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PARODY AND PERSPECTIVE IN THE NOVELS OF HENRY FIELDING:  
AN ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the development of Fielding's work, against the background of the work of the earlier eighteenth century novelists, from his interest in the burlesque drama and parody to his final novel. In the pattern of development that emerges Shamela is a key work for it is at once a link, as a work of parody, between the burlesque drama Tom Thumb and the novel Joseph Andrews, and an epitome of Fielding's objections to Richardson's Pamela. Fielding rejected both Richardson's introspective epistolary method of writing, and the morality that equated virtue with chastity and with little else. So far Fielding concerned himself merely with debunking Pamela. In the central portion of Joseph Andrews, however, he first provided an alternative vision of man and human nature. That alternative morality achieves full expression in Tom Jones and parody per se disappears almost entirely. Fielding's extensive work with parody, nevertheless, had left a legacy in the comic perspective of Tom Jones. That perspective, the superbly controlled sense of ironic detachment, is shattered in the last novel, Amelia, a work that is wholly serious and much closer to the kind of novel that Richardson was writing. Having shown how the comic perspective developed in Fielding's work, the thesis, in the third and final chapter, examines some of the techniques used by Fielding in his major work, Tom Jones, in establishing the comic perspective.



## I

The English novel is a bastard; no one seems to know who its father is. The paternity has been ascribed to Defoe, to Richardson, and to Fielding, and at least two of these have not blushed to acknowledge it.<sup>1</sup> The question, a delicate one, had, perhaps, best been left alone. The reason for raising it at all is to indicate what is surely a characteristic note of this first generation of the English novelists -- the rivalry. The literary feud between Richardson and Fielding is well known and it is generally recognized, rightly, that Shamela,<sup>2</sup> Fielding's parody of Richardson's Pamela, is the spring board for Fielding's work as a novelist. We will see later just how important Shamela (and parody in general) is in the work of Henry Fielding. Fielding, of course, rejected both Richardson's way of writing (his method) and what he said (the morality). Such a rejection of Richardson's method and morality in the early works led to a development of the full expression of his own morality as an alternative to Richardson's. The full development of Fielding as a novelist from a dramatist and

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<sup>1</sup>

Both Richardson and Fielding have proclaimed their work to be a "new species of writing".

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I take it as now established that Fielding wrote Shamela. See any one of Austin Dobson, Wilbur Cross, Alan D. McKillop, Charles B. Woods.

parodist, the place and importance of parody in his rejection of Richardson, and the alternative vision of man and human nature that Fielding offered, <sup>make up</sup> is the subject of this thesis.

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I have said that the characteristic note of the first generation of the English novel is one of rivalry, and I have pointed to the well known antagonism of Fielding to Richardson as an example. In such a case, when the matter comes out into the open and the literary expression of it takes the form initially of parody, and later of an alternative in Tom Jones, there is no doubt that rivalry, here open and universally known, is the right word. However, the rivalry among the early novelists existed in a less conscious, or at least a less public sense, in as far as each of them, Defoe, Richardson, Smollett, Fielding, attempted a different solution to the problem of the novel. That they all looked upon this problem as the need to create verisimilitude can scarcely be doubted. Defoe represented fiction as truth with a mass of convincing detail. Richardson adopted an epistolary technique because it seemed to intensify verisimilitude and intimacy. Fielding, while rejecting the convenient first person device of his predecessors, used the omniscient author convention which allowed him to direct his readers' attention more readily. Smollett, whose characters range through a vast selection of more or less unrelated

episodes, hangs the unity of his work on a picaresque hero and represents life in all its changes and chances. But behind this desire for verisimilitude, and their various solutions to it, lies a more fundamental problem which is reflected over and over again in the prefaces and introductions to their novels. They write, we are frequently told, not only to entertain but also to instruct. For example, in his introductory chapter to Joseph Andrews, Fielding speaks of his high regard for "those biographers who have recorded the actions of great and worthy persons of both sexes" and he refers to some of their works by name. "In all these", he tells us, "delight is mixed with instruction and the reader is almost as much improved as entertained."<sup>3</sup> We might put this in another way and say that the reason for verisimilitude is both psychological and philosophical -- psychological because the reader is caught up in the life of the hero or the lives of the characters and takes a vicarious pleasure from his reading, and philosophical in that it makes what the author has to say about the men (and women) and their lives seem true. The novel, then, is a vehicle for the expression of a "philosophy of life", a view of man and human nature. As each of the early eighteenth century novelists used the novel to express, in a different way, his view of life, it would be well if we looked briefly at each

of them to see what kind of novels he wrote.

The first of these in time is Defoe. Why then is he not universally accepted as the "Father of the English Novel"? The answer is to be found in the somewhat rudimentary quality of much of his work. To many readers his adventure stories, even when they are sophisticated adventure stories like Robinson Crusoe seem to have little in common with the novel as we know it today with its presentation of the great problems of human relationships and communication, its involved analysis of the springs of human action, its reflection of metaphysical concepts such as duration and the absurd, and its difficult presentation often in the form of the stream of consciousness technique. In Defoe's novels the action is centered exclusively around one character. Perhaps no better words can be found to describe Defoe's Robinson Crusoe than his own when he calls it "the story of [a] private man's adventures in the world".<sup>4</sup> The story element ranks high in all of Defoe's novels. It is, of course, neither a romance nor a fable, nor is it the story of a prince. Its hero is a private citizen, like most of Defoe's heroes, someone from "the middle station in life". He is a rugged individualist, someone who has to make his own way in the world. Conflict in Defoe's novels inevitably arises from the fact that the hero stands ego contra mundum, and

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Defoe, Robinson Crusoe (1719), intro. by Louis Kronenberger (New York, 1948), p. 2.

that world is hostile. Life is, consequently, a constant struggle for survival, which is usually, although not always, as in the case of Roxana, ultimately successful.

The heroes and heroines of Defoe share many qualities. They come as a rule from the middle class but are early reduced in fortune and position. However, their natural qualities of self assertion come to the fore under the pressure of adversity and before long they are successfully directing their own affairs and those of others. Inevitably, their infatuation with adventure takes them away from England, often far away, but in the end they invariably return to the homeland. Theirs is, however, a limited world. Defoe makes almost exclusive use of the autobiographical technique, and we see the fictional world of the novel only through the eyes of the main character. Other characters pass in and out of the novel, but with a few exceptions, such as William the Quaker, Moll Flander's "governess" and Roxana's determined daughter, they are not memorable. Human relationships are rarely important as ends in themselves but only as means to an end. This is particularly so in the two novels about women, Moll Flanders and Roxana, where marriage is invariably an economic necessity and a means of rising in the world.<sup>5</sup> The characters show little introspection, although Robinson Crusoe when he is on his island, and Moll

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<sup>5</sup> For a full discussion of the homo economicus see Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957), p. 63 passim.



Flanders, in her wonderful astonishment at the course of her life, are partial exceptions. On the whole they have little control over the events of their lives; they can take advantage of opportunities, but can rarely create them.

Defoe has frequently been called a master illusionist. He represents fiction as truth and lends support to the supposed veracity of his account by a mass of convincing detail of which the use of the bills of mortality in the Journal of the Plague Year is but one illustration from among thousands that would do as well. A strong sense of time and place lends credence to the account. Dates and places are frequently given; lists of articles stolen (Moll Flanders) or rescued (Robinson Crusoe) are common; and preparations for any undertaking are extensively documented. All this is supported by the regulating presence of a physical environment (as in Robinson Crusoe) and the disarming tone of utter frankness of the narrator. It is these last two qualities in particular that make Defoe the craftsman that he is.

Defoe's novels seem to lack any real structural unity or any of the more sophisticated narrative devices such as irony. Yet Moll Flanders, possibly the greatest if not the most widely known of Defoe's works, possesses both of these, albeit in a relatively undeveloped form. The unity of Moll Flanders, apart from the presence of the heroine herself, arises from the continuity based on the relationship<sup>6</sup>

of Moll, her mother, half-brother, favourite husband and only significant child. All of them, furthermore, spend time in Virginia at some point. It is in Virginia too that Moll is ironically told the history of her incestuous relationship with her half-brother by a woman who is unaware that Moll is the principal person in her story. Such irony is occasional, however, and it is doubtful if any of the novels possesses any sort of sustained irony such as Swift's use of an ironic persona or Fielding's ironical comments as intrusive narrator. The ironic contrast of Moll's life with her professedly respectable middle class standards, although it only comes up occasionally, is the most sustained piece of irony in Defoe. It is a technique that Fielding will exploit in Tom Jones.

When we come to Richardson's novels Pamela and Clarissa, we leave the great wide world of travel and adventure of Defoe, and we step into a closed world of highly introspective letter writers. Defoe's novels, like so many of his characters have a "big-boned" quality. His characters are bold and robust, but seem to have little sexual desire. In Defoe's novels energy takes the place of passion. It would seem to be just the opposite in Richardson's work.

In many ways Richardson's novels can be seen as a development of Defoe's. Most striking is, of course, the refinement of the autobiographical technique. The epistolary technique, although it has its drawbacks, allows for a change

in the point of view of the writer. Events are not viewed from the perspective of someone looking back over a lifetime but, rather, the time of the event and the time of writing are almost identical. Hence it is that Pamela's changing feelings about Mr B. can be satisfactorily presented. Furthermore, we do not see through the eyes of only one character; rather, because there is more than one letter writer, we are given more than one point of view and more than one character can be fully developed. This technique is taken further in Clarissa which has two fully developed pairs of letter writers. The story is built up by a slow process of accretion. Each event is fully analysed from the multiple points of view of the various letter writers. On the other hand the drawback in the technique is obvious. Dr Johnson, who preferred Richardson to Fielding, put it finally and succinctly when he pointed out that "if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself".<sup>7</sup> He tells us that we must read Richardson "for the sentiments".

The development of the epistolary technique from the autobiographical technique, as I have indicated, means a fictional world of more than one rounded character. This in turn means that action now finds its origin, not in the struggles of an individual against the world, but in the

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<sup>7</sup> James Boswell, Life of Johnson (1791), intro. by Sir S. Roberts (London and New York, 1906), Vol. I, p. 427.

relationship of individuals with each other. It is this aspect of human relationships that is to become the main source of action in novels from Richardson onward.

Another result of the epistolary technique is the highly introspective quality of the novel; it is a commonplace of literary criticism to say that Richardson wrote novels of sentimental analysis. And analysis, unrelentingly introspective, is exactly what we have. If the main-spring of the action were not rape the novels would be only tedious; as it is the concern about inner consciousness is morbid and, in the case of the second half of Clarissa, it is macabre.

The fictional worlds that Richardson created are peopled with beings of unbelievable cruelty; Clarissa's treatment by her family and in particular by her brother is abnormal to say the least. They are a strange group of people in other ways. Apart from the fact that they must spend hours every day in writing to one another (which can be overlooked as a flaw in the device that Richardson has chosen to use) they seem to be almost entirely devoid of humour. The novels throughout are serious and moral. Lovelace almost alone of the characters in either novel exhibits anything even resembling a sense of humour. The humour of most of the characters, Mrs Jewkes, say, or Mr B., is usually more sadistic than amusing. The morality that finds expression in both novels is seen largely in terms of black

and white, unspotted virtue pursued by diabolical vice. The morality of Pamela is particularly objectionable for it makes of virginity a saleable commodity; Pamela holds out long enough to marry her master and pursuer.

It is, perhaps, the sense of restricted movement that most clearly distinguishes Richardson's novels from those of Defoe and Smollett. The interiors of great houses and occasionally their high walled gardens, coaches, and a London brothel are all we ever see; the theme of imprisonment lies heavily over these works. The world of the outdoors and of action is eliminated in favour of the indoors and introspection.

With <sup>the early novels of</sup> Smollett we move out of doors again into a world where there is even less introspection than in Defoe. As in Defoe, one character seems to dominate the novel although this is rather more true of Roderick Random than of Peregrine Pickle. Smollett, who looks back to Don Quixote and Gil Blas, revived the picaresque hero. Like the heroes of Defoe's novels, Smollett's hero begins well but is soon forced by circumstances to run away to sea. There he engages in a seemingly endless series of episodic adventures full of fierce action and great hardships, but wins through in the end because of his essentially good nature, gains the sympathy of the reader, and returns home to inherit his rightful place. Once again action takes the place of sexual interests and the hero moves through a world that is predominantly

masculine. Hawser Trunnion's famous romance serves as a source of amusement and not as a means of discussing a moral question. The fictional world of Smollett is filled with seafarers and soldiers and metropolitan scoundrels, and life among these people is often marked by brutality, filth, squalor and a callous disregard for human life. The novel serves as a vehicle for the expression of Smollett's sense of the need for reform both in the navy and in the city.

Characterization in Smollett is perhaps the most interesting feature of the novel for Smollett's characters are often caricatures -- Commodore Hawser Trunnion, that "walking embodiment of a vocation" is a good example. The approach to character, unlike Richardson's but like Defoe's, is external. Smollett's characters, like so many of Fielding's, could have stepped out of the pictures of Hogarth. It is for this reason, and because of Smollett's sense of social injustice, and his exposure of petty pride and hypocrisy (just think of Peregrine's sisters) that he appealed so much to Dickens.

Smollett provided one solution to the problem that Richardson's novels created, but his fictional world is as limited in its way as Richardson's. These two, Smollett and Richardson, really are poles apart; the one writes novels that are, characteristically, robust, even rowdy, full of action and adventure, episodic, and dominated by a hero who rarely pauses long enough to engage in serious reflection,

while the other writes of a world of restricted movement, confined indoors, based on a single and perpetually imminent event -- the rape of the heroine, and dominated by a heroine who has far too much time for introspection.

Fielding, true as always to the Augustan tradition, avoids either extreme. On the one hand he reacted against the sense of restricted movement and the world of morbid introspection. Fielding's world is healthier and saner and more alive than Richardson's as Coleridge emphasized when he said that picking up Fielding after Richardson was like emerging from a sick room heated with stoves to an open lawn on a breezy day. Yet, on the other hand, he did not turn to the solution that Smollett was working out for himself at that time. Smollett, as Coleridge might have continued, is as far away from Fielding as the sea from the breezy lawn. Fielding's reaction to Richardson was stronger, however, than even Coleridge's statement might indicate. He was outraged that the over-simplified, methodized morality of Pamela should go down with <sup>the</sup> a public as a new height in goodness -- religious as well as moral. Furthermore, he reacted against both Richardson's "original" method of writing and the morality he presented (the two are closely related). In Joseph Andrews Fielding, obviously with Richardson (among others) in mind, declaims against "those persons of surprising genius, the authors of immense romances, or the modern novel and Atlantis writers; who, without any assistance from nature or

history, record persons who never were, or will be, and facts which never did, nor possibly can, happen; whose heroes are of their own creation, and their brains the chaos whence all their materials are selected."<sup>8</sup> Fielding felt that there was an alternative both to Richardson's method and his morality, but that alternative is the subject of the next section.

## ii

When Fielding wrote (in the same chapter of the same book of Joseph Andrews in which he spoke of those novelists whose "heroes are of their own creation") "I declare here, once for all, I describe not men, but manners; not an individual but a species",<sup>9</sup> his eighteenth century readers would have recognized this as a declaration in favour of the Augustan and Classical tradition. Fielding consciously associated himself with that tradition, a tradition that, a little self-consciously perhaps, connected itself with the reign of Augustus Caesar, the finest period of Latin literature and an age of peace and stability. The Augustans, of whom Swift and Pope are the foremost, looked back to the classical writers as models. (Fielding's use of Latin quotations, his theory of the comic prose epic and his frequent mention of Homer, Aristotle, Horace, and other classical writers are manifestations of this retrospective view point).

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<sup>8</sup> Fielding, Joseph Andrews, p. 143.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



A tradition derived from classical antecedents meant a tradition that emphasized, confidently, the general rather than the particular, the "prominent and striking feature" over<sup>10</sup> "minuter discriminations". Dr Johnson's remarks on the<sup>11</sup> business of a poet might well serve as a general pronouncement on the Augustan literary practice:

He must divest himself of the prejudices of his age or country; he must consider right and wrong in their abstracted and invariable state; he must disregard present laws and opinions, and rise to general and transcendental truths, which will always be the same: he must therefore content himself with the slow progress of his name; condemn the applause of his own time, and commit his claims to the justice of posterity. He must write as the interpreter of nature, and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations; as a being superiour to time and place.<sup>12</sup>

It was, of course, precisely from this tradition that Richardson alienated himself. Richardson particularized. He used an exchange of intimate and personal letters as a structural basis for his novels. His novels are long because they are filled with the unsifted, unsorted minutiae of the most intimate details of the lives of his characters. His intention was to create verisimilitude, and in so far as he leaves us with the impression that we are eavesdropping, he

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel Johnson, Rasselas, Ch. X.

<sup>11</sup> Although, as Imlac observes, "Thou hast convinced me, that no human being can ever be a poet".

<sup>12</sup> Johnson, Rasselas, Ch. X. Johnson does not appear consistent. It is interesting to note how different this passage of literary theory is from Johnson's remarks on the relative merits of Richardson and Fielding.

does. The Augustan tradition demanded a careful sifting of the facts, an accurate and balanced summary of events, a presentation of "general and transcendental truths". The Augustan writer had responsibilities of this kind to his readers. He had to "consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations; as a being superior to time and place". His view was Olympian and Fielding, the omniscient and intrusive narrator, is in this tradition. Such a writer, finally, "must be content with the slow progress of his name". It was, perhaps, this violation of decorum on Richardson's part that Fielding most deplored. Richardson had written commendatory letters about Pamela and had inserted them (as anonymous editor) in the first edition of Pamela. Fielding's unsparing parody caused Richardson to withdraw them in later editions.

It is in the light of this tradition that one can understand the Augustan concern for decorum and for modes. The ancient writers had developed the great literary forms, the ode, the epic, and so forth, and had adopted a style in each case suited to the form. Hence, Fielding was concerned that his new kind of writing should have classical antecedents. He even went so far as to claim that his novels were simply the ancient comic epic (the lost Margites of Homer) in prose. The discussion of the comic prose epic, however, is but part of the general Augustan discussion of literary theory of which Pope's Essay on Criticism is a memorable

example. Much of this discussion took the form, significantly, of an argument over the superiority of the Ancients to the Moderns, or vice versa. Swift's Battle of the Books and Dryden's Essay of Dramatic Poesy stand as prime examples in this area of literary criticism.

Other important concepts in the Augustan literary thought were the neo-classical rules, the "humours", and the importance of wit. The 'Rules' are derived from Aristotle and classical practice and deal, typically, with such matters as the proper length of time for a drama (a day -- whether natural or artificial) or an epic (a year). The doctrine of the humours had descended from the mediaeval explanation of man's various physical and mental qualities in terms of the preponderance of one (or a combination) of the four chief fluids in the body. The tradition, as the Augustans conceived it came, of course, from Ben Jonson's comedy of humours. The doctrine conceived of man's body as a battleground in which each of the humours was struggling for the mastery. Hence the need in man for self discipline. Men, furthermore, can be divided into various categories based on the humours. The lawyer in the stage coach in Joseph Andrews "is not only alive, but hath been so these four thousand years".<sup>13</sup> When Fielding says that he describes "not men, but manners; not an individual, but a species" he speaks within the tradition of the comedy of humours.

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Fielding, Joseph Andrews, p. 144.

The importance of wit particularly concerns a student of Fielding. Part of the Augustan emphasis on wit took the form of a war on its enemy, Dullness. The general of the campaign was Pope whose Dunciad was the heaviest gun in the line and one of the most powerful Augustan weapons of satire. Fielding joined in the fray, not only by the use of the pseudonym "Scriblerus Secundus",<sup>14</sup> but also by bringing a charge of dullness against "the painful and voluminous historian, who, to preserve the regularity of his series, thinks himself obliged to fill up as much paper with the detail of months and years in which nothing remarkable happened, as he employs upon those notable eras when the greatest scenes have been transacted on the human stage".<sup>15</sup> Here, perhaps, was the area of Fielding's finest achievement: he provided an alternative to Richardson's unsifted presentation of facts in a flat prose style. Fielding inherited from the Augustan satirists such sophisticated literary devices as the ironic persona, the imposed plot, the mock-heroic, the analogical situation, a highly formal prose style, and he made brilliant use of them, as we will see later.

### iii

The Augustan tradition helped Fielding to provide not only an alternative to Richardson's method of writing, but

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<sup>14</sup>

In the annotations of his The Tragedy of Tragedies.

<sup>15</sup>

Henry Fielding, Tom Jones (1749), intro. by George Sherburn (New York, 1950), p. 40.

also an alternative to his morality. It was Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who in her delightful comment on Richardson's breach of decorum in having his characters "declare all they think", pointed out that "fig leaves are as necessary for our minds as our bodies".<sup>16</sup>

The method and the morality of both Richardson and Fielding are, of course, closely related, and Fielding was, consequently, quite right when he realized that in rejecting one he must reject the other. It is the epistolary technique that allowed that morbid introspection to which Fielding so strongly objected. It is Fielding's omniscient author convention that prevents just such a personal and intimate view of the mind of the characters that the epistolary technique provides. Fielding's method provided the necessary fig leaves for the mind.

What Fielding objected to in Richardson was the affectation, and affectation, as he tells us in the Preface to Joseph Andrews, proceeds from vanity and hypocrisy. These two words as well as any seem to sum up Fielding's objection to Pamela. The vanity took the form, as we have already noted, of a Preface and a number of commendatory letters, as well as an exchange of compliments in the letters themselves. The hypocrisy proceeded from the fact that, as far as Fielding was concerned, Pamela's supposed virtue was a sham and that the real morality of the book was vulgar and

utilitarian. The morality was methodized and over-simplified. When virtue becomes synonymous with chastity any wide view of the value of goodness or benevolence becomes impossible. It is for this reason that Fielding gives us, as an alternative, the unchaste but goodhearted Betty of Joseph Andrews and, more emphatically, Tom Jones himself.

The problem with Richardson's book was that the morality, apart from frequently displaying a mawkish sentimentality, becomes distorted; the individual perspective on moral action cannot, because of the epistolary technique, be balanced against a larger perspective. As Professor Thornbury has pointed out, "Richardson never viewed his characters as the gods would view them -- sub specie aeternitatis.<sup>17</sup> He was one of them". But Fielding, on the other hand, developed and maintained the comic attitude to the world in order to portray it accurately. His was the perspective of the Olympian deities.

Hence it is that Fielding presents a broader canvas of life and gives us a world which emphasizes the value of normal and universal qualities, a world of common sense and common decency. Fielding's world is a far more inclusive world than Richardson's, limited as it is to one class of people and their servants. It is a world motivated not only by sex but also by "the humdrum motives of avarice, stupidity,

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E.M. Thornbury, Henry Fielding's Theory of the Comic Prose Epic (Madison, 1931), p. 163.

vanity, courage, and love".<sup>18</sup> Fielding's is a saner world and it is peopled by saner individuals. To see the contrast clearly, one need only think for a moment of the rosy<sup>19</sup> cheeked and normal Sophia and the wan and morbid Clarissa. The important lesson for the people of Fielding's fictitious<sup>ti</sup> world to learn, and one which they ultimately do learn, is to get along with one another. It is in an harmonious adjustment to the society that the individual finds his greatest happiness. Hence in Fielding evil is equated with<sup>20</sup> selfishness and good with benevolence and generosity.

## iv

The doctrine of benevolence, like the full comic perspective, only developed in Fielding's novels gradually, however. It would be as well, then, if we now took a brief look at Fielding's work as a whole. His apprenticeship as a writer was served in the exacting workshop of the drama and of parody -- exacting because the competition was keen and the public critical. His early training taught him two things that were to be of immense importance in his later work as a novelist. He developed the dramatist's techniques of handling scenes and characters and he learned to give

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Maynard Mack, "Joseph Andrews and Pamela", in Fielding, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962), p. 53.

19

Thornbury, p. 162.

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C.D. Ashmore, "Henry Fielding's 'Art of Life': A Study in the Ethics of the Novel", D.A. XIX, 2610.

expression, in parody, to his own acute sense of affectation -- both the literary and the human kind. Tom Thumb and Shamela are Fielding's most important works in drama and pure parody respectively, and the latter forms, conveniently, a link with his first novel, Joseph Andrews. Shamela, furthermore, is an epitome of Fielding's main objections to Richardson's novel for in it he parodied Richardson's method and debunked his morality. In this sense it is an epitome too of Joseph Andrews which did the same thing on a larger scale. The difference between the two works, however, is not hard to see. Shamela was written because Fielding merely despised Pamela. By the time he came to write Joseph Andrews, Fielding was well on his way to providing a substantial alternative to Richardson's novels.

Shamela, then, developed into Joseph Andrews, and in the novel we can clearly see the two aspects of Fielding's work with which we are concerned, namely, the parody of the form of Richardson's novel, and the provision of an alternative morality. The two great movements in Fielding's work that we will examine are the decline in parody and the corresponding enlargement of the perspective. These two aspects, although clearly not equally important in Joseph Andrews, are given approximately the same space. The next novel, taken chronologically, is Jonathan Wild but, in the context of Fielding's work as a whole, it is a reversion to his earlier interest in parody and satire. Consequently, we will



examine Jonathan Wild and Shamela together. After Joseph Andrews we will look at Tom Jones with which it is clearly linked. Tom Jones represents the full expression of the ideas that Fielding had been working with in Joseph Andrews. Here, furthermore, a balance between the two aspects has been achieved. The larger perspective has achieved a full expression and parody, although still in evidence, is no longer structurally important. Finally, we will look at Amelia, which, coming after Tom Jones, was and is a disappointment. The reason for the failure of Amelia is complex, but for the moment, it might be said that that failure can be seen in the light of the fact that Amelia is wholly serious, that parody has been virtually eliminated, and that the moral problem, which is concerned now with much the same subject that Richardson was concerned with, has taken over. It would be unfair to Fielding, and inaccurate, to say that he had come full circle and was now writing the same kind of novel as Richardson. But in taking, in the context of a domestic novel, the theme of a virtuous female suffering in a predatory masculine world, he has certainly moved closer to Richardson. Fortunately, Fielding adopted neither Richardson's morality nor his epistolary method. Amelia remains, simply, a kind of weakened continuation of Tom Jones.

## II

It was Shamela that propelled Fielding into the novel, but it was in the drama that he received his early training as a writer. In this section, beginning with the drama, it will be necessary to examine in some detail two great movements of Fielding's work, namely, the development away from his early fascination with parody and the growth into a larger perspective. In this connection it is well to remember that while parody itself implies a perspective, it is not a perspective that encompasses an alternative to the work parodied. The alternative to Richardson both in method and morality, although latent in Shamela, came first in Joseph Andrews, and received its full expression in Tom Jones. In the next section of this thesis, therefore, I propose to examine the comic perspective of Tom Jones.

### i

The dramatic works of Fielding are important to the student of his novels for two reasons. In the first place, the success of the "rehearsal" drama points to a general importance of burlesque and satire in Fielding's work as a whole. Secondly, the drama served as an apprenticeship in writing for Fielding. In them he was able to experiment, for example, with situations, characterizations, and irony. In the novels we will see evidence of the dramatist's technique.

Of the very large number of Fielding's dramatic works -- comedies, farcical ballad-operas, burlesques, and dramatic satires -- only a very few have survived. Significantly, the least successful of these dramas were the regular comedies and the farcical ballad-operas, and the most successful the burlesques and the dramatic satires. Three of his dramatic works, The Author's Farce, The Tragedy of Tragedies, and Pasquin, Fielding rescued from oblivion by including in his Miscellanies. These three, the "rehearsal" satires, were probably the most successful of Fielding's dramas. Even of them only one, The Tragedy of Tragedies, or, as it is better known, The History of Tom Thumb the Great, is read today. The dramatic satires are a burlesque of the excesses of the contemporary theatre. In Tom Thumb, for example, Fielding attacks the bombast, pedantry and artificiality of the heroic drama. The speeches of King Arthur, "a passionate sort of king", or of Tom Thumb, "a little hero with a great soul", but "something violent in his temper" may serve as good examples of heroic bombast. The attack on pedantry takes the form of a preface and the elaborate annotations of H. Scriblerus Secundus. One of these notes in particular is of interest to us because it is an excellent illustration of Fielding's early interest in the mock heroic technique.

This tragedy, which in most points resembles the ancients, differs from them in this -- that it assigns the same honour to lowness of stature which they did to height. The gods and heroes in Homer and Virgil are continually

described higher by the head than their followers, the contrary of which is observed by our author. In short, to exceed on either side is equally admirable; and a man of three foot is as wonderful a sight as a man of nine.<sup>1</sup>

The artificiality of the plot can be detected in the description of the Dramatis Personae. King Arthur is "in love with Glumdalca",<sup>2</sup> Tom Thumb has a great "love for Huncamunca", Lord Grizzle is also "in love with Huncamunca", Queen Dollalolla, "a woman intirely faultless, saving that she is a little given to drink" is "in love with Tom Thumb", the Princess Huncamunca, who is "of a very sweet, gentle, and amorous disposition", is "equally in love with Lord Grizzle and Tom Thumb, and desirous to be married to them both". While finally (one might say supremely) Glumdalca, a captive giant queen<sup>2</sup> is also in love with the irresistible and diminutive hero. In a wonderful burlesque of the "enormity of Shakespearian mutilation",<sup>3</sup> the plot can only be resolved by the slaughter of all the characters. Fielding burlesqued the florid diction, the unbelievable violence, the lofty sentiments and all the stock devices of heroic tragedy.<sup>4</sup> What aroused Fielding's ire was, of course, the affectation

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Fielding, "The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great", in his Miscellanies. Vol. II of The Works of Henry Fielding, ed. by George Saintsbury (London, 1902), p. 57, n.2.

<sup>2</sup> Fielding was obviously indebted here to Book II of Swift's Gulliver's Travels.

<sup>3</sup> F.H. Dudden, Henry Fielding, His Life, Works, and Times (Oxford, 1952), I, p. 228.

<sup>4</sup> W.R. Irwin, "Satire and Comedy in the Works of Henry Fielding", ELH, XIII (1946), 168-88.

of the dramatists and their work. It is significant that the two authors in Pasquin<sup>5</sup> are Trapwit and Fustian. It was just this kind of pretense that Fielding was to attack in Richardson by his Shamela.

Fielding's position before Richardson, then, is clear. He was an important, if minor dramatist whose strength lay in the burlesque imitation of the contemporary theatre. It was not without a touch of pride that, when speaking in the Preface to Joseph Andrews of "mere burlesque", Fielding justifiably said, "I have had some little success on the stage this way." He knew that his kind of burlesque would "conduce better to purge away spleen, melancholy, and ill affections, than is generally imagined" and he seemed to feel that this was better for an audience than being "soured by a tragedy or a grave lecture". This kind of drama, however healthy and necessary it may have been, was, nevertheless, parasitic. Fielding had yet to find a literary form that would provide him with an opportunity to write something that could stand alone and that had a lasting interest. That form, as we know, was to be the novel, and it was Shamela that made the bridge for Fielding between the burlesque drama and the early novel of parody.

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The title page in part reads: PASQUIN: A Dramatick Satire on the Times: Being the rehearsal of two plays: viz., A Comedy called THE ELECTION, and a Tragedy called THE LIFE AND DEATH OF COMMON SENSE.

Shamela bears much the same relationship to Pamela as Tom Thumb does to the heroic drama. In drama we usually refer to attack by exaggerated imitation as burlesque. In other literature we usually call such an attack a parody.<sup>6</sup> Shamela, then, is a parody of Pamela and a wonderfully effective one it is at that. The real test of good parody, as the etymology of the word indicates, is its closeness to the original. Shamela is a "cruelly clever satire"<sup>7</sup> because it bears just such a close relationship to Pamela. There are, for example, the same commendatory letters to the editor parodied as "The Editor to Himself", and "John Puff, Esq; to the Editor". The general outline is a greatly reduced copy of the form of Pamela, a number of letters from Pamela to her mother (whose name has been expanded to Henrietta Maria Honora Andrews), followed by a break-down in the epistolary technique at the point when Pamela was unable to send letters and began to write a diary. In many interior details the letters are very close; whole phrases have been preserved intact and many incidents are presented with only slight but, of course, telling changes from the original. In letter VI, for example, we find a parody of the famous incident in

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These two words are commonly used interchangeably even by critics. Such a usage is not wrong, but, as H.W. Fowler, Modern English Usage points out, it is important to realize that as well as the wider application each of the words has its own province -- "action and acting is burlesqued", "verbal expression is parodied".

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Dudden, p. 318.

Pamela (Letter XXV) in which Mr. B. (expanded in Shamela to Mr. Booby), after hiding in a closet while Pamela prepared for bed, suddenly rushed out and attempted to seduce her. Had it not been for the timely intervention of Mrs Jervis and the fact that Pamela "sighed and screamed, and fainted away", her ruin would have been accomplished at last. Here is the passage as it is parodied 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;.... I no sooner see him, but I scream out to Mrs. Jervis,.... After having made a pretty free use of my fingers, without any great regard to the parts I attacked, I counterfeited a swoon. Mrs. Jervis then cries out, O sir, what have you done! you have murdered poor Pamela:....

O What a difficulty it is to keep one's countenance, when a violent laugh desires to burst forth!

The poor Booby, frightened out of his wits, jumped out of bed,.... Mrs. Jervis applied lavender water,... for a full half hour; when thinking I had carried it on long enough,...I began by degrees to come to myself.

The squire,...the moment he saw me give symptoms of recovering my senses, fell down on his knees; and O Pamela, cried he, can you forgive me, my injured maid? by heaven, I know not whether you are a man or a woman, unless by your swelling breasts. Will you promise to forgive me? I forgive you! D--n you, says I; and d--n you, says he, if you come to that. I wish I had never seen your bold face, saucy sow -- and so he went out of the room.

O what a silly fellow is a bashful young lover!

He was no sooner out of hearing, as we thought, than we both burst into a violent laugh.

Here Fielding has exploited the salacious quality of the original passage. Furthermore, he has adroitly substituted bad motives for good ones (in this connection the significance of the title of Fielding's parody should not be overlooked), and "exposed", as he does throughout the book, "all

the matchless arts of that young Politician". The italicized exclamations are clearly written in imitation of the repeated and pathetic outbursts of Pamela about her wretched state. (The reader can find examples of such ejaculations in Pamela by opening it at almost any page.) Finally, in Shamela's remark at the beginning of the passage about writing in the present tense, Fielding has ridiculed the incessant letter writing in Pamela where the reporting of events follows closely upon the happening and even at times, as here, coincides.

Shamela is a parody not only of Pamela, however. In it Fielding also attacks Whitefield and the Methodists, Colley Cibber, Lord Hervey and Conyers Middleton. The attack on Whitefield is to be found in the parody of Whitefield's teaching of the calvinistic doctrine of the justification by faith and not by works. In his sermon Parson Williams, who, unlike Mr. Booby, has successfully seduced Pamela, takes as a text, Be not righteous overmuch. Colley Cibber's pretentious autobiography, An Apology for the Life of Mr Colley Cibber, is parodied in the full title of Shamela, An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews. Finally in an introductory letter Fielding parodies Conyers Middleton's fatuous dedication of his Life of Cicero to the effeminate Lord Hervey. The closeness of the parody can only be appreciated by those who have read both letters (too long to be given here), but I have space for one example.



Middleton had written, "It was Cicero who instructed me to write; your Lordship who rewards me for writing", which Fielding parodies as "it was Euclid who taught me to write. It is you, Madam, who pay me for writing." The letter is closed by the signature Conny Keyber, a double pun on Colley Cibber and Conyers Middleton.

Shamela, as the title hints, is pure parody. It is really a sort of extended pun. Its intention is destructive, its humour often crude, its satire scathing, and its result effective. In Shamela Fielding was content to parody the form of Pamela and debunk its morality; as yet he offered no alternative to Richardson's kind of novel. Here, however, in his dual concern with method and morality are to be found, together and in their simplest form, two strains of his development as novelist that are to persist until Tom Jones.

Jonathan Wild breaks the pattern of the development of Fielding's novels. Unlike Joseph Andrews which precedes it, Jonathan Wild is a development of only one of the strains of Shamela. The perspective of Jonathan Wild is the perspective that parody and irony provide; there is nothing of the larger perspective of Joseph Andrews. Jonathan Wild in short, like its hero, is anti-social. It will not keep orderly company with Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, and Amelia. Some critics are reluctant to accept it as a novel at all and look upon it simply as a piece of sustained ironic narrative in the manner, although inferior, of the fourth book

of Gulliver's Travels. It has no place, either, in the simile that likens Joseph Andrews to the sunrise, Tom Jones to the brilliant noon day, and Amelia to the gentle sunset of Fielding's career as novelist.<sup>8</sup>

Jonathan Wild, then, represents a return on Fielding's part to an earlier fascination with parody. The biographic form of the book is a parody on the adulatory style of the biographies of eminent men. In this instance the adulatory biographies are the object of parody just as the heroic drama and Pamela are the objects of parody in Tom Thumb and Shamela respectively. In the following passage Fielding takes some hard hits at the adulatory biographies:

When the former [Alexander] 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 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 corrupted and enslaved the greatest people whom the sun ever saw, we are reminded, as an evidence of his generosity, of his largesses to his followers and tools, by whose means he had accomplished his purpose and by whose assistance he was to establish it.<sup>9</sup>

The falseness of these biographies was as objectionable to Fielding as the falseness of heroic drama or of Pamela.

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Arthur Murphy, "An Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding, Esq." (Prefixed to the first collected edition of Fielding's works in 1762). Quoted in Dudden, p. 805.

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Henry Fielding, The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great (New York, 1962), p. 23.

The hero of the work, the eminent man, is the notorious thief and informer Jonathan Wild who is throughout ironically referred to as THE GREAT. His preeminence lies in the fact that there is scarcely any "spark of goodness" in him, for, "no two things can possibly be more distinct from each other" than greatness and goodness. Greatness "consists in bringing all manner of mischief upon mankind, and goodness in removing it from them".<sup>10</sup> The chief fault of earlier biographies has always been that they have confounded the two ideas and have made their great men into good men, "without considering that by such means they destroy the great perfection called uniformity of character".

We hope our reader will have reason justly to acquit us of any such confounding ideas in the following pages, in which, as we are to record the actions of a GREAT MAN, so we have nowhere mentioned any spark of goodness which had discovered itself either faintly in him, or more glaringly in any other person, but as a meanness and imperfection, disqualifying them for undertakings which lead to honour and esteem among men.

As our hero had as little as perhaps is to be found of that meanness, indeed only enough to make him partaker of the imperfection of humanity, instead of the perfection of diabolism, we have ventured to call him THE GREAT; nor do we doubt but our reader, when he hath perused his story, will concur with us in allowing him that title. <sup>11</sup>

The satiric point is, of course, that it is not only the notorious Wild who is a great man, but also the political leader, for "the same parts which qualify a man for eminence in a low sphere qualify him likewise for eminence in a higher":

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<sup>10</sup>

Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>11</sup>

Ibid., p. 23.

Doth it not ask as good a memory, as nimble an invention, as steady a countenance, to forswear yourself in Westminster Hall as would furnish out a complete tool of state, or perhaps a statesman himself? It is needless to particularize every instance; in all we shall find that here is a nearer connexion between high and low life than is generally imagined, and that a highwayman is entitled to more favour with the great than he usually meets with. <sup>12</sup>

In Jonathan Wild Fielding is examining the idea of Spurious Greatness. <sup>13</sup> In the allegory Wild represents Walpole, and the scoundrel and the politician are taken together as examples of Great Men. Throughout the work Wild's aims are represented as noble, his atrocities as exemplary and his undoubted successes as triumphant. He ends his life of consummate greatness in an "apotheosis" on the "tree of glory" at Tyburn. After his death he is the subject of a eulogy which concludes: "while GREATNESS consists in power, pride, insolence, and doing mischief to mankind -- to speak out -- while a GREAT MAN and a great roque are synonymous terms, so long shall Wild stand unrivalled on the pinnacle of GREATNESS." <sup>14</sup>

The idea on which Jonathan Wild is based is sound and Fielding's interest in parody legitimate. However, had the work been kept within the bounds of the length of Shamela instead of being expanded almost to the length of Joseph Andrews, it would have been more successful. As it is, Jonathan Wild is too long for the idea which is meant to

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>13</sup> See Dudden's chapters on Jonathan Wild.

<sup>14</sup> Fielding, Jonathan Wild, p. 218.

sustain it. Jonathan Wild suffers from what one critic has<sup>15</sup> aptly called a "literary infirmity of purpose". It is too flamboyant and unsubtle in its satire to be really effective as a long work. Furthermore, it offers none of the comic vision of the central portion of Joseph Andrews.

Another weakness of Jonathan Wild derives from the fact that Fielding's interest in parody, which in Joseph Andrews contributes to the structure, here causes the disunity of the work. He inserted the long and generally wearisome episodes of Mrs. Heartfree's adventures into a story framework with which it has little connection. Of course some device had to be used to explain how Mrs Heartfree came into possession of the jewels which would free her husband, but her extraordinary story seems a needlessly full explanation. Mrs Heartfree's adventures in foreign countries<sup>16</sup> are, of course, a parody of the extravagant travel tales. Fielding, like Swift in Gulliver's Travels, was capitalizing on a current passion for travel literature. At the same time, the miraculous preservation of her virtue in spite of the attempts of numerous lusty males, is a parody of the exaggerated romances which described the trials of a virtuous<sup>17</sup> female at the hands of lovers intent on her ruin. Here,

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<sup>15</sup> A.E. Dyson, "Satiric and Comic Theory in Relation to Fielding", Mod. Lang. Q., XXXIX (1960), 496-507.

<sup>16</sup> Dudden, p. 477.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Fielding's objections to Pamela, which he had already attacked in Shamela and Joseph Andrews, find expression again.

iii

In Joseph Andrews Fielding first provided an alternative to Pamela. Joseph Andrews is not only a parody of Pamela; it is, basically, "a reply of one ethical concept to another".<sup>18</sup> Richardson, as we noted earlier, had reduced the vast range of human emotions and the complexity, excitement, and variety of eighteenth century life to the false oversimplifications of Pamela's world. The ethical concept of Richardson's novel was that "virtue", in Richardson's limited sense of the word, resided in female chastity. To this restricted and unlikely view, Fielding replied strongly and positively with a picture of humanity "taken from life and not intended to exceed it".<sup>19</sup> True virtue, to Fielding, is to be seen in the life of a good man, a man of benevolence, and it is for that reason that Joseph Andrews can confidently defy "the wisest man in the world to turn a true good action into ridicule".<sup>20</sup> It was only too easy, as Fielding demonstrated, to turn the actions and writing of Pamela into ridicule. The true good action comes from within and cannot be laid aside like a cloak. In Fielding's eyes Pamela's "virtue" was just such a cloak, a pretence worn to conceal

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<sup>18</sup> Thornbury, p. 69.

<sup>19</sup> Fielding, Joseph Andrews, p. 145.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

true motives and it was his job as a satirist to tear away the cloak of pretence and expose the hypocrisy within.

But Fielding in Joseph Andrews is more than a satirist -- he is a comic artist. That is why he offers as an alternative to Richardson "the sweeping social comedy of the epic of the road"<sup>21</sup>. In this connection it is important to remember that Fielding takes care to tell us on the title page of Joseph Andrews that his novel is a "History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his Friend, Mr Abraham Adams, Written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes, Author of Don Quixote". Of course, in certain specific ways the two works are alike -- Parson Adams is clearly modelled upon Don Quixote, Joseph Andrews, like Don Quixote is divided into short chapters, and some sections of both works have chatty introductory essays, often on some aspect of critical theory. The connection, however, does not end with these particulars. Joseph Andrews takes the general form of Don Quixote. Cervantes had begun his great work with a parody of the romances of chivalry. However, his work soon ceased to be mere parody and became a wonderful comic romance whose characters, like Fielding's, are drawn from nature. The parody of the romances acts as a foil to Cervantes' alternative. Contrary to the opinion of some critics Joseph Andrews is not famous in literary history as

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M.C. Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews (Middleton, Conn., 1959), p. 9.

an example of a false start. Fielding's plain statement tells us that he intended his first novel to be a comic prose epic in the tradition of Cervantes. This is the difference between Shamela and Joseph Andrews. Shamela is pure parody; it takes its life and vigor from the closeness of its resemblance to the real thing. Joseph Andrews is much more than parody. The main narrative is an alternative to Richardson's method and morality.

Furthermore the parody in the two works is different, or, rather, much of the attack on Richardson in Joseph Andrews is of the nature of satire, not parody. Parody ridicules verbal expression and literary form. Satire works more generally. It selects the main vice or folly and holds that up to ridicule. Hence the attack on Pamela, which is confined almost entirely to the first ten and the last thirteen chapters of Joseph Andrews, proceeds after the manner of satire by recalling the moral and technical weaknesses of Pamela. The distinction can be put in another way. When he wrote Shamela, Fielding must have worked with the text of Pamela before him; by the time he wrote Joseph Andrews he was working, surely, from memory. Fielding had already parodied the small and large faults of the work. In Joseph Andrews the satiric parody provides a framework for the more important comic alternative to Richardson's kind of novel. As Maynard Mack has pointed out, Fielding's serious criticism of Pamela "whether or not he intended it as such, is the kind



of world Joseph Andrews creates."<sup>22</sup>

The main elements of Joseph Andrews that concern us are, firstly, the satiric parody of Pamela in the first ten and last thirteen chapters; secondly, the satire on human nature which runs throughout the book; and, thirdly, the comic vision of the central portion.

The chapters of parody attack Pamela mainly on two points, namely, a double standard of morality between the two sexes, and the exchange of virginity for a marriage proposal from a social superior. Joseph Andrews, brother of the "virtuous" Pamela (whose name has been restored) and the hero of the work, is an outstanding example of "male chastity", which Fielding assures us is "doubtless as desirable and becoming in one part of the human species as in the other".<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, we are told, "it was by keeping the excellent pattern of his sister's virtue before his eyes that Mr Joseph Andrews was chiefly enabled to preserve his purity in the midst of such great temptations".<sup>24</sup> Joseph is in love with Fanny, but since Pamela has raised her family by marriage with Mr Booby, Joseph cannot marry Fanny, the priggish Pamela tells him, without "throwing down our family again, after he [Mr B.] hath raised it". Fanny "was my equal", Pamela admits, "but I am no longer Pamela Andrews; I am now

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<sup>22</sup>

Mack, Art. cit., in Paulson, p. 53.

<sup>23</sup>

Fielding, Joseph Andrews, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>

Ibid.

this gentleman's lady, and, as such, am above her."<sup>25</sup> The difficulty is resolved, when, through the epic device of a surprise reversal, Fanny turns out to be a sister of Pamela and Joseph the better born son of Mr Wilson. Fielding plays upon what he knew would be his reader's reaction to the idea of "male chastity" to expose the foolishness of virtue based on female chastity. In the elaborate devices of reversal he exposed the equally objectionable notion that a servant girl can rise to be a gentleman's wife if she is prepared to trade her virginity for a marriage proposal. The subtitle of Pamela is Virtue Rewarded. Fielding exposes the shoddiness of Richardson's concept of virtue, and debunks his idea of its reward.

The satire of Joseph Andrews, however, broadens out from the attack on Pamela into a satiric exposure of the follies and vices of mankind in general. Pamela and Lady Booby become types as well as individuals; and other characters, Mrs Tow-wouse, for example, and the lawyer, are introduced on the same basis as Fielding makes clear to us in the initial chapter of Book III. As part of the lengthy prefatory discussion of the comic prose epic, Fielding discourses on the true sense of the ridiculous, which is affectation. Just as in Shamela he had attacked Richardson because of the "puffing" letters, so in Joseph Andrews he attacks the "puffed up" Pamela. "Affectation," he tells us,

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<sup>25</sup>

Ibid., p. 242.

"proceeds from one of... two causes, vanity or hypocrisy."

It is these qualities he exposes in the characters in Joseph Andrews. His description of Mrs Slipslop may serve as an example:

Mrs. Slipslop, the waiting-gentlewoman, being herself the daughter of a curate, preserved some respect for Adams. She professed great regard for his learning, and would frequently dispute with him on points of theology; but always insisted on a deference to be paid to her understanding, as she had been frequently at London, and knew more of the world than a country parson could pretend to.<sup>27</sup>

The clue to Fielding's method here can be seen in the epithet "waiting-gentlewoman".

Because Fielding is writing about the Ridiculous in human nature, he takes care to point out to us frequently that his characters are copied from nature, by which he means that, although changed for purposes of disguises, his characters are copied from actual persons. His objection to the characters of romances, and one can feel fairly safe in asserting to the characters of Richardson, was that they were not believable. Both characters and actions, he tells us, should be "copied from the book of nature". Parson Adams, copied from the literary model Don Quixote, is the only major exception to this rule, and he, it should be pointed out, is by no means an exact copy of the Knight of La Mancha. Don Quixote is mad; Parson Adams merely eccentric. Don Quixote is an unmarried, melancholy, Catholic layman, proud of his

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Ibid., Author's Preface, p. xxx.

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Ibid., p. 7.

knightly prowess; Parson Adams is a cheery, married latitudinarian clergyman, proud of his learning and preaching and the father of six children.<sup>28</sup> Unlike Richardson's, Fielding's characters live not in remote and shut in country mansions, but in a more familiar world<sup>29</sup> of country inns and hostels, coaches, open roads and fields, lowly cottages, and vicarages, and they are motivated not by one or two over simplified desires, but by the whole range of human emotions, both good and bad. A character such as Betty, essentially cheery and warm hearted but promiscuous, would have no place in Richardson's novels. Nor incidentally<sup>al</sup> would any character ever be spoken of with this sense of ironical detachment:

She had good-nature, generosity, and compassion, but unfortunately, her constitution was composed of those warm ingredients which, though the purity of courts or nunneries might have happily controuled [sic] them, were by no means able to endure the ticklish situation of a chambermaid at an inn. 30

Joseph Andrews, on one level, is a satire on the theme of the virtuous female in a predatory masculine world, but on a more profound level, it is a vital and vigorous alternative to that world.

It remains only to point out that many of the techniques of the fully developed comic artist are present in Joseph Andrews; the imposed plot which is used to articulate the theme of the meeting of the country world and the city

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Dudden, p. 338.

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Mack, Art. cit., in Paulson, p. 53.

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Fielding, Joseph Andrews, p. 57.



world (this as we will see is to become even more important in Tom Jones); the use of the mock heroic as in the epic genealogy of Joseph's cudgel or Adams' battle with the pack of hounds; and the dramatist's technique of the division of action into scenes. To this kind of writing, which he affirms has been "hitherto unattempted in our language", Fielding gives the name of "a comic epic poem in prose". He distinguishes it from purely fanciful writings, from comedy, from the serious epic, and from burlesque. Its action, he tells us, is "more extended and comprehensive" than comedy, and furthermore it contains "a much larger circle of incidents", and it introduces "a greater variety of characters". It differs from the serious epic "in its fable and action", "in its characters" and "in its sentiment and diction". And of the burlesque he says:

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 ... so in the former we should ever confine ourselves strictly to nature. 31

Here, surely, Fielding is consciously marking the distinction between Shamela and Joseph Andrews.

iv

In Tom Jones Fielding's development from the burlesque to the comic "species of writing" is carried one stage further by the virtual elimination of parody as a part of the structure. In the central section of Joseph Andrews Fielding

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Ibid., Author's Preface, p. xxviii.

had worked out into a comic narrative that transcended the satiric parody of the opening and the conclusion of the novel. In Tom Jones parody, although not discarded altogether, is reduced in importance and no longer contributes to the structural organization.

Tom Jones is a realization of the possibilities of the main narrative of Joseph Andrews, a development of the love story of Joseph and Fanny in the persons of Tom and Sophia, and a fuller expression of the great doctrine of benevolence (of which Tom and Sophia's love is a part) than Joseph Andrews afforded. The relationship of Tom Jones to Pamela is at one remove. Joseph Andrews stands, importantly, between the two books. Tom Jones, however, stands alone, and the comic vision is its own sustaining force.

Parody, like satire, requires a conspiracy in sympathy between the writer and his readers, a common agreement about the evil or the weaknesses of the work to be parodied or satirized. In Tom Jones that conspiracy of sympathy is maintained, but it finds its outlet not in parody but in the full development of the detached comic attitude, the device of an intrusive narrator and a highly sophisticated use of verbal irony and irony of situation. In addition Tom Jones manifests a development of characterization, a new articulation of theme, a wonderfully conceived and sustaining plot, and the effective use of the mock heroic technique and the dramatic presentation of scene.

There are two ways, however, in which it might be

said that parody in Tom Jones is still used structurally. One of these is the imprisonment of Sophia, the other the bastardy of Tom. Pamela (and for that matter Clarissa), it will be remembered, is imprisoned and deprived of ink and paper. In the case of Clarissa the imprisonment was enforced because of her refusal to marry the man that her family had selected for her. Clarissa, furthermore, escaped and went to London in the company of Lovelace. In like manner Sophia was imprisoned by her father and put under the wardship of Mrs Honour, (both Pamela and Clarissa had a female servant-guard), who was "to attend her with whatever Sophia pleased, except only pen, ink, and paper, of which she was forbidden the use."<sup>32</sup> Secondly, the reader will remember that Pamela underwent a sudden elevation in class through her marriage with Mr B. In Joseph Andrews Fielding parodied this by having Joseph Andrews become Joseph Wilson. In like manner, Tom Jones turns out to be the bastard nephew of Squire Allworthy and, with the disgrace of Blifil, heir to his estate. As a result all obstacles in the way of his union with Sophia are removed. In these two cases the thin dividing line between parody and the comic alternative that Fielding offered to Richardson's work can be perceived. That the structure of Tom Jones owes something to Richardson's novels cannot, I think, be doubted. Tom Jones, however, is not a parody. Neither the imprisonment of Sophia nor the bastardy

of Tom has that conscious closeness to the original that all good parody demands. Parody is not a subtle device. The unnaturalness or the ridiculousness of Richardson's original does not come to mind when one reads Tom Jones. One might, indeed, go so far, in the case of the theme of Sophia's imprisonment, as to say that rather than parodying Richardson, Fielding is actually copying an effective device.

More importantly, Tom Jones, I believe, is a reworking of the main narrative of Joseph Andrews. There are too many parallels between the two books to doubt this for long. One need not think only of the principals of the two love stories. Certain other characters appear for a second time.<sup>33</sup> Mrs Honour recalls Mrs Slipslop, and Lady Bellaston Lady Booby -- both wanted to go to bed with the hero. In Joseph Andrews this had been impossible. In Tom Jones, however, sexual indiscretion on the hero's part is possible. In the course of writing Joseph Andrews Fielding may have realized the possibilities in a good natured but unchaste hero, but was unable at that time to exploit the idea. Leonora's money grabbing father may have a connection with Old Nightingale, and certainly Farmer Wilson appears in a somewhat different form as the Man of the Hill. The story of each, furthermore, is told in a digression.

The most important development occurs, of course, in Joseph and Fanny and their spiritual father, Parson Adams.



Joseph is perhaps the key figure for not only does he grow into Tom, but he develops within his own novel. Joseph is created as an example of male chastity, and it is largely as an element in the parody that we are initially interested in him. Although Joseph remains pale in contrast with the high-spirited Tom, (largely, I suspect, because Fielding was limited by the need to keep him chaste) once he leaves Lady Booby, sets out on his journey, and meets Parson Adams, he becomes more interesting as a character per se. The rollicking humour of Joseph's innocent attempts to preserve his virginity in the face of Lady Booby's and Mrs Slipslop's determined advances gives way to the often boisterous but always more profound, symbolic journey of Joseph and Adams from the corruption of town life to the relative innocence of the country. He grows in wisdom as he learns to see the limitations for practical life of his old schoolmaster's stoical precepts. Tom Jones, on the other hand, begins life, significantly, as a bastard. Tom is good natured, handsome, full of animal spirits, intelligent (although his innocence, a good quality, makes him naive), fairly well educated, and generous to the point of rashness. Above all he is natural and unaffected. Tributes to these qualities abound in the novel but perhaps the finest came from the grateful and good-natured Mrs Miller who refers to Tom's "beauty, and his parts, and his virtue ...his goodness and generosity"<sup>34</sup> and calls

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<sup>34</sup>Fielding, Tom Jones, p. 805.

him "the best natured creature that ever was born".<sup>35</sup> Yet he is not perfect. (That was the trouble with the heroes of the romances.) Mr Allworthy at one point refers to his "wantonness, wildness, and want of caution", and points out "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."<sup>36</sup> Like Joseph, Tom is early in the story turned out of doors and he begins a long journey. Unlike Joseph's, however, Tom's odyssey (for surely that is what it is, in part, meant to be) takes him from the country to the city. In the course of his adventures he grows in wisdom as he loses his innocence and learns the "Prudence" that Mr Allworthy had earlier pointed out as Tom's chief deficiency. Tom is capable of mending the error of his ways, which come mainly, in any case, from an excess of animal spirits, and his eventual acceptance by Sophia clearly indicates this. Tom is more interesting than Joseph, of course, not only because he is more colourful, but because he occupies a definitely central place in the novel. In Joseph Andrews Adams dominates the hero but in Tom Jones, Tom himself is the central character.

Adams, the spiritual father of Joseph reappears in

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Ibid., p. 801.

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Ibid., p. 97.

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Tom Jones as Mr Allworthy, the guardian and, by discovery, the uncle of Tom. Adams, although a fully developed and essentially sympathetic figure, in his attempts to live up to a bookish and at times harsh and stoical morality, and in his incredible absentmindedness, is a caricature of the impractical man of learning. Mr Allworthy, in most respects also an exemplary character, has a failing similar to Adams'. By nature fairminded, he too rigorously applies his principles and suffers, consequently, from a lack of insight into real worth. In his punishment of Tom and his good opinion of the sneaking Blifil he demonstrates a failing that his name would seem to contradict. But then again, the name indicates a nature too good to be true. The caricature has disappeared but the name is still indicative of the slightly inhuman quality of a man above other men. The other difference between Adams and Allworthy is that the latter is not allowed to grow out of importance in the novel. One would not wish the delightful Adams to be anything else than what he is, but Fielding, surely, in writing Tom Jones realized that there was need to find a balance between the hero and the other characters in the book. Hence, Mr Allworthy is put more into the background than Adams, and Tom makes his great journey accompanied only by Partridge.

Tom's journey is paralleled by Sophia's. In Sophia and her journey after Tom, Fielding has developed both the

character of Fanny and her attempt to find Joseph. Fanny, when hearing of Joseph's misfortune "that instant abandoned the cow she was milking" and "immediately set forward in pursuit"<sup>38</sup> of Joseph. The ease and homeliness of her departure contrasts strongly with that of Sophia's. Sophia, after confinement, eventually managed to escape from her father's house but the situation became more complicated when, after the incidents at Upton Inn, Sophia decided she must not follow Tom, but must make her way directly to her aunt in London. The difference between the two departures is indicative of the difference in the characters. Fanny, who incidently "could neither read nor write"<sup>39</sup> (one thinks of heroines of Richardson's novels!), remains relatively undeveloped as a character and is, for the most part, merely the object of Joseph's adoration. Sophia, on the other hand, is a beautiful young lady, highly intelligent and accomplished, heiress to her father's fortune, capable of making decisions and taking definite actions, and is in every way a suitable match for Tom.

There is a further development on a more profound level from Joseph Andrews to Tom Jones. This development lies behind the conception of characters and is indicated by the shift in emphasis from the Preface of Joseph Andrews to

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<sup>38</sup> Fielding, Joseph Andrews, p. 107.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

that of Tom Jones.<sup>40</sup> The purpose of Joseph Andrews, Fielding tells us in the Preface to that novel, is the exposure of affectation, "the only source of the true Ridiculous", and "the Ridiculous only" as he said a little earlier in the Preface, "falls within my province in the present work". Fielding's practice here, as we know, went beyond his critical theory. Adams, for instance, is not only used to expose affectation. He is also commended to us in the Preface because of his "goodness of heart" and his "worthy inclinations". In the Preface to Tom Jones the exposure of affectation has given way to a more positive purpose. "I declare", says Fielding in a now well known sentence, "that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history". Hence, (I run the risk of repeating myself) the caricatured aspect of Adams is eliminated in the conception of Mr Allworthy. In a fine phrase he speaks of the "beauty of virtue" and tells us that he has tried to convince "men that their true interest directs them to a pursuit of her". Finally in this regard he says:

I have endeavoured strongly to inculcate that virtue and innocence can scarce ever be injured but by indiscretion; and that it is this alone which often betrays them into the snares that deceit and villainy spread for them. A moral which I have the more industriously laboured, as the teaching it is, of all others, the likeliest to be attended with success; since, I believe, it is much easier to make good men wise, than to make bad men good.

The effect of this shift in emphasis can be seen not

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Irwin, Art. cit., ELH, XIII (1946), 168-88.

only in Allworthy, but also in Tom and in the love of Tom and Sophia. The common sense doctrine of benevolence is made concrete in the presentation of Tom, the closest approach to an ideal figure in Fielding's novels. Joseph Andrews, it will be remembered, had defied "the wisest man in the world to turn a true good action into ridicule".

Tom's statement of the same idea is somewhat more positive:

What is the poor pride arising from a magnificent house, a numerous equipage, a splendid table, and from all the other advantages of appearances of fortune compared to the warm, solid content, the swelling satisfaction, the thrilling transports, and the exulting triumphs which a good mind enjoys in the contemplation of a generous, virtuous, noble, benevolent action? 41

The love of Tom and Sophia is fuller than the love of Joseph and Fanny because it is seen to be part of Fielding's concept of benevolence. In a lengthy passage that I must give in full he explains that love (not just sexual love) is a part of that concept:

...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. Lastly, that esteem and gratitude are the proper motives to love, as youth and beauty are to desire, and, therefore, though such desire may naturally cease, when age or sickness overtakes its object, yet these can have no effect on love, nor ever shake or remove, from a good

mind, that sensation or passion which hath gratitude and esteem for its basis. 42

The purpose of our argument in this section so far has been to show that the connection between Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews is not one of parody, but rather that Tom Jones is a reworking of Joseph Andrews. While parody in Tom Jones does not have a major, structural place, it does, however, have a minor but important one. The function of parody in Tom Jones is special and local. One use is closely related to Fielding's method of characterization, and his concern, not with the individual, but with the species. Parody, for instance, is used to establish certain typical speech patterns. Here, for example, is Fielding's parody on the technical jargon of lawyers:

If the case be put of a partridge, there can be no doubt but an action would lie; for though this be ferae naturae, yet being reclaimed, property vests: but being the case of a singing bird, though reclaimed, as it is a thing of base nature, it must be considered as nullius in bonis. In this case, therefore, I conceive the plaintiff must be non-suited; and I should disadvise the bringing any such action. 43

This remarkable speech is a reply to Squire Western's question about the operation of the law in the case of "some virtuous religious man or other" who might take it into his head to set all his partridges loose and then justify his action, as Blifil had just done in the case of Sophia's bird,

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Ibid., p. 215 f.

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Ibid., p. 117.

by saying that confining anything "seemed to be against the law of nature". Fielding also parodies the technical jargon of doctors,<sup>44</sup> and the spluttering, explosive speech of the hard drinking, fox-hunting country squire of whom Western is a true type. Parody is also used occasionally as part of Fielding's elevated style. Possibly the best known example of this kind of parody is to be found in the second chapter of book IV, entitled, "A short hint of what we can do in the sublime, and a description of Miss Sophia Western". Here, of course, the purpose of the parody is simply to entertain. It contrasts, for example, with the parody of Shamela which is used to expose the defects of Pamela.

While on the one hand the main development in Fielding's novels is from Joseph Andrews to Tom Jones, on the other hand the full development of Tom Jones owes something to Jonathan Wild. In Jonathan Wild Fielding had represented the abstract qualities of 'goodness' and 'greatness' in the persons of Heartfree and Wild. Furthermore, he had learned to use Heartfree as a foil to Wild. The qualities of one character could be seen more clearly by contrast with another. In Tom Jones, from one point of view, Heartfree and Wild live again as Tom and Blifil, and Blifil's wickedness is very much used as a foil to Tom's goodness. One difference between the two books, however, is that in the one Wild is

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., VII, 13; VIII, 3.



the main character, while in the other Blifil is a minor character. The purpose of Jonathan Wild is essentially destructive in contrast to Tom Jones, which is a vehicle for the expression of Fielding's vision of the goodness of man. The good and good-natured Tom has supplanted the wicked and destructive Jonathan Wild. Again, Fielding has used the technique of playing one character off against another in his conception of Square and Thwackum. Square, the philosopher, held to the "rule of right", and the "eternal fitness of things",<sup>45</sup> while, Thwackum, the clergyman, believed in "the divine power of grace"<sup>46</sup> and the Christian revelation. Here, of course, as in the case of Wild and Heartfree, both characters are extremes, and therefore are closer to being abstractions.

The highly controlled use of verbal irony, which is one of the most impressive aspects of the style of Tom Jones, owes something too to Jonathan Wild. Words such as prudent, proper, honour, occur frequently and are almost always used in the same ironical sense as the word greatness in Jonathan Wild. Thus Fielding speaks of the "prudence of which must be supposed to attend maidens at that period of life to which Mrs Deborah had arrived"<sup>47</sup> (she was fifty-two). Here, as with the word greatness 'prudence' retains its literal

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

meaning, but that meaning clashes with its connotations.

Mrs Deborah, a maiden at fifty-two had been too prudent -- or perhaps not prudent enough. The following sentences are also illustrative of Fielding's use of irony:

It was Mr. Western's custom every afternoon, as soon as he was drunk, to hear his daughter play on the harpsichord; for he was a great lover of music, and perhaps, had he lived in town, might have passed for a connoisseur; for he always excepted against the finest compositions of Mr. Handel. He never relished any music but what was light and airy; and indeed his favourite tunes were Old Sir Simon the King, St. George he was for England, Bobbing Joan, and some others. 48

The exquisite irony of the (unlikely) possibility of the squire's being taken for a connoisseur of fine music, "had he lived in town", becomes clear when we learn what kind of music it was of which Mr Western was a connoisseur. Furthermore, as Miss E.N. Hutchen has pointed out in a recent article, the matter-of-fact tone of "as soon as he was drunk" is at odds with its meaning and thus provides an ironic comment on the manner of the squire's life.

There is in Tom Jones, of course, irony of situation as well as verbal irony as the case of poor Captain Blifil, who had married solely for money, well affords:

Nothing was wanting to enable him to enter upon the immediate execution of this plan but the death of Mr Allworthy; in calculating which he had employed much of his own algebra, besides purchasing every book extant that treats of the value of lives, reversions, etc. From all which he satisfied himself, that as he had every day a chance of this happening, so had he more than an even chance of its happening within a few years.

But while the captain was one day busied in deep

contemplations 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 malapropos, 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. 49

Here the ironical tone of the passage is much closer to the lightness of Joseph Andrews than to the bitter tone of Jonathan Wild.

## v

Tom Jones is Fielding's most important work and undoubtedly one of the greatest novels in English literature. It is with a sense of loss, therefore, that we come to his last novel, Amelia. The change from Tom Jones to Amelia is indicated, as it had been in the two earlier novels, by the change in the Preface. In the Preface to Joseph Andrews Fielding told us that he was concerned with exposing the human affectations of hypocrisy and vanity. In Tom Jones he was concerned with recommending "goodness and innocence" and for this purpose he says, "I have employed all the wit and humour of which I am master in the following history; wherein I have endeavoured to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices". In each case the Preface set the tone of the book. In Amelia that tone is graver. The atmosphere of Amelia is harshly realistic as the Dedication to Ralph

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Ibid., p. 69.

Allen indicates:

... -- the following book is sincerely designed to promote the cause of virtue, and to expose some of the most glaring evils, as well public as private, which at present infest the country.

The moral concern is with "glaring evils" not with mere "affectations". And there is no mention of "wit and humour". The moral view, which in Tom Jones takes its place with the other elements to form a balanced perspective, has now, in Amelia, taken over entirely. Amelia is to one end of the line of development what Shamela is to the other. From Shamela to Amelia the line of parody has been steadily moving downward, while the line of the moral view has been moving upward. In Joseph Andrews Fielding was approaching the balance that he later achieved, splendidly, in Tom Jones. In Tom Jones, in short, the perspective achieved its widest, most satisfactory range. That perspective in Amelia has been lost.

Amelia is a domestic drama. In this sense it begins where Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones left off. Both the earlier novels had ended with a marriage; Amelia begins with one. The subject of the book is the domestic relationship of Amelia and her husband Captain Booth and the "various accidents" that befell that "very worthy couple" in their society. Booth, Amelia, and their benefactor, Dr Harrison are Tom, Sophia and Mr Allworthy in a more sober dress. Amelia, however, owes as much to the passive Mrs Heartfree as she does to Sophia, and Booth learns Prudence long after his marriage (hence, much of the difficulty) rather than just before it.

Dr Harrison, a clergyman like Adams, who by this time is a remote ancestor, suffers from the same failing as Mr Allworthy, namely, in making overhasty decisions largely on other people's evidence. It is interesting to note that Dr Harrison, like most of the characters in Amelia (Bondum the Bailiff and Justice Thrasher are the exceptions) have ordinary, contemporary names. The change in the naming of characters is symptomatic of the general change in the novel.

The novel is wholly serious both in its moral purpose and in its narrative manner. In the introductory chapter there is a grave paragraph on "The Art of Life" in which Fielding sets out his thesis. "Life", he tells us, "may properly be called an art as any other". We must, then, examine human life in order to discover the laws of its operation. In this way "we shall best be instructed in this most useful of all arts". The novel is designed as an illustration of this very serious and moral theme and the style is adopted to the subject matter. Fielding is scarcely in evidence as the mildly facetious intrusive narrator that we have come to know in the earlier works. Only rarely do we catch glimpses of the old narrative method as in the History of Captain Trent<sup>50</sup> or in the presentation and the characterization of Justice Thrasher. The story has become the thing, and cannot be allowed, as it was earlier, to share the honour with the making of the story. The essays on the art of

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Henry Fielding, Amelia (New York, 1962), pp. 485 ff.

writing prose fiction are significantly missing. Fielding has, in short, largely withdrawn from the novel. The narrator has changed from the exuberant creator of Tom Jones to the decent "man of sense" of Amelia.<sup>51</sup> There is a definite shift in tone and a decided loss of energy in the novel.

Joseph Andrews, it will be remembered, consisted of a comic prose narrative set in the framework of a parody on Richardson's Pamela. Tom Jones was the fuller development of the central comic section of Joseph Andrews. In Amelia there is neither parody nor comic prose epic. The action is less brisk, the scenes less varied and less vivid, the characters less singular (no Parson Adams or Squire Western), and the scintillation of wit much less frequent.<sup>52</sup> In addition the Augustan conventions of the mock-heroic and epic diction have been cut out. Fielding has, in short, moved closer to the other major eighteenth century novelists. His theme of the virtuous female suffering in a predatory masculine world is akin to Richardson's, and the overly serious and passive Amelia is similar to Clarissa. This theme, which at one time was the subject of parody (Shamela, Jonathan Wild, Joseph Andrews) is now treated seriously. The way of telling the tale is less like his earlier novels and more like that of Defoe and of Smollett. As George Sherburn has pointed out,

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John S. Coolidge, "Fielding and the 'Conservation of Character' ", in Fielding, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962), p. 164.

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Dudden, p. 806.

Fielding has abandoned the comic prose epic (which he derived from Cervantes and Scarron) in favour of a "newer tradition of the epic in prose" in which the "private history" is told "with fidelity to the facts of everyday life". There is, furthermore, far more moralizing in the story which, consequently, often tends to drag. There are, for example, long sections on the role of clergymen in society, the operation of bailiffs, moral reflection on Vauxhall and Ranelagh, on the evil of duelling, and on the expense of commissions. Fielding obviously felt strongly about the importance of Amelia and in the Covent Garden Journal he called her his favourite child. Some critics have felt that the novel reflects Fielding's increasingly pessimistic view of society brought about by years as a Bow Street magistrate and by ill health. More recently, critics such as George Sherburn, have felt that the shift in tone and subject matter was more consciously deliberate.<sup>53</sup> None of these things concern us very much here. The point is clear, however, that whatever the case, without the light play of wit and irony, the good humoured, even rollicking parody and the style and form of the comic prose epic, Amelia is much less engaging than Fielding's earlier novels.

### III

It is fitting that we should come now to Fielding's comic perspective. In the last chapter we have seen how Fielding's comic narrative art arose from the happy conflux of his literary training as a writer of satiric dramas and his disgust with the moral and technical limitations of Richardson's Pamela. The rise of Fielding's comic narrative art achieved its zenith in Tom Jones where the moral view and the comic view come satisfactorily together to form a balanced perspective. Here with superb confidence Fielding, in a broad survey of English society, is able to give full expression to his ideas about human nature and to his great social doctrine of benevolence. It is then to Fielding's perspective in the novels, particularly Tom Jones, that I now intend to turn. In this section, in order to see clearly the techniques that Fielding employed in creating the detached comic perspective, it will be necessary to look both at the narrator and at some representative characters. There are two aspects of the narrator that I wish to consider, namely, the narrator as dramatist and the intrusive narrator. Of the characters that I shall examine, two pairs will be given particular emphasis; Squire Western's sister and Lady Bellaston; Tom and Sophia. Finally, to conclude the section, we will briefly consider Fielding's remarks about Human



Nature.

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It is, I think, often assumed that the general organization of Fielding's novels is derived from epic practice. In part it is, as Fielding makes clear in the opening chapter of Book II of Joseph Andrews where he draws the reader's attention to the novel's division into books and chapters and tells him, half-seriously, that "These divisions have the sanction of great antiquity." Homer began the practice and Virgil and Milton continued it. There is, of course, a self-conscious identification with the epic tradition in Fielding's novels that manifests itself, in part, in the formal divisions of the work.

However, Fielding's manipulation of scenes is derived not from the epic but from the drama and is very closely related to his device of intruding into the novel. The opening chapter of Book VII, "A comparison between the World and the Stage", sets forth the analogy that lies behind the technique. "The world hath been [so] often compared to the theatre" and "human life [considered] as a great drama" that "stage and scene are by common use grown... familiar to us, when we speak of life in general." But this is easily accounted for when we reflect "that the theatrical stage is nothing more than a representation, or, as Aristotle calls it, an imitation of what really exists". Human life is a "great drama" enacted in "this vast theatre of time" or in "this great

theatre of Nature". Hence, the best writers ought to be "so capable of imitating life, as to have their pictures in a manner confounded with, or mistaken for, the originals". Now if life may be fairly represented as drama, then, perhaps the best way to write a novel is to treat it as a play. Consequently, the chapters of Tom Jones correspond to the scenes of a play, just as the books or groups of books correspond to the acts of a play. The three acts of Tom Jones are centered about the country, the road, and the town in that order and the action of the novel, as in a play, conducts towards the third act and the denouement which occurs there. The novelist, however, has none of the stage equipment of the playwright by which the latter can so easily change scenes or create atmosphere. Fielding makes up for this deficiency by acting as his own stage hands, by intruding into the novel to change a scene, or to set the tone.

In the movement of the novel from scene to scene Fielding clearly reveals the comic dramatist's touch. Book XVII may well serve as an example. The story is now near the end and the fortunes of Tom and Sophia are at their lowest point. In the initial chapter<sup>of this book</sup> Fielding tells us that for the tragic writer an ending for the story would not be hard to find. "But to bring our favourites out of their present anguish and distress, and to land them at last on the shore of happiness seems a much harder task". The solution might seem to be to lend Tom some "supernatural assistance". However,

Fielding shuns the ancient dramatist's deus ex machina and resolves to try by "natural means" to do what may be done for poor Jones. The rest of the book is divided into eight chapters or scenes (chapters four and seven incidently are specifically called scenes) the settings for which are variously Mr Allworthy's lodgings, Mrs Western's house, and the prison. Fielding generally intrudes "by way of chorus, on the stage",<sup>1</sup> at the opening of each chapter to give us the setting and the characters:

Mr. Allworthy and Mrs. Miller were just sat down to breakfast, when Blifil, who had gone out very early that morning, returned to make one of the company. 2

He intrudes again very often, at the end of a chapter, to wrap up the scene and to prepare the stage for the next scene:

Thus Sophia, by a little well-directed flattery, for which surely none will blame her, obtained a little ease for herself, and, at least, put off the evil day. And now we have seen our heroine in a better situation than she hath been for a long time before, we will look a little after Mr. Jones, whom we left in the most deplorable situation that can be well imagined. 3

Each scene centers upon the fortunes of Tom or Sophia alternatively (chapters two, five, seven and nine deal with Tom; chapters three, four, six, and eight are concerned with Sophia). All the characters have something to do with the lives and happiness of Tom and Sophia who are suffering at

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<sup>1</sup> Fielding, Tom Jones, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 781.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 796.

the hands of one or more destructive agents. Blifil is intent upon further discrediting Tom with Mr Allworthy and is partly responsible for Tom's being in prison. Mrs Western and Lady Bellaston are trying to force Sophia into accepting the marriage proposal of Lord Fellamar. On the other hand, there is the beneficent Mrs Miller who is working against the forces that would destroy the relationship of Tom and Sophia. In the background is Mr Allworthy, whose god-like patronage is a force for order. It is Mr Allworthy who restrains Squire Western when he wants to force Sophia into marriage. And it is Mr Allworthy that Blifil and Mrs Miller try to convince of Tom's guilt or innocence respectively. The scenes move rapidly from one place to another and the various characters are constantly coming and going as the story unfolds before us. We watch as Blifil on the one hand and Lady Bellaston on the other carry out their plots to bring about the destruction of Tom and the marriage of Sophia to Lord Fellamar. However, Blifil's efforts, in particular, are frustrated by Mrs Miller who in the seventh chapter half convinces Mr Allworthy of Tom's essential goodness. It is Mrs Miller, furthermore, who carries Tom's letter to Sophia, thereby linking, in a conventional stage device, the two principal characters, who, in this book of the novel, have no other means of communication and who never meet.

The chief dramatic devices are the rapid succession

of short scenes, the dramatic opposition of Mrs Miller and Tom's and Sophia's enemies, and an extensive use of dialogue. All of these devices help to maintain the impression that we are looking upon "human life as a great drama". The comic level of this drama is maintained throughout; that is to say that we know that Jones will eventually be saved from prison and that he and Sophia will ultimately triumph over their enemies. This impression, an essential element in comedy, has been created in part by the dramatic techniques. The rapid succession of short scenes, for example, means a constant change of setting, characters and mood; consequently, introspection on the part of the characters and a sense of tragic involvement on the part of the audience, both of which demand long scenes, are avoided. In the activities of Mrs Miller and Blifil the forces of human goodness and human wickedness are shown to be operating in the world at the same time. However, both must operate under the eye of Mr Allworthy, who is a pattern of true wisdom and of goodness,<sup>4</sup> and we remain certain that good fortune will inevitably win out over bad. In the final chapter, the wheel of fortune begins to turn upward when Mrs Waters arrives to inform Tom that Mr Fitzpatrick's injury is not fatal.

As well as in the general organization of the book, Fielding's apprenticeship as a writer of comedy can be seen also in his handling of individual scenes. There is, for

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 226.

example, a considerable amount of deliberate stage setting in the novels -- the scenes at Upton Inn and Sophia's interview with Lord Fellamar come to mind at once. The skill with which Fielding handles his scenes may be well illustrated in the third chapter of Tom Jones in which the narrator recounts the discovery of the infant Tom by Mr Allworthy. After a short supper with his sister Mr Allworthy went to his chamber, said his prayers -- "a custom which he never broke through on any account" -- and drew back the covers to get into bed. There, as we know, he discovered the infant. He rang for Mrs Deborah Wilkins, "an elderly woman servant", who came after a short time in which she allowed "her master sufficient time to dress himself". He, however, had been so engrossed in "contemplating the beauty of innocence" that he had not yet put on his clothes. The "prudent" Mrs Wilkins, upon entering the room, "started back in a most terrible fright". He desired her to leave and then dressed himself. Mrs Wilkins soon returned to the room and discovered why she had been called. She made some observations on what should be done with "the hussy its mother", on "wicked strumpets who lay their sins at honest men's doors", on "misbegotten wretches", and on leaving the child on the church warden's door. Mr Allworthy whose attention had been given to the child rather than to Mrs Wilkins, ignoring whatever he may have heard of her remarks, ordered her to look after the infant. The "discernment" of Mrs Wilkins, the "respect she

bore her master" and her "excellent place" in his household prevailed upon her and "her scruples gave way to his peremptory commands". She "walked off with it to her own chamber".

Here the chapter serves the same function in the novel as a scene in a play. The setting is Mr Allworthy's bed-chamber. The time is "very late in the evening". The characters are Mr Allworthy and Mrs Wilkins. The action centers around the discovery of the infant, and the arrival of Mrs Wilkins. The dialogue is short and is designed to reveal character and to further the plot. The scene ends when Mrs Wilkins makes her exit and Mr Allworthy returns to bed and, as it were, the curtains come down. The next chapter-scene opens with a description of Mr Allworthy's estate on a beautiful May morning. It is, of course, breakfast-time the next day and the plot unfolds a little more.

Now the discovery of an infant child is not, in itself, comic. It might very well be pathetic or ultimately tragic. If Mrs Wilkins' advice had been followed it would certainly have been the latter. The comic detachment is obtained by the skillful device of Mrs Wilkins' double entrance. We, as audience, can maintain a comic attitude towards the events; we know that everything will turn out all right, because the scene which is naturally pathetic is leavened by the good humour of Mrs Wilkins' first entrance and by her change of mind about the infant when she learns of her master's feelings towards it. In short the stage

technique of Mrs Wilkins' comic entrance and her apparent change of mind have been used by Fielding to maintain the high comic level of the novel in this scene.

ii

It is clear from what has already been said that Fielding's perspective, unlike Richardson's, is Olympian. He stands outside and above his novels and from that position, like Thackeray who calls himself a puppet-master, he controls the movement and characters of his story. Sometimes entire chapters, such as the introductory chapters to the sections of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, are wholly outside the story. At other times, in the context of the story, for a moment we are conscious of the presence of the narrator as he manipulates his story or comments on the characters and situations. In the second chapter of Tom Jones, for example, we are told that Mr Allworthy "had the misfortune of burying this beloved wife herself, about five years before the time in which this history chooses to set out". (italics mine) "He now lived", Fielding tells us, "with one sister." "She was of that species of woman whom you commend rather for good qualities than beauty, and who are generally called, by their own sex, very good sort of woman -- as good a sort of woman, madam, as you wish to know". In this one sentence alone, typical of Fielding's method as a whole, we can see the objectivity of his comment and the distancing effect of his position outside the novel,



and we can hear the irony of his voice. The objectivity is of one who stands apart from his characters and sees them as they really are, a thing impossible in Richardson. The distancing effect is part of the comic technique that prevents our being caught up in the characters. And the irony is spiced with a humour that is very close to the laughter of Sterne. The aside to the reader, in this case to the female reader, is an application to the novel of the dramatists' technique. Such addresses to the reader are to be found throughout the novel. Part of the advantage of the narrator's position outside the novel is that it allows him to intrude into the novel (as we have already seen) and to digress. Perhaps the strongest statement of his intention in this regard comes at the end of the chapter that we are now examining:

Reader, I think proper, before we preceed any farther together, to acquaint thee that I intend to digress, through this whole history, as often as I see occasion, of which I am myself a better judge than any pitiful critic whatever; and here I must desire all those critics to mind their own business, and not to intermeddle with affairs or works which no ways concern them; for till they produce the authority by which they are constituted judges, I shall not plead to their jurisdiction.

In short, Fielding arbitrarily, authoritatively and amusingly establishes a detached and objective perspective in, and a strong control over, his work.

The narrator imparts to his novel an air, important to Fielding's conception of the novel, of neutrality,

authority, and sympathy.<sup>5</sup> Maynard Mack puts this idea in another way when he points out that "comedy presents us with life apprehended in the form of spectacle rather than in the form of experience".<sup>6</sup> The comic view point is a detached view point; the writer and the reader are not involved in the consciousness of the protagonist -- we look around the characters as well as at them. Fielding makes skillful use of the air of neutrality in the following passage. He is speaking of Dr Blifil:

Besides this negative merit, the doctor had one positive recommendation; -- this was a great appearance of religion. Whether his religion was real, or consisted only in appearance, I shall not presume to say, as I am not possessed of any touchstone which can distinguish the true from the false. 7

Fielding takes shelter behind a shield of ignorance; he does not know and he will not presume to say. Yet the barb which he has thrown hits home. The neutrality is feigned, and therefore ironical. The narrator has said one thing and left the impression of another. Yet in another sense his position really is neutral -- the polite neutrality of one who refuses to be led into an outspoken condemnation.

The air of authority with which Fielding as narrator speaks can scarcely be missed. He is clearly telling his story and in his own way. We have already seen his imper-

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<sup>5</sup> Paulson, "Introduction" to Fielding, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Mack, Art. cit., in Paulson, p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> Fielding, Tom Jones, p. 27.

viousness to criticism. Until the critics "produce the authority by which they are constituted judges," he says, "I shall not plead to their jurisdiction."<sup>8</sup> He is the author of his own kind of "history" and, as such, has no need of laws from any outside source:

...I shall not look on myself as accountable to any court of critical jurisdiction whatever; for as I am, in reality, the founder of a new province of writing, so I am at liberty to make what laws I please therein. And these laws, my readers, whom I consider as my subjects, are bound to believe in and to obey; with which that they may readily and cheerfully comply, I do hereby assure them that I shall principally regard their ease and advantage in all such institutions; for I do not, like a jure divino tyrant, imagine that they are my slaves or my commodity. I am, indeed, set over them for their own good only, and was created for their use, and not they for mine. Nor do I doubt, while I make their interest the great rule of my writing, they will unanimously concur in supporting my dignity, and in rendering me all the honour I shall deserve or desire. <sup>9</sup>

It is this air of confidence and authority that permeates every page. He alone has the facts; his alone is the narration of them.

Again, the narrator may express sympathy as in the following passage where the sincerity of Mr Allworthy's convictions is treated sympathetically and the malice of the world is exposed:

This loss, [of his wife] however great, he bore like a man of sense and constancy, though it must be confessed he would often talk a little whimsically on this head; for he sometimes said he looked on himself as still married, and considered his wife as only gone a little before him, a journey which he should most certainly, sooner or later, take after her; and that he had not the

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<sup>8</sup>

Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>9</sup>

Ibid., pp.41-42.

least doubt of meeting her again in a place where he should never part with her more -- sentiments for which his sense was arraigned by one part of his neighbours, his religion by a second, and his sincerity by a third.<sup>10</sup>

The essential point about Fielding's position outside his novels and the pervasive irony of tone with which he tells his story is that they give an impression of fairness. Even unfavourable characters receive a sympathetic treatment. (Blifil and Wild are the exceptions.) Lady Booby in the height of her frustrated desire is revolting yet pitiful. Square, behind the curtain in Molly's bedroom, turns out to be a hypocrite not a blackguard. As Professor McKillop has pointed out, "The steadying influence and broad views of the narrator are intended to insure that individual acts and episodes shall be viewed in the light of a basic tolerance of human nature."<sup>11</sup> We always feel that we are seeing men and women as they really are. Their affectations are ridiculed; their true virtues are treated sympathetically. We are not put in the position of seeing a character through prejudiced eyes -- Mr B. as he appears to Pamela. We have the perspective of the narrator, not the protagonist, and consequently Richardson's kind of introspection is not possible.

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<sup>10</sup>

Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>11</sup>

A.D. McKillop, The Early Masters of English Fiction (Kansas, 1956), p. 126.

## iii

The narrator who is intrusive, although he may plead ignorance, is also omniscient. Fielding's intrusions into the novel, indeed, are only manifestations of his omniscience. Because Fielding's omniscience as narrator infuses every aspect of his concept of characterization, it is to the characters themselves that I now intend to turn.

Broadly speaking, there are three degrees in Fielding's method of characterization and hence, three kinds of persons. All three types are to be found in Tom Jones. First, there are the caricatures, of which Square and Thwackum are the obvious and only examples. Then there are the realistic characters, mainly, Tom, Sophia, and Mr Allworthy. Finally, there is a large group of characters who are neither wholly realistic nor wholly caricatured. They stand halfway between as the slightly caricatured characters. Squire Western and his sister, Partridge, and Lady Bellaston, for example, are part of this group. In the conception of his wholly realistic characters Fielding in Tom Jones rises above the limitations of Joseph Andrews. Because of the importance of parody in Joseph Andrews, most characters are at least slightly caricatured; many of them are almost entirely so. Furthermore, there are scarcely any characters that without qualification can be called realistic. As I noted earlier, even Adams, the most fully developed character, is in part a caricature of the unworldly

man of classical learning. Caricature, it need hardly be said, tends to oversimplify and to distort. In his slightly caricatured characters Fielding emphasizes idiosyncrasies, the human qualities -- often of selfishness and self-deception -- that differentiate and divide human beings. Hence, this kind of character is retained in Tom Jones. However, in the conception of Tom and Sophia and Allworthy Fielding emphasizes the value of normal and universal qualities, the human qualities of love and benevolence that unite us. There is a worth and permanence in the qualities of the principal characters that must win out over the selfish, the dividing, idiosyncratic qualities of the secondary characters.

The secondary characters, although often slightly caricatured, are not generally meant to be unbelievable. Rather, they represent the kinds of people that Tom and Sophia, taken as the universal figures of the young lovers, might well have to overcome. Unlike caricatures, they are complex and Fielding delights in showing them to us in their complexity. Often they are self-deceived and not infrequently they suffer from a predominant passion. Their self-deception is part of their affectation, (Fielding's fascination with affectation in Joseph Andrews has continued strongly in Tom Jones) and when their opinion of themselves is better than it should be, Fielding ruthlessly allows us to see through them.

An excellent example of this aspect of the comic

perspective is Squire Western's sister who is introduced to us in the second chapter of Book VI as a woman possessing "great learning and knowledge of the world". Her brother, on the other hand, was "a man of no great observation". It would seem then that Mrs Western ought to perceive those things that are not seen by her brother whom she professes to despise because of her "sovereign contempt" for all his sex and because he has no knowledge of the town. Yet for all her "wonderful sagacity" Mrs Western completely misses the truth about the object of Sophia's admiration and a little later is successfully flattered and pacified by her ignorant, country brother. As Fielding explains in the next chapter, Mrs Western's "town learning" lets her down in much the same way that the "three countrymen" are deceived by the "Wiltshire thief":

Three countrymen were pursuing a Wiltshire thief through Brentford. The simplest of them seeing "The Wiltshire House," written under a sign, advised his companions to enter it, for there most probably they would find their countryman. The second, who was wiser still, answered, "Let us go in, however, for he may think we should not suspect him of going amongst his own countrymen." They accordingly went in and searched the house, and by that means missed overtaking the thief, who was at that time but a little way before them; and who, as they all knew, but had never once reflected, could not read.

Had the thief been able to read or had Sophia been an artful, town bred girl instead of an innocent country girl, he would have been caught and she would have been found out. Mrs Western suffers from the folly of considering others "wiser" than they really are. But "as to the plain simple workings

of honest nature, as she had never seen any such, she could know but little of them".

Mrs Western, furthermore, is deceived not only by her town learning but also by the supposed superiority of her understanding as a woman. She made a great deal of her knowledge as a woman in the face of her brother's outspoken contempt for it, but when he went so far as to say that her "friends at court" were "wiser than to trust women with secrets", she could bear it no longer and threatened to leave his house. Squire Western, for all his "ignorance", at once realised his mistake. "He knew the just value and only use of money, viz. to lay it up ...and had often considered the amount of his sister's fortune." In the really important matter the Squire was wise enough to give way and by flattery he soon persuaded his sister to stay. It is interesting to notice that the two kinds of special knowledge, the one derived from the experience of the town and the other from being a woman, which have been played in counterpoint throughout the chapter have come together in the Squire's remark about his sister's friends at court and their wisdom in not trusting women with secrets. It is these two kinds of knowledge that account at once for Mrs Western's self-asserted insight and her surprising myopia.

The foolishness of Mrs Western's conviction that her sex has something to do with her understanding is heightened by the description of her that Fielding gives us. Her



masculine person, which was nearly six foot high, added to her manner and learning, possibly prevented the other sex from regarding her, notwithstanding her petticoats, in the light of a woman. 12

Ironically, this large, strident woman who thinks and speaks, like Sterne's Uncle Toby, in military language, is simply a female version of her irascible brother.

In Fielding's skillful characterization we see her from three points of view. We see her first as she sees herself, namely, as a woman who has had the advantages of a town education. We see her also as her brother sees her, as one who can be induced to change her mind by flattery. We see her, as the narrator sees her, as a woman who lacks sensitivity and real insight, but who, like her brother, hides a kind heart behind a gruff exterior. And we come to know her, finally, at the end of the chapter as a woman who is not quite so blind that she cannot see through her brother's flattery. She knows that she is merely signing a treaty of peace with him which will be good only until his interests call upon him to break it. Here then, in spite of the slight degree of caricaturing, is a person that we might meet with in real life. And as with people in real life we know her not just as she appears to herself, but also in her dealings with other people and from what we are told about her.

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Fielding, Tom Jones, p. 218.

## iv

Not all of the less than wholly natural characters are as fully developed as Squire Western's sister, however. Lady Bellaston, the ill-tempered, grande dame of the city, for example, is more important and more interesting as a symbol and as an agent than as a character. As such she helps to illustrate the great range in Fielding's characterization in Tom Jones from the wholly natural characters to the caricatures. The characterization of Lady Bellaston is often close to caricature.

Lady Bellaston is, of course, little more than a successful Lady Booby. Both women are conceived in the tradition of the comedy of humours. Both are examples of a certain kind of loveless, ageing, haughty, immoral town ladies. There are differences, of course. Lady Bellaston is more single-minded than Lady Booby who is ridiculous largely because she cannot make up her mind about her passion for Joseph. Although even here, in the succession of contradictory letters that Lady Bellaston sends Tom, she resembles Lady Booby. In the plot structure, however, Lady Bellaston is more important than Lady Booby. Lady Bellaston plays a major role in the plot of Tom Jones and as Tom's lover and Sophia's "protectress" she is inadvertently a link between the two principals of the love story.

Lady Bellaston assumes great importance in the plot of Tom Jones from the moment that she first encounters the

hero. We first meet her in the final chapter of Book XI as the woman kind enough to provide a welcome refuge to Sophia upon her arrival in London. But from the moment that her passion for Jones begins to exercise its tyranny upon her, her true nature becomes clear. Fielding describes her nature to us in the initial chapter of Book XIV. Unlike most women "of the highest life" who are "so entirely made up of form and affectation, that they have no character at all", Lady Bellaston is one of the exceptional ladies who are distinguished "by their noble intrepidity, and a certain superior contempt of reputation, from the frail ones of meaner degree". In this sense she does not represent the women of fashion of the beau monde which is characterized by folly rather than vice.<sup>13</sup> On the contrary, Lady Bellaston is an extreme example of the corruption of the town. As the story progresses her corruption becomes more formidable. She is discovered to be capable of arranging for the rape of Sophia and of contriving that Jones might be "pressed and sent on board a ship".<sup>14</sup> As the final malicious act of "a woman who hath once been pleased with the possession of a man, [and] will go above half way to the devil to prevent any other woman from enjoying the same",<sup>15</sup> she gave Tom's proposal of marriage to Mrs Western that it might be shown to Sophia as the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 651.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 768.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 770.

ultimate instrument of the estrangement of Tom and Sophia.

Yet Lady Bellaston, as she becomes more terrible, becomes more ridiculous. As her passion increases her foolishness and selfishness become more apparent. At one point, like Square, she is reduced to hiding in the bedroom of her lover, where from behind the bed she must listen to the comments of her own servant upon her (Lady Bellaston's) lack of virtue. She is, as Fielding tells us, a demi-rep:

...that is to say, a woman who intrigues with every man she likes, under the name and appearance of virtue, and who, though some over-nice ladies will not be seen with her, is visited (as they term it) by the whole town; in short, whom everybody knows to be what nobody calls her.<sup>16</sup>

Finally her passion grows to such a height that, thwarted in her love for Tom, she becomes more monster than human and will stop at nothing to ruin Tom and Sophia.

The characterization of Lady Bellaston is typical of Fielding's method of allowing the characters to expose themselves by their own words and actions. From a detached point of view we watch Lady Bellaston as she grows more terrible and ridiculous. As it becomes clear that Lady Bellaston has long ago been drained of every drop of benevolence, it also becomes obvious that she has been cut off from the possibility of real love or affection from those around her. Finally when, through the efforts of Mrs Miller and Mr Allworthy, who are the very opposites of Lady Bellaston, the marriage of Tom and Sophia takes place, Lady

Bellaston fades from the scene. We learn only in the last chapter that she "paid the latter [Sophia] a formal visit at her return to town, where she behaved to Jones as to a perfect stranger, and, with great civility, wished him joy on his marriage." In the characterization of Lady Bellaston, in short, the comic view provides a comment on the moral view. The comic perspective and the moral perspective have come together.

## v

An important aspect of Fielding's comic perspective is the refusal to delve into the minds and emotions of the characters, to present their thoughts 'from the inside'. When, for example, Tom leaves Mr Allworthy's house we do not hear a monologue of despair (such as we would have had from the pen of Richardson), but rather we are told that:

...he presently fell into the most violent agonies, tearing his hair from his head, and using most other actions which generally accompany fits of madness, rage, and despair.

When he had in this manner vented the first emotions of passion, he began to come a little to himself. His grief now took another turn, and discharged itself in a gentler way, till he became at last cool enough to reason with his passion, and to consider what steps were proper to be taken in his deplorable condition. 17

Again, whenever the story reaches a point where a confessional monologue would be in order Fielding prefers to tell his reader that he will easily be able to divine the thoughts of the character by himself. At the end of the "long dialogue

between Sophia and her maid" about Tom Jones, Fielding interrupts:

Here the dinner bell interrupted a conversation which had wrought such an effect on Sophia, that she was, perhaps, more obliged to her bleeding in the morning, than she, at the time, had apprehended she should be. As to the present situation of her mind, I shall adhere to a rule of Horace, by not attempting to describe it, from despair of success. Most of my readers will suggest it easily to themselves; and the few who cannot, would not understand the picture, or at least would deny it to be natural, if ever so well drawn. 18

Fielding, in short, avoids the intimate and confessional approach to personality.

The way in which Fielding handles the story of Tom and Sophia illustrates this aspect of Fielding's comic detachment. Here, if nowhere else, we might expect to find the narrator concerned with intimacy and emotional expression. On the contrary, the depth of "the purest and tenderest affection" that this "fond couple" had for each other, is to be seen largely in their attempts to find one another in the face of the difficulties that a complex plot presents. In fact, Tom and Sophia rarely meet, although the course of their journey to London and the mishaps that befall them there are remarkably similar.

The natural affinity of these two people is emphasized by the parallel course of their lives. Both Tom and Sophia were born in Somersetshire where they grew up as children on adjoining estates. Shortly after they fell in

love, Tom left Mr Allworthy's house in disgrace, and Sophia decided to set out for London to avoid marrying Blifil. Both lose the greatest part of their money on the road early in the journey. They almost meet at the Upton Inn but, significantly, do not. In London their separation is most pronounced when Tom is imprisoned and Sophia is almost raped by Lord Fellamar. However, Lady Bellaston, one of the agents of their separation is unwittingly also the agent of their reunion and it is at her house that they accidentally meet. The story, as everybody knows, is brought to a happy and conventional conclusion by their marriage. The comic sense is maintained throughout, although at times a happy ending, in the reunion and marriage of Tom and Sophia, appears to be threatened. After the episode at the Upton Inn, for example, Sophia decided to give up her search for Tom and symbolically left her muff (the symbol of her regard for Tom) behind at the inn. Again, it is made clear more than once that Tom will have to learn prudence before he can win the hand of Sophia.

This kind of plot structure is imposed rather than organic. With an organic plot the movement of the story takes its form from the actions and thoughts of the characters themselves and often there is no escape from past action. The difference between the two kinds of plots is reflected in the fact that Tom's actions can be forgiven, while Mr B.'s are merely forgotten. The implications of the

imposed plot for Fielding's detached comic perspective are clear. The degree of attention paid to the subjective lives of the characters is much smaller than in other kinds of plots. The imposed plot reduces the importance of individual actions; the characters become interesting as "manifestations of the great pattern of nature".<sup>19</sup>

Fielding continually emphasizes the importance of "understanding the characters of men". His characters, he tells us, are copied from the "vast authentic Domsday Book of Nature",<sup>20</sup> and in the wonderful invocation to Genius he calls upon her to teach him "to know mankind better than they know themselves". He also calls upon Genius' constant companion Humanity, and upon Learning ("for without thy assistance nothing pure, nothing correct, can genius produce").<sup>21</sup> Finally he prays Experience to come to him for "From thee only can the manners of mankind be known". Knowledge of men implies knowledge of manners, of those fundamental qualities that make men what they are. With this knowledge of manners, of human kinds, Fielding feels competent to "recommend goodness and innocence" and to endeavour "to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices".<sup>22</sup> Fielding's characters, in short, "teach by example the fundamental moral truths,

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<sup>19</sup> Watt, Rise of the Novel, p. 271.

<sup>20</sup> Fielding, Tom Jones, p. 415.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 415 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Preface.



well known but always needing reiteration".<sup>23</sup>

vi

One reason Fielding avoided the intimate and confessional approach to personality is that he was involved with something larger than characters. The broad view, the comic prose epic, allowed Fielding to talk about Human Nature, the grand subject of Fielding's work as a whole. At the beginning of Tom Jones he gives us a "Bill of Fare" to his novel, which is "no other than Human Nature".

Nor do I fear that my sensible reader, though most luxurious in his taste, will start, cavil, or be offended, because I have named but one article. The tortoise -- as the alderman of Bristol, well learned in eating, knows by much experience -- besides the delicious calipash and calipee, contains many different kinds of food; nor can the learned reader be ignorant, that in Human Nature, though here collected under one general name, is such prodigious variety, that a cook will have sooner gone through all the several species of animal and vegetable food in the world, than an author will be able to exhaust so extensive a subject. <sup>24</sup>

The essential thing that we must learn about human nature, Fielding tells us, is that it has a "prodigious variety" -- that there is some portion of human nature, just as there is some dish of food, to appeal to every taste.

In taking human nature as his subject and viewing it through the eyes of the comic narrator, Fielding is able to evaluate characters. In his characterizations, Fielding is able, for example, to use one character as a foil to another.

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<sup>23</sup> Irwin, Art. cit., in ELH, Vol. XIII (1946), pp. 168-88.

<sup>24</sup> Fielding, Tom Jones, p. 2.

Thwackum is contrasted with Square and the inadequacies and hypocrisy of both their positions are exposed. Tom's real goodness under his apparent wickedness is seen by contrast with Blifil's real wickedness masking beneath a virtuous outward appearance. Other characters invite comparisons, Mr Allworthy and Mr Western, Sophia and her cousin, and so on. But the point here is that from the contrast of one character with another comes an evaluation. The reader, with the help of the narrator, sees the essential qualities of a character. Furthermore, with the exception of Blifil, who has a special function in the novel, none of the characters is wholly bad. Fielding's characters are "morally mixed beings",<sup>25</sup> as men are, surely, in real life. The implicit criticism of Richardson is that his characters are not. As we have observed earlier, they seem to come only in the black of "diabolic depravity" or the white of "angelic perfection"<sup>26</sup> -- Mr B. and Pamela, Lovelace and Clarissa. The morality to which they subscribe is strained. It is an absolutist moral system and Richardson's characters seem either to accept it absolutely or absolutely to reject it. Fielding asks us "not to condemn a character as a bad one because it is not perfectly a good one".<sup>27</sup> His own characters need not seek a "rarely possible virtue". Fielding was

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<sup>25</sup>

Dudden, p. 657.

<sup>26</sup>

Fielding, Tom Jones, p. 447.

<sup>27</sup>

Ibid.

far more concerned with the well-being of society than the purity of an individual and the great lesson that Fielding wants men to learn, both his characters and his readers, is to get along with other men. Boswell, whose own morality must have been close to Fielding's has drawn our attention to this:

The moral teaching of Fielding's writings, though it does not encourage a strained and rarely possible virtue, is ever favourable to honour and honesty, and cherishes the benevolent and generous affection. He who is as good as Fielding would make him is an amiable member of society. 28

Clearly, Fielding exhibits a basic tolerance of human nature. He asks us to evaluate his characters not in terms of a rigid moral code, but against a "norm of rational morality." 29

In a consideration of morality in the novels Tom's position is crucial. In so far as Tom Jones is an epic -- it is at least a comic prose epic -- Tom is an epic hero, a young man of modern life, who bears the same relationship to Tom Jones as Ulysses to the Odyssey. Earlier we saw that Tom is a development of Joseph Andrews. Tom, however, is not an example of the perfectly good man. But, for all his falls from virtue, sexual or otherwise, he is the perfectly good-natured man. He, unlike Blifil, who as far as we know was chaste and did not steal, is a virtuous man. He is virtuous because he possesses "goodness and innocence", the

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James Boswell, The Life of Dr. Johnson. Quoted by Dudden, p. 656.

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McKillop, p. 102.

goodness of one who shows generosity and spontaneity and the innocence of one who never suspects another, male or female, of an unkind or selfish action. He never seemed to realize that he had not so much seduced Molly and Mrs Waters, as he had been seduced by them, and he never realized that it was Black George the gamekeeper, his friend, who had caused the disappearance of his £500. Tom perseveres in good nature and wins his own reward in spite of his promiscuity. He is even capable of a certain amount of moral development. At any rate he learns prudence and continence. Like Amelia's husband, however, he had been, essentially, a good man all along, but, also like Booth, he had certain weaknesses. Fielding believed that the good man is able to learn prudence. He was not concerned with the problem of making a bad man good; there is no Mr B. in Fielding's novel.

The other characters also illustrate Fielding's moral perspective. The women in Fielding's novels are particularly interesting for the contrast that they afford with the women of Richardson's novels. Richardson's women, like the men, are either angelically pure or diabolically black, for Pamela (and Clarissa) or against her. The women in Fielding's novels may be grouped into three classes. First there are the virtuous, Fanny, Mrs Heartfree, Sophia, and Amelia. Then, on the other extreme, there are the corrupt, Lady Booby, Mrs Slipslop, Lady Bellaston, and Mrs Ellison. In between these two there are those who are neither virtuous nor corrupt; Betty, Molly, Mrs Fitzpatrick, Mrs

Bennett. Within each of these groups there are further divisions that might well be made. Sophia is clearly superior in many ways to Mrs Heartfree; Mrs Bennett is scarcely of the same order as Molly Seagrim. However, two points emerge at once. First, there is a great range in the virtue, or lack of it, of these women. Secondly, and more importantly, there is such a group as the unchaste but not corrupt. Both these points emphasize the importance of Fielding's wide perspective. He knew that people in this world are not simple beings who act from one or two basic motives and can therefore be judged in the light of one or two actions. A man or woman is a complex creature and moral judgments must not be hastily made. He cautions us more than once that "A single bad act no more constitutes a villain in life, than a single bad part on the stage."<sup>30</sup> And in the same passage he continues:

The passions, like the managers of a playhouse, often force men upon parts without consulting their judgment, and sometimes without any regard to their talents. Thus the man, as well as the player, may condemn what he himself acts; nay, it is common to see vice sit as awkwardly on some men, as the character of Iago would on the honest face of Mr. William Mills.

Upon the whole, then, 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. In a word, they are the same folly, the same childishness, the same ill-breeding, and the same ill-nature, which raise all the clamours and uproars both in life and on the stage. The worst of men generally have the words rogue and villain most in their mouths, as the lowest of all wretches are the aptest to cry out low in the pit.

It is for the purpose of illustrating this central point that Fielding has introduced the long and digressive story of the Man of the Hill into Tom Jones. The Man of the Hill has rejected the world because his "first mistress" and his "first friend" betrayed him "in the basest manner" and almost brought about his death. Tom, with remarkable maturity of judgment, points out to him that his misanthropy is based on too few examples:

...the abhorrence which you express for mankind ...is much too general. Indeed, you here fall into an error, which in my little experience I have observed to be a very common one, by taking the character of mankind from the worst and basest among them; whereas, indeed, as an excellent writer observes, nothing should be esteemed as characteristical 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 acquaintance, have suffered injuries from bad and worthless men; two or three instances of which are very unjustly charged on all human nature. 31

Before we leave this subject of Fielding's morality it would be well to add a word of caution. If the first premise of his ethical position is that human nature is fundamentally good, the second is that prudence is necessary to the good life. Amelia is, from one point of view, a novel written to illustrate just this point, and in the first chapter, "containing the exordium", he says emphatically:

To retrieve the ill consequences of a foolish conduct, and by struggling manfully with distress to subdue, is one of the noblest efforts of wisdom and virtue.

It is not insignificant, surely, in Tom Jones that, although Tom early falls in love with the daughter of Squire Western, he comes at the end to be the heir (and, of course, the blood relative) of Squire Allworthy. The exuberance of his spirits is subdued and we may trust that he proved a suitable heir to his uncle. Mr Allworthy is the prudent man, or, as Fielding would have preferred to have put it in Tom Jones, the man of moderation. Near the end of Chapter III of Book VI he writes:

And here, in defiance of all the barking critics in the world, I must and will introduce a digression concerning true wisdom, of which Mr. Allworthy was in reality as great a pattern as he was of goodness.

And a little later he continues:

To say truth, the wisest man is the likeliest to possess all worldly blessings in an eminent degree; for as that moderation which wisdom prescribes is the surest way to useful wealth, so can it alone qualify us to taste many pleasures. The wise man gratifies every appetite and every passion while the fool sacrifices all the rest to pall and satiate one.

It is significant that at the very end of the book Mr Jones (as he is now called) acquires both "worldly blessings" and wisdom. Mr Western resigned to him "his family seat, and the greater part of his estate" and Mr Allworthy in "continual conversation" taught him wisdom. "He hath also, by reflection on his own follies, acquired a discretion and prudence very uncommon in one of his lively parts." In its own way Tom Jones is a story of "Virtue Rewarded",

but that virtue is benevolence, and the story of its reward marks the full expression of Fielding's vision of man and human nature.



#### IV

Fielding's literary work, when seen against a background of the work of his contemporaries and in the light of the Augustan tradition, exhibits a pattern which can be defined. A career in the writing of burlesque drama provided a training in the handling of parody which could be turned to good account when Fielding wanted to express his strongly felt repugnance to Richardson's Pamela. Parody, however, for Fielding was not something to be built upon but was a bridge from the drama to the novel. Shamela is important because it represents a point of departure in Fielding's work, one end of the bridge that links the dramas with the novels. The two aspects of Fielding's work which have been the special subject of this thesis are both present there, but in different proportions: parody is fully developed; the alternative morality is nascent. The first real alternative to Richardson's kind of novel comes in Joseph Andrews in which, however, the moral view is set in the framework of parody. The next step is the virtual elimination of parody, at least as a structural device, and the development of the full expression of an alternative vision of man and human nature. Fielding takes this step in Tom Jones which is his greatest work and one of the finest novels in English literature. In its richness can be found a judicious balance between

Fielding's sense of parody and humour, that superbly controlled sense of ironic detachment that the earlier work had helped to develop, and his warm and humane view of the essential goodness of mankind. Tom Jones is a highly polished piece of work in the best eighteenth century literary tradition. It avoids both the roughness of parody, which though healthy is usually crude, and the sentimentality or hypocrisy of that other tradition, exemplified in Richardson, to which Fielding vigorously objected. Tom Jones, furthermore, is Fielding's highly successful solution to the problem of the novel that not only Richardson but Defoe and Smollett, each in a different way, were attempting to solve.

In Amelia the balance, achieved splendidly in Tom Jones, is destroyed. In his final novel Fielding moved, circuitously, towards Pamela and Clarissa. The old lightness of touch is gone; the concern with form and the literary tradition is lacking; and the sheer delight in being omniscient, in molding the work, has largely disappeared. The moral view has taken over. The theme resembles the themes of Pamela and Clarissa and the narrative manner is closer to that of Defoe and Smollett. Parody per se had little importance in Tom Jones but it left a valuable legacy in the detached comic perspective of that work. In Amelia Fielding has forgotten his own injunction in the first chapter of Tom Jones that "the excellence of the mental entertainment consists less in the subject than in the author's skill in well

dressing it up." Here Fielding, in stressing form over subject, is certainly speaking with tongue in cheek, but the point that both aspects are needed remains an important one. The difference between Amelia and Tom Jones helps to make clear the quality of the masterpiece. Amelia is weakened by the loss of the comic perspective. Tom Jones is a great novel because Fielding's early fascination with parody has matured into the skillfully handled comic perspective. From Tom Thumb to Tom Jones parody has become perspective.

V

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Abbreviations

<u>Art. cit.</u>	Article cited (used in footnotes)
<u>D.A.</u>	<u>Dissertations Abstracts</u>
<u>ELH</u>	<u>Journal of English Literary History</u>
<u>Mod. Lang. Notes</u>	<u>Modern Language Notes</u>
<u>Mod. Lang. Q.</u>	<u>Modern Language Quarterly</u>
<u>MP</u>	<u>Modern Philology</u>
<u>Philol. Q.</u>	<u>Philological Quarterly</u>
<u>PMLA</u>	<u>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</u>

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