambiguities in the poem, but in reality a full exposition of Mandeville's philosophy; and, second, in The Origin of Honour and the Use of Christianity in War. He rejected the view, as Bayle had done before him, that human beings acted according to the dictates of their reason and in accordance with their principles. Men's actions demonstrated that they were swayed by their passions, and, in particular, by whatever passion happened to be uppermost at the time of action:

"All Human Creatures are sway'd and wholly govern'd by their Passions, whatever fine Notions we may flatter our Selves with; even those who act suitably to their Knowledge, and strictly follow the Dictates of their Reason, are not less compell'd so to do by some Passion or other, that sets them to work, than others, who bid Defiance and act contrary to Both, and whom we call Slaves to their Passions".¹

Mandeville is contending, as Booth later contends in discussion with Amelia and Dr. Harrison, that no action can be judged worthy of merit or demerit since even the most benevolent and altruistic actions can be shown to derive, not from conscious motive or religious principles, but from the interplay of the passions. When a man performs good acts it is because the passion predominant at the time of action is benevolence, and, as Booth points out to Amelia, self-love may direct the person to gratify it by doing good to others. Everyone therefore is inclined to follow the bent of his ruling passion.

Yet if this is accepted, the question arises, whence come our ideas of virtue and vice? Mandeville, in a passage which reminds us of Hobbes, asserts

¹ Bernard de Mandeville, An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War (1732), p.31.

that it is a trick of politicians to keep man in subjection. If anarchy must not prevail, man must somehow be prevented from the indiscriminate gratification of his appetites. Having no innate moral sense, and being unlikely to be deterred by religious considerations, he leaves the politician with only one weapon -- the weapon of flattery. If man can be persuaded that he is superior to animals, and that the only way in which he can show this superiority is by curbing his appetites, then he can be subdued. So, what men call virtue, is no more than the successful curbing of the appetites for political ends:

"They thoroughly examin'd all the Strength and Frailties of our Nature, and observing that none were either so savage as not to be charm'd with Praise, or so despicable as patiently to bear Contempt, justly concluded, that Flattery must be the most powerful Argument that cou'd be used to Human Creatures. Making use of this bewitching Engine, they extoll'd the excellency of our Nature above other Animals, and setting forth with unbounded praises the Wonders of our Sagacity and vastness of Understanding, bestow'd a thousand Encomiums on the Rationality of our Souls, by the help of which we were capable of performing the most noble Achievements".¹

Later Mandeville adds:

"It is visible then that it was not any Heathen Religion or other Idolatrous Superstition, that first put Man upon crossing his Appetites and subduing his dearest Inclinations, but the skilful Management of wary Politicians; and the nearer we search into human Nature, the more we shall be convinc'd that the Moral Virtues are the Political Offspring which Flattery begot upon Pride".²

It follows that virtue bears no relation to religion or philosophical principles. Man is by nature corrupt, and acts according to the dictates of his passions.

The weakness of Mandeville's position is his failure to realize that,

¹ Mandeville, An Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of Moral Virtue (1723), I, 29.

² *ibid.*, I, 37.

although men may be initially impelled by their passions, and although religious principles may play little part initially in determining the motives for their actions, yet these passions can be checked and kept within proper bounds, not only by flattery, but by the sanctions of revealed religion. Moreover, man does have a proper sense of right and wrong, and religion, by appealing to this sense, can act as a counterweight to the force of the passions and ensure that man remains virtuous. Virtue, in other words, does have some connection with religious principles.

Whenever Booth refers to the ruling passion, it is clear that it is Mandeville's version of the doctrine that he has in mind, although he himself on one occasion refutes Mandeville. This happens during a discussion with Miss Matthews in which Booth points to Bob Bound as proof of the validity of the theory of the ruling passion, for Bound could not act from any motive of virtue and religion. Miss Matthews expresses her agreement with the doctrines and informs Booth that this has always been her view ever since she read the works of Mandeville.

"'Pardon me, Madam', answered Booth, 'I hope you do not agree with Mandeville neither, who hath represented human nature in a picture of the highest deformity. He hath left out of his system the best passion which the mind can possess, and attempts to derive the effects or energies of that passion from the base impulses of pride or fear. Whereas it is as certain that love exists in the mind of man, as that its opposite hatred doth; and the same reasons will equally prove the existence of the one as the existence of the other'".¹

It may well be that Mandeville leaves out the passion of love from his system, but this does not by itself destroy the validity of his theory that man acts always from the force of his passions. This is the main burden of Mandeville's works and Booth accepts it. He should have realized that

¹ Amelia, Bk.III, ch.v.

whether the passion of love was acknowledged or not, the doctrine of the ruling passion by itself represents man in "a state of the highest deformity", since it presents him as a being entirely governed by irrational passions and appetites, and completely incapable of being swayed by reason, religion or philosophy.

III

Once the doctrine of the ruling passion is accepted the way is prepared for doubts to be cast on the role of providence in the direction of the world's affairs. If men's actions are dictated by the force of their predominant passions, it not only means that they cannot influence their destinies, but that providence cannot do much about it either. Apparently, Booth accepts this view, and this is the point that Fielding makes when communicating to the reader the nature of Booth's beliefs at the beginning of the novel. Booth has lost all faith in the providential order of the world and now clearly believes that the power, if any, which directs man's destinies is chance or Fortune. Fortune features prominently in the novel, but it does not seem to enjoy the dominance that Booth attributes to it. For a correct assessment of the novel's meaning it is important to consider the role that Fortune plays.

Evidently, Fielding himself believes that Fortune is very often wrongly blamed for the consequences men bring upon themselves by their thoughtless actions. Yet Booth has not attained the spiritual condition which will make it possible for him to accept responsibility for the consequences of his own actions. In the course of the novel, therefore, he states his belief in the dominance of Fortune and several times lays the blame for his misfortunes at

Fortune's door. But Fielding, on whose judgement we surely ought to rely is of another opinion. In the first chapter of the novel he writes:

"The distresses which they waded through were some of them so exquisite, and the incidents which produced these so extraordinary, that they seemed to require not only the utmost malice, but the utmost invention which superstition hath ever attributed to Fortune; though whether any such being interfered in the case, or, indeed, whether there be any such being in the Universe, is a matter which I by no means presume to determine in the affirmative. To speak a bold truth, I am, after much mature deliberation, inclined to suspect, that the public voice hath, in all ages, done much injustice to Fortune, and hath convicted her of many facts in which she had not the least concern. I question much, whether we may not, by natural means, account for the success of knaves, the calamities of fools, with all the miseries in which men of sense sometimes involve themselves, by quitting the directions of Prudence, and following the blind guidance of a predominant passion; in short, for all the ordinary phenomena which are imputed to Fortune; whom, perhaps men accuse with no less absurdity in life, than a bad player complains of ill-luck at the game of Chess".¹

Fielding's views could not have been more clearly stated. Chance, accident of Fortune, call it what you will, plays a much less important role in life than man's own deliberate actions stemming from his character and his will. Even when his own foolish conduct has led him into misery and degradation, man can still overcome the consequences by his own exertions; he can turn the tide himself without waiting for Fortune to lend a helping hand. No matter, therefore, how many times Fortune is referred to in the novel, the reader must realize that it is Fielding's considered view that it should not be held responsible for the turn of events.

Booth not only attributes the blame for his mishaps to Fortune, he seems to depend on it to relieve him from his distresses, and carries this to the extent of trusting to the gaming table. When he does so Fielding comments:

"Booth and his friends were partners, and had at first some success; but Fortune, according to her usual conduct, soon shifted about, and persecuted Booth with such malice, that

¹ Amelia, Bk.I, ch.i.

in about two hours he was stripped of all the gold in his pocket, which amounted to twelve guineas, being more than half the cash which he was at that time worth".

Later, Fielding adds:

"It cannot be wondered, therefore, that Fortune was on their side, the winners for, however she may be reported to favour fools, she never, I believe, shows them any countenance when they engage to play with Knaves".¹

This again makes Fielding's position perfectly clear. Booth and his friends can only be regarded as fools if it is assumed that they bear the responsibility for their present action. Fortune is not to blame.

Yet one of the reasons why critics, such as Allan Wendt, believe that Fortune plays a predominant part in guiding the destinies of the Booths, is that Fielding, himself, on a number of occasions, seems to lay some blame on Fortune for their sufferings. Indeed, in his treatment of the theme of Fortune, he seems to behave with strange inconsistency. When, for instance, Booth gains his first release from prison, Fielding says:

"He was just delivered from a prison, and in the possession of his beloved wife and children; and (which might be imagined greatly to augment his joy) fortune had done all this for him within an hour, without giving him the least warning or reasonable expectation of this strange reverse in his circumstances".²

Fielding surely could not be suggesting that Fortune was responsible for Booth's release? Miss Matthews procures it deliberately in order to secure her own sinister ends. Perhaps Fielding wants to suggest that the circumstances appeared to Booth in that light. At the end of the novel, however, there is another remark on Fortune which is much less easily explained:

¹ Amelia, Bk.X, ch.v.

² Amelia, Bk.IV, ch.iii.

"As to Booth, and Amelia, Fortune seems to have made them large amends for the tricks she played them in their youth".

Is not Fielding finally admitting the responsibility of Fortune for the misery that Booth and Amelia had to endure? It may be that, once more, Fielding simply implies that this was the light in which the events appeared to the world. It may even be a mistake. Whatever it is, it runs counter to our experience in reading the novel and, if true, it would have the effect of negating everything that Fielding has so far demonstrated. If Booth must be shown the error of his ways, then it is crucial that he be brought to accept responsibility for the consequences of his own actions.

Booth's subscription to the dubious doctrines of Mandeville has two broad consequences. First, it leads to a denial of the existence of virtue and religion, and secondly it leads to a reliance on Fortune.

The result of Booth's rejection of virtue and religion can be seen in his own faults of character; for Fielding wishes to stress that Booth lacks virtue because he is not a Christian. Now it is clear that Booth has many admirable qualities which must not be overlooked; but it is equally important not to gloss over his glaring defects, otherwise, the point of the novel is missed. Yet most critics, while recognizing Booth's virtues, have no more than a passing comment for his vices. This, it seems, is the main defect of George Sherburn's otherwise excellent essay. He says:

"Booth acts almost always from benevolent instincts — not like most of his friends from self-interest only; he is, all told, a devoted husband; and all his faults (which are not so many) are those of the eighteenth-century gentleman. No man of his station (except Sir Charles Grandison) could have refused the overtures of Miss Matthews in Newgate. The Lady, furthermore, plies him with rack-punch before he yields; and once out of Newgate he forsakes her as promptly as Aeneas does Dido. He is arrested three times; but once it is through the malice of his Wiltshire neighbours who have lied about him to Dr. Harrison".¹

¹ Sherburn, op.cit.,p.5.

Booth's faults may not be many, but they are serious and lead to grave consequences. To suggest that every eighteenth-century gentleman had such faults is beside the point. It does not alter the fact that Booth lacks virtue and must acquire religious principles. Allan Wendt, for his part, dismisses Booth's faults as "bad habits", the result of bad education which further reading would doubtless correct:

"His bad habits, moreover, are easy to see — gambling is one of them and the habit of thinking deistically and behaving as if this life were all he had to worry about was another".¹

But Booth's faults are not just bad habits; they stem from his endorsement of shaky philosophical principles leading to his rejection of religion and virtue. Yet Homes Dudden hardly recognizes any faults at all. Not only does he emphasize Booth's sterling qualities, he also sees a strong similarity between Booth and Tom Jones:

"'Billy' Booth may, indeed, be regarded as a more mature Tom Jones — a Tom Jones whom added years, experience of marriage with the woman of his choice, and parental responsibilities, had unhappily failed to cure of his flightiness and folly".²

It is true that Booth is a development of Tom Jones, but he is a development in the wrong direction. He lacks certain qualities which Tom possessed. Tom was not perfectly virtuous because he lacked Sophia (heavenly wisdom) but he was fundamentally a Christian, and his generosity of heart was much more apparent than Booth's. His errors, moreover, were almost entirely sexual. Booth, on the other hand, lacks virtue because he is not a Christian, and his errors are not only sexual.

Of course, one must acknowledge Booth's good qualities. He is,

¹ Wendt, op.cit., p.139.

² Homes Dudden, op.cit., II, p. 824.

generally speaking, a generous and benevolent man, and whenever an occasion arises, he tries to relieve his friends' misery as far as he possibly can. He is also a devoted father, and, in spite of the misery which his folly causes Amelia, he is a loving husband. Amelia herself pays eloquent testimony to the strength of his love for and faith in her. Yet we miss the point unless we realize that something is sadly lacking in Booth. Clearly, like Tom, he has a good heart; but even Tom found that a good heart by itself was not enough to carry him happily through life. In the same way Booth's good heart has to be rectified by reason so that he may come to embrace sound religious principles and lead a virtuous life.

For the moment, however, Booth's lack of virtue leads him gradually down the path of moral decline. In normal circumstances, gambling might be regarded as nothing more than a bad habit. But Booth's circumstances are not normal. To gamble away more than half of his family's means of survival shows lack of principles and of all sense of duty and responsibility. Booth's prodigality, shown in his purchase of the coach, is another direct result of his lack of principles, and his lack of virtue is shown again in his affair with Miss Matthews. Sherburn is probably right in suggesting that any eighteenth-century gentleman in Booth's situation would have succumbed to Miss Matthews' wiles. But such a gentleman would not then have been a virtuous man. This surely is the point Fielding stresses; Booth reveals his lack of virtue when he indulges in illicit relations with a former mistress, even though he possesses one of the most beautiful and devoted of wives. His reckless actions are a direct result of his defects of character, defects which are themselves the consequence of the doctrines he has embraced. In the end, they land him in prison where, like Tom Jones,

he realizes the error of his ways and is finally converted.

But although Booth's folly has unfortunate consequences, he could still have extricated himself and his family from their desperate situation by an effort of Will. As Fielding put it:

"To retrieve the ill consequences of a foolish conduct and by struggling manfully with distress to subdue it, is one of the noblest efforts of wisdom and virtue".

Booth not only lacks virtue, but fails to see that he has a moral obligation to help his family. Secondly, since he believes that the world is governed by chance and that man's exertions are consequently useless, he can see no point in rousing himself from his lethargy to overcome the difficulties his family is faced with. Booth is passive; he leaves the destiny of his wife and children entirely in the hands of his upper-class friends, the Noble Peer and Colonel James. But he himself does very little.

It is this passivity which strikes us if we compare him with Tom Jones. Perhaps it is true that Fielding meant Booth to be as vivacious, sanguine and good-natured as Tom. He tells us of Booth's goodness and vivacity several times, but whereas we see Tom's good qualities in action, this is not so with Booth; and the reason is precisely that Booth does so very little. Tom is full of life and energy, and his presence fills the world through which he journeys. Booth, by contrast, appears lethargic and his presence is much less felt. Had he manfully exerted himself and taken a firm stand against the forces opposed to him, we would have been much more aware of his personality. No doubt, it is this passivity, this inability to act which partly accounts for the view that Amelia is at the centre of the novel and that Booth is not.

Somehow, Booth must be rescued from this state; he must also admit his

errors. Whereas in Tom Jones, Tom acquired Sophia at the end, Booth has to be brought to Amelia's level by conversion. In Amelia, Fielding has come as near as possible to the creation of a model wife. She is virtuous in every sense of the word; not only is she chaste, she is also charitably disposed. Dr. Harrison says of her, "She hath a sweetness of temper, a generosity of spirit, an openness of heart, in other words she hath a true Christian disposition. I may call her, indeed, an Israelite in whom there is no guile". And we recall that this has always been Fielding's idea of the model Christian. Amelia is based on even sounder foundations than Sophia. Sophia had to undergo some development during the course of Tom Jones, and although she represented heavenly wisdom, we were aware of this only in an allegorical sense; we never experienced the strength of her Christian convictions. With Amelia, it is otherwise. Fielding goes to great lengths to demonstrate that she is perfect in almost all respects. It is for this reason that her chastity and virtue are exposed to such severe temptations. But she wards off the attempts on her virtue one after the other, whereas Booth succumbs to Miss Matthews. While Booth gambles away the residue of his family's fortune, Amelia scrapes together what little she can find to provide him with a splendid meal, and then saves the money on a glass of wine in order to buy some tarts for her children. Continually, the actions of husband and wife are juxtaposed, so that the reader is enabled to see not only that Amelia is a perfect wife and Christian, but also that Booth falls far short of the standards she sets.

Throughout Booth's misfortunes, Amelia gives him loyal support. When he is arrested for the second time she exclaims:

"I have sinned against common sense, which should teach me,

instead of weakly and heavily lamenting my misfortunes, to rouse all my spirits and remove them. In this light, I am shocked at my own folly, and am resolved to leave my children under your care, and go directly to my husband. I may comfort him. I may assist him. I may relieve him. There is nothing now too difficult for me to undertake".¹

Amelia thus decides to forget her own misfortunes and hasten to take her place at her husband's side. Throughout, this is the way in which she behaves; she must surely be the most self-sacrificing wife ever created. No matter how reprehensible Booth's misdemeanours may be, she never scolds him. On the contrary she does her utmost to lessen the effect on him of the consequences of his own foolish conduct. When, for instance, Trent demands his fifty pounds from Booth, Booth informs Amelia of the entire history of that transaction and Amelia, instead of upbraiding him, calmly suggests that the debt will have to be paid and volunteers to raise the sum herself. Fielding comments:

"A pathetic scene now ensued between the husband and wife, which would not, perhaps, please many readers to see drawn at too full a length. It is sufficient to say, that this excellent woman not only used her utmost endeavours to stifle and conceal her own concern, but said and did everything in her power to allay that of her husband".²

This view of Amelia accords with A.R. Towers' interpretation of the marriage theme as treated in the novel. The modern reader, however, not having been inured to eighteenth-century conceptions of marriage, is entitled to ask a few questions. In normal circumstances one might accept that Fielding was content to create a wife who simply reflected eighteenth-century ideas on the model wife, and who was therefore absolutely obedient, unquestioning and loyal. But the circumstances presented in Amelia are not

¹ Amelia, Bk.VIII, ch.iv.

² Amelia, Bk.XI, ch.iv.

normal. We are faced with a situation here in which the husband lacks virtue and makes disastrous blunders; moreover, the wife is really more intelligent and balanced than her husband. In such a situation, is it realistic to portray a wife who accepts her husband's follies and misdemeanours without complaint, especially as he makes no attempt to reform? The question also arises whether we are being fair to Fielding in assuming that he sacrificed psychological plausibility simply in order to conform to eighteenth-century conceptions of marriage and the role of the wife. Moreover, although the convention demanded obedience and loyalty from the wife, it was still prepared to make allowances when the husband was deficient in virtue or intelligence. From the tone of some of Fielding's own articles in The Champion on the subject of reckless, unfaithful and extravagant husbands, it can be inferred that he himself would have supported some mild resistance by the wife when the husband's conduct tended to plunge the family into ruin. We must also remember that one of the reasons why Fielding's contemporaries criticized the novel so savagely on its publication, was that the heroine was much too passive. Amelia's passivity was too much, even for the eighteenth century. It is much more intolerable for us.

It seems possible that Fielding, too, disapproved of Amelia's leniency, for he goes out of his way to show that it has no effect on Booth's character and conduct; it does not help him become better; if anything, it makes him worse. For instance, in the famous chapter — "Read Gamester and Observe" — Booth informs Amelia about the money he had lost at play. Amelia shrugs off the whole matter as of little importance and contents herself with eliciting a vague resolve from Booth not to play any more. But a word of mild reproof might have stirred Booth's sense of shame. As it is, Amelia's

reply emboldens him to suggest that they pawn her grandmother's diamond ring, her children's watches and everything of value she possesses. When this is done and Booth receives the money, he does not pay his debt to Captain Trent; he gives the money instead to the "little great man". There is even one occasion when Booth actually asks Amelia for advice, and Amelia, out of false modesty, declines to give it (XI, v). It happens when Booth learns from Bob Bound that he must "touch" the "little great man" in order to be sure of his support in the search for a suitable situation. At the time Booth had only the fifty pounds obtained by pawning Amelia's things and originally intended for Trent. He was therefore unwilling, at first, to use it to "touch" the "little great man", although he realized that he may be sacrificing his chances of getting a commission. In his dilemma, he turned to Amelia for advice. One would have expected that Amelia would insist that the debt be paid; but she did nothing of the sort; instead she left it all to Booth's shaky judgement. The money was given to the "little great man", Trent's debt remained unpaid, and as a result Booth had to go to prison for the second time. While accepting that it is a wife's duty to defer to her husband's judgement, one must also acknowledge that it is equally her duty to give him advice, especially when such advice is freely sought.

Yet, we cannot be sure that Fielding intends us to be critical of Amelia. There is nothing in the style to suggest that his attitude here is ironic, and to indicate what the reader's response should be. We can only infer what Fielding's attitude must have been by recalling what he wrote elsewhere. But, in the novel itself, the whole treatment of the marriage relationship when the husband lacks virtue and intelligence and the wife has both, is somewhat blurred.

It is also a possible indictment of Amelia that she behaves naively sometimes, and fails to detect the hidden motives concealed behind men's good outward appearance. But this is characteristic of all the good-natured people in Fielding's works. It is true of the Heartfrees, of Tom and of Mr. Allworthy. The good heart is not suspicious; it expects well of human nature, and seldom suspects that there are sinister motives behind ostensibly virtuous conduct. Apart from her possible errors of judgement, therefore, Amelia remains the model wife.

IV

Although Amelia is the perfect Christian she nonetheless lacks the professional religious judgement which Dr. Harrison provides. In Amelia, Dr. Harrison plays the role which Parson Adams played in Joseph Andrews. But he is much less amiable than the parson, and he is also liable to error and to take rash decisions without hearing all sides of the case. His behaviour during the "Watch episode" is a case in point. Yet one remembers that he has to deal with a tougher and more sophisticated society than Parson Adams had to cope with. Accordingly he has to be tough and sophisticated himself. The Clergyman has therefore gone through a process of refinement since Joseph Andrews; he has become something of a diplomat and an outspoken man of the world, capable of holding his own with peers, colonels and attorneys. Clearly, Dr. Harrison is the embodiment of Fielding's positives in this novel, and it is he who outlines the Christian attitude on questions such as honour, virtue, merit and reward.

The concept of honour features much more prominently in Amelia than it did

in Tom Jones. It is clear that several people, including Booth, regard honour almost as a substitute for religion as a guide to conduct. Booth's ideas of religion are very vague, but, at any time, he is prepared to stand by his honour. The same is true of Colonel Bath. Yet Fielding's intention is to show that it is religion which gives rise to virtue and that religion is the only valid guide to conduct. If he must demonstrate this, then it is essential that other supposed guides to human conduct should be rejected and that false conceptions of honour should be exposed.

The particular conception of honour which is held by men like Colonel Bath seems to derive from Mandeville. Both in The Origin of Moral Virtue and The Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War, Mandeville had suggested that Honour, like virtue, was invented by politicians to urge man to keep his word and discharge his obligations by appealing to his sense of shame:

"My Conjecture concerning Honour, as it signifies a Principle from which Men act, is, that it is an Invention of Politicians, to keep Men close to their Promises and Engagements, when all other Ties prov'd ineffectual; and the Christian Religion itself was often found insufficient for that purpose".¹

The concept of honour, then, like the concept of virtue, bore no relation whatever to religion. Men turned to it after it was discovered that religion had failed to influence the actions of the wicked, and it appealed, not to their sense of right and wrong, but to their sense of shame. In the first dialogue of the enquiry into the origin of honour, Cleomenes, Mandeville's spokesman, says that by appealing to man's sense of shame he can be made afraid of himself:

"...And this, I am persuaded, was the Case! For as soon as

¹ Mandeville, The Origin of Honour, pp.29-30.

it was found out, that many vicious, quarrelsome, and undaunted Men, that feared neither God nor Devil, were yet often curb'd and visibly with-held by the Fear of Shame; and likewise that this Fear of Shame might be greatly encreas'd by an artful Education, and be made superior even to that of Death, they had made a Discovery of a real Tie, that would serve many noble Purposes in society. This I take to have been the Origin of Honour, the Principle of which has its Foundation in Self-liking; and no Art could ever have fix'd or rais'd it in any Breast, if that Passion had not pre-existed and been predominant there".¹

To a certain extent, what Mandeville says here applies to Booth, for though he would never allow his actions to be dictated by religious principles, yet he was always anxious to guard his reputation and his honour. According to Mandeville, also, the invention of honour was an even greater achievement than the invention of religion and virtue, and was of more lasting benefit:

"Men are better paid for their Adherence to Honour, than they are for their Adherence to Virtue: The First requires less Self-denial; and the Rewards they receive for that Little are not imaginary but real and palpable. But Experience confirms what I say: The invention of Honour has been far more beneficial to the Civil society than that of Virtue, and much better answer'd the End for which they were invented".²

It is easy to move from this position to a defence of the practice of duelling; for behind the convention of duelling, lay the appeal to a man's honour and his sense of shame. Those who defended it claimed that it was more likely than religion to act as a deterrent. When a man committed an injury he would be called upon to defend his honour, and in the encounter he might possibly lose his life; if he declined the challenge, he would still be mortified by shame. Neither alternative was pleasant to contemplate, if it was accepted that the man in question had a sense of shame:

"...for either there is no Honour at all, or it teaches Men to resent Injuries, and accept of Challenges... Those that rail at Duelling, don't consider the Benefit the Society receives

¹ Mandeville, The Origin of Honour, p.40.

² Mandeville, The Origin of Honour, pp.42-43.

from the Fashion: If every ill bred Fellow might use what Language he pleas'd, without being call'd to an Account for it, all Conversation would be spoil'd...Nothing civilises a Man equally as his Fear, and if not all, (as my Lord Rochester said) at least most Men would be Cowards if they durst: The dread of being call'd to an Account keeps abundance in awe, and there are thousands of Mannerly and well-accomplish'd Gentlemen in Europe, who would have been insolent and insupportable Coxcombs without it; besides if it was out of Fashion to ask Satisfaction for Injuries which the Law cannot take hold of, there could be twenty times the Mischief done than there is now...."¹

It is beliefs like this that Colonel Bath holds; but it is not only Colonel Bath who subscribes to this false conception of honour; Booth, and even Amelia do as well. When Booth leaves Amelia for Gibraltar, he does so, because he considers that if he does not respond to the call, his honour would be lost. When Trent proposed that he prostitute Amelia to the Noble Peer, Booth could have given a host of reason for refusing, but the reason he actually gave was that such a transaction would leave a stain on his honour. "You will excuse me, sir," says Booth, "but I think no man can be too scrupulous in points which concern his honour". Booth accepts at least one challenge to a duel, and when Amelia receives a letter from Colonel James challenging him to another, she too assumes that Booth will have to accept, if he should be able to retain his honour.

It is Dr. Harrison whom Fielding entrusts with the responsibility of exposing this irreligious conception of honour. He says to Amelia:

"Honour! Nonsense! Can honour dictate to him to disobey the express commands of his Maker, in compliance with a custom established by a set of blockheads, founded on false principles of virtue, in direct opposition to the plain and positive precepts of religion, and tending manifestly to give a sanction to ruffians, and to protect them in all the ways of impudence and villainy?"²

¹ Mandeville, The Origin of Moral Virtue, I, 242-3.

² Amelia, Bk.XII, ch.iii.

Ideas such as Mandeville's on honour were dangerous, and if Booth must be led to the paths of virtue and religion at all, he must be made to disown them. If society as a whole should be purified, it should be rid of such irreligious doctrines. It is this mission which the learned doctor undertakes in his long discussion about honour with Colonel Bath.

The novel also deals with the question of merit and rewards, and, once more, it is Dr. Harrison who acts as Fielding's spokesman. In his discussion with the two clergymen from the country he stresses the need for doing good regardless of rewards, and in his discussion with the peer whom he asks to give assistance to Booth he rejects the view that assistance and rewards should be given on the basis of political expediency, and suggests that they ought to be given solely on the basis of merit. Homes Dudden believes that the doctor's discussion with the clergymen and the peer are irrelevant to the plot of the novel; this, however, cannot be true. The discussion with the Clergymen stresses the need for Christian virtue, and this, after all, is the main point of the novel. The discussion with the nobleman, apart from touching on the question of merit, gives a catalogue of all the vices of the age, together with their causes and possible remedies; in short, it says in little what the novel as a whole demonstrates:

"'I thank you for your simile,' cries my lord; 'for in the natural body, I believe, you will allow there is the season of youth, the season of manhood, and the season of old age; and that, when the last of these arrives, it will be an impossible attempt by all the means of art to restore the body again to its youth, or to the vigour of its middle age. The same periods happen to every great Kingdom. In its youth it rises in arts and arms to power and prosperity. This it enjoys and flourishes for a while; and then it may be said to be in the vigour of its age, enriched at home with all the emoluments and blessings of peace, and formidable abroad with all the terrors of war. At length, this very prosperity introduces corruption; and then comes on its old age. Virtue and learning, art and industry, decay by degrees.

The people sink into sloth and luxury and prostitution. It is enervated at home, becomes contemptible abroad; and such indeed is its misery and wretchedness, that it represents a man in the last decrepit stage of life, who looks with unconcern at his approaching dissolution'.

'This is a melancholy picture indeed', cries the doctor; 'and, if the latter part of it can be applied to our case, I see nothing but religion, which would have prevented this decrepit state of the constitution, should prevent a man of spirit from hanging himself out of the way of so wretched a contemplation'¹.

We must remember that Amelia is the story of a young couple set against a background of corruption. Here, the nobleman gives a diagnosis of the disease affecting society and the doctor suggests the only possible remedy. The state of affairs described here is identical with that already demonstrated in the novel, and the remedy the doctor proposes is the same as that he suggests to Colonel Bath, the young Clergyman and Booth.

V

It is important that Booth should come to see the error of his views on virtue, honour and religion. The ethical pattern of the novel demands, not that there should be a transformation in Booth's character, but that there should be a change of ideology. It is from this change of ideology that the change of character would result. At the end, therefore, Booth does not go through a process of reformation, he only repents and is converted to Christianity. The assumption the reader is expected to make is that as a result of this conversion he sees where he had been wrong and goes on to lead a virtuous life, because he now understands the connection between virtue and religion.

There are two main objections to this conclusion; the first is that it

¹ Amelia, Bk.XI, ch.ii.

is not the ending one would have expected from the events which have been enacted before the reader's eyes. This is the view of Homes Dudden and he puts it this way:

"Owing to the author's tender-heartedness, the story is not carried to its logical conclusion. If the book had been written by a modern novelist of the realistic school, the events therein described could have had but one issue — Booth would have been unable to extricate himself from his difficulties and would consequently have been condemned to languish indefinitely in a debtors prison, and Amelia, left destitute, would at last have sacrificed herself to Colonel James or the wicked peer in order to save herself and her children from starvation. Such a catastrophe would have been true to the brutal facts of life. To Fielding, however, the idea of it, though it can hardly have failed to enter his mind, was quite intolerable".¹

Homes Dudden can only think this because he fails to see the moral point of the novel. The reason why Booth was unable to rouse himself and to try to extricate his family from its difficulties was that he felt the world was governed by chance, not by divine providence. The aim of the novel is to bring him to acknowledge the falseness of his views. Once he realizes that providence directs the world, and that a man can also help to shape his own destiny through an effort of will, and that there is a relation between virtue, honour and religion, it is hoped that he will acquire virtue and go on to behave accordingly. The logical conclusion of the novel, therefore, is repentance and conversion. This is the same answer one can give to the second objection, which is that Booth does not go through a process of reformation. We must not expect him to do so, and there is no need for us to try, like Allan Wendt, to chart a process of gradual transformation when this does not exist in the novel. Wendt says:

"The plot of the novel offers a series of shocks to Booth which finally persuade him to give up his theories. When Trent makes

¹ Homes Dudden, II, 811.

his infamous proposal, alleging that the willingness of a man to advance himself by prostituting his wife is merely human nature — Booth replies, 'Nature perhaps, but it is human nature depraved, stripped of all its worth and loveliness and dignity, and degraded down to a level with the violent brutes'. The irony should be clear: Booth's own abstract theories commit him to the acceptance of the proposal which he indignantly refuses".¹

But this surely is a mistaken interpretation of the implications of the ruling passion theory. The doctrine does not imply that everyone is at liberty to commit offences indiscriminately. Booth could not accept the Captain's proposal unless his ruling passion at that moment was avarice. His rejection of Trent's plan does not, therefore, mean the abandonment of his own views. The truth is that Booth does not change before our eyes, nor does the ethical pattern demand that he should. It only demands that, at the end, he should repent and be converted, and this occurs after he has read some of Barrow's sermons in prison.

There is no particular reason why Booth's conversion should have been affected by Barrow's sermons. Any of the other Latitudinarian divines would have done just as well. The works of Hoadly, Tillotson, Clarke and Barrow contain several sermons on Divine Providence, The Attributes of God, The Necessity of Christianity and The Necessity of Faith. Any of these sermons could have effected the conversion, for they emphasized God's omnipotence and omnipresence; they also highlighted his commandments as revealed through Christ and the prophets, and pointed out that virtue consists in the conformity of actions to such principles and commandments. But if one had to point to any particular sermon by Barrow which could have effected Booth's conversion, then The Virtue and Reasonableness of Faith would be a likely choice:

¹ Wendt, op.cit., p.142.

"In like manner is faith the Square and the Source of our spiritual activity, disposing us seriously to undertake; earnestly, resolutely, industriously, and constantly to pursue the design of virtue and piety, brooking the pains and hardships, breaking through the difficulties and hazards which occur in religious practice; engaging us to the performance of duty, deterring us from the commission of sin.

What but faith, eying the prize, will quicken us 'to run patiently the race that is set before us?' What but faith, apprehending the crown, will animate us to 'fight stoutly the good fight?' What but faith, assuring the wages, will support us in working all the day with unwearied industry and patience? What can raise pious hope, what can kindle holy desire, what can spur a conscientious endeavour, but a faith of attaining worthy recompense for doing well? What can impress an effectual dislike and dread of offending, but a faith of incurring grievous punishment and sad mischiefs thence".¹

Amelia, then, is a story of a young couple set against a background of vice and corruption. The husband lacks virtue because he lacks religion, having subscribed to the doctrines of the sceptics on honour, virtue and religion. Accordingly, he believes that the world is governed by chance and therefore fails to take any action to extricate his family from the consequences of his own foolish conduct. His moral decline is therefore accentuated. The wife, on the other hand, is almost perfect in all respects, and it is clear that Booth has to be brought up to her level by repentance and conversion. This accordingly happens at the end when Booth announces his conversion to Dr. Harrison who acts as Fielding's spokesman in the novel.

Yet, it is generally agreed that Amelia is the least satisfactory of Fielding's novels. The reason seems to be that, although many moral points are made, these are not adequately demonstrated, nor is the morality controlled by art. Fielding either seems to have abandoned the use of those devices he developed for portraying morality in the earlier novels, or his ability to use them to maximum advantage has declined. Whether this is true will be investigated in the next chapter.

¹ Isaac Barrow, "The Virtue and Reasonableness of Faith", in Christian Institutes, A Series of Discourses and Tracts, arranged by Christopher Wordsworth (1837), II, 27-28.

CHAPTER NINE

The Decline of Fielding's Art

I

Although one's general impression on reading Amelia is that Fielding's art has declined, yet it is true that he continues to use his ingenuity and inventive powers for the development of devices which help to demonstrate his morality and point to his meaning. In Amelia, Fielding resorts to the use of literary analogues as a framework, in the hope that their meaning will direct the reader's attention to the meaning of his work. The analogues he uses are the Aeneid and Othello; and an understanding of how these are used is essential for an understanding of the meaning of Amelia.

Yet Fielding also employs some of the more familiar devices we have become accustomed to in reading his work; irony, juxtaposition and contrast are all used to manipulate the reader's responses and condition his attitude — at least, Fielding makes a brave attempt in this direction, but it is an attempt which largely fails. Somehow, his art seems to have declined between Tom Jones and Amelia. For there is little doubt that Amelia makes a much less forceful impact on the reader than the previous novels, and one is tempted to account for this by suggesting that since Fielding is writing about a decadent society, he is in a more savage mood, and may not therefore have felt inclined to raise his art to the brilliantly comic level of the earlier novels; so he produces a work which is unrelentingly sombre and prosaic. The more plausible explanation, however, seems to be that the duller nature of the novel is due, not to deliberate choice, but to a failure of art pointing to a decline in

Fielding's literary powers. The art has declined in complexity, richness, variety and control; the literary devices, once used so superbly in Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews, seem to have lost their bite in Amelia; and, as a result, Fielding's moral points are not demonstrated or implied (as in the earlier novels) but stated blatantly. There is padding, irrelevancy and little attempt to correlate character and scene. All these issue from defects in structure, which in themselves indicate a loss of control. The question inevitably arises whether the decline of the art does not affect the value and validity of the morality; and, even if it can be argued that it does not, one must accept that it blunts its impact and raises the doubt whether Fielding still believes in the morality as forcefully as he did when writing Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones.

First, it is necessary to clarify the relation between Virgil's Aeneid and Fielding's Amelia. L.H. Powers' perception of the similarity between the events of the two works is useful in directing our attention to their relationship, but he mistakes the nature of this relationship.¹ According to Powers the novel begins with Booth's narration of his experiences to Miss Matthews just as the Aeneid begins with Aeneas' narration to Dido. Miss Matthews is an attractive woman bereft of her consort, just as Dido was bereft of Sychaeus. She has an unaccepted suitor in Colonel James, as Dido has one in Iarbas. Booth, like Aeneas, obeys the call to duty, and he also shares a common destiny with Aeneas -- each is seeking a secure foundation for his progeny. Aeneas' descent into the lower world is paralleled by Booth's visit to Ranelagh; and Colonel James, the Noble Peer, and his various aids

¹ L.H. Powers, "The Influence of the Aeneid on Fielding's Amelia", MLN, LXXI (1956), 330-336.

serve a purpose similar to that of Turnus and the Rutulians. Moreover, Powers detects a book-by-book correspondence, from Book VI of Amelia¹ onwards, which can be listed like this:

Amelia, VI: The first marked advances to Amelia made by the "noble peer", who enjoys the aid of Mrs. Ellison. (She urges Amelia to accept the invitation to the masquerade at Ranelagh).
Aeneid, VII: The outbreak of war, with Turnus a suitor for the hand of Lavinia, and enjoying the aid of Juno.

Amelia, VII: Mrs. Bennett relates her life story. This recitation serves to provide arms against the "noble peer".
Aeneid, VIII: The elaborate preparation of arms to be used against Turnus and the Rutulians — Vulcan's armour for Aeneas.

Amelia, VIII: During Booth's absence from the principal scene of action (he is in jail), there occurs the pressing attack on Amelia by Col. James (his insistent offer to shelter her and her children); Mrs. Bennett assumes the role of Cybele by warning Amelia against the Colonel, and thus thwarting his intended mischief.

Aeneid, IX: During Aeneas' absence from the principal scene of action, there occurs the severe attack by Turnus, and the intervention of Cybele to prevent his wrecking mischief (on the ships of Aeneas).

Amelia, IX: Booth returns to the principal scene of action to face another severe attack by Col. James — in the form of an invitation to dinner — and the attack of the "noble peer" at "a morning rout".

Aeneid, X: Aeneas returns to the principal scene of action and joins battle with the foe.

Amelia, X: Booth's principal adversaries are deceived by the disguised Amelia (actually Mrs. Bennett) at the masquerade; both the "noble peer" and Col. James pursue this phantom.

Aeneid, X(continued): Turnus is deceived into pursuing the phantom he believes to be Aeneas.

Powers, furthermore, points out the correspondences between characters in the Aeneid and in Amelia. Booth corresponds to Aeneas, Miss Matthews is Dido and later Camilla, Amelia is both Creusa and Lavinia, and Colonel James and the noble Peer both correspond to Turnus. Colonel Bath is also Turnus in his still admirable but passe heroic role, Sergeant Atkinson is Achates

¹ Powers, p.332.

and Pallas, and Doctor Harrison assumes the importance of Jupiter. Mrs. Bennett is Venus (on one occasion she is Cybele) and Mrs. Ellison is Juno and Queen Amata.

It is obvious that some of these correspondences are accurate. When Booth tells Miss Matthews the story of his fortunes the reader is bound to recall Aeneas' narration to Dido. On his release from prison Booth forsakes Miss Matthews as promptly as Aeneas obeys the call of destiny and forsakes Dido. Also, Fielding sets the scene in the prison in a manner reminiscent of Hades. Commenting on it he says: "There were assembled at the table the governor of these (not improperly called) infernal regions". Although in Powers' list Ranelagh corresponds to the underworld, it seems much more likely that Fielding meant the prison to be its equivalent. The scenes of horror, degradation and misery, which are there described, are a much more fitting parallel for the sombre wretchedness of Hades.

But, although some of these correspondences are accurate, we must be careful not to pursue them too far and invent equivalents where they do not apply; we must also not expect to find an exact book-by-book, event-by-event, person-by-person correspondence between the two works.¹ The correspondence between the prison and Hades should warn us of the dangers of expecting correspondences which are exact in nature and in time. For if the prison is hell, then Booth descends to hell much earlier than Aeneas; he does so, in fact, at the same time as he recounts his story to Miss Matthews — Dido. Ranelagh would have fitted the time-scheme better, but there is no other reason why we should suppose that Ranelagh was intended to correspond to Hades.

¹ Powers does not give an exact book-by-book correspondence; generally, the events in Amelia occur one book earlier than the corresponding events in the Aeneid. But this pattern is followed regularly and mechanically throughout with only one divergence from the rule.

Powers chooses Ranelagh simply because Booth's visit to it occurs at a stage in the story similar to that of Aeneas' descent into Hades. This is the kind of unsatisfactory choice we are forced to make if we expect exact, mechanical similarities.

If we look closely at Powers' correspondences we can see that some of them are quite preposterous. Mrs. Bennett's relation of her life-history does not seem to have the slightest resemblance to the very powerful passage in the Aeneid in which Vulcan plies his craft to prepare the divine arms of Aeneas. It seems even more absurd to compare Colonel James' offer of protection to Amelia and her children, with Turnus' attack on the Trojans during Aeneas' absence. Turnus does not attack Lavinia; indeed, he claims to be the protector of Lavinia, her father and their state from the hostile invaders -- the Trojans. Turnus attacks Aeneas' ships, whereas Colonel James "attacks" Amelia herself.

If the equivalence of events is unacceptable, the correspondence of individuals is even more so. No exception admittedly can be taken to Miss Matthews' correspondence to Dido; but she turns up later as Camilla, a likeness which is surely doubtful. It is true that as far as Virgil is concerned, Camilla is fighting on the wrong side; nevertheless, the reader (and Virgil himself) are impressed by her purity, her bravery, her skill and her moral earnestness. She does her best to thwart Aeneas' plans, but she does so out of profound loyalty to her friends and allies. Miss Matthews, by contrast, is spiteful and unchaste; she cannot correspond to Camilla.

Amelia is acceptable as Creusa, but surely not as Lavinia. Lavinia is too much in the background to make a credible parallel for Amelia, and the reader is never informed about the state of her feelings for Aeneas in the

same way as he is sure of Amelia's undying love for Booth. But, granted that a parallel must be found for Lavinia, then Amelia is, perhaps, the most likely candidate, and in this sense the likeness becomes tolerable. Other correspondences, however, cannot be accepted in any sense.

To suggest that Colonel James, the noble Peer and Colonel Bath are parallels to Turnus is to step outside the bounds of credibility. It is true that both Colonel James and the noble Peer harbour hopes of seducing Booth's wife just as Turnus is determined to possess Aeneas' destined beloved. But there the parallelism ends. Turnus' love is chaste and honourable, for he wishes to possess Lavinia as his lawful wife. The Colonel and the noble Peer, on the other hand, wish to possess Amelia as a mistress. Moreover, Turnus wins our admiration in a way that Colonel James and the noble Peer do not. Indeed, were it not for Virgil's biased if pardonable patriotism, Turnus would probably have been as admirable as Aeneas himself. His bravery and obvious qualities of leadership are beyond doubt. Moreover, since he is fighting to preserve what, in his view, is his rightful and promised inheritance, against a band of lawless adventurers, he even excites our sense of fairness and wins our sympathy.

To suggest also that Turnus in his heroic moments approximates to Colonel Bath is even more preposterous. Colonel Bath is undoubtedly brave and he has a code of honour, even if it is a mistaken one. But he is reckless and eccentric. Turnus' bravery, on the other hand, is purposeful; he employs his valour in defence of his native regions, as the champion of all that he and his kindred tribes consider sacred and inviolable. Mrs. Ellison can be accepted as Juno, but Sergeant Atkinson does not seem to bear any relation to Pallas, nor does Mrs. Bennett make a credible Venus; and in spite

of the near-infallibility of his wisdom, Doctor Harrison can hardly be said to assume the role of Jupiter.

There seems, therefore, to be grave pitfalls in looking for parallels in Amelia for all Virgil's major characters. When Fielding decided to use the Aeneid as a framework for his last novel, he evidently did not set out mechanically to reproduce its characters and events; he was not at all anxious to see that every character and every event had an exact parallel, and it is surely not our business to look for them, especially as it seems that the details of these correspondences do not, in themselves, help our understanding of the meaning of the novel.¹ This, surely, is not the relation we must look for between the Aeneid and Amelia. The fundamental relationship between the two works is thematic rather than structural, and this is why an understanding of the meaning of the Aeneid helps us to understand the meaning of Amelia. That the relation is thematic is shown most clearly when we consider the relationship of Booth and Aeneas. For if we look at the two characters closely, we realize that whereas Aeneas is a hero who knows his destiny and works steadily towards it with a single-mindedness of purpose which helps him overcome all obstacles, Booth is an unheroic character who does not seem to be aware of his destiny, and who lacks the driving force and will-power to make his way. Aeneas, in other words, is everything that Booth is not; and there can be no question of a simple parallel in so far as character is concerned. But this in itself suggests the thematic relationship; for it is surely Fielding's purpose to point out that Booth lacks the qualities which were responsible for Aeneas' success, and

¹ It is remarkable that, having listed the correspondences, Powers does not go on to use them for a critical assessment. So it seems that it hardly helps us very much to know that Amelia represents Creusa and Lavinia, and that Colonel Bath is like Turnus. If anything, it may distort our interpretation of the novel.

he is using the meaning of the Aeneid to point to and elucidate his own meaning in Amelia.

Aeneas is always called "pius", thus emphasizing his faith in the Gods. He may have been uxorious, but his religious principles are unquestioned, and he does believe in the direction of the world by divine providence. When he receives Jupiter's command to forsake Dido and pursue his destiny, he accepts without a murmur. Throughout the Aeneid, three aspects of Aeneas's character are continually stressed: his bravery and energy, his faith, and his purposeful sense of destiny. In Amelia, on the other hand, the reader cannot fail to observe the irony with which Fielding uses the word "pius", for Booth is anything but pious. Fielding means to show that Booth lacks faith in the power of providence and does not subscribe to any firm religious principles. The irony, therefore, points to a contrast between him and Aeneas. The central point of the Aeneid, surely, is that Aeneas discovers his destiny and then proceeds virtuously to accomplish it trusting in the power and assistance of the gods. During his career, his virtue and his ability to act in order to achieve this destiny are clearly demonstrated. Booth, on the other hand, does not decide to abandon Miss Matthews by a deliberate act of will, as Aeneas decides to abandon Dido; he does so, because on the arrival of Amelia, he could do nothing else. When he leaves Miss Matthews, he does not go to work for his destiny or to ensure security for his progeny; he remains inactive. Fielding stresses Booth's lack of virtue as a direct consequence of his lack of faith; while virtue is one of the main qualities which Virgil stresses in Aeneas. Indeed, the three major qualities which are given prominence in the portrayal of Aeneas — virtue, faith, and a sense of purpose, are the three most wanting in Booth.

Although Powers appears to realize that the Aeneid's meaning can act as a pointer to the meaning of Amelia, he seems to draw the wrong conclusions about the nature of that meaning. Quoting Sir Maurice Bowra on Virgil, he says:

"Virgil represented a new ideal of heroism and showed in what fields it could be exercised. The essence of his conception is that man's virtus is shown less in battle and physical danger than in the defeat of his own weakness".¹

Powers believes that this is precisely what Fielding wishes to demonstrate in Amelia, but he goes on to imply that Booth defeats his weakness and demonstrates his virtue in the same way as Aeneas does. Yet this is just what Booth does not do. The validity of Powers' case rests on the assumption that Aeneas and Booth are parallel characters. But all the evidence suggests that they are meant to be contrasted. Booth's inadequacy is shown up all too clearly in comparison with Aeneas' worthiness; his lack of virtue and inaction are set against Aeneas' virtue, faith and sense of purpose.

This is not to suggest that Sir Maurice Bowra's interpretation of the Aeneid is wrong; indeed it seems quite fair. The Aeneid is not about war at all; it is about a man's virtue, his conquest of his vices, and his faith in providence, all demonstrated in his actions as he proceeds toward his destiny. Aeneas conquers his weakness early, then fulfils his destiny and leads his people to victory. But Booth never overcomes his weakness: He succumbs to Miss Matthews once again, and his passivity and lack of virtue remain with him almost to the very end. He goes through no visible process of reformation, and we are simply told, at the end, of his conversion to the Christian faith. We assume, of course, that as a result of this conversion, a new Booth will emerge, but we certainly never see him emerging.

¹ Powers, p.334.

Another aspect of the Aeneid's meaning further demonstrates that the interpretation of Booth's character given above is the correct one. For the Aeneid is not only about a man's virtuous endeavour, it is also about the transfer of civilization from a decadent Troy to firmer foundations in Latium. The eighteenth century realized this significance of the Aeneid, and a few writers, notably Pope in The Dunciad, made use of it. Pope, in order to give bite to his satire, reverses the direction of the Aeneid, and portrays the transfer, not of civilization, but of decadence and anarchy from the outskirts of the city into its very heart. Fielding also, in Joseph Andrews, adopts a similar theme to suit his own ends, and shows the transfer of civilization from the corrupt city to be planted on firmer foundations in the country where the primal virtues are to be found. In Amelia, in conformity with his practice in this last novel, the movement is once more contrary to that of the Aeneid. Booth does not assist in the re-establishment of civilized standards on firmer foundations. When he moves to the country, it is only to indulge in snobbery and extravagance — two of the vices for which the city was notorious. When he leaves the prison, and "obeys the call of destiny", it is to end up eventually within the pale of "the court", a bankrupt's haven. Far from helping ~~to~~ impose civilized standards on society he participates in its decadence. He squanders the fortunes of his family in gambling, offers bribes to procure a commission, indulges in one more illicit love affair and condones the practice of duelling.

Thus, once more, the contrast between the movement of the two works highlights Booth's failure to do everything that Aeneas does; he fails to conquer his weakness and go on to glorious endeavour; he is everything that Aeneas is not. Fielding, therefore, by modelling his novel on the Aeneid,

and by emphasizing the thematic relationship with it, not only clarifies Booth's character, but also elucidates the meaning of the whole work.

The second literary analogue that Fielding uses to suggest his meaning is Othello. He must have done so for three reasons: first, he wished to show Booth's unreasonable and sudden jealousy; secondly, he wanted to demonstrate Amelia's purity and innocence; and, thirdly, he wished to highlight the susceptibility of the "good heart" to deception and also to stress the need to judge, not the foolishness of the "good heart" deceived, but the unscrupulous plotting of the villains.

It is astonishing that although the critics have been quick to realize the similarity between Amelia and the Aeneid, little or nothing has been said about the novel's obvious connection with Othello, and this is all the more surprising because Fielding calls attention to the similarities himself. When Booth finally discovers the truth about Colonel James and confronts Amelia with it, Fielding comments:

"She then went on, and related most of the circumstances which she had mentioned to the doctor, omitting one or two of the strongest, and giving such a turn to the rest, that, if Booth had not had some of Othello's blood in him, his wife would have appeared almost a prude in his eyes".¹

Both Amelia and Othello are domestic stories set against a national and military background. One of them has a tragic ending, and the other barely escapes having one. In both, there is a charming and devoted wife who adores her husband, and there is an officer of high rank who is suspected of having an affair, or of wanting to have an affair, with the wife. The husband in both cases has a trusted confidant who breaks the news to him, and the confidant has a wife who is not particularly scrupulous about her virtue, and who acts

¹ Amelia, Bk.X, ch.vi.

as a mentor to the young wife. In Othello, Iago informs Othello of Cassio's exclamations during his (Cassio's) sleep and this serves as one of Othello's "proofs". In Amelia, Sergeant Atkinson relates the dream in which James threatens to stab Amelia and this finally convinces Booth of the Colonel's villainy.

But the similarity goes beyond the character groupings and the details of the two stories. If we look at the sequence in which Othello confronts Desdemona after seeing what he believes is proof of her guilt, we can see a striking resemblance to Amelia when Booth confronts his wife after Atkinson has told him the details of his dream. This is the Othello sequence:

Desdemona: Upon my knee, what doth your speech import?
I understand a fury in your words,
But not the words.

Othello: Why, what art thou?

Desdemona: Your wife, my lord; your true
and loyal wife.

Othello: Come swear it, damn thyself,
Lest being like one of heaven, the devils themselves
Should fear to seize thee. Therefore be double-damned;
Swear thou are honest.

Desdemona: Heaven doth truly know it.

Othello: Heaven truly knows, that thou art
false as hell.¹

In Amelia we find this:

"It touched him to the quick; he turned pale, gnashed his teeth, and cried out, 'Damnation! this is too much to bear'. Amelia was thrown into the utmost consternation by this behaviour; and with great terror in her countenance, cried out, 'Good Heavens! my dear love, what is the reason of this agony?' 'Ask me no questions,' cried he, 'unless you would drive me to madness'. 'My Billy! my love!' said she, 'what can be the meaning of this? — I beg you will deal openly with me, and tell me all your griefs'.

¹ Othello, IV, ii.

'Have you dealt fairly with me, Amelia?' said he.
 'Yes, surely,' said she; 'Heaven is my witness how fairly'.
 'Nay, do not call Heaven,' cried he, 'to witness a falsehood.
 You have not dealt openly with me, Amelia. You have concealed
 secrets from me; secrets which I ought to have known, and which,
 if I had known, it had been better for us both'.
 'You astonish me as much as you shock me,' cried she. 'What
 falsehood, what treachery have I been guilty of?'
 'You tell me,' said he, 'that I can have no reliance on James; why
 did not you tell me so before?'
 'I call Heaven again,' said she, 'to witness; nay I appeal to
 yourself for the truth of it; I have often told you so. I have
 told you I disliked the man, notwithstanding the many favours he
 had done you. I desired you not to have too absolute a reliance
 upon him. I own I had once an extreme good opinion of him, but
 I changed it, and I acquainted you that I had so —'
 'But not,' cried he, 'with the reasons why you had changed it.'
 'I was really afraid, my dear,' said she, 'of going too far. I
 knew the obligations you had to him; and if I suspected that he
 acted rather, from vanity than true friendship,—'
 'Vanity!' cried he, 'take care, Amelia, you know his motive to be
 much worse than vanity — a motive, which, if he had piled obligations
 on me till they had reached the skies, would tumble all down to
 Hell. It is in vain to conceal it longer — I know all — your
 confidant hath told me all.'
 'Nay then,' cries she, 'on my knees I entreat you to be pacified,
 and hear me out...'¹

Amelia calls on heaven as Desdemona does, and Booth warns his wife against telling a falsehood as Othello warns Desdemona. Amelia, like Desdemona, entreats him on her knees, and Booth's "have you dealt fairly with me" is very similar to Othello's "swear that thou art honest". Amelia's "My Billy, my love what can be the meaning of this?" parallels Desdemona's "What doth your speech import?" There can be little doubt that Fielding had this scene in Othello in mind while he was writing this passage in Amelia. Apart from the similarities already noted, there is also the lack of communication between Amelia and her husband about the James affair and the noble Lord's designs. Booth does not make known his suspicions of the noble Peer until very late, and Amelia deliberately withholds information about Colonel James.

¹ Amelia, Bk.X, ch.vi.

Much misunderstanding results from this, as when Desdemona fails to be absolutely truthful about the handkerchief and when Othello fails to question her about Cassio. There is also some likeness between Atkinson's dream and Iago's account of Cassio's alleged nocturnal reveries. There is, of course, the difference that Iago's account is false and is deliberately intended to deceive, while Sergeant Atkinson's is true and is intended to warn Booth of real danger. In one case the teller is himself the villain, in the other the teller is an innocent well-meaning friend who directs attention to the real villain. But basically, the dreams are similar. Sergeant Atkinson dreams that Colonel James holds his sword at Amelia's throat and threatens to murder her. This has as blatantly sexual overtones as Iago's account. In both cases the reader's indignation is directed at the villains who are the agents of the unscrupulous plotting, for although we feel that Othello acts foolishly in accepting Iago's account without rigorous questioning, we nevertheless reserve our condemnation for Iago's diabolical intellect, as, in Amelia, it is reserved not for the "deceived" Booth, but for Colonel James.

Yet, though our anger is not directed at Booth, the analogy is introduced in order to make us realize that Booth's jealousy, though justified by the evidence, is exaggerated out of all proportion, especially as he directs his anger at Amelia and not directly at the plotters. This seems to be the implication behind Fielding's statement that Booth had some of Othello's blood in him. Moreover, Booth, like Othello, is primarily concerned, not with the danger which had beset his wife's virtue, but with the affront that the success of the Colonel's scheme would have presented to his honour:

"'Is not Amelia, then,' cried he, 'equally jealous of my honour?"

Would she, from a weak tenderness for my person, go privately about to betray, to undermine the most invaluable treasure of my soul? Would she have me pointed out as the credulous dupe, the easy fool, the tame, the kind cuckold of a rascal, with whom I conversed as a friend?"¹

There is surely a suggestion in the passage that the "most invaluable treasure" of Booth's soul ought to be, not his honour, but his wife Amelia. Fielding thus makes the reader aware that at a time like this Booth should be thinking, not of himself, but of his wife.

So the analogy with Othello, while stressing the plotters' villainy, also brings out Booth's preoccupation with a false conception of honour and his failure to grasp the real issue involved, which is, that Colonel James' success would have meant the loss of his wife's chastity. These literary analogues, therefore, are of some help to the reader in his attempt to discover what Fielding's attitude to his hero is, and so what the novel means.

II

Yet, Fielding does use some of the more traditional devices he had earlier employed to manipulate the reader's responses, and one of these is irony. The use of irony is most crucial in his treatment of the affair with Miss Matthews. Many critics have tried to make excuses for Booth's intimacy with the lady while he is in prison. The relevant point, however, is not whether this kind of behaviour was common,² but whether Fielding condones his hero's action. If we look at the comments he makes on the affair, and study

¹ Amelia, Bk.X, ch.vi.

² See Chapter Eight above.

the movement of his irony, we see that he does not:

"We desire, therefore, the good-natured and candid reader will be pleased to weigh attentively the several unlucky circumstances which concurred so critically, that fortune seems to have used her utmost endeavours to ensnare poor Booth's constancy. Let the reader set before his eyes a fine young woman, in a manner, a first love, conferring obligations, and using every art to soften, to allure, to win, and to enflame; let him consider the time and place; let him remember that Mr. Booth was a young fellow, in the highest vigour of life; and lastly, let him add one single circumstance, that the parties were along together; and then, if he will not acquit the defendant, he must be convicted; for I have nothing more to say in his defence".¹

Now let us examine the implications of all these statements and see whether they do, in fact, amount to an excuse. Miss Matthews was, indeed, a first love, but this in itself reminds the reader that Booth now has another love -- a beautiful and devoted wife. Fielding asks us to consider the time and place; we do so, and admit that both were very "convenient" for the kind of illicit love which society condemns and which is universally regarded as wrong because it cannot be conducted in the light of day. We would also agree that Booth was a fine young fellow in "the highest vigour of life and health", but if we excused his conduct on this account, we would also have to excuse all lecherous, young eighteenth-century gentlemen who committed adultery. It becomes clear, as we go on with the analysis, that Fielding's irony is directed against Booth, and that the so-called excuses are really meant to condemn him. What strengthens this view even further, is the last statement, that if the reader, having heard all these excuses, refuses to acquit Booth, he must be condemned, for Fielding has no more to say in his favour. Fielding, as it were, realizes that the case he has presented for Booth's condemnation is so overwhelming and unanswerable, that he must give up the defence as a hopeless cause.

¹ Amelia, Bk.IV, ch.i.

Fielding's comments in the opening paragraph of the next chapter are even more damaging:

"A whole week did our lady and gentleman live in this criminal conversation, in which the happiness of the former was much more perfect than that of the latter; for though the charms of Miss Matthews, and her excessive endearments, sometimes lulled every thought in the sweet lethargy of pleasure; yet in the intervals of his fits, his virtue alarmed and roused him, and brought the image of poor injured Amelia to haunt and torment him".¹

In this passage Fielding makes use of linguistic irony. On a first reading, we might think that, on the whole, he is on Booth's side, especially as he stresses the fact that Booth was haunted by the thought of the injury being done to Amelia. Yet, if we consider the implications of the words and phrases used, we find that the passage implies severe blame on him. In the first place, Fielding refers bluntly to the affair as "criminal conversation".² No other adjective could possess less pleasant overtones of the courtroom. There is also the reference to Miss Matthews' "excessive endearments" which lulled Booth in the "sweet lethargy of pleasure", and his entire conduct is seen as a "fit". The picture presented is of a man who has temporarily lost

¹ Amelia, Bk.IV, ch.ii.

² We realize the significance of this if we recall that, in the eighteenth century, criminal conversation was an offence for which the offended party could bring a court action. Blackstone refers to it in 1768. It was obviously a serious offence, for F. Pollock on Torts, 3rd. ed. (1892) p.210 says that in form it was generally trespass vi et armis, on the theory that 'a wife is not, as regards her husband, a free agent or separate person'. Of course Miss Matthews is unmarried, but the fact that Fielding uses the term even though one of the parties is unmarried shows how seriously he regards their conduct. Of course the term "conversation" meaning illicit sexual relations goes much further back to 1511 1st. Eng. Bk.Amer. (Arb) p.xxvii, "The men hath conversacyon with the wymen, who that they ben or who they fyrst mete". Shakespeare refers in 1594 (Richard III) to "conversation with Shore's wife".

his senses and his power of judgement, and who is drifting in a world of pleasure the woman has created. Booth's behaviour is thus shown as almost bordering on madness. Closely related to this image of being adrift is the comic play with which Fielding uses the terms "excessive", "endearments" and "tenderness". At the end of his narration to Miss Matthews Booth says:

"And here, give me leave to assure you, my dear Miss Matthews, that whatever advantage I may have reaped from your misfortune, I sincerely lament it; nor would I have purchased any relief to myself at the price of seeing you in this dreadful place'.

He spake these words with great tenderness; for he was a man of consummate good-nature, and had formerly much affection for this young lady; indeed, more than the generality of people are capable of entertaining for any person whatsoever".¹

The irony on "tenderness" suggests much more than the compassion which Booth seems, on the surface, to be extending to Miss Matthews. It suggests that he has already begun those amorous advances which are later to lead to Miss Matthews' "excessive endearments". The explanatory irony which follows reinforces the point, for "consummate good-nature" suggests "amorous disposition", and the remark that Booth had at one time "much affection" for the lady suggests that the affection is still latent, that current circumstances are about to enflame it, and it may come to life once more. Fielding thus underlines the inflammability of Booth's tenderness, and this, incidentally, gives the only genuine comedy in the novel, because this is the only occasion when irony is effectively used.

The way in which the episode is presented also points to the fallacy of Booth's theory of the Ruling Passion. For, if this theory were correct, no external inducements, not even Miss Matthews' "excessive endearments", should have been able to succeed in breaking down Booth's reserve, if his ruling passion (which, presumably, is his love for Amelia) did not point in

¹ Amelia, Bk.III, ch.xii.

that direction. As it is, Booth is led to folly, not by the force of any predominant passion, but by an easy, volatile, self-indulgent, unimaginative, unprincipled emotionalism. He makes the first advances by demonstrating his "tenderness" for Miss Matthews, and she responds with even more "excessive endearments", which gradually lead him into blind sexuality.

Fielding has thus used irony, not only to demolish Booth's theories, but also to demonstrate his own responsibility for his folly. It also helps to show, quite clearly, that Booth must not be excused, but ought to be condemned.

In addition to irony, Fielding also makes use of juxtaposition and contrast in Amelia, although the use of these two devices is much less subtly accomplished than in Tom Jones.¹ In Amelia their use is principally seen in Fielding's provision of two other married couples to serve as foils to the Booth family. These are the Atkinsons and the Jameses. The histories of these two families demonstrate what Fielding regards as the consequences of distorting the normal relationship between a husband and wife.

The James union is a marriage from which love is entirely absent. The couple show no regard for each other, and there is little readiness to defer to the views or wishes of the other. Colonel and Mrs. James merely agree to co-exist. Colonel James openly pursues his extra-matiral affairs, while Mrs. James consoles herself with her cards, and promises not to meddle in her husband's affairs; indeed, she sometimes helps to promote them. In the Atkinsons we are presented with a pair who have inverted the normal husband-wife relationship. This couple do live happily, but only because Sergeant Atkinson has agreed to defer to the views of his wife in everything.

¹ See Chapter Seven above. In Tom Jones juxtaposition and contrast are used as components in the device of "double irony" and they were thus built into the structure of the novel.

Fielding uses these foils to show that the Booth's marriage is as near to perfection as one is likely to get, although this perfection is almost entirely due to the wife's virtues.

Mrs. Atkinson also serves as a foil to Amelia in another way. For, given the main outline of the story, it was perhaps inevitable that there should be someone in it as prepared to prostitute herself, as Amelia is to remain faithful in marriage. Fielding had already treated the subject, in fact, in his play, The Modern Husband, where Mrs. Modern goes to extremes to procure extra money and to further the wishes and prospects of her husband, whereas Mrs. Bellamant preserves her virtue against all attacks. Yet, the question remains why, in Amelia, the foil has to be Mrs. Atkinson? For she seems to act out of character when, after taking Amelia's place at the masquerade, she persuades the "noble Peer" to procure a commission for her husband and (in all probability) prostitutes herself to him. Earlier in the novel we had been led to believe that Mrs. Atkinson, if not a model of virtue like Amelia, had, at least, a proper regard for her chastity. We hardly expect her to behave in the way she does later. It is true that Fielding does hint at the gap between her profession and her practice, when, after strongly denouncing "bigamy" she proceeds eventually to marry Atkinson; but the point is not strongly made; certainly, it is not made strongly enough to prepare us for her unprincipled behaviour later.

Fielding also makes effective use of contrast, when he juxtaposes Amelia's responsible and considerate acts with Booth's recklessness. For instance, Booth's indulgence in gambling and drunkenness is contrasted with Amelia's sacrifice in saving the money on a glass of wine for herself, in order to buy tarts for her children. Her wifely industry and loyalty are

also shown when she exerts herself to her utmost in order to prepare Booth a sumptuous meal, while he deserts her, and resorts instead to Miss Matthews' apartment for dinner. The contrast between the two is also shown in their reaction to events. When Booth gambles away the twenty pounds he possesses and then contracts a debt of fifty pounds to Trent, he persuades his wife to sell virtually all she has, and Fielding comments:

"Booth was so overjoyed with the prospect of discharging his debt to Trent, that he did not perfectly reflect on the distress to which his family was now reduced". (Ek.XI, ch.iv)

Once more, the attitudes of Amelia and Booth are strongly contrasted. Amelia sacrifices everything she possesses to retrieve her husband from a desperate situation; whereas Booth forgets his family's plight and rejoices that his debt will soon be paid. When the money is given, not to Trent, but to the "little great man", Fielding comments once more:

"Here I shall stop one moment, and so, perhaps, will my good-natured reader; for, surely, it must be a hard heart, which is not affected with reflecting on the manner in which this poor little sum was raised, and on the manner in which it was bestowed".¹

Of course, there is condemnation here of the "little great man's" callousness, but the meat of the passage is the contrast between Amelia's sacrifice and Booth's thoughtlessness in handing the money to the "little great man".

These are some of the traditional devices Fielding used in Amelia. Yet, it will be noticed that they are not used often. Irony, juxtaposition, the mock-epic, burlesque and farce were all drawn upon by Fielding in his earlier novels to demonstrate his morality; they were not just meant to give a comic atmosphere. It was because they were used that the reader was able to see the author's attitude to his characters and subject-matter; it was by

¹ Amelia, Bk.XI, ch.v.

their means, therefore, that the author made his morality clear. But largely because of his abandonment of these devices in Amelia, Fielding's morality, in the new novel, is largely stated, rather than demonstrated. This is the reason why the moralizing appears so blatant; it seldom seems to have been preceded by any adequate demonstration. The reader often forms the impression that Fielding preaches too much, and that he is too intent on stating a thesis, without making sure that the implications of that thesis are demonstrated in action in the novel. The following is an example of the novel's over-obvious didacticism:

"And yet however difficult this may be, my young readers, it is absolutely necessary, and that immediately too; flatter not yourselves that fire will not scorch as well as warm, and the longer we stay within its reach, the more we shall burn. The admiration of a beautiful woman, though the wife of our dearest friend, may at first perhaps be innocent; but let us not flatter ourselves it will always remain so".¹

We need only compare this with Fielding's excellent comment on "prudence" in Tom Jones, with the wide-ranging implications of its irony, and the various interpretations of Tom's conduct, and of the word "prudence" which it held in suspension, to realize how much Fielding's art has deteriorated. In that passage, Fielding's attitude was conveyed through his use of irony, and we could be sure that the surface meaning was not the one intended. In other words, the moralizing was not as blatant as it is here.

It is perhaps debatable, though, whether Fielding's art has actually declined, or whether he intentionally refrained from employing comic devices for moral purposes in his last novel. A strong case can be made in support of the latter claim. It can be argued that the atmosphere of Amelia is different from that of Tom Jones, because Fielding's mood has changed; his

¹ Amelia, Bk.VI, ch.i.

mood has grown more savage and serious than in the two earlier novels. In the preface to Joseph Andrews, Fielding had said that vice was not the object of laughter although follies were; vice excited detestation rather than laughter. In Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, Fielding had sported with follies, therefore he could make those novels hilariously funny, and the use of comic devices was in place. In Amelia, on the other hand, Fielding deals with vice in all its forms — adultery, prostitution, duelling, gambling and fraud. These are serious matters; they cannot be the subject of laughter and therefore the use of comic devices would be incompatible with the atmosphere. If we compare the picture of Blear-eyed Moll with that of Mrs. Slip-slop in Joseph Andrews, we can see evidence of this change of mood. The description of Mrs. Slip-slop was comic; that of Moll is not:

"Her eye, (for she had but one) whence she derived her nickname, was such as that nickname bespoke; besides which it had two remarkable qualities; for first, as if nature had been careful to provide for her own defect, it constantly looked towards her blind side; and secondly, the ball consisted almost entirely of white, or rather yellow, with a grey spot in the corner, so small that it was scarcely discernible. Nose she had none; for Venus, envious perhaps of her former charms, had carried off the gristly part; and some earthly damsel, perhaps, from the same envy, had levelled the bone with the rest of her face".¹

This is a venomous, not a comic description; Fielding has created a monster, not a woman.

The nature of the novel's conclusion also indicates the change in mood. In none of Fielding's earlier novels does a character suffer the death penalty for his misdemeanours. Blifil endures nothing more severe than banishment to the North and conversion to Methodism. Even Black George is allowed to disappear quietly from the scene. Yet, in Amelia, Murphy is hanged at Tyburn, Robinson is pardoned at first, but returns to evil courses and is also hanged.

¹ Amelia, Bk.I, ch.iii.

Mrs. Ellison and the noble Peer die as a consequence of their vices, Colonel Bath dies in a duel and Miss Harris dies abroad in a "most miserable manner".

Another reason why the reader is tempted to attribute the nature of the novel to a change of mood rather than failing artistic powers, is that twenty years or so earlier, Fielding had written The Modern Husband which dealt with the same themes. The mood and nature of the play was very similar to that of Amelia; but after The Modern Husband Fielding went on to write plays which were even more hilariously funny than the first play, Love in Several Masques, or the second, The Temple Beau. The question of failing powers did not arise as far as The Modern Husband was concerned. Fielding had simply changed his mood and style to suit his subject matter. The same might be true of Amelia. By itself this is not conclusive proof, but when it is added to the other evidences, the weight of the argument that Amelia only shows a change of mood seems overwhelming.

III

There are, however, two powerful arguments to support the view that Amelia shows signs of declining literary powers. In the first place, Fielding does not entirely abandon the traditional comic devices; he does attempt to use them, but they either fail to have any effect, or, when they do, they fall short of the standards achieved in Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews. Secondly, there are other signs -- such as irrelevancies, inconsistencies, and faulty structuring -- which point to a decline in the author's control over the events of the story. The truth of this claim that Fielding's art has deteriorated can be demonstrated by an examination of selected passages.

In this connection we may recall, once more, Fielding's cruel description of Blear-eyed Moll: "Her eye (for she had but one) whence she derived her nickname, was such as that nickname bespoke". Fielding's parenthetical explanations can be as devastating in their irony as his major statements.¹ In the above extract there was tremendous potential for the use of explanatory irony; "(for she had but one)" — or some such phrase — could have been used to much more telling effect, and it seems that Fielding was aiming at this. But the result, as we have it, fails to produce laughter. We need only compare it with the quasi-parenthetical explanation of Mrs. Blifil's premature delivery to see that Fielding's attempt here has misfired.² In that passage, the irony contained in "by reason of a fright" is much more effective.

Next, we may look at Booth's description of what his neighbours think of his purchase of a coach:

"The consequences of setting up this poor old coach is inconceivable. Before this, as my wife and myself had very little distinguished ourselves from the other farmers and their wives, either in our dress, or our way of living, they treated us as their equals; but now they began to consider us as elevating ourselves into a state of superiority, and immediately began to envy, hate, and declare war against us. The neighbouring little squires too, were uneasy to see a poor renter become their equal in a matter in which they placed so much dignity; and not doubting but it arose in me from the same ostentation, they began to hate me likewise, and to turn my equipage into ridicule; asserting that my horses, which were as well matched as any in the kingdom, were of different colours and sizes: with much more of that kind of wit, the only basis of which is lying".³

This seems to be an attempt at double irony. It is the same method that Fielding employed to portray the reactions of the various groups of

¹ See Chapter Seven above.

² See Chapter Seven above.

³ Amelia, Bk.III, ch.xii.

spectators in the theatre to Black George's theft.¹ There is again great potential for double irony here, but it is marred by our ignorance of Fielding's exact attitude towards Booth in this episode. We do not, for that matter, know what his attitude is towards the other groups referred to. Everything is seen with Booth's eyes and from his point of view, and Fielding gives us no hints that his point of view is the same as Booth's. Had he been more skilful he could have balanced Booth's vanity, extravagance and snobbery against his neighbours' envy and malice, and the reader would have been able to realize that Fielding views Booth as critically as his neighbours. But all this is unrealized. Again, we need only set this passage beside his comparison of the world and the stage to see what the passage in Amelia lacks.

In his description of the courtship between Tom and Mrs. Waters in Tom Jones, Fielding had made masterful use of irony, burlesque and imagery.² Let us examine a similar scene between Booth and Miss Matthews:

"Miss Matthews did not in the least fall short of Mr. Booth in expressions of tenderness. Her eyes, the most eloquent orators on such occasions, exerted their utmost force; and at the conclusion of his speech, she cast a look as languishingly sweet as ever Cleopatra gave to Antony. In real fact, this Mr. Booth had been her first love, and had made more impressions on her young heart, which the learned in this branch of philosophy affirm, and perhaps truly, are never to be eradicated.

When Booth had finished his story, a silence ensued of some minutes; an interval which the painter would describe much better than the writer".³

This is clearly an attempt to recreate the battle of the eyes and sighs in Tom Jones. But what a wealth of imagery was used in that scene! Love was presented in terms of duelling and eating, and Mrs. Waters' advances were

¹ See Chapter Seven above.

² See Chapter Seven above. See also T.J., Bk.IX, ch.v.

³ Amelia, Bk.IV, ch.i.

described at great length and with great comic power. In the Amelia scene, on the other hand, Fielding gives up, and leaves the task to the painter, though he himself had painted a scene in Tom Jones which no painter could have equalled.

In Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews Fielding showed how adept he was at the manipulation of situations to reveal character. He was, in effect, very skilful in his use of irony of situation. He could put certain characters on the stage and force them to act in ways which exposed them to the reader. The disjointed soliloquies of Lady Booby, the tantrums of Mrs. Wilkins and Mrs. Western, conditioned our attitudes to those characters, even if they were not intended to give us insight into the workings of their souls. In Amelia, Fielding makes several attempts to use irony of situation, but these fall far short of the success achieved in Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews. We may take as an example, his description of Mrs. James' behaviour when she learns of the duel between Booth and her husbands:

"Neither Miss Bellamy nor Mrs. Cibber were ever in a greater consternation on the stage, than now appeared in the countenance of Mrs. James. 'Good Heavens! brother,' cries she, 'what do you tell me! You have frightened me to death. Let your man get me a glass of water immediately, if you have not a mind to see me die before your face. When, where, how was this quarrel, why did you not prevent it, if you knew of it? Is it not enough to be every day tormenting me with hazarding your own life, but must you bring the life of one who you know must be, and ought to be, so much the dearest of all to me, into danger? Take your sword, brother, take your sword, and plunge it into my bosom; it would be kinder of you than to fill it with such dreads and terrors'. Here she swallowed the glass of water; and then threw herself back in her chair, as if she had intended to faint away".¹

Mrs. James's outburst is simply melodramatic and nothing more. Doubtless, it was intended to call our attention to her insincerity, hypocrisy and affectation, but it does not. It fails to achieve the same effects as

¹ Amelia, Bk.V, ch.viii.

comparable outbursts by Lady Booby and Mrs. Western. The last sentence, also, is clearly an attempt at explanatory irony, designed to call our attention to Mrs. James's feigning. But how much more powerfully does Fielding do the same sort of thing in his description of Mrs. Blifil's pretended faint on hearing the news of her husband's death!¹ "As if she had intended to faint away" is too blatant and too openly condemnatory; it gives the game away. Fielding tells us quite openly that she was feigning; there is thus no irony here. Mrs. James' insincerity is not subtly suggested. When in Tom Jones Fielding talks of a lady who knew "the true state" of Mrs. Blifil's feelings the reader realizes there are several layers and possibilities of meaning in the statement; the irony is therefore much more subtle, and, as such, much more effective. Further evidence of Fielding's unsuccessful attempts at explanatory irony is provided by the following examples:

"Mr. Trent then was a gentleman, possibly of a good family; for it was not certain whence he sprung on his father's side".²

"This was nothing but making a mistake, pretty common at this day, of writing another man's name to a deed instead of his own. In truth this matter was no less than what the law calls forgery, and was just then made capital by an act of parliament".³

In both examples the irony lacks edge and humour. Moreover, the reference to Trent's illegitimacy can hardly be regarded as a point against him. In Tom Jones, on the other hand, the hint that Mrs. Blifil was actually pregnant when she got married was a point against her. The explanatory section in the second passage -- ("In truth...forgery") -- does not add anything new to the information we already have; it fails, therefore, to surprise or to shock us; and this is an essential characteristic of the

¹ See Chapter Seven above.

² Amelia, Bk.XI, ch.iii.

³ Amelia, Bk.XI, ch.iii.

explanatory type of irony.

There are very few examples of rhetorical irony in Amelia. This is a marked departure from Fielding's practice in Tom Jones. How magnificently were we treated in that novel to those detailed ironic accounts of Squire Western's relations with his wife, or Square's liability to succumb to the things of the flesh! The nearest we have to these in Amelia is Fielding's description of Colonel James's character, but even this can hardly be called ironical.

"In truth, the colonel, though a very generous man, had not the least grain of tenderness in his disposition. His mind was formed of those firm materials, of which nature formerly hammered out the Stoic, and upon which the sorrows of no man living could make an impression. A man of this temper, who doth not much value danger, will fight for the person he calls his friend; and the man that hath but little value for his money will give it him; but such friendship is never to be absolutely depended on".¹

Once again, there was great potential here for ironic treatment. But Fielding, after an early promise (his mind was formed of those firm materials ...) moves away from the ironic stance and gives only literal comments. If we compare this with some of the comments on Thwackum, Square, and Mr. Western, we can again see that Fielding's art in Amelia lacks complexity and subtlety.

Fielding also attempts to use burlesque, and mock-epic descriptions and similies, but he is no more successful with these than he is with other devices. Here, for example, are his comments after the "little great man" receives the sum of fifty pounds from Booth:

"The great man received the money, not as a gudgeon doth a bait, but as a pike receives a poor gudgeon into his maw. To say the truth, such fellows as these may well be likened to that voracious fish who fattens himself by devouring all the little inhabitants of the river".²

¹ Amelia, Bk.VIII, ch.v.

² Amelia, Bk.XI, ch.v.

The quasi-epic simile here fails to match the ferocity of a similar one in Jonathan Wild,¹ nor does it rise to the level of grandeur achieved by Fielding's reference to Mrs. Wilkins as a hawk. He meets with slightly greater success in the following passage:

"As in the delightful month of June, when the sky is all serene, and the whole face of Nature looks with a pleasing and smiling aspect, suddenly a dark cloud spreads itself over the hemisphere, the sun vanishes from our sight, and every object is obscured by a dark and horrid gloom. So happened it to Amelia; the joy that had enlightened every feature disappeared in a moment; the lustre forsook her shining eyes; and all the little loves that played and wantoned in her cheeks, hung their drooping heads, and with a faint trembling voice, she repeated her husband's words: 'Not sup with me tonight, my dear!'"²

There is no doubt of the power with which Amelia's disappointment is evoked. But this is due not to the epic simile but the picture of the crestfallen Amelia conjured up in the last three lines as she forces herself to whisper, "Not sup with me tonight, my dear!" If we compare this with the grove scene in Tom Jones, we can see that the wealth of imagery, typified in that scene by the "rutting" image, has almost entirely vanished.

If we look then in Amelia for the richness of texture and variety of Tom Jones we are bound to be disappointed. Fielding has used few of the many comic devices he employed in his earlier novels, and where he has used them, he has failed to match the subtlety and bite he achieved earlier. In Tom Jones, in particular, he had used double irony to portray the complexities in individual characters, in human nature and in human life. In Amelia, on the other hand, double irony is hardly used at all, although there are several possibilities for its use. Because of this, there is little indication of complexity in the characters or in the interpretation of events.

¹ Jonathan Wild, Bk.II, ch.i.

² Amelia, Bk.XI, ch.viii.

Furthermore, there is abundant evidence in the novel of a decline in the author's powers of control. One cannot help feeling that there are far too many irrelevancies and faults of taste. What was the point, for instance, of taking the trouble to get Booth into Mrs. Harris' house, concealed in a hamper, if, in the end, he had to be discovered and forced to leave without seeing Amelia? The whole episode is very crudely managed. Again, when Captain Atkinson informs Booth of his intention to marry, Booth and Amelia rush to the conclusion that his intended wife must be Mrs. Ellison, and they go on to laugh about it for two pages together, for no apparent reason. In the next scene, Colonel Bath and his sister, Mrs. James, are discovered having an argument about Colonel James's failure to return home; this again goes on pointlessly for two more pages. Neither of these episodes seems to have been necessary; neither makes any significant contribution to an elucidation of the novel's meaning.

Fielding can even be accused of having committed faults of taste. An incident during Mrs. Bennett's relation of her history bears this out. Mrs. Bennett has just come to the point in her narration where her former husband accuses her of having "polluted" him. It is a crucial scene, and it is very powerfully and touchingly described. When Mrs. Bennett faints, we feel it is genuine, and that her condition can hardly be the object of ridicule. But Fielding is so accustomed to making fun of ladies' swoons, that he cannot resist the temptation here:

"The reader, if he hath been acquainted with scenes of this kind, very well knows that Mrs. Bennett, in the usual time, returned again to the possession of her voice; the first use of which she made was to express her astonishment at the presence of the serjeant, and, with a frantic air, to enquire who he was".¹

¹ Amelia, Bk.VII, ch.viii.

To suggest that Mrs. Bennett's swoon was a fake, was very ungallant and unworthy of Fielding at this particular juncture.

Finally, serious questions must be asked about the plot and structure of Amelia. It is certainly not as compact as Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews. In those novels, the crucial digressions were not only firmly integrated into the moral scheme, but they occurred at the appropriate points. The Wilson episode in Joseph Andrews and the Old Man episode in Tom Jones in particular, occurred more or less at the half-way stage of each novel. Each of them was a summary of everything that had been demonstrated in the novel up to that point, and a foreshadowing of everything that was to be seen later. If one might be permitted to speak metaphorically and look on each novel as an arch, then each of these episodes can be regarded as the centre-stone, holding together all the elements that went into the novel's making; without it the whole construction would be meaningless and would collapse. This cannot be said of any of the digressions in Amelia, not even of the doctor's discussion with the nobleman. Indeed, the various arguments the doctor has, not only with the nobleman, but also with his friends from the country, are badly positioned even though they are thematically relevant. The same applies to the "sermonizing" at Ranelagh. There is no reason for their being where they are. Although the placing of the narrations of Booth, Mrs. Bennett and Miss Matthews is more expert, faults can be detected in the handling of these episodes. Booth's narration, necessary though it may be to bring the reader up to date, is too long. It holds up the action and destroys the fictive illusion, because the reader feels that he is listening to an account of events, and not watching scenes from the life enacted before his eyes. Although the narrations of Miss Matthews and Mrs. Bennett are shorter, Fielding makes

little attempt to correlate character and scene.

In Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews, the accounts of the Old Man of the Hill and Mr. Wilson, not only gave us information, they also gave us some insights into the characters of Mr. Wilson and the Old Man. The account of the Old Man's relations with his brother, for instance, not only told us something of eighteenth-century customs and pastimes, but also helped to throw light on the Old Man's character. Throughout Tom Jones, Fielding had taken great care to relate character, scene and setting. When we turn to Amelia, on the other hand, we find little evidence of such care. The reader learns little about the characters of Miss Matthews and Mrs. Bennett from their stories, and Mrs. Bennett's account in particular, fails to prepare us for her dishonest manoeuvres later. The two accounts give much information but little elucidation.

All these show that Fielding was not completely in control of his material. Faults of taste and defects of structure and plot must point to the author's lack of grip on the events of the novel. When one adds to this the fact that the novel's texture is defective in complexity, richness and variety, it is clear why Amelia makes so much less of an impact than the other novels.

Does the decline of Fielding's art, however, affect the validity of his morality? It should not necessarily do so. What Fielding has been trying to say all along may still be valid, even though it is now much less powerfully stated and makes less impact on the reader. The change in Fielding's art does not affect the validity of his morality; it merely blunts its impact. Yet one is bound to raise the question whether Fielding may have failed to state his morality powerfully and forcefully because he himself no longer believed in it. Is it not possible that the morality's

blunt impact can be attributed to Fielding's own waning convictions? Is not the ailing Fielding of Amelia more disillusioned and saddened than the triumphant Fielding of Tom Jones? These questions make interesting speculation, but they can hardly be answered with any certainty. We shall probably never know such personal reasons for the weakness of the morality in Amelia. Unfortunately, apart from the Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon,¹ we do not possess much that Fielding wrote after Amelia on which to base a sound judgement. Amelia, as we have it, represents the twilight of Fielding's artistic endeavour. It is an interesting, but second-rate work. Nevertheless, it demonstrates the validity of the view that Fielding's morality and meaning are clearly and effectively stated only when his art is skilfully managed. Art and Morality in Fielding cannot be dissociated.

¹ The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon, though often praised, does not seem to show any greater artistic subtlety than Amelia. This seems to bear out the view that Fielding's illness may have had some effect on his artistic powers, and evidence of this can already be seen in Amelia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fielding's Works

The Works of Henry Fielding; with the Life of the Author, ed. A. Murphy, 4 Vols. (1762).

New edition etc., 10 Vols. (1784).

New edition, ed. A. Chalmers, 10 Vols. (1806).

New edition, The Works of Henry Fielding with an Essay on his Life by A. Murphy, ed. J.P. Browne, 10 Vols. (1871). This edition has been chiefly referred to.

The Works of Henry Fielding, ed. with a biographical essay by Leslie Stephen, 10 Vols. (1882).

The Works of Henry Fielding, ed. G. Saintsbury, 12 Vols. (1893).

The Works of Henry Fielding, with an introduction by E. Gosse, 12 Vols. (1898).

The Works of Henry Fielding, ed. W.E. Henley, 16 Vols. (New York, 1902).

The Miscellanies, 3 Vols. (1743).

The Fielding Library, with an introductory notice signed M.M.B. (1889).

Fielding's Novels, Shakespeare Head edition, 10 Vols. (Oxford, 1926).

An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews (1741).

The Champion, 2 Vols. (1741).

Biography and Criticism

- Allott, Miriam, "A Note on Fielding's Mr. Square", MLR, LVI (1961), 69-72.
- Baker, Sheridan, "Fielding's Amelia and the Materials of Romance", PQ, XLI (1962), 437-449.
- Banerji, H.K. Henry Fielding: Playwright, Journalist and Master of the Art of Fiction, his Life and Works (Oxford, 1929).
- Bateson, F.W. English Comic Drama, 1700-1750 (Oxford, 1929).
- Battestin, M.C. "Fielding's changing Politics and Joseph Andrews", PQ, XXXIX (1960), 39-55.
- "Fielding's Revisions of Joseph Andrews", SB, XVI (1963), 81-117.
- ed. Joseph Andrews and Shamela, by H. Fielding (University of Virginia and London, 1965).
- The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art (Wesleyan University Press, Conn., 1959).
- Beatty, R.C. "Criticism in Fielding's Narratives and his Estimate of Critics", PMLA, XLIX (1934), 1087-1100.
- Bispham, G.T. "Fielding's Jonathan Wild" in Eighteenth Century Literature (Oxford, 1909).
- Bissell, F.O. Fielding's Theory of The Novel (Cornell University Press, 1933).
- Blanchard, F.T. Fielding The Novelist (New Haven, 1925).
- Bland, D.S. "Endangering the Reader's Neck: Background Description in the Novel", Criticism, III (1961), 121-139.
- Booth, Wayne. "The Self-Conscious Narrator in Comic Fiction before Tristram Shandy", PMLA, LXVII (1952), 162-185.
- Brogan, H.O. "Fiction and Philosophy in the Education of Tom Jones, Tristram Shandy and Richard Feverell", College English, XIV (1952), 144-149.
- Butt, J.E. Fielding (1954).
- Caughen, I.B. "Fielding's Digressions in Joseph Andrews", College English, XVII (1956), 379-382.
- Child, H.H. "Fielding and Smollett", Cambridge History of English Literature, X (Cambridge, 1913).

- Coley, W.B. "The Background of Fielding's Laughter", ELH, XXVI (1959), 229-252.
- Cooke, Arthur L. "Henry Fielding and the Writers of Heroic Romance", PMLA, LXII (1947), 984-994.
- Coolidge, J.S. "Fielding and Conservation of Character", MP, LVII (1960), 247-259.
- Crane, R.S. "The Concept of Plot and the Plot of Tom Jones", in Critics and Criticisms Ancient and Modern (Chicago, 1952), pp.616-647.
- Cordasco, F. Henry Fielding: A List of Critical Studies published from 1895-1946 (Brooklyn, 1948).
- Cross, W.L. The History of Henry Fielding, 3 Vols. (New Haven, 1918).
- de Castro, J.P. "Did Fielding write Shamela?", N & Q, January 8 (1916).
- Downs, B.W. ed. An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews, by H. Fielding (Cambridge, 1930).
- Ehrenpreis, I. "Fielding's Use of Fiction", in Twelve Original Essays on Great English Novels, ed. Charles Shapiro (Wayne State University Press, 1960).
- Empson, W. "Tom Jones", The Kenyon Review, XX (1958), 217-249.
- Frey, B. Shaftesbury und Henry Fielding. Shaftesbury's Ethik und Humorgedanke in Henry Fielding's Komischen Epos (Bern, 1952).
- Homes Dudden, F. Henry Fielding, his Life, Works and Times, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1952).
- Godden, G.M. Fielding: A Memoir (1910).
- Goggin, L.P. "Development of Techniques in Fielding's Comedies", PMLA, LXVII (1952), 769-781.
- Goldberg, H. "Comic Epic or Comic Romance: The Argument of the Preface of Joseph Andrews", PQ, XLIII (1964), 193-215.
- Gosse, E. Henry Fielding. An Essay (1898).
- Greene, C.R. "A Note on the Authorship of Shamela", MLN, LIX (1944), 571
- Hazlitt, W. Lectures on the English Comic Writers (1819).
- Hill, R.M. "Setting in the Novels of Henry Fielding", Bulletin of the Citadel, VII (1943), 26-51.
- Hughes, L. "The Influence of Fielding's Millieu upon his Humour", University of Texas Studies in English (University of Texas Press, Austin, 1945), pp.269-297.

- Humphreys, A.R. "Fielding's Irony: its Methods and Effects", RES, XVIII (1942), 183-196.
- Hutchens, Eleanor M. Irony in Tom Jones (University of Alabama Press, Alabama, 1965).
- Irwin, W.R. "Satire and Comedy in the Works of Henry Fielding", ELH, XIII (1946), 168-188.
- The Making of Jonathan Wild: A Study in the Literary Method of Henry Fielding (Columbia University Press, 1941).
- Jenkins, Elizabeth. Henry Fielding (1947).
- Jensen, G.E. "Proposals for a Definitive Edition of Tom Jones", Library, XVIII (1937), 314-330.
- Jones, B.M. Henry Fielding, Novelist and Magistrate (1933).
- Johnson, Maurice. Fielding's Art of Fiction: Eleven Essays on 'Shamela', 'Joseph Andrews', 'Tom Jones' and 'Amelia' (Philadelphia, 1961).
- Kermode, F. "Richardson and Fielding", Cambridge Journal, IV (1950), 106-114.
- Kettle, Arnold. An Introduction to the English Novel, 2 Vols. (1951).
- Knight Miller, H. Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies: A Commentary on Volume One (Princeton, 1961).
- Kreisman, Bernard. Pamela - Shamela: A Study of the Criticisms, Parodies and Adaptations of Richardson's "Pamela" (University of Nebraska Press, 1960).
- Loftis, J. Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding, Stanford Studies in Language and Literature, No. 19 (Stanford University Press, 1959).
- McCutcheon, R.P. "Amelia or the Distressed Wife", MLN, XLII (1927), 32-33.
- McKillop, A.D. ed. An Essay on the New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding, anon. (1751), Augustan Reprint Society, No. 95, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library (University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1962).
- "The Personal Relations between Fielding and Richardson", MP, XXVIII (1931), 423-433.
- "Henry Fielding", The Early Masters of English Fiction (University of Kansas Press, Lawrence, Kansas, 1956).
- "Some Recent Views on Tom Jones", College English, XXI (1959), 17-22.
- Middleton Murray, John. "In Defence of Fielding", Unprofessional Essays (London and New York, 1956), pp.25-39.

Nichols, C.W. "Social Satire in Fielding's Pasquin and The Historical Register", PQ, III (1924), 309-317.

Nicoll, Allardyce J. British Drama (1925).

Parker, A.A. "Fielding and the Structure of Don Quixote", Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, XXII (1956), 1-16.

Paulson, R. ed. Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays (Inglewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962).

Pons, E. Fielding, Swift et Cervantes; De Don Quixote in England a 'Joseph Andrews' (1943).

Powers, L.H. "The Influence of The Aeneid on Fielding's Amelia", MLN, LXXI (1956), 330-336.

Raleigh, Sir Walter. The English Novel (1894).

Rawson, C.J. "Professor Empson's 'Tom Jones'", N & Q, CCIV (1959), 400-404.

Rogers, W.H. "The Significance of Fielding's Temple Beau", PMLA, LV (1940), 440-444.

— "Fielding's Early Aesthetic and Technique", SP, XL (1943), 529-551.

Sacks, Sheldon. Fiction and the Shape of Belief (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964).

Saintsbury, George. Fielding (1906).

— The English Novel (1913).

Scott, Sir Walter. Fielding, a Memoir (Edinburgh, 1821).

Sherburn, George. "Fielding's Social Outlook", PQ, XXXV (1956), 1-23.

— "Fielding's Amelia: an Interpretation", ELH, III (1936), 1-14.

Stephen, Sir Leslie. "Fielding's Novels", in Hours in a Library, Series 3 (1879).

Stevick, P. "Fielding and the Meaning of History", PMLA, LXXIX (1964), 561-568.

Swann, G.R. "Fielding and Empirical Realism", Philosophical Realism in Six English Novelists (Philadelphia, 1929).

Taylor, D. "Joseph as Hero in Joseph Andrews", Tulane Studies in English, VII (1957), 91-109.

Taylor, H.W. "Fielding Upon Cibber", MP, XXIX (1931), 73-90.

Thornbury, Ethel M. Henry Fielding's Theory of the Comic Prose Epic, University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, No. 30. (Madison, 1931).

Touster, Eva B. "The Literary Relationship of Thackeray and Fielding", JEGP, XLVI (1947), 383-394.

Towers, A.R. "Amelia and the State of Matrimony", RES, New Series, V (1954), 144-157.

Van Ghent, Dorothy. The English Novel: Form and Function (New York, 1953).

Watson, W. The Life of Henry Fielding with Observations on his Character and Genius (1807).

Watt, Ian. The Rise of The Novel (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957).

— ed. An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews, by Henry Fielding, Augustan Reprint Society, No. 57, William Andrews Clarke Memorial Library (Los Angeles, 1956).

Wells, J.E. "Fielding's Political Purpose in Jonathan Wild", PMLA, XXVIII (1913), 1-55.

Wendt, Allan. "The Naked Virtue of Amelia", ELH, XXVII (1960), 131-148.

Wilcocks, Mary P. A True Born Englishman, Being the Life of Henry Fielding (1947).

Willy, Margaret. Life was Their Cry, Essays on Fielding etc. (1950).

Wilson, R.W. "Thackeray's Injustice to Fielding", JEGP, LVI (1957), 203-212.

Woods, C.B. "Notes on Three of Fielding's Plays", PMLA, LII (1937), 357-373.

Work, J.A. "Henry Fielding, Christian Censor", in The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to C.B. Tinker (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1949).

Wright, Andrew. Henry Fielding, Mask and Feast (1965).

Primary Sources for the Intellectual and Social Background

- Addison, Joseph. Essays from Addison, ed. J.H. Fowler, English Literature Series (1954).
- Atterbury, Francis. Sermons and Discourses, 5th ed., 4 Vols. (1740).
- Ashley-Cooper, Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury. The Characteristics of Men, Manners and Opinions, 3 Vols. (1711).
- Barrow, Dr. Isaac. The Theological Works, ed. Revd. A. Napier, 9 Vols. (Cambridge, 1859).
- "The Virtue and Reasonableness of Faith", in Christian Institutes, A Series of Discourses and Tracts, arranged by Christopher Wordsworth (1837).
- Bayle, Pierre. Miscellaneous Reflections on a Comet, trans. from the French, 2 Vols. (1708).
- Berault, P. A Discourse of the Trinity etc. (1700).
- Berkeley, Bp. George. Alciphron: or, The Minute Philosopher, 2 Vols. (1732).
- Le Bossu, Rene. A Treatise of the Epic Poem, trans. W.J., 2 Vols. (1719).
- Bunyan, John. pseud. The Statesman's Progress, or a Pilgrimage to Greatness (Dublin, 1741).
- Burnett, Gilbert. A History of My Own Time, 2 Vols. (1724, 34).
- Butler, Bp. Joseph. The Analogy of Religion (1736).
- Cibber, Colley. An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian (1740).
- Clarke, Dr. Samuel. "Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion", in Sermons at Boyle Lectures, ed. S. Letsome and J. Nicholl, 3 Vols. (1739).
- Works, 3 Vols. (1738).
- A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God — The Boyle Lectures, 6th ed. (1724, 25).
- Chubb, Thomas. A Discourse Concerning Reason (1731).
- Collins, Anthony. A Discourse of Freethinking, Occasioned by the Rise and Growth of a Sect Call'd Freethinkers (1713).
- Defoe, Daniel. A History of the Life of Jonathan Wild (1725).
- A Narrative of all the Robberies, Escapes etc. of John Sheppard (1724).

- A General History of the Pirates (1724).
- Dryden, John. "A Discourse on Epic Poetry", in Dryden on Satire and Epic Poetry (1888).
- Hoadly, Bp. Benjamin. Works, 3 Vols. (1773).
- Hobbes, Thomas. The Leviathan, Everyman edition (1953).
- Hume, David. A Treatise of Human Nature, 3 Vols. (1739).
- Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding (1748).
- Hutcheson, Francis the Elder. An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue (1725).
- Law, William. A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life (1728).
- Of Justification by Works, a Dialogue Between a Churchman and a Methodist (1760).
- Leslie, Charles. A Short and Easy Method with the Deists (1745).
- A Dissertation Concerning Private Judgement and Authority (1726).
- Locke, John. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690).
- de Mandeville, Bernard. The Fable of the Bees. An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue, 2nd ed., 2 Vols. [parts 1 & 2 (1723, 1729)].
- An Enquiry into the Origin of Honour and the Usefulness of Christianity in War (1732).
- Free Thoughts on Religion, the Church and National Happiness (1723).
- Middleton, Conyers. The Life of Tullius Marcus Cicero, 2 Vols. (1741).
- Prideux, Humphrey. A Letter to the Deists (1697).
- Richardson, Samuel. Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded, 2 Vols. (1741).
- The History of Sir Charles Grandison (1753).
- Sacheverell, Henry. The Perils of False Brethren (1709).
- "The Communications of Sin", in Sermons and Tracts (1709).
- Smith, Alexander. Memoirs of the Lives and Times of the Famous Jonathan Wild (1726).
- The History of the Lives of the Most Noted Highwaymen, Footpads, Shoplifters and Cheats of Both Sexes (1714).

South, Dr. Robert. Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions, New ed., 7 Vols. (Oxford, 1823).

Steele, Sir Richard. The Dramatic Works (1723).

Swift, Jonathan. The Works of Jonathan Swift, 6 Vols. (Dublin, 1735-8).

Sherlock, Bp. Thomas. Several Discourses Preached at the Temple Church, 3 Vols. (Edinburgh, 1774).

Tillotson, Archbp. John. Works, 3 Vols. (1735).

Tindal, Matthew. Christianity as Old as the Creation (1732).

Toland, John. Christianity not Mysterious (1696).

Warburton, Bp. William. A Sermon Occasioned by the Present Unnatural Rebellion (1745).

Webster, Alexander. The Wicked Life and Fatal but Deserved Death of Haman (Edinburgh, 1741).

Wesley, John. Standard Sermons, ed. E.H. Sugden (1921).

Secondary Sources for the Intellectual and Social Background

- Baker, E.W. A Herald of The Evangelical Revival (1948).
- Bond, Harold L. The Literary Art of Edward Gibbon (Oxford, 1960).
- Butt, J.E. ed. The Poems of Alexander Pope, Twickenham, one Vol. edition (1963).
- Courtines, L.P. Bayle's Relations with England and the English (New York, 1938).
- Crane, R.S. "Towards a Genealogy of The Man of Feeling", ELH, I, (1934), 205-230.
- Dobree, Bonamy. English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century, Vol. VII of the Oxford History of English Literature (Oxford, 1959).
- Distaff, J. A Character of Don Sacherrellic (1730).
- Dyson, A.E. The Crazy Fabric. Essays in Irony (1965).
- Dyson, H.V.D. & Butt, J.E. Augustans and Romantics (1940).
- Entwhistle, W.J. Cervantes (Oxford, 1940).
- Fowler, J. Shaftesbury and Hutcheson (1882).
- Humphreys, A.R. The Augustan World (1954).
- Kaye, F.B. ed., The Fable of the Bees, by B. de Mandeville, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1924).
- Mason, H.T. Bayle and Voltaire ((1963).^{re. 1931}).
- Overton, J.H. & Abbey, C.J. The English Church in the Eighteenth Century, 2 Vols. (1878).
- Primer, I. ed. The Fable of the Bees, by B. de Mandeville (New York, 1962).
- Riley, E.C. Cervantes' Theory of The Novel (Oxford, 1962).
- Robertson, J.M. A Short History of Free Thought, 2 vols. (1899).
- Robinson, J.H. Bayle The Sceptic (New York, 1931).
- Scudi, A.T. The Sacheverell Affair (1939).
- Smith, L.W. "Fielding and Mandeville: 'The War against Virtue'", Criticism, III (1961), 7-15.

- Stromberg, R.N. Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth Century England (1954).
- Trail, H.D. & Mason, J.S. ed., Social England, V (1904).
- Van Doren, M. Don Quixote's Profession (New York, 1958).
- Williams, Aubrey L. Pope's Dunciad (1955).
- Williams, Basil. The Whig Supremacy, Vol. XI of The Oxford History of England, 2nd revised ed. (Oxford, 1962).
- Williams Kathleen. Jonathan Swift and The Age of Compromise (Lawrence, Kansas, and London, 1959).
- Willey, Basil. The Eighteenth Century Background (1940).

General Works

- Bernbaum, E. The Drama of Sensibility. (Boston and London, 1915).
- Birkhead, E. "Sentiment and Sensibility in the Eighteenth-Century Novel", Essays and Studies, XI (1925), 92-116.
- Bond, R.P. English Burlesque Poetry, Harvard Studies in English, No. 6 (Camb. Mass., 1932).
- Booth, Wayne C. The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, 1961).
- Chandler, F.W. The Literature of Roguery (Boston, 1907).
- Cross, R.W. Development of The English Novel (New York, 1899).
- Danby, John. Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature (1949).
- Hardy, Barbara. The Novels of George Eliot (1959).
- Harvey, W.J. The Art of George Eliot (1961).
- Jack Ian. Augustan Satire (Oxford, 1952).
- Krutch, Joseph W. Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration (New York, 1924).
- Lubbock, Percy. The Craft of Fiction (1921).
- Mayo, E.D. The English Novel in the Magazines, 1740-1815 (North Western University Press, 1962).
- Sutherland, James. English Satire (Cambridge, 1958).
- Tillyard, E.M.W. The Epic Strain in the English Novel (Oxford, 1958).