

INDIRECT ETHICAL DISCOURSE: FIELDING, DIALOGUE, AND DIALECTIC

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By

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this enquiry is to examine the techniques of indirect ethical communication which Fielding invented, adapted, and perfected, and which may be seen at work in his novels, developed to meet what he understood to be the special needs of his readers. His innovations in the fictional communication of ethical value are explained in the context of the widespread agreement in his own time that the direct communication of ethical and religious conviction was difficult, if not impossible, because real conviction depends upon a frank, reasonable, and voluntary assent to the terms of belief.

The enquiry examines two kinds of indirect ethical discourse, which have been termed dialogue and dialectic. Dialogue in fiction consists in the interchange of ideas in conversation, including series of conflicting or complementary examples or illustrations, implicit references to other texts, and encounters between rival definitions of evaluative terms. The focal points of Fielding's dialogues are matters of some moment, such as the duties of charity, temperance, the respect due to the clergy, marriage, prudence, and the origin and scope of law.

Because the reader of satire is invited to compare what is ridiculed with a social normative referent, satire is a kind of dialogue. But certain dialogic patterns are designed to entrap the reader, forcing him to reconsider the assumptions by which he interprets the novels. This process becomes dialectical when the program of reader-implication stim-

ulates an inward turning. The philosophical context includes both the Platonic assumption that the Good is latent in each individual, and the Anglican doctrine of assent (personal responsibility for belief). The reader is an appropriate target for the indirect stimulation of the potential faculty of Good Nature, beginning with the reduction of common but erroneous opinion (elenchus), and reaching completion with the Socratic method of "intellectual midwifery" (maieusis), which assists the reader to bring latent ideas into active life.

The enquiry undertakes a close reading of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, considering questions of comedy and the admixture of jest and earnest, deliberate artificiality of form, narrative technique, irony, reader response, and ethical discourse.

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This work is dedicated to my family, and especially to E., for whom this (as everything) is done.

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CHAPTER I.

FIELDING AND THE PARABOLIC MODE

1. The Introduction to the Work, or Bill of Fare to the Feast

An Author ought to consider himself, not as a Gentleman who gives a private or eleemosynary Treat, but rather as one who keeps a public Ordinary, at which all Persons are welcome for their Money...To prevent therefore giving Offence to their Customers by any...Disappointment, it hath been usual, with the honest and well-meaning Host, to provide a Bill of Fare, which all Persons may peruse at their first Entrance into the House; and having thence acquainted themselves with the Entertainment which they may expect, may either stay and regale with what is provided for them, or may depart to some other Ordinary better accomodated to their Taste.

As we do not disdain to borrow Wit or Wisdom from any Man who is capable of lending us either, we have condescended to take a Hint from these honest Victuallers...¹

Until relatively recently, the great majority of critics of Henry Fielding's novels have not often recognized the nature of the seriousness at the heart of his comic fiction.² Nonetheless, Fielding's novels (and his writing in general) may be considered

¹The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling [1749], ed. Martin C. Battestin and Fredson Bowers (Middletown, Conn., and Oxford, 1975), Book I, Chapter i, page 31. Subsequent references to Tom Jones (sometimes abbreviated "TJ") will appear parenthetically in the text, indicating book, chapter, and page number.

²The task of placing Fielding's seriousness in the context of the religious thought of his age was first approached by James A.

ethical literature, for they are constantly concerned with ethical questions -- questions concerning what ought to be done, right and wrong, duty and obligation, and so forth. Fielding's formal definition of comedy, too, is essentially ethical, in that it defines the Ridiculous in terms of laughable divagations from the path of Honesty and Virtue.

The primary purpose of this enquiry will be to examine the techniques of indirect ethical communication which Fielding adapted, invented, and perfected, and which may be seen at work in his novels. The Fielding canon includes a considerable body of direct ethical discourse. It may be found in his novels in the prefatory chapters and the incursions of the commenting authorial or narrative voice into the story; it may be found as well in Fielding's political writings, journals, legal pamphlets, and even occasionally in his plays. Some of Fielding's statements in the direct mode will be important in coming to understand certain aspects of the novels, but this enquiry was not undertaken with a design of surveying Fielding's cultural milieu or of describing the full range of his intellectual, religious, or philosophical background. Rather, it focuses on the indirect mode, the method which Fielding developed

Work, "Henry Fielding, Christian Censor", in The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker (New Haven, Conn., 1949), pp. 139-48. Work's contribution to Fielding criticism was to open the field for investigation of Anglican thought as the intellectual background for Fielding's novels. The most important of these studies, and one to which this enquiry owes a considerable debt, is Martin C. Battestin's The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art (Middletown, Conn., 1959). Also invaluable is Henry Knight Miller's

to meet what he considered were the special needs of his readers. His innovations in the fictional communication of ethical value can only be understood in the light of the widespread agreement in his own time that the direct communication of ethical and religious conviction was difficult, if not impossible, because real conviction depends upon a frank, reasonable, and voluntary assent to the terms of belief.

The enquiry examines two kinds of indirect ethical discourse, which have been termed dialogue and dialectic. Dialogue occurs in fiction on a number of levels, and consists in a more or less clearly articulated exchange of ideas or conversation; Fielding explains the significance of conversation in terms which apply to the dialogue, when he defines it in the Essay on Conversation as "a reciprocal Interchange of Ideas, by which Truth is examined, Things are, in a manner, turned round, and sifted..."³ Dialogue, in its most immediately recognizable form, consists of conversation (or talk)

Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies (Princeton, 1961), which provides insight into the typical 18th century admixture of classical ethics and Christian divinity. More recently, Bernard Harrison has combined a study of the moral philosophy of Fielding in his time with a close reading of Tom Jones, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones: The Novelist as Moral Philosopher (London, 1975); especially interesting is Harrison's analysis of the history of critical prejudice against Fielding, which ranges from Dr. Johnson (who considered Fielding's morality a menace) to Sir John Hawkins (who considered him a weak Shaftesburian, and philosophically naive) to modern critics, who consider Fielding's moral outlook at best intuitively correct.

Before the work undertaken so successfully by these critics, a reading such as this enquiry purposes to undertake would have been, if not impossible, at least highly improbable.

³Miscellanies by Henry Fielding, Esq; Volume One [1743]; ed. Henry Knight Miller (Middletown, Conn. & Oxford, 1972), p. 120.

between characters; in modern times, this usage seems to have supplanted other definitions. The interchange of ideas, however, may be accomplished in other varying forms, including series of conflicting or complementary examples or illustrations, implicit references to (or comparisons with) other literary texts with which the reader could be expected to be familiar, encounters in speech and action between rival definitions of evaluative terms, and so forth. In Fielding's novels, the focal points of these dialogues (the subject of the conversations) are matters of some moment, such as the question of prudence, the duty of charity, the respect due to the clergy, the origin and scope of the law, and the importance of temperance.

Satire, too, is a kind of dialogue: the reader is invited to make a comparison between what is held up for ridicule and the normative referent which must exist in society for satire to be comprehensible and successful. The reader's own activity in satire is important, and in all of Fielding's fictional dialogues a certain degree of inferential freedom is allowed. Nonetheless, Fielding's authorial presence is clearly felt nearly all the time. Another dimension of dialogue is thus built into the novel: the dialogue between the author and the reader. Sometimes this involves an interchange consisting of proffered situation and invited judgment, and sometimes the narrative persona seems to "speak" directly to the reader. The conversation is not always so easy, however, and a careful analysis of certain kinds of dialogue reveals that the reader is being "set up" or "entrapped". For instance, the novels are set

in a corrupt, upside-down society, a dystopia similar to that depicted by Hogarth, and ruled primarily by materialism and self-interest. The narrative persona often seems to adopt the values of this society in his language, without warning, and the reader is disingenuously encouraged to accept such affected attitudes and values as his (the narrator, "Fielding") own, or else to make a stock response or let it pass by unnoticed. Inevitably, then, the logical consequences and implications of these attitudes are brought (sometimes forcibly) to the reader's attention; sufficient guidance is provided to correct the error into which the reader has been steered.

Fielding's novels become dialectical when the program of reader implication is extended in such a way that individual inquiry and self-examination is stimulated. The dialectic is made possible by a philosophical context which includes both the Platonic assumption that the Good is latent in the individual (an assumption still very current in Fielding's time), and the Anglican doctrine of assent, or personal responsibility for belief. Fielding regarded his reader as an appropriate target for indirect stimulation of the potential faculty of Good Nature.

This enquiry is so structured as to provide the cultural context and terminology necessary to understand Fielding's methods in a gradual way. The first chapter, therefore, concerns itself with the notion of the duality of literary discourse which prevailed immediately before and during Fielding's literary career. Comedy, it was widely agreed, could be allowed to have a dual nature comprised of a serious message contained in an amusing form. Because of this

doubleness, comedy can be classed in the parabolic mode (along with hieroglyphics, emblems, fables, allegories, and parables themselves), which seeks to communicate a gnomic content with a more or less disposable form. The enquiry considers the reader's role in interpreting parabolic discourse, and the affective power of the parable on the reader. After a brief investigation of this power, especially in the Gospel parables, the double nature of Comedy is again considered, this time in the light of the Lucianic tradition of satirical dialogue. Again, the common link will be found to be not doubleness alone, but the involvement of the reader in the process of interpretation. Indeed, the reader is implicated, as well as interpreting. The use of a classical image or topos (the description of Socrates as an ugly Silenus-figure which opens to reveal a god) by Erasmus and later ethically-committed satirists serves as an analogy of the reader's role in interpreting or "opening" indirect or parabolic discourse. A further line of enquiry examines the Anglican doctrine of assent, the requisite condition of mental preparation known as "ingenuity", Fielding's active participation in this tradition, and the use of another classical topos which serves as a fitting analogy. Finally, the literary context which licenses satire and corrective comedy is outlined briefly.

Chapters II and III are devoted to Fielding's use of dialogue in Joseph Andrews. The first section of Chapter II continues the discussion of the doctrine of assent, and establishes the background

necessary to understand Fielding's method. Following this is a series of sections which explicate several thematic dialogues. Because Fielding mentions two books of popular divinity as influential upon Joseph's moral education (The Whole Duty of Man and The Imitation of Christ), constant reference is made to these texts to provide a sense of the implicit dialogue of contrast; reference is also made to Fielding's own didactic writing. Chapter III concerns two kinds of dialogue on the subject of temperance or moderation, and begins with an outline of the importance of temperance in Anglican thought. Both dialogues set forth examples of what it is and is not; the first dialogue is more straightforward, while the second is somewhat trickier. In both cases, the reader is sometimes deliberately misled, only to have his error pointed out.

Chapters IV, V, and VI deal with Tom Jones. Chapter IV undertakes a close look at the novel's form, especially the overwhelming tendency to deliberate artificiality. These artificialities, it is argued, are not anomalies in a historical evolution toward purer forms of narrative, but essential ingredients in a program of conditioning, directing, and manipulating the reader. In Chapter V, the nature of this manipulation is more fully explored. The role of the reader, it will be seen, extends from the reformulation of words and sentences from linguistic symbols, to the active inference and judgment of complex literary experience. Fielding involves himself in a process of "conditioning" the reader, in developing first what he calls "Sagacity" (a kind of informed discrimination and careful judgment in circumstances which

are often misleading), and finally in developing a subjective understanding of (and assent to) certain values to which Fielding was absolutely committed. The process involved, it will be demonstrated, is a fictionalized form of the Socratic method. It is a vital part of the enquiry to determine how this is done, and to establish a sense of the cultural context in which it is reasonable to claim Fielding as a legitimate heir and practitioner of the Socratic method.

Chapter VI undertakes a detailed examination of Fielding's method in several particular instances. The concept of Benevolence and "Good Nature" is outlined briefly, and the manner in which it is indirectly communicated is carefully explicated.

Throughout the enquiry, careful attention is paid to the response which Fielding designed in his readers. He is constantly either confronting his reader with dramatic choices between correct interpretation and obvious misreading, or else seducing them into going along with a superficial or erroneous understanding (often ostensibly that of the narrator himself), only to expose their errors. Therefore, in examining particular passages, the language of this enquiry necessarily assumes the imperative tone. When it is maintained that the reader "must" do this or risk that, the source of the coercion is not insistence on the authority of my own interpretation, but a sense of Fielding's firm control over the process of reading, and especially over the forcible choice of alternative interpretations.

Many of the chapters and sections begin with one or more epigraphs. There are several different reasons for their selection: sometimes they encapsulate a problem, controversy, or idea to be discussed; sometimes they indicate extremes in a continuum of opinion; sometimes they serve as a text upon which what follows will be an extended gloss; sometimes they serve as signals of transition from what has come before to what can be expected as the enquiry progresses. In every case, the epigraph is intended to provoke interest in what follows. Bacon prefaced an early edition of his Essays with this message, which might be appropriated to this less ambitious enquiry, with all appropriate modesty: "My hope is they may be as graynes of salte, that will give you an appetite, rather than offend you with satiety."⁴

Finally, as Fielding himself begs his readers not to judge detail irrelevant whose significance is not immediately apparent, so must I extend a like request. The nature of this enquiry is such that a gradual unfolding of the argument is essential, and so certain principles or ideas may be introduced well before they are brought into concentrated action. The careful reader, it is to be hoped, will recognize the threads which run through my arguments. It will also be readily apparent that my choice of references and secondary criticism is somewhat eclectic. The precedent I claim for this should appear sound -- it is Fielding himself, whose library, citation, allusion, imitation, and parody all reveal the wide-ranging interest which is one of the most fascinating aspects of the 18th-century mind.

⁴Cancelled dedication to 1612 edition, as quoted by Stanley Fish, Self-Consuming Artifacts (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1972), p. 78.

2. Comedy and the Parabolic Mode

These were those fathers...and founts of knowledge and learning; or nurses of wisdom from whose pregnant breasts the whole world hath sucked the best part of humane knowledge it hath; And from whose wise and excellent fables...all those who were after them called Philosophers took their grounds and first initia Philosophandi....Their Philosophy was no other than fabularum sensa ab involucris fabularum explicata -- the senses and meanings of fables taken out and separated from their husks and involvements.⁵

Non cortex nutrit, sed medulla.⁶

Art thou for something rare, and profitable?
Wouldst't thou see a truth within a fable?
Art thou forgetful? Wouldst thou remember
From New Year's Day to the last of December?
Then read my fancies, they will stick like burrs,
And may be to the helpless comforters.

This book is writ in such a dialect
As may the minds of listless men affect:
It seems a novelty, and yet contains
Nothing but sound and honest gospel-strains.⁷

The question of the nature of comedy sparked lively debate in the 18th century. Henry Fielding's critical efforts in this field draw on a number of authorities, some predictable, some more eclectic. Perhaps the clearest acknowledgement of his wide reading and discipleship is to be found in his invocation to the Comic Muse in Tom Jones, in which he sues for the honour of being placed in the

⁵Henry Reynolds, Mythomystes... (London, 1632) pp. 20f. Facsimile, with introduction by Arthur F. Kinney (Menston, Yorkshire: Scolar Press 1972).

⁶Marisilio Ficino [fl. 1433-1499], The Letters..., tr. by Members of the Language Department of the School of Economic Science (London, 1975), II, 81. [It is not the husk but the kernel which gives nourishment.]

⁷John Bunyan, "The Author's Apology for His Book", The Pilgrim's Progress [1678], ed. Roger Sharrock (Harmondsworth, 1965), p. 37.

company of Aristophanes, Lucian, Cervantes, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Swift, and Marivaux. (TJ XIII;I:685f.) Comedy is clearly seen to have a specifically corrective function; the jest and the earnest are inextricably bound together. This serious laughter (and laughing seriousness) characterizes the age.

It is curious that neoclassical musings concerning the nature of comedy continually return, longingly, to two missing works -- the first is Homer's Margites, together with the complementary portion of the Poetics which Aristotle surely would have written if Homer had left us that notable, non-extant comic epic.⁸ The other item is the "lost" part of Plato's Symposium; Aristodemus concludes his relation of this dialogue by mentioning that he had just missed Socrates' explanation of the close relation between tragedy and comedy, wasted on two sleepy, tipsy friends in the wee, small hours

⁸ Fielding refers to the precedent of the lost Margites in his Preface to The History of Joseph Andrews [1742], ed. Martin C. Battestin. The Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding (Middletown, Conn.; Oxford, 1967), p. 3. Subsequent references to Joseph Andrews (sometimes abbreviated "JA") will appear parenthetically in the text, referring to book, chapter, and page number. Fielding draws on this Renaissance commonplace often, as in his Preface to David Simple: "I have attempted in my Preface to Joseph Andrews, to prove, that every work of this kind is in its nature a comic epic poem, of which Homer left us a precedent, though it be unhappily lost." The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, Esq., ed. W. E. Henley (New York, 1902), Vol. XVI, p. 10. (Subsequent references to this edition of Fielding's works will be indicated by the short form, "Henley"). Again, concerning the critical definition of the term "Humour", Fielding laments the loss of Aristotle's aid: "And no one, as I know of, hath undertaken to shew us expressly what it is, tho' I scarce doubt but it was amply done by Aristotle in his Treatise on Comedy, which is unhappily lost." The Covent-Garden Journal, No. 55, (July 18, 1752), ed. Gerard Edward Jensen (New York, 1964), II, 60.

of morning.⁹

The import of this attractive nostalgia is clear. While there never seemed to be a shortage of explanations of tragedy or of the poetic sublime, comedy had few critical apologists. Justification for comedy, in its varying degrees of pleasant usefulness and seriousness, was ardently sought out, especially in this imaginary tradition. Implicit in the legend of Homer's authorship of a comic epic, and explicitly alluded to by Socrates, is the compelling notion that the conditions of tragedy and comedy are essentially the same.¹⁰

Both are based on contradiction, and differ mostly in the degree to which a way of escaping (or solving) the contradiction is seen as possible. Søren Kierkegaard notes the family resemblance, and comments:

Wherever there is life, there is contradiction, and wherever there is contradiction, the comical is present. The tragic and the comic are the same, in so far as both are based on contradiction; but the tragic is the suffering contradiction, the comical the painless contradiction...The comic apprehension evokes the contradiction or makes it manifest by

⁹ Symposium, 223d. The Collected Dialogues of Plato, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton, 1961), p. 474.

¹⁰ Curiously enough, Montaigne argues that man cannot experience either pure laughter or tears: "Nature discovers this confusion to us: painters hold that the same motions and screwings of the face that serve for weeping, serve for laughter too..." "That We Taste Nothing Pure", Essays of Michel de Montaigne, tr. Charles Cotton [1685-6], ed. W. C. Hazlitt (n.p., 1892), II, 129. Fielding's 1743 edition of Montaigne was in his library at its dispersal by auction after his death, and was probably an edition of Cotton's popular translation.

having in mind the way out, which is why the contradiction is painless. The tragic apprehension sees the contradiction and despairs of a way out.¹¹

Comic laughter, the laughter which ridicules the contradiction of social norms known as folly, serves to protect society, reinforcing its values by excluding the alien and irregular. In the late 17th century, one of the early theorists of this process, the Abbé Bellegarde (whose treatise, Reflexions on Ridicule, and the Means to avoid it, Fielding knew and admired) combined this mechanism of social protection with an anticipation of Meredith's notion of a regulatory Comic Spirit. Bellegarde's value, according to Fielding, is to be discovered in his description of the way in which Ridicule acts as a dynamic attribute of the "Publick", or society at large:

Men are made for Society, and therefore the most useful of all Sciences is the Art of Living, which guards us perpetually against Ridicule, and teaches us to avoid whatever may disgust the Persons we converse with, and diminish the Pleasure they take in our Conversation.... 'Tis Folly to wink against our own Imperfections and to seek pitiful Arguments to evade the Thoughts of them: for tho' it may be easy to put a Fallacy upon themselves, there's no imposing upon the Publick, a penetrating and inexorable Judge.¹²

One of the most beneficial effects of ridiculing the failure to meet certain accepted standards of behaviour, is to make these standards seem more desirable, and more practicable. Aristotelian critics

¹¹Concluding Unscientific Postscript, tr. D. F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1941), pp. 459 ff.

¹²Jean Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde, Reflexions upon Ridicule ..., 5th English ed. (London, 1739), Vol. I, pp. 1-2. [Fielding's copy of the Reflexions was no longer in his library at its dispersal by auction; I have used this edition for convenience.] Fielding

hypothesize, moreover, that, like its graver counterpart, comedy must have its own form of catharsis:

Comedy can be a means of mastering our disillusionments when we are caught in a dishonest or stupid society. After we recognize the misdoings, the blunders, we can liberate ourselves by a confident, wise laughter that brings a catharsis of our discontent. We see the flaws in things, but we do not always need to concede the victory....If we can laugh wisely enough at ourselves and others, the sense of guilt, dismay, anxiety, or fear can be lifted. Unflinching and undaunted we see where we are. This strengthens us as well as society.¹³

Aristotelian theory places the emphasis on a psychological or transcendent internal adjustment in the audience.. Most 17th and 18th century comic authors, however, used comedy as a tactical attack on particular targets, the agents and advocates of folly and vice. The most popular form is probably satire, the attritional, corrective, and educational functions of which depend upon the reader's (audience's) simultaneous recognition of two points: an instance or pattern of conduct, and the normative referent against which it is measured and

praises Bellegarde's capable survey of the varieties of the Ridiculous, with the reservation that he failed to locate the source, which Fielding places in Affectation; Preface, Joseph Andrews, p. 7. His praise for Bellegarde, however, is less equivocal in his discussion of Humour and the Ridiculous in The Covent-Garden Journal, No. 55 [July 18, 1752], II, 62 ff. Ian Donaldson sees another anticipation of Meredith in James Beattie's Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition [1764]; The World Upside-Down (Oxford, 1970), p. 12.

¹³Wylie Sypher, "The Meanings of Comedy", in Comedy: Meaning and Form, ed. R. W. Corrigan (San Francisco, 1965), p. 53.

found wanting. The reader's part is clearly defined as one of recognition and assent in censure; the ideal response is to join the author, voluntarily and almost automatically, in laughing "Mankind out of their favourite Follies and Vices."¹⁴ In so doing, the reader reaffirms by his implicit assent those values folly and vice contradict.

We will return to the question of the corrective function of comedy. First, however, let us examine the nature of comic communication. It can be seen that a great deal of the comic contains an earnest at the heart of the jest, bringing into play the ancient analogy which describes art as seed and husk. The entertaining literal surface of comedy surrounds a kernel of submerged, implicit meaning. Such a view of literary art sees it as a sort of fable -- the essential communication takes place in an indirect, parabolic mode.

It should not be surprising, then, that Aesop turns up so frequently as the exemplar of ethically committed literature, as for example in Sidney's explanation of the functional superiority of the parabolic utterance of poetry over the baldly discursive didacticism with which he (rather unfairly) types philosophy:

The poet is indeed the right popular philosopher, whereof Aesop's tales give good proof: whose pretty allegories, stealing under the formal tales of beasts, make many, more beastly than beasts, begin to hear the sound of virtue from these dumb speakers.¹⁵

Others go much farther. Petrus Mosellanus, translating Lucian in the

¹⁴ Dedication, Tom Jones, p. 7.

¹⁵ Sir Phillip Sidney, A Defence of Poetry [c. 1580], ed. J.A. Van Dorsten (Oxford, 1966), p. 34.

early 16th century, maintained:

The plain truth, presented directly, is as unpalatable to the human mind as a pill without its sugar coating is to the human stomach. It is a waste of time to try to present moral instruction in a direct form, as it will be so unpalatable that none of it will take effect. You must put it into pretty language, attractive and amusing, just as Christ found it advisable to express his new philosophy through parable and allegory.¹⁶

The same argument was adjusted to serve the purpose of defending comedy against its many enemies. In answering the indignant attacks upon the Restoration stage mounted by Jeremy Collier, George Farquhar attributed the founding of comedy to Aesop himself, and linked the pedigree of the parabolic method in comedy to familiarly weighty authorities:

Here are Precepts, Admonitions, and Salutary Innuendo's for the ordering of our Lives and Conversations couch'd in these Allegories and Allusions. The Wisdom of the Ancients was wrapt up in Veils and Figures: the Aegyptian Hieroglyphicks, and the History of the Heathen Gods are nothing else; but if these Pagan Authorities give Offence...consult the Tales and Parables of our Saviour in Holy Writ...Nathan's Fable of the poor Man's Lamb had more influence on the Conscience of David, than any force of downright Admonition. So that by Ancient Practice, and modern Example, by the Authority of Pagans, Jews,

¹⁶As quoted by C. Robinson, Lucian and His Influence in Europe (London, 1979), p. 96. The Renaissance view of Lucian's satirical dialogues as moral vehicles will be discussed below. The parabolic argument set forth by Mosellanus received lively expression in Pope's Essay on Criticism, ll. 575-7:

'Tis not enough your Counsel still be true,
Blunt Truths more Mischief than nice Falshoods do;
 Men must be taught as if you taught them not;
 And Things unknown propos'd as Things forgot:
 Without Good Breeding, Truth is disapprov'd;
 That only makes Superior Sense belov'd.

Pope defines Good Breeding several lines later (639-42) as a combination of literary taste, social and literary knowledge, and freedom from excessive pride, indicating that truth must be "presented" or "dressed" tastefully to be acceptable. The Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. E. Audra et al. (London, 1961-63). The specific problems of teaching the resistant will be discussed below.

and Christians, the World is furnish'd with this so sure,
so pleasant, and expedient an Art, of schooling Mankind
into better Manners. Now here is the primary Design of
Comedy.¹⁷

Fielding indicates his awareness of this tradition when he observes that Homer "wrote to heathens, to whom poetical fables were articles of faith."¹⁸ The authority of the fables -- before the advent of historical criticism -- was practically unassailable. That Socrates had spent part of his last days versifying Aesop was widely considered a tacit advocacy on his part of the parabolic mode.¹⁹ Sir Richard Blackmore, defining the fable as a "feign'd or devis'd story" -- that is, as fiction, created by an author consciously and to a purpose -- elaborates at length upon the double communication of the parabolic mode:

And in the first Ages, especially in the Eastern World, great use was made by Learned and Wise men of the feign'd Discourses, Fables, or Apologues, to teach the ruder and more unpolish'd Part of Mankind. Theologians, Philosophers, and great Law-givers everywhere fell into this way of instructing the People in the knowledge of Religion, Natural Philosophy, and Moral and Political Virtues. So Thales, Orpheus, Solon, Homer, and the rest of the great Men in those Ages have done...and these reasons may be given for the usefulness of it. Naked Philosophical Precepts are of themselves harsh and dry, hardly attended to, and ungratefully entertain'd...Man is naturally a lover of Pleasure, and if you would do him Good, it must be by pleasing him; you must give him Delight; and keep his Mind in a constant agreeable Agitation, else he will not attend to the most useful Counsel and Instruction. He is pleas'd already with

¹⁷"A Discourse on Comedy, in Reference to the English Stage" [1702], in Critical Essays of the Eighteenth Century, ed. W.H. Durham (New York) 1961), pp. 274f. See Fielding's parody of John Rich's "Serious" and "Comic" in Pantomime (i.e., Dullness), Tom Jones, V:1:213f.

¹⁸Tom Jones, VII.1:397.

¹⁹Phaedo, 60c. Collected Dialogues, p. 43. M.A. Screech observes,

the Notions and Habitues, howsoever false and vicious that have the present Possession of him, and you must give him a great deal of Pleasure and Entertainment to engage him to hear you, when you would perswade him to the trouble of becoming Wiser and Better. Now the first Wise Men that undertook to civilize and polish the barbarous World found this way of Fables...to be mighty Acceptable to the People: the Contrivance gave them Delight, and the Novelty rais'd their Admiration.²⁰

The double communication adds the pleasure of discovery to the satisfaction of knowledge gained; the reader of the fable is offered
²¹ what Bacon called "a thread to be spun on." That is to say, the essential knowledge is not handed over like a fish on a platter, but emerges only with the reader's own active, synthetic effort. Even
²² the simplest Aesopic fable, equipped with an "epignome" to ensure proper interpretation, operates in the same way. Nonetheless, the process is rarely automatic; it would seem to be a matter of simple common sense to recognize that many of those who most need the ethical

"Aesop, now often banished to the children's bookshelves, was the only one of the 'eight moral authors' of medieval teaching to retain his prestige during the Renaissance, and actually to enhance it. He was admired as representing the cream of ancient thought by authors as diverse as Luther, Erasmus, and Montaigne. His weight alone would have served to lend virtually unshakeable authority." Rabelais (Ithaca, 1979), p. 235.

²⁰"Preface to Prince Arthur, an Heroick Poem" [1697], in Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, ed. J.E. Springarn (Oxford, 1908), III, 235f.

²¹The Advancement of Learning, in The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon..., reprinted from the texts and translations of Ellis and Spedding, ed. John Mackinnon Robertson (London and New York, 1905), p. 124.

²²A "gnome" is "a shorty, pithy statement of a general truth; a proverb, maxim, or apothegm" (OED); an "epignome" is a "gnome" which "rests upon" the literary artifact, as does the "moral" of an Aesopic fable.

message at the heart of the "Salutory innuendo's" will be very likely
²³
 to resist. Set in his ways, comfortable (perhaps) in his vice and
 folly, there are certain things such a person would just rather not
 hear. Blackmore appears to accept blithely the notion that such
 people will countenance the telling discomfort of moral persuasion in
 exchange for the aesthetic pleasure to be found in literary contrivance
 and novelty.

But the parable is a tool which offers more to the hand of a
 skilled author. Within the parabolic mode, there is a diversity of
 forms available -- the classical fable (designed to inculcate
 prudential morality), the myth (in which the gnomic truth and its
 vehicle are completely blended), and allegory (whose form is specifically
 tailored to be a vehicle for the gnomic essence, and which, unlike the
²⁴
 parable, cannot stand by itself as an intelligible narrative.) The

²³
 "They who are governed by Reason, need no other Motive than
 the mere Goodness of a Thing to incite them to the Practice of it. But
 Men, for the most Part, are so superficial in their Enquiries, that they
 take all upon Trust; and have no Taste for any Thing but what is
 supported by the Vogue of others, and which it is inconsistent with the
 Fashion on the World not to admire." Samuel Croxall, Preface, Fables
 of Aesop and Others..., 13th ed. (1722; London, 1786), sig. A8v-A9r.

The literary tactics required by the belief that man's rational
 perceptions are clouded, and the concept that virtue must be learned
 subjectively, will be discussed at length below.

²⁴

Richard Chenevix Trench, Notes on the Parables of Our Lord,
 11th ed. (1841; New York, 1861), pp. 10-15. I am indebted for these
 distinctions to Archbishop Trench. They are generally accepted and
 employed by most students of the literature: cf. A.B. Bruce, The
 Parabolic Teaching of Christ (London, 1882), pp. 99f; A.T. Cadoux,
The Parables of Jesus: Their Art and Use (London, n.d.) [Cadoux argues
 that interpretation of the parables is distorted by excessive

parable itself works both as an analogy to promote understanding of certain truths, and as an indication of the connection of two levels of reality:

Their power lies...in the higher harmony unconsciously felt by all men, and by deeper minds continually recognized and plainly perceived, between the natural and spiritual worlds, so that analogies from the first are felt to be something more than illustrations, happily yet arbitrarily chosen. They are arguments, and may be alleged as witnesses; the world of nature being throughout a witness for the world of spirit...²⁵

The reader or auditor of the parable is challenged to take the necessary step beyond the temporal, literal meaning, and to reaffirm that coherence between the spiritual and natural realms which is expressed in the commonplace that natural creation can be "read" like a hieroglyphic:

Thus there are two Bookes from whence I collect my Divinity; besides that written one of God, another of his servant Nature, that universall and publick Manuscript, that lies expans'd unto the eyes of all; those that never saw him in the one, have discover'd him in the other....Surely the

allegorization, p. 19 et passim] ; G.V. Jones includes a valuable summary of the history of criticism in this field, although his account of Trench tends to underplay the lofty, transcendent reading upon which Trench insists. See also C.H. Dodd's classic definition: "At its simplest, the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the reader by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought." The Parables of the Kingdom, 3rd ed. (London, 1936), p. 16. Sallie TeSelle's distinctions are also useful: "A parable is an extended metaphor. A parable is not an allegory, where the meaning is extrinsic to the story, nor is it an example story, where, as in the story of the Good Samaritan, the total meaning is within the story. Rather, as an extended metaphor, the meaning is found only within the story itself although it is not exhausted by that story. At the same time that a parable is an aesthetic whole and hence demands rapt attention on itself and its configurations, it is open-ended, expanding ordinary meaning so that from a careful analysis of the parable we learn a new thing, are shocked into a new awareness." Speaking in Parables (Philadelphia, 1975), p. 13.

²⁵Trench, pp. 18ff.

Heathens knew better how to joyne and reade these mysticall letters than wee Christians, who cast a more carelesse eye on these common Hieroglyphicks, and disdain to suck Divinity from the flowers of Nature.²⁶

The transference of meaning between the two levels depends upon the inferential ability, the "ingenuity" of the reader, which is susceptible to training, but generally obstructed by habitual dimness of vision.

John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, explains the operation and benefit of the parabolic method in his discourse, "The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion" [1660]:

The mind of a proverb is to utter wisdom in a mystery -- as the apostle sometimes speaks -- and to wrap up divine truth in a kind of enigmatical way, though in vulgar expressions. This method of delivering divine doctrine (not to mention the writings of the ancient philosophers) we find frequently pursued in the Holy Scripture, thereby both opening and hiding, at once, the truth which is offered to us. A proverb or parable being once unfolded, by reason of its affinity to the fancy, the more sweetly insinuates itself into that, and is from thence, with the greater advantage, transmitted to the understanding. In this state, we are not able to behold truth in its own native beauty and luster; but, while we are veiled with mortality, truth must veil itself too, that it may the more freely converse with us....

And therefore God, to accomodate his truth

²⁶ Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici [c. 1636, publ. 1642-3], Selected Writings, ed. Sir Geoffrey Keynes (Chicago, 1968), p. 21.

There are countless instances of this commonplace throughout the 17th and 18th century. One of the most succinct expressions may be found in Roger Boyle's Some Considerations Touching the Usefulness of Experimental Philosophy [1663]: "His power, His wisdom, and His goodness, in which the World, as well as the Bible, although in a differing, and in some points a darker Way, is designed to instruct us." As quoted by H.R. McAdoo, The Spirit of Anglicanism (London, 1965), p. 264. See also Joseph Addison's Ode, "The Spacious Firmament on high...", The Spectator, August 23, 1712; The Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford, 1926), pp. 37-8.

to our weak capacities, does, as it were, embody it in earthly expressions; according to that ancient maxim of the Cabbalists, 'Lumen supernum nunquam descendit sine indumento' [The light from above never comes down without a mask.] ²⁷

There is something more in Smith's notion of insinuating sweetness than mere sugar-coating. The "conversation" with truth which parable makes possible is not so much a matter of providing answers, as providing training in a method of thought.

John Bunyan's "Apology" for The Pilgrim's Progress contains veiled references to an effect upon the reader greater than either simple decoding of disguised sententiousness or conventional aesthetic pleasure can provide. Bunyan promises, instead, an actual change in his reader's disposition. Truth "makes the will submit"; it must be remembered, and it will be tenacious, and stick "like burrs". The irresistible truth is a "dialect" which affects the reader's mind, replacing complacency and listlessness with attentiveness.²⁸ The Pilgrim's Progress gets underway with truths which are relatively easy to accept, and proceeds gradually and inexorably through a progress of increasingly difficult or uncomfortable truths. The dialectical process hinted at here, in Bunyan's critical preface, is the fundamental characteristic of the parable. The formal narrative captures the auditor's (reader's) attention, and he gives assent easily until he is led to accept a narrative situation which carries

²⁷ The Cambridge Platonists, ed. G.R. Cragg (New York, 1968), p. 92.

²⁸ The Pilgrim's Progress, pp. 34, 37.

with it unmistakable reference to his own condition. J. Alexander Findlay provides a chatty but invaluable definition of this subversive pattern:

Curiously enough, I came across what seems to be a better definition...when reading -- in the train -- a book by that great humourist, Mr. P.G. Wodehouse. I am afraid that I must have given the book away, for I have never been able since then to verify the reference, and can only give its purport; it is not within my power to reproduce Mr. Wodehouse's nervous English. "What do you call," says one of the characters, "that 'what-you-may-call-it' in the Bible that looks like a straightforward yarn when you begin to read it, but turns out to have something up its sleeve that pops out at you and leaves you flat before you've finished?" His friend answers, "I suppose you mean a parable." The essence of a parable is that it contains what I may call "a bolt from the blue", whether the parable is in narrative form or consists of one or more paradoxical sayings.²⁹

Findlay's insistence upon the essential "element of surprise" seems to be unique among scholars of parable in scripture, although Dodd's "doubt teasing into active thought" may bring about surprising results.³⁰ However, once the parable has "taken", the effect is more generally agreed upon: the auditor or reader takes the word (or seed), and makes it his own. The Gospel parable of the Sower (1 Peter i.24; John iii.9) is, of course, the locus classicus of this process. Archbishop Trench sums it up concisely:

²⁹Jesus and His Parables (London, 1950), p. 8. Robert W. Funk, in his Language, Hermeneutic, and the Word of God (New York, 1966), seems to continue this tradition by employing a Wodehousian illustration, p. 156, and he notes approvingly Findlay's concept of surprise, p. 161.

³⁰See above, fn. 24. Modern hermeneutical critics increasingly share this approach. Funk comments, "The parable is not closed, so to speak, until the listener is drawn into it as a participant." p. 133; see Part Two of Language Hermeneutic, and the Word of God, and Sallie TeSelle, Speaking In Parables, passim.

The comparison of the relations of the teacher and the taught to those between the sower and the soil, is one so deeply grounded in the truest analogies between the worlds of nature and spirit, that we must not wonder to find it of frequent recurrence, not merely in Scripture; but in the works of all the wiser heathens, of all who have realized in any measure what teaching means, and what sort of influence on the spirit one man ought to seek to exercise on the spirits of his fellows, communicating to them living and expanding truths....All teaching that is worthy of the name is such....All words, even of men, are as seeds, with a power to take root in the minds and hearts of those that hear them, contain germs in them that only by degrees develop themselves...³¹

According to this view of the parable, much must be left to the inferential activity of the reader. As reasonable and humane a view as this is, it is by no means universally accepted. The double communication is a human exercise or habit of very ancient standing. From the school of Pythagoras and the myth of the ancient Egyptian mysteries descends the very pervasive idea of esoteric discourse, and the notion of a body of hidden truths meant only for the initiate. In his observations on the parabolic mode in The Wisdom of the Ancients, [1623] Bacon wrote:

Parables have been used in two ways, and (which is strange) for contradictory purposes, For they serve to disguise and veil the meaning, and they serve also to clear and throw light upon it.³²

Both attitudes are discernible in the varying history of interpretation of Christ's parables in the Synoptic Gospels, giving rise to the question which still confronts us: how accessible is the meaning concealed in the parable's husk and involvement?

³¹Trench, pp. 59f.

³²Philosophical Works, p. 823. Although Bacon, in the Advancement, suspects that in the case of classical fable the story

3. Open or Closed Parables

"Why speakest thou unto them in parables?"

-- Matthew xiii.10

Honest men try to tell the truth, but in order to do so, they are obliged, like liars, to tell stories....Stories have been told, and told with imagination, in the serious attempt to speak the truth that concerns human life most deeply.³³

The question of whether Christ's parabolic utterances were intentionally meaningful only for his initiates, or were a vital part of his public ministry, has long been a matter of contention. The crux of the controversy is found in Matthew xiii.10-13:

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but unto them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because seeing they see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

The passage initially seems to argue that a special interpretive faculty was granted to the disciples, and this impression is strengthened by the fact that when Gospel parables are provided with epignomes (which occurs most frequently in Matthew), it takes place privately, after the public parabolic utterance. The concept of special, closed revelation, even if it is argued as a necessary part

preceded the gnostic exposition, by the time he reworked the fables in The Wisdom of the Ancients he had changed his mind. For a thorough discussion of Bacon's changing attitude, see Paolo Rossi, Francis Bacon: From Magic To Science, tr. Sacha Rabinovitch (London, 1968), especially Chapter III, "The Classical Fable".

³³Stephen Crites, "Myth, Story, History" [1968], as quoted by TeSelle, p. 120.

of the preparation of the disciples for the spreading of the Gospel, has met with considerable opposition. The fact that nearly all the parabolic sayings of Christ were delivered in public is important to the exoteric argument. If the parabolic revelations were restricted to initiates, why were they addressed to the widest audience? The deliberate, ironic exclusion of the public from the gnomic content of the parables seems improbable and inconsistent.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the parable seems eminently suited to the historical requirement's of Christ's ministry. As a method of teaching it is unmatched. The subversive or "surprising" method of dialectical revelation was then (and perhaps has always been) the very thing needed to overcome the resistance generated by opinion, habit, and comfortable acclimatization in a different religious, philosophical, pragmatic world view. Thus, the statement to the disciples that they had been given the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, while the public auditors had not (yet), can be read as a simple statement of fact: Christ had taught the disciples, and was still teaching the public. The enigmatic speech of (for instance) the Sermon on the Mount could only have meaning for those already engaged in the dialectic: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given." Those who do not have any inkling about the nature or even the existence of this process, who cannot and will not hear, simply will not be able to do a thing about it. Their (spiritual) perceptual faculties are useless.

Such an interpretation of the "hard" passage in Matthew is supported by the other Evangelists (see Mark iv.21-3, and Luke viii.18);

"Take heed how you hear," Christ's auditors are warned. This variation in Luke's version of the utterance indicates that the method of "hearing" (or "reading") parables is of the utmost importance. When the disciples ask for an explanation, they are answered: "Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? The sower soweth the word." (Mark iv. 13-14)³⁴

According to several critics, the parable also functioned in a more pointed manner upon occasion, and could be used as a tactical attack on particular vice:

The parables were not told merely as illustrative stories for the simple, but used...as weapons in an armoury as well as means of the proclamation of grace. Few were without some ulterior motive, and judging by the frequency of their use not much perspicuity was required to perceive what their purpose was. They were not undisguised condemnations or attacks, but, nevertheless, sufficiently pertinent to make those for whom they were intended apply them, even if resentfully and reluctantly, to themselves.³⁵

There can be no doubt that the people to whom these "surprising yarns" were directed got the point. The distinct advantage of such a method, once again, is that by engaging the assent of the auditor in relatively harmless narration, and gradually turning the context, the will is forced to submit, and the uncomfortable truth is brought home.³⁶

³⁴ Stanley Fish notes that Milton, in his *Divorce Tracts*, interprets the Gospel parables as a process of gradual revelation, which may be intentionally misleading and "intangling", only to teach "in due place and season." *Surprised by Sin* (London, 1967), p. 21.

³⁵ G. V. Jones, p. 114. Cf. A.T. Cadoux, p. 13; "In its most characteristic use the parable is a weapon of controversy, not shaped like a sonnet in undisturbed concentration, but improvised in conflict to meet an unpremeditated situation."

³⁶ This dialectic may take several directions. Cadoux, p. 57,

The parabolic mode, then, is not only double in content (literal husk and meaningful seed), but in delivery as well (the ostensibly neutral approach and the auditor-implicating "bolt from the blue"). It has not been usual for modern literary criticism (until quite recently) to look at literature in this light. Modern readers have become acclimatized to the idea of the aesthetic objectivity of a literary work of art, and this acclimatization includes the assumption that the work is fixed and stable, and the reader's job is entirely a matter of seeing what is in the work. On the other hand, critics such as Stanley Fish argue that literature is in the reader. That is, many works must be understood in terms of strategy, "as an action made upon a reader rather than as a container from which a reader extracts a message."³⁷ If literature is seen as a potential strategy which can engage the reader in a progressive process of understanding, then the parabolic mode is one of the most significant forms of literary possibility. Fish maintains that the "intangling" aspect of this mode, "in which the reader is led by the inconsistencies (puzzles) of the 'surface materials' to a point which is not made directly in the text",³⁸

states: "A special and notable use of the parable is to induce the hearer to a true judgment in a matter in which he is biased (especially self-biased) by getting him to give a verdict on a similar case, the connection of which with his own he does not at first see, as in the cases of David and Simon the Pharisee."

³⁷"Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics", in Reader-Response Criticism, ed. J.P. Tompkins (Baltimore and London, 1980), p. 71.

³⁸Fish credits D.W. Robertson's Preface to Chaucer (Princeton, 1962), for this lesson: Surprised by Sin, p. 137. Fish's own method of approaching a text is invaluable, particularly his concept of "entangling

is a pervasive one in humanist literature.

Modern hermeneutical scholars, although they agree that parables are meant to be opened, insist that the essential meaning is not to be extracted or "translated" from the parable into systematic theology. Paul Ricoeur calls parables "a language which from beginning to end, thinks through the Metaphor, and never beyond,"³⁹ TeSelle explains that the images of the parable are not provisional devices to be replaced by concepts, but form a process giving rise to thought.⁴⁰ The watchword of the new hermeneutic, she adds, involves an awareness of the affective power of parable:

We do not interpret the parable, but the parable interprets us....Metaphors cannot be "interpreted" -- a metaphor does not have a message, it is a message. If we have really focused on the parable, if we have let it work on us (rather than working on it to abstract out its "meaning"), we find that we are interpreted.⁴¹

the reader. Although my conclusions frequently differ from his, my debt to his thought and method will be apparent throughout this enquiry. Also important is Joel B. Altman's study of rhetorical enquiry and question in 16th century drama, The Tudor Play of Mind (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978), and Douglas Duncan's outline of the "Art of Teasing" in Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition. Other material concerning the implication of the reader in opening (and inventing) the literary work or experience will be discussed below.

³⁹ As quoted by TeSelle, p. 64.

⁴⁰ TeSelle, p. 64.

⁴¹ TeSelle, pp. 71f.

The parable, then, is open to the auditor who is willing or able to hear, and who is sufficiently responsible and honest to confront the uncomfortable truths which the parable may turn on him. What we have called "parabolic" may also be called ironic, and for two reasons. First, there is a doubleness in the parabolic communication, in that it comprises a seed and a husk; and secondly, there is an ironic doubleness in intention, in that the parable masquerades as a harmless, "straightforward yarn", concealing a strategy to affect the auditor in a controversial or sensitive area.

4. Jest and Earnest: the Lucianic Tradition

Quamquam ridentem dicere verum quid vetat?⁴²

[Dialogue speaks:] Moreover, [Lucian] took away from me the respectable tragic mask that I had, and put another upon me that is comic, satyr-like, and almost ridiculous. Then he unceremoniously penned me up with Jest and Satire and Cynicism and Eupolis and Aristophanes, terrible men for mocking all that is holy and scoffing at all that is right. At last he even dug up and thrust in upon me Menippus, a prehistoric dog, with a very loud bark, it seems, and sharp fangs, a really dreadful dog who bites unexpectedly because he grins when he bites.⁴³

Fielding's own concerns as a satirist may be understood in the light of his frequent acknowledgement of a debt to the great Menippean satirist, Lucian. In an advertisement for a projected publication of a translation of Lucian's works -- unfortunately never realized -- Fielding asserted that he had "formed his Stile upon that very Author."⁴⁴

⁴²"What is to prevent one from telling truth as he laughs?" Horace, Satires, I.1.24-5; Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica, tr. H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1966), pp. 6ff.

⁴³Lucian, The Double Indictment, Lucian (Opera), tr. A.M. Harmon, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1921-61), III, 145ff.

⁴⁴Covent-Garden Journal, No. 52 (June 30, 1752), II, 50. On Fielding's debt to Lucian, see Levi Robert Lind, "Lucian and Fielding", Classical Weekly, XXIX (1936): 84-6; Henry Knight Miller, Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies (Princeton, 1961); and C. Robinson, Lucian and His Influence in Europe, especially Part III, "Erasmus and Fielding".

Lucian's influence is most often charted in the widespread borrowing of structures and topoi, such as the dialogue of the dead, the dialogue of the gods, the cynic's demolition of sophistical pretensions, the fantastic journey, the view of mortal life from the heavens (kataskopos), the trick of dramatic irony transferred to prose (unwitting self-revelation of character), and so forth.⁴⁵ But the most significant element, for those who consciously patterned their writing on the idea of Lucian current after the revival of his tradition by Erasmus, was the concealment of urgent messages within the satire, together with clues to prompt the reader toward their discovery.

The popularity of the comic approach to serious matters during the Renaissance led the humanist satirists to seek classical precedents in Menippean satire, the spoudaiogeloion, Roman satirists, and even (more cautiously) the example of Aristophanes.⁴⁶ Common to all of these sources was a potent admixture of jest and earnest, deriving impact from incongruity, the illumination of contradictions between moral

⁴⁵ For a thorough survey of the spread of Lucianic topoi, see Robinson, Parts I and II, and Duncan's treatment of the kataskopos figure (a term derived from J. Bompaire, Lucien Ecrivain: Imitation et Creation (Paris, 1958), p. 327, indicating the detached, satirical view of puppetlike humans from the height of Olympus), pp. 15f. et passim. Also noteworthy is A.R. Bellinger, "Lucian's Dramatic Technique", Yale Classical Studies, I (1928), pp. 3-39.

⁴⁶ For Menippean satire, see Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, 1957), pp. 309-12, and Duncan, pp. 6, 10f., et passim. The spoudaiogeloion is the admixture of jest and earnest associated with Menippus, the Greek Cynics and Stoics, and adopted by Horace and recommended by Cicero; see George Converse Fiske, "The Plain Style in the Scipionic Circle", University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, 3 (1919): 62-106; Lawrence Giangrande, The Use of Spoudaiogeloion in Greek and Roman Literature (The Hague and Paris,

imperatives and the moral weaknesses of daily life. It is not entirely a matter of interpretive apprehension applied wholesale, seeking serious matter within every laughable situation, although Cicero contended that "there is no type of joke from which serious and grave thoughts are not also to be derived."⁴⁷ Erasmus read Lucian as a moralist, and considered that his satire played an important part in the destruction of pagan superstition. But Lucian's real innovation -- the modification of the philosophical dialogue to the purposes of satire -- appealed to Erasmus and the humanists for the opportunity provided for irony and oblique commentary. In Lucian's Double Indictment, the satirist's narrative persona, "the Syrian", responds to Dialogue's reproach:

When I took him in hand, he was still dour, as most people thought, and had been reduced to a skeleton through continual questions. In that guise he seemed awe-inspiring, to be sure, but not in any way attractive or agreeable to the public. So first of all I got him into the way of walking on the ground like a human being; afterwards by washing off all his accumulated grime and forcing him to smile, I made him more agreeable to those who saw him: and on top of all that, I paired him with Comedy, and in this way too procured him great favour from his hearers, who formerly feared his prickles and avoided taking hold of him as if he were a sea-urchin,⁴⁸

In this exchange, the emphasis is on the dialogic method (or the adaptation of the dialogic vehicle); the precise nature of what is being communicated doesn't seem to enter into the picture. In fact, the subject of discourse in most of Lucian's satiric dialogues is classical philosophy itself -- and the matter of philosophic inquiry

1972), and Duncan, passim.

⁴⁷ De Oratore, II.250; as quoted by Giangrande, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Lucian III, 149ff.

(the question of what sort of life is best). Frequently Lucian's attack is directed at the inflated claims made for philosophy by various partisan characters, who, it becomes increasingly evident as the dialogue progresses, have substituted empty forms for actual inquiry. Lucian's method of attack, appropriately enough, is itself of philosophical origin. In such dialogues as Hermotimus or Anacharsis, a questioner asks the novice to explain his motivation for pursuing his current philosophical course, and his impressions of the nature of the best sort of life. Lucian adopts the reductive element (elenchus) of Socratic dialogue, gradually and inexorably undermining the novice's assumptions and opinions, until they collapse under the weight of their own absurdity.⁴⁹

This reductive satire has occasioned frequent criticism of Lucian as destructive of value and belief, yet it can be argued that there is something left after the philosophers have been bowled over.

⁴⁹ Lucian's treatment of Socrates in his dialogues is rather equivocal. Socrates is used as a conventional example of the unjust death of an innocent man (Zeus Catechized; Lucian, II, 81); as an example of laudable devotion to truth (The Dream, or Lucian's Career; Lucian, III, 227); as an example of courage (*ibid.*, 289ff.); and so forth. These are common examples of the exemplary use of Socrates' biography in classical times. Nevertheless, Lucian is far from unwilling to include Socrates in his catalogue of debunked philosophers. In A True Story, the narrator comes upon Socrates in the Isle of the Blest surrounded by "handsome lads", with whom he is engaged in "chopping logic". Lucian wryly observes: "It seemed to me that Hyacinthus was his especial favourite, for at any rate he refuted him most." (Lucian, I, 320) In the Dialogues of the Dead, Socrates is again (if paradoxically) surrounded by young men of great physical beauty (Lucian, VII, 33); Socrates' legendary bravery in the face of death is made out to be a mere sham (*ibid.*, 19ff.); Socrates innocently insists that when he claimed to be ignorant, he really meant it (*ibid.*,

Lucian implies that the entire thrust of systematic philosophy is misdirected, top-heavy, and by its very nature beside the point.

The seer Teiresias, who should know, tells the questioning Menippus:

The life of the common sort is best, and you will act more wisely if you stop speculating about heavenly bodies and discussing final causes and first causes, spit your scorn at those clever syllogisms, and counting all that sort of thing nonsense, make it always your sole object to put the present to good use and to hasten on your way, laughing a great deal and taking nothing seriously.⁵⁰

Lucian's common-sensical attitude is embodied repeatedly in two sorts of questioners: the cynic (the Syrian, Menippus, Lycinus, Lucian), and the innocent (the simple, unpretentious, genuinely useful man, such as the cobbler Miccyllus). This may be considered a rather weak, even ineffectual bonum to leave standing after the wholesale demolition of sophisticated constructions, but that seems to be Lucian's intent.

Both Lucian and Erasmus conscripted philosophical process to the purpose of satire. In Erasmus, the parabolic technique, with its husk and kernel of meaning, as well as its dialectic affecting the reader who opens the work, is appropriated to satire. One of his favourite challenges to the reader is the game of allusion; Bompaire's study of Lucian's referential style demonstrates that a great deal of meaning is communicated by allusion to previous works⁵¹ -- other critics generally agree that the debunking of Homeric gods

33ff.). I am not convinced that these satirical attacks really indicate Lucian's attitude toward Socrates was a negative one. Rather, he seems dedicated to some of the same things, although he uses slightly different methods.

⁵⁰Menippus; Lucian, IV, 107ff.

⁵¹Op. cit.

takes on a special piquancy with the recognition of the satirist's use of Homeric language. For Erasmus, too, allusive activity is important on at least two levels. Public allusion refers to texts, particularly scriptural, with which a general familiarity can be assumed. Erasmus also takes great delight in a more esoteric form of allusion, the play of literate wit.

So learned are the jokes of The Praise of Folly that in 1515 he instigated the publication of an elaborate commentary to explain them, which appeared under the name of his pupil, Gerard Lijster.

"There is no greater proof of intelligence," Lijster claimed, "than erudite joking."⁵²

Some of Erasmus' allusions are necessary for comprehending the essential communication, others are decorative, atmospheric, or only tonal, and still others contribute to the esoteric game of the erudite joke.

The principal at the heart of the allusive technique is a playful challenge to the reader; this challenge is also the operative principal of the Erasmian form of satire as a whole. Duncan

⁵² Duncan, p. 32. Erasmus was so fond of this kind of play that his assertion that the jesting part of the "joco-serium" (spoudaiogeloion) was only a kind of "pimp" for the earnest must be taken with a grain of salt. Although strong evidence is presented that Erasmus at several times suggested this priority by writing that the jesting is "falsely-attractive", and therefore a foul means to a fair end (Duncan, p. 35), his amazing fertility of imagination in multiplying essentially closed, erudite, esoteric allusions argues that he did not undervalue the first (literal) level of play of wit. Still, it can be argued (as Duncan does in his discussion of the Colloquies, pp. 49ff.) that the play of wit for Erasmus was not an end in itself, but a means to foster the critical spirit in provoking a search for hidden meanings.

attributes this to the influence of Lucian:

Where Lucian was decisively important for Erasmus was as the main classical inspiration and authority for his theories of lusus. That term infallibly recurs, in one form or another, wherever Erasmus discusses or defends his work. He seems to have considered it in three closely-related aspects. The first of these was the surface quality of the game, the display of wit, which he regards as mainly responsible for producing voluptas or pleasure. The second is the serious content or implication of the game, embodying utilitas or profit. The third aspect...is the rhetorical method involved, the intended impact of the game on the reader as participant.⁵³

The reader is challenged on many levels by a literary communication which jestingly affects ignorance concerning its own seriousness. The Erasmian lusus, once again, turns out to be a form of irony, one which challenges the reader, and changes him.⁵⁴ The archetypical serious jester and ironist is, of course, Socrates. The acknowledgement of his example and influence appears throughout the Lucianic tradition, from Erasmus on. The essential part of his influence is well indicated in a uniquely appropriate and revealing analogy, the description of Socrates by Alcibiades as a Silenus figure, unprepossessing on the outside, but revealing, when opened, a divine image. The factor which legitimizes satire is the earnest at the heart of the jest, and the dialectic which motivates Erasmus and his humanist followers to employ satire is the implication and engagement of the reader (auditor, respondent) in opening the satire.

⁵³ Duncan, p. 31.

⁵⁴ The irony which is designed to prepare the reader or respondent for the serious truth at its heart, and which when completely understood is no longer needed or useful in the same way, is given a thorough and stimulating treatment in Stanley Fish's study of 17th-century literature, Self-Consuming Artifacts, and in other writings by Fish which emphasize what he calls "the good temptation".

5. Opening the Sileni Alcibiadis

"Which reminds me of a point I missed at the beginning; I should have explained how his arguments, too, were exactly like those sileni that open down the middle. Anyone listening to Socrates for the first time would find his arguments simply laughable; he wraps them up in just the kind of expressions you'd expect of such an insufferable satyr. He talks about pack asses and blacksmiths and shoemakers and tanners, and he always seems to be saying the same old thing in the same old way, so that anyone who wasn't used to his style and wasn't very quick on the uptake would naturally take it for the most utter nonsense. But if you open up his arguments, and really get into the skin of them, you'll find that they're the only arguments in the world that have any sense at all, and that nobody else's are so godlike, so rich in images of virtue, or so peculiarly, so entirely pertinent to those inquiries that help the seeker on his way to the goal of true nobility."⁵⁵

The new comedy of the humanists is consistent with the Platonic concept of the Ridiculous. Socrates, in the Republic, explained his notion of what is laughable; when the fear of ridicule attendant upon innovation occurs in conversation, Socrates observes:

It is not long since the Greeks thought it disgraceful and ridiculous, as most of the barbarians do now, for men to be seen naked. And when the practice of athletics began, first with the Cretans and then with the Lacedaemonians, it was open to the wits of the time to make fun of these practices.... But when, I take it, experience showed that it is better to strip than to veil all things of this sort, then the laughter of the eyes faded away before that which reason revealed to be best, and this made it plain that he talks idly who deems anything else ridiculous but evil, and who tries to raise a laugh by looking to any other pattern of absurdity than that of folly or wrong, or sets up any other standards of the beautiful as a mark for his seriousness than the good.⁵⁶

Aristotle also traces folly to a similar confusion:

Whatever the true end may be, only a good man can judge it correctly. For wickedness distorts and causes us to be

⁵⁵Alcibiades in the Symposium, 221d-222a; Collected Dialogues, p. 572.

⁵⁶The Republic, V, 452c-e; Collected Dialogues, p. 691.

completely mistaken about the fundamental principles of action.⁵⁷

Without this vision, man must lack even practical wisdom, and will inevitably fall into any number of immensely foolish and dangerous vices and errors. The most dangerous obstacle is philautia, or self-love, and the true Ridiculous may be seen in lives lived as antitheses to the famous Delphic inscription, "Know thyself."⁵⁸

By making apparent to the audience or reader the manifest foolishness of irrational wickedness, the humanist satirists encouraged that introspection necessary for each individual if he is to come to understand his duty or way of life. It is a unique appeal to common sense, this method of holding up to view the complex foolishness of vice and the simpler yet wiser choices of virtue. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that the appeal to common sense is more creative of, than referential to that faculty.

The satirist's method of concealing urgent messages inside literary puzzles becomes a method of training the reader to examine things (including his own assumptions and the intellectual habits which determine his life) more carefully. Erasmus was fond of explaining his use of parabolic irony by referring to the proverbial

⁵⁷ Nichomachean Ethics, VI, 1144a; ed. and tr. Martin Ostwald, Library of Liberal Arts (Indianapolis, 1962), p. 170. The notion that the Ridiculous consists of a divagation from the reasonable and proper bounds of morality will be discussed at length below.

⁵⁸ Cf. Plato's Philebus, 48c-d, in which Socrates observes the nature of the Ridiculous: "Taking it generally it is a certain kind of badness and it gets its name from a certain state of mind. I may add that it is also that species of the genus 'badness' which is

application of the image of the Sileni Alcibiadis. In his treatment of the subject in the Adages, he explains that it is used

either with reference to a thing which in appearance (at first blush, as they say) seems ridiculous or contemptible, but on closer and deeper examination proves to be admirable, or else with reference to a person whose looks or dress do not correspond at all with what he conceals in his soul. For it seems that the Sileni were small images divided in half, and so constructed that they could be opened out and displayed; when closed they represented some ridiculous, ugly flute-player, but when opened they suddenly revealed the figure of a god....And in the Symposium of Plato, Alcibiades starts his speech in praise of Socrates by drawing a comparison between him and the Sileni, because he looked quite different to the eye of an intent observer from what he had seemed at first appearance....His eternal jesting gave him the air of a clown....But once you have opened out this Silenus, absurd as it is, you find a god rather than a man, a great, lofty, and truly philosophical soul, despising all those things for which other mortals jostle and steer, sweat and dispute and struggle.⁵⁹

There is much that will yield treasure if "opened" in the proper way. Erasmus goes on to describe more philosophers, the prophets and apostles, scripture, and even Christ himself as Sileni. The example of Erasmus was widespread, as can be discovered in the many instances of the borrowing of this passage. Rabelais drew upon it to indicate to his reader that, by opening Gargantua, he might discover that the matter contained therein is not so trivial as it might appear at first glance. Rabelais accosts his readers in a typically jolly fashion:

Most Noble and Illustrious Drinkers, and you thrice precious Pockified blades (for to you, and none else do I dedicate my writings) Alcibiades, in that Dialogue of Plato's which is

differentiated by the opposite of the inscription at Delphi....Plainly the opposite of that would be for the inscription to read, 'By no means know thyself.'" Collected Dialogues, p. 1129.

⁵⁹The Adages of Erasmus: A Study With Translations, Margaret Mann Phillips (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 269f.

Entituled The Banquet, whil'st he was setting forth the praises of his Schoolmaster Socrates (without all question the Prince of Philosophers) amongst other discourses to that purpose said, that he resembled the Silenes. Silenes of old were little boxes, like those we now may see in the shops of Apothecaries, painted on the outside with wanton toyish figures, as Harpyes, Satyrs, bridled Geese, horned hares, saddled Ducks, flying Goats, Thiller Harts, and other suchlike counterfeted pictures at discretion, to excite people unto laughter, as Silenus himself, who was the foster-father of good Bacchus, was wont to do; but within those capricious caskets were carefully preserved and kept many rich jewels, and fine drugs, such as Balme, Ambergreece, Amamon, Musk, Civet, with several kindes of precious stones, and other things of great price. Just such another thing was Socrates, for to have eyed his outside and esteemed of him by his exterior appearance, you would not have given the peel of an Onion for him....Now opening this boxe you would have found within it a heavenly and inestimable drug, a more than humane understanding, an admirable vertue, matchlesse learning, invincible courage, unimitable sobriety, certaine contentment of minde, perfect assurance, and an incredible misregard for all that, for which men commonly do so much watch, run, saile, fight, travel, toyle and turmoile themselves.⁶⁰

Through Urquhart's scrupulously colourful translation, it can be seen that Rabelais is himself translating the Erasmian analogy into his own deceptively flashy language. Opening Rabelais may well prove to be at least as complex (and apparently self-contradictory) an experience as opening In Praise of Folly. Another similarity can be found in the use or adaptation of dialogue form: the question and response of bizarre and ludicrous figures elicit from Rabelais' reader a reaction of distance in rejection of the folly therein depicted. M.A. Screech demonstrates that the satire of Rabelais' major work focuses on the folly of self-love, with its attendant "moral,

⁶⁰"The Author's Prologue to the First Book, The Works of Mr. Francis Rabelais, tr. Sir Thomas Urquhart (1653; London, 1931), pp. 8f.

philosophical, and spiritual blindness." The "intellectual comedy" which runs like a thread through Rabelais, and which is used ultimately to condemn Panurge, is based on the exposure of the lack of self-knowledge; the laughter which results is the "philosophical laughter" at the true Ridiculous, described by Socrates in the Philebus.⁶¹

Francis Bacon, too, though not usually considered a Rabelaisian, borrows the Silenus image, for one of his aphorisms, indicating the presence of seriousness within a joking image. Warning against the danger of misjudging the levity of the learned, Bacon uses neither the Erasmian nor the Platonic version, but one which clearly draws on Rabelais:

I refer them also to that which Platon said of his master Socrates, whom he compared to the gallypots of apothecaries, which on the outside had apes and owls and antiques, but which contained within sovereign and precious liquors and confections; acknowledging that to an external report he was not without superficial levities and deformities but was intwardly replenished with excellent virtues and powers.⁶²

Jonathan Swift, who later encountered the peculiarly distressing event for a satirist -- being judged and condemned for the literal, unopened level of some of his work -- also acknowledges his place in the tradition with his colourful and Rabelaisian introduction to The

⁶¹M.A. Screech, Rabelais, pp. 237f. Screech's study, which has been most useful in my assessment of the place of Rabelais in the Lucianic tradition, also provides several other cogent arguments, including an explication of Rabelais' debt to Erasmus, his participation in the traditional literary campaign against philautia, and his use of the "Socratic" definition of the Ridiculous.

⁶²Advancement, Philosophical Works, p. 52; cf. Bacon's Apothegms New and Old; Philosophical Works, p. 880. I am indebted for this

Tale of a Tub:

But the greatest Maim given to that general Reception, which the Writings of our Society have formerly received, (next to the transitory State of all sublunary Things,) hath been a superficial Vein among many Readers of the present Age, who will by no means be persuaded to inspect beyond the Surface and Rind of Things; wheras, Wisdom is a Fox, who after long hunting will at last cost you the Pains to dig out; 'Tis a Cheese, which by how much the richer, has the thicker, the homelier, and the courser Coat; and wherof to a judicious Palate, the Maggots are the best. 'Tis a Sack-Posset, wherein the deeper you go, you will find it the sweeter. Wisdom is a Hen, whose Cackling we must value and consider, because it is attended with an Egg; But then, lastly, 'tis a Nut, which unless you chuse with Judgment, may cost you a Tooth, and pay you with nothing but a Worm. In consequence of these momentous Truths, the Grubaeen Sages have always chosen to convey their Precepts and their Arts, shut up within the Vehicles of Types and Fables, which having been perhaps more careful and curious in adorning, than was altogether necessary, it has fared with these Vehicles after the usual Fate of Coaches over-finely painted and gilt; that the transitory Gazers have so dazzled their Eyes, and fill'd their Imaginations with the outward Lustre, as neither to regard to consider, the Person or Parts of the Owner within. A Misfortune we undergo with somewhat less Reluctancy, because it has been common to us with Pythagoras, Aesop, Socrates, and others of our Predecessors.⁶³

Again we are in distinguished company. Swift's version of the argument is interesting in that it is itself an example of what it describes -- the multiplication of analogies, the homeliness and downright silliness of the things to which concealed wisdom is compared, and the wayward, bantering tone all contribute to a momentary distraction from (and even an apparent contradiction to) the implicit sententious content.

point to Huntingdon Brown, Rabelais in English Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), p. 99, who comments that Bacon "was fair to 'the great jester'."

⁶³ The Tale of a Tub [1686?-1705], in The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1957), I, 46.

Indeed, the delight in the play of language appears at every stage of the evolution we have here described. Its ostensible frivolity entertains the reader, and disingenuously invites him to dismiss it as an amusing trifle. The image of the Sileni Alcibiadis maintains its currency because it perfectly expresses the interdependent and complementary relationship of jest and earnest in philosophical laughter.

6. Ingenuity and the Naked Beauty of Truth

It is truly said of Virtue, that could Men behold her naked, they would all be in Love with her. Here it is implied, that this is a sight very rare or difficult to come at; and indeed there is always a modest Backwardness in true Virtue to expose her naked Beauty. She is conscious of her innate Worth, and little desirous of exposing it to the publick View.

-- Henry Fielding, Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men⁶⁴

In studying the method of an author consciously dedicated to the communication of certain ethical truths to a general audience, it is essential to come to an understanding of the way in which he viewed his audience's capacity to receive this communication. Fielding shared with his favourite divines, and with many of his contemporaries, the notion that, given a certain intellectual and spiritual attitude, man is capable of recognizing and assenting to truth. It is not my intention to initiate a history of the debate concerning the prerogatives or limits of reason. It must serve the purposes of this inquiry to accept the premise that, despite the influence of fideism and scepticism, a conviction that reason is capable of the discovery of many essential truths (including those offered by nature and by revelation) was a central part of the mainstream of 17th and 18th century thought.

The intellectual and spiritual attitude to which I have just referred was known by English divines as "ingenuity". In the early 17th century, Thomas Jackson used the word to translate a Gospel

⁶⁴ Miscellanies, I, 173; cf. The Champion (January 24, 1739-40); Henley XV, 166ff.

term, and it was taken up several years later by Benjamin Whichcote.⁶⁵ Jackson laid the groundwork for the doctrine of the reasonableness of Christianity. In Acts 17.11, the people of Berea are praised for their nobility in readiness of mind to search the scriptures: Greene explains the significance of Jackson's commentary:

For Jackson the nobility of the Bereans consisted in the exercise of their reason, as free men, to judge the truth of new revelation by comparison with the teachings of accepted revelation. This praise of the Bereans is in no sense a charter for the secular rationalism of a later age, but it does emphasize the moral obligation of independent critical appraisal of proffered religious truth and the necessity for interpreting and comparing the texts of sacred writings. These obligations naturally rest upon an assumption that man has the capacity for such disinterested investigation, that his intellect has the acuity and the requisite freedom from the distortion of self-regarding passions to fulfill such obligations. It is the exercise of this capacity which constitutes the nobility of man, as certified by Scripture in this verse, and which is now, in Jackson's commentary, newly designated or defined as ingenuity. (Greene, p. 238)

Whichcote refined the term further, combining the sense of responsibility for personal assent to religious knowledge with a measure of necessary humility. In his controversial letters with Anthony Tuckney, he stressed the responsibility of each individual to receive instruction:

The proposal for progress and growth in knowledge -- That an ingenuous-spirited Christian, after application to God, and diligent use of means to find-out truth; might fairly propose, without offense taken, what upon search he finds cause to believe; and whereon he will venture his own soule... (Greene, p. 233)

⁶⁵ The ensuing discussion of ingenuity is heavily indebted to Robert A. Greene, "Whichcote, Wilkins, 'Ingenuity,' and the Reasonableness of Christianity", Journal of the History of Ideas, XLII, 2 (April-June, 1981): 227-52. Subsequent references to Greene will be included parenthetically in the text. In the ensuing pages, I will use the terms "ingenuous", "ingenuity", and "ingenuousness" in the 17th and 18th-century sense, as documented by Greene.

Whichcote argued that his concept of ingenuity could be by no means be equated with liberty of prophesying. He went so far as to suggest that true ingenuity consisted in a certain humble receptivity, an openness to the divine logic in Scripture:

They who fullie come-up to scripture; and set themselves with ingenuitie to finde-out the sense; seeking to God, to guide them; being not under the power of anie lust, or corruption, or Worldlie interest; will not substantiallie differ, in their resolved judgements about verie materiall things... (Greene, p. 235)

Ingenuity is tempered by meekness and self-knowledge; it is "the Learner's Temper." (Greene, p. 240) Later, Bishop Wilkins praises the Gospel centurion who shows "his great ingenuity of mind in submitting to sufficient evidence." (Greene, 245)⁶⁶

We will return to the question of ingenuity and assent, after a brief look at a traditional analogy or poetic metaphor which describes the innate attraction of truth for man. Though the absolute truth cannot be seen by man with his corporeal eyes, yet, somehow, it can be seen. The ingenuous observer, granted but a glimpse of truth, must be captivated. It is worth comparing Fielding's adaptation of Plato's image of the desirability of truth (wisdom, virtue) with the original; discussing the virtues and limitations of man's sensual

⁶⁶ Greene cites examples of the term's usage in Hooker, Joseph Hall, Henry Hammond, Sir Francis Bacon, Wilkins, John Smith, Nathaniel Culverwell, George Rust, Fowler, Clagett, Gere, John Milton, John Goodwin, and Lord Shaftesbury. His study traces the shift from Christian moral rationalism to scientific insight. See also Donald Davies' brief discussion of the word "candour" in "Berkeley and the Style of Dialogue", in The English Mind, Studies in the English Moralists Presented to Basil Willey, ed. H.S. Davies and George Watson (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 90-106. Davies cites Capt. Blifil's use of the term (TJ II:5:94) as an extreme example. Berkeley couples candour and ingenuity in the same phrase.

faculties, Plato praises the keenness of sight, but laments the restrictions of its range:

Wisdom, indeed, we cannot see thereby -- how passionate had been our desire for her, if she had granted us so clear an image of herself to gaze upon -- nor yet any other of those beloved objects, save only beauty; for beauty alone has this been ordained, to be manifest to the sense and most lovely of all.⁶⁷

The recurrence of this image in Western literature is a convincing indication of the extent of Plato's influence. The common source, perhaps, was as often Cicero as Plato. Douglas Bush has suggested, indeed, that the passage from De Officiis [i.5.15] which enlists Plato's image in the definition of sapientia serves as a full "definition of Renaissance humanism",⁶⁸ Sidney enlists it in his defence of Heroical poetry: "...if the saying of Plato and Tully be true, that who could see virtue would be wonderfully ravished with the love of her beauty."⁶⁹ The image is made manifest in Spenser's Faerie Queene, in the person of Una (the One Truth), who lays aside

⁶⁷ Phaedrus, 250b-d; Collected Dialogues, pp. 496f. See also Symposium, 210-e-211c; ibid., pp. 562f.

⁶⁸ The Renaissance and English Humanism. (Toronto, 1956), pp. 54-5.

⁶⁹ A Defense of Poetry, p. 47.

her veil and shines upon the Red Cross Knight with the "blazing
 brightness of her beauties beame".⁷⁰ Dryden assures his readers
 that a mere glimpse of truth must captivate every viewer:

'Tis true, she bounded by, and trip'd so light
 They had not time to take a steady sight;
 For truth has such a face and such a meen
 As to be loved needs only to be seen.⁷¹

That the notion of the inherently attractive powers of truth was
 aligned with the ends and methods of corrective comedy can be seen in
 Dryden's apology for Lucian and his iconoclastic satire:

Excepting what is already excepted, he seems to me to be an
 enemy to nothing but vice and folly. The pictures he draws
 ...are as fair as that of virtue herself, if, as the philosopher
 said, she could wear a body.⁷²

It is precisely this configuration of corrective comedy and ethical
 communication or "tradition" which attracted Fielding to Lucian, as
 popularized in the Erasmian tradition. Fielding's argument for the
 efficacy of Example indicates his awareness of, and participation in
 a Platonic tradition of "transitive knowledge":

I declare, that to recommend Goodness and Innocence hath been
 my sincere Endeavour in this History. This honest Purpose you
 have been pleased to think I have attained: And to say the

⁷⁰ I.xii.23 Spenser's Poetical Works, ed. J.C. Smith and E.
 de Selincourt (London, 1929).

⁷¹ "The Hind and the Panther" [1687], I, 31-4. The Works of
 John Dryden, ed. H.T. Swedenborg et. al. (Berkeley and Los Angeles,
 1969), Vol. III.

⁷² "The Life of Lucian", in The Works of John Dryden, ed. Sir
 Walter Scott, rev. ed. George Saintsbury (London, 1893), Vol. XVIII,
 p. 73.

Truth. It is likeliest to be attained in Books of this Kind; for Example is a Kind of Picture, in which Virtue becomes as it were an Object of Sight, and strikes us with an Idea of that Loveliness, which Plato asserts there is in her naked Charms.⁷³

Again, in An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men, Fielding employs the Platonic image:

Nothing can, in Fact, be more foreign to the Nature of Virtue, than Ostentation. It is truly said of Virtue, that could Men behold her naked, they would be all in Love with her. Here it is implied, that this is a Sight very rare or difficult to come at; and indeed there is always a modest Backwardness in true Virtue to expose her naked Beauty. She is conscious of her innate Worth, and little desirous of exposing it to the publick View.⁷⁴

When Fielding substitutes the "naked beauty of Virtue" for Plato's "naked beauty of Wisdom", H.K. Miller notes that "the idea of nakedness seems to be Fielding's own," adding that "'naked virtue', like naked truth, is perhaps proverbial."⁷⁵ In fact, the nakedness of virtue is not an innovation at all, but a significant reference to the Platonic identification of truth, wisdom, virtue, and true beauty.

There is, however, an independent proverbial tradition of "naked truth" which ought to be considered. Scholars of iconography have noted the frequency with which Truth is represented symbolically as a naked woman. Panovsky, while not making an explicit connection with Plato, maintains that Truth's nakedness simply expressed innocence

⁷³ Dedication, Tom Jones, p. 7.

⁷⁴ Miscellanies, I, p. 173. Cf. The Champion [January 24, 1739-40], Henley, XV, 166ff.

⁷⁵ Loc. cit.; Battestin is more cautious, noting: "The specific notion of the naked charms of Virtue imaged as a beautiful woman is only implicit in Plato." Tom Jones, p. 7.

and humility, as in the case of other personified ideals:

And nudity as such, especially when contrasted with its opposite, came to be understood as a symbol of truth in a general philosophical sense. It was interpreted as an expression of inherent beauty...as opposed to mere accessory charms...⁷⁶

These accessory charms served to veil or hide the truth away from those who seek her. In Isaac Fuller and Peirce Tempest's version of Caesar Ripa's Iconologia, Verity is shown as a naked woman; the description in the key explains;

This naked Beauty, holds a Sun in her right Hand; in her left, a Book open, with a Palm; under one Foot the Globe of the World. Naked, because downright Simplicity is natural to her. The Sun shows her great Delight in Clearness. The Book, that the Truth of Things may be found in good Authors. The Palm, her Rising the more she is oppres'd. The Globe, that being immortal, she is the strongest of all Beings in the World, and therefore tramples upon it.⁷⁷

Verity's nakedness, then, like that of several other figures in the Iconologia (including Beauty, Conversion, and the Grace of God), resembles the nakedness of other Renaissance personifications in its signification of purity, simplicity, and innocence. Naked truth is (proverbially) naked to emphasize that embellishment and worldly affectation hinder, not help, the perception of the real nature of truth.

⁷⁶ Studies in Iconology (New York, 1962), pp. 157-9. See also Samuel C. Chew, The Virtues Reconciled (Toronto, 1947), pp. 69-100; and Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance, 2nd ed. (London, 1967), pp. 142ff.

⁷⁷ Fig. 311, Iconologia: Or, Moral Emblems (London, 1709), p. 78. (Facsimile ed., New York: Garland Press, 1976).

Thus, in John Davies of Hereford's Humours Heav'n on Earth [1609], Aletheia (Truth) is discovered by Nature naked, but hidden "with cloudes of mysterie that shee is hard to be found." Aletheia explains that her mask and misty shroud serve to protect her from men, who seek her destruction "like fiends", primarily by measuring truth only "by their present worldly profite." Nature has sought her out to discover the reason his sons (Mankind) are so susceptible to the blandishments of Vice. Davies' scheme implies that the obscuring mists which surround truth are of man's making: "Natures eies are dimd by Adams transgression." Alethea's mask, therefore, is "modest Backwardness", a hesitancy to stand exposed "to the publick View" when the public is so corrupt. Nevertheless, the mask ought not to discourage the diligent seeker after truth; Aletheia is not unwilling to allow herself to be seen, as she indicates in her tribute to the assistance of the poets, because of the moral emphasis underlying "feigned" telling: "Poets which all men taxe for lying, doe least lie of any, the morall of their fictions considered."⁷⁸ There is no indication anywhere in Davies that Aletheia's nakedness is meant to signify the inherent attractiveness to (and connatural relation with) man; rather, he seems to refer to the iconographic tradition of unadorned innocence and purity, superadding an element of obscurity and difficulty of access.

⁷⁸ Stanzas 144-52; The Complete Works..., ed. Alexander B. Grosart (1878; New York, 1967). I owe this citation to Samuel Chew,

The essence of the proverbial tradition of "naked truth" is just this unadorned directness. Richard Baxter, the noted Presbyterian divine, employs it in his argument that the matter of sermonic discourse must not be obscured by literary mannerisms:

All our Teaching must be as Plain and Evident as we can make it....He that would be understood must speak to the Capacity of his Hearers, and make it his Business to make himself understood. Truth loves the Light, and is most Beautiful when most naked.⁷⁹

Here the divergent themes of the irrelevance of ornament and the inherent attractiveness of truth are tentatively conjoined. A similar union can be seen in Herbert Croft's tract, The Naked Truth: Or, the True State of the Primitive Church [1675]

- If you bring a Man an evident Demonstration, and he hath a Brain to understand your Demonstration, he can't but assent to it. If you hold a clear printed Book with a clear Candle to a Man of clear Eyes, he will certainly read; but if the Print be not clear, or the Candle, or his Sight not clear, or he not learned to read, can your Force make him read? And just so is it with our Understanding, which is the Eye of our Soul, and a Demonstration being as a Candle to give Light; if then your Demonstration or Deduction, or his Understanding be not clear, or he not learned, you may with a Club dash out his Brains, but never clear them.⁸⁰

⁷⁹"Gildas Salvanius, or the Reform'd Pastor" [1655], as quoted by W.F. Mitchell, English Pulpit Oratory (London, 1932), p. 104. The argument was by no means limited to one sect; Robert South (a liberal Anglican), in a lengthy discourse entitled "A Discourse against Long and Extempore Prayers", and designed to support the established liturgy, maintained: "In brevity of speech, a man does not so much speak words, as things; things in their precise and naked truth, and stripped of their rhetorical mask, and their fallacious gloss..." The English Sermon, (Cheadle, Cheshire, 1976), II, 116.

⁸⁰In John, Lord Somers, A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts (London, 1748), III, p. 333. Fielding had a copy of this Collection in his library.

Croft's splendidly blustery style emphasizes the absolute necessity of gaining the reader's assent in any delivery of transitive knowledge. If the reader is sufficiently prepared (ingenuous), he must give his assent to well-prepared arguments; the argument that force will never avail where individual assent is required will be encountered again in this enquiry.

Wing's Short-Title Catalogue and the British Museum Catalogue list a number of "Naked Truth" titles in the late 17th and early 18th centuries; besides several replies and sequels to Croft's tract, there were political tracts, a song "without a lye", a pamphlet on "the distiller's case", a pamphlet opposing war, and an essay on trade. Each title implicitly claims that the contents will bare the truth, strip away the adventitious and sophistical veils of interest, correct fallacious glosses, and thereby gain every reader's assent by the immediacy, simplicity, and irrefutability of the evidence.

The union of the two traditions (Platonic and proverbial) may be traced to the influence of the Italian neoplatonists. Ficino's use of the Platonic image is still very close to the original:

Since wisdom is present in no man, or at any rate in very few, and cannot be perceived by bodily sense, it follows that images of divine wisdom are very rare among us, hidden from our senses and totally ignored. Because of this, Socrates says...that the image of wisdom may not be seen at all with the eyes, because if it were it would deeply arouse that marvellous love of that divine wisdom of which it is an image.⁸¹

⁸¹The Letters of Marsilio Ficino, I, 44.

Pico della Mirandola extends the image to suggest the way in which the deficiencies of corporeal vision may be corrected or supplemented. His suggestion can be found in Henry Reynolds' Mythomystes [1632]; Reynolds is fascinated by the concept of Socratic frenzy, or possession of and by the absolute, and he quotes Pico at length:

Homer (sayes he) with seeing the ghost of Achilles, which inspired him with that Poeticke fury, that who with understanding reades, shall find to containe in it all intellectual contemplation, was thereby deprived (or faigned to bee deprived) of his corporal eyesight, as one that seeing all things above, could not attend to the heeding of triviall and meaner things below. And such rapture of the spirit, is exprest (saies he) in the fable of Tyresias that Callimachus sings; who for having seene Pallas naked (which signifies no other than that Ideall beauty, whence proceeds all sincere wisdom, and not cloathed or covered with corporall matter) became sodainly blind, and was by the same Pallas made a Prophet; so as that which blinded his corporall eyes, opened to him the eyes of his understanding.⁸²

Although Florentine thought came to England with Erasmus and Colet, the full impact of this doctrine was not felt until the advent of

⁸²Mythomystes pp. 18-19. Reynolds' Neoplatonism was fairly true to the Renaissance form, but was not influential. The concept of Socratic frenzy was of paramount importance to the Florentine Neoplatonists, and Erasmus incorporated it into his own humanistic divinity. M.A. Screech, in his thought-provoking study, Ecstasy and the Praise of Folly (London, 1980), discusses the amazement and ecstasy which accompanies the discovery of that wisdom "without which a man is foolish or insane", a discovery which can be made by opening the Sileni Alcibiadis. "Erasmus certainly associated it with the amazement which seizes a man who discovers the spiritual truth hidden within the Silenus of Christ and the Scriptures....The amazement leads to the contemplation of the wisdom of God....The Christian man is struck with an astonishment...which...makes him seem mad to the ordinary run of mortal men. In this the Christian can find a prototype in Socrates....Among many, many points of similarity, one might note that Socrates is said to have seemed like a fool, because of his constant jesting: he was a perpetual joke....at the very time when worldly-wise fools...were actually affecting wisdom...'to the point of madness'! Yet he it was who proved to be the sane one, with his

Whichcote and the Cambridge Platonists. Whichcote characteristically notes the connection between the ability to perceive truth and the necessity of action (i.e., practical morality):

...in Vice there is a natural deformity or monstrosity;
and in Vertue, beauty: to which all, that are not deprav'd
by ill habits readily bear a great reverence and regard...⁸³

Whichcote insists on the practical force of the perception of truth:

This Advantage Truth hath: It hath so much of self-evidence,

love of the spiritual and the invisible: the real fools were the worldly-wise. But to such men Socrates -- or Christ -- will always seem a crazy fool." (pp. 29f., 66f.) Screech argues that the Christianizing of the Socratic concept of ecstatic love for God began in patristic times, and took hold in Italy in the 15th century (p. 134).

⁸³Benjamin Whichcote, Apostolical Apothegms... (London, 1685), p. 108. (Facs. ed., Menston, Yorkshire: Scolar, 1971) A parallel tradition of the Naked Deformity of Vice is also traceable; consider, for instance, Spenser's pairing of Truth and Falsity in Una and Duessa. The argument was incorporated into Anglican divinity by numerous authors. In his "Discourse concerning the true nature of the Lord's Supper" [1642], Ralph Cudworth sets forth an apposite fable: "All great errors have ever been intermingled with some truth. And indeed, if falsehood should appear alone into the world, in her own true shape and naked deformity, she would be so black and horrid that no man would look upon her; and therefore she hath always had an art to wrap herself up in a garment of light, by which means she passed freely disguised and discerned. This was elegantly signified in the fable thus: Truth at first presented herself to the world, and went about to seek entertainment; but when she found none, being of a generous nature, that loves not to obtrude herself upon unworthy spirits, she resolved to leave earth upon unworthy spirits, she resolved to leave earth, and take her flight to heaven: but as she was going up, she chanced, Elijah-like, to let her mantle fall; and Falsehood, waiting by for such an opportunity, snatched it up presently and ever since goes about disguised in Truth's attire....There is always some truth which gives being to every error....though sometimes it would require a very curious artist, in the midst of all Error's deformities to decry the defaced lineaments of that Truth which first it did resemble." As quoted by John Tulloch, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy (1874; New York, 1972), II, 198f.

it is so satisfactory to an ingenuous Mind that it will prevail, unless there be an Indisposition in the Receiver.⁸⁴

Other Cambridge Platonists explicitly adopted the doctrine of Socratic frenzy. In his Discourse Concerning the True Way or Method of Attaining Divine Knowledge [1660], John Smith contrasts the barrenness of superficial controversialists with the treasures available to the "Epoptist", or beholder enlightened by a sudden illumination in the darkness:

Jejune and barren speculations may be hovering and fluttering up and down about divinity, but they cannot settle or fix themselves upon it. They unfold the plicatures of truth's garment, but they cannot behold the lovely face of it. There are hidden mysteries in divine truth, wrapt up one within another, which cannot be discerned but by divine "Epoptists".⁸⁵

Despite the strong suggestion that such illumination is reserved for the few, Smith goes on to insist that the ultimate test of such knowledge is not mysterious, but simply practical:

There is an inward beauty, life and loveliness in divine truth, which cannot be known, but when it is digested into life and practice.⁸⁶

Smith seems to hint that this knowledge may spring from practice, which makes it more accessible than if the process moved only the

⁸⁴Select Sermons (Edinburgh, 1742), p. 3.

⁸⁵The Cambridge Platonists, pp. 80f.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 81. Henry More explains the connection between the absolute personal experience of the Socratic frenzy and practical morality in his Enchiridion Ethicum [1669]: "To estimate the fruit of virtue by that imaginary knowledge of it which is acquired by mere definition, is very much the same as if one were to estimate the nature of fire from a fire painted on the wall....Every vital good is perceived and judged by life and sense....If you have ever been this, you have seen this." As quoted by Ernst Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England (Austin, Texas, 1953), p. 28.

other way. The possibility of moving other individuals is explained, once again, in terms of an irresistible appeal to rational assent in ingenuity:

Nothing would more effectively commend religion to the minds of men in displaying and unfolding the excellencies of its nature, than the true native beauty and inward luster of religion itself.⁸⁷

This emphasis signals the integration of the Naked Truth tradition into the rational theology of the age. In his second Boyle Lecture, Samuel Clarke applies the Platonic image as an analogy illustrating the necessity of rational assent to truths found in Scripture. Christianity, he insists, requires assent from every man who makes use of his natural rational capacities (the willingness so to do, of course, is ingenuous);

Men are not called upon to believe the Christian Religion without very reasonable and sufficient Proof; much less are they required, to set up Faith in opposition to Reason; or to believe anything for that very reason, because it is incredible. On the contrary, God has given us all the Proofs of the Truth of our Religion, that the Nature of the Thing would bear, or that were reasonable either for God to give, or Men to expect....And indeed no reasonable Man⁸⁸ can fail of being persuaded by the Evidence we now have.

Those who are unable or unwilling to honestly follow the arguments provided, Clarke maintains, are blinded by the "Love of this present World." Noting Cicero's account of the Platonic image in De Officiis, Clarke applies the analogy to that part of Scripture which, for him,

⁸⁷ The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion [posth. 1660]; op. cit., p. 139.

⁸⁸ A Discourse Concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of Revelation (London, 1706), pp. 389f. Fielding had this edition of Clarke's Boyle Lectures in his library.

has the greatest potential impact:

Let any impartial person judge, whether a Religion that tends thus manifestly to the recovery of the rational part of God's Creation, to restore Men to the Imitation and Likeness of God, and to the Dignity and highest Improvement of their Nature; has not within itself an intrinsick and very powerful evidence of its being truly Divine. Let any one read the fifth, sixth, and seventh Chapters of St. Matthews Gospel, and judge if they do not, as it were, set before his eyes such a lovely Image and Representation of true Virtue, as Plato said could not but charm Men with the highest degree of love and admiration imaginable.⁸⁹

The "Complete Divinity" of the Sermon on the Mount has the potential for change of Truth made manifest. If it is read with eyes made clear by Reason, readied by an ingenuous disposition, Clarke insists that admiration and assent, as well as practical application, are inevitable.

Fielding acknowledges that Virtue has "a modest Backwardness", which requires a considerable effort on the part of the seeker after truth. The provision of example is conceived not so much to furnish models of emulation, but to spark the natural appetite or inclination toward virtue. Once the attraction generated by the glimpse of virtue's beauty has taken hold, the second assumption about the parabolic, literary dialectic comes into play. That is, the deep-rooted conviction that reason, when various obstructions

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 394, 273f. Cf. Fell's edition of the Letter to Donatus: "Virtue has more things and stronger things than vice has with which to allure man. But those things escape the notice of most men. How so? Because Reason, which is the eye of the mind, lies in us slothfully buried in a deep sleep." As quoted by J.S. Marshall, Hooker and the Anglican Tradition (London, 1963), p. 96.

are removed, will be able to discover truth. This attitude, rediscovered by humanist scholars in the classics, is characteristically and confidently set forth by Quintilian:

There is absolutely no foundation for the complaint that but few men have the power to take in the knowledge that is imparted to them, and that the majority are so slow of understanding that education is a waste of time and labour. On the contrary you will find that most are quick to reason and ready to learn. Reasoning comes as naturally to man as flying to birds, speed to horses, and ferocity to birds of prey: our minds are endowed by nature with such activity and sagacity, that the soul is believed to proceed from Heaven.⁹⁰

The classical optimism about the accessibility to, and efficacy of, the beneficial services of reason gained a new currency with the Renaissance, and left its mark on much of Anglican thought. Much later in the century, Dr. Johnson, in a comment recorded by Boswell, indicates the pervasive influence of the notion of a personal dialectic dynamically impelled by the innate desire for knowledge:

Knowledge always desires increase; it is like fire, which must first be kindled by some external agent, but which will afterwards propagate itself.⁹¹

Any literary work which provides the first spark for this flame, which offers an inviting glimpse of the beautiful goddesses, Truth and Virtue (or, is she one goddess?), and which invites the reader to open its literary outer shell and discover the precious truths hidden within, is in a very real sense initiating just such a dialectical movement.

⁹⁰Institutio Oratorio, I.i; tr. H.E. Butler, (London, 1921), pp. 19ff.

⁹¹Life of Samuel Johnson (1791; New York, n.d.), p. 321, Walter J. Ong, with his characteristic muted scepticism, observes

Fielding presents his reader with exemplary characters, whose fundamental Good Nature, and whose progress toward an ideal active life of practical morality both attract the reader's admiration and emulation. The closest Fielding ever comes to "pure" example is in his presentation of ideal female character, and he does not hesitate to seek authoritative precedent in Plato. In his Essay on Conversation, he suggests that modern Dancing-Masters (the embodiment of superficiality and frivolity) might feel uncomfortable conversing with Socrates or Plato about "the Nature of the Soul, or ...the native Beauty of Virtue." Fielding goes on to suggest wryly that Socrates was not unacquainted with the Dancing-Master's interests, and that Plato "drew Virtue in the Person of a Fine Woman," thus facetiously uniting the interests of the "Heel Sophists" and the Philosophers.⁹²

A more serious note is struck in his description, in Tom Jones, of Sophia Western. Fielding spares no pains to let his reader know

that the term "Reason" in the Renaissance came to be considered "a kind of unerring power bearing straight for the truth, with the inevitability of a syllogism but somehow without being encumbered with all the syllogistic formalities after all." Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 193f.

⁹²Miscellanies, I, 143.

that she is truly beautiful (see especially IV.ii), and that her inward condition is a perfect match. The Platonic image recurs in X.iii, when Fielding describes the effect she has on several minor characters with whom she comes in contact:

The Conversation in the Kitchin was all upon the Charms of the young Lady. There is indeed in perfect Beauty a Power which almost none can withstand... (X.iii;537)⁹³

The ensuing encomium upon her physical beauty is completed with "Praises of her Goodness," and the effect on the characters is extended to the reader.

Fielding is not yet finished with the Platonic image, but the discussion of his further transformations of the Naked Beauty of Truth topos must wait until a later chapter. Before we can investigate the method involved in turning the reader's eye toward truth, we need to establish a sense of the context of corrective comedy, which serves to ridicule and eliminate the obstructions to clear vision.

⁹³For an eloquent emblematic reading of the significance of Sophia in Tom Jones, and some notes on the Platonic image, see Martin C. Battestin, "Fielding's Definition of Wisdom: Some Functions of Ambiguity and Emblem in Tom Jones," ELH, XXXV (1968): 188-217; cf. Allan Wendt, "The Naked Virtue of Amelia," ELH, XXVII (1960): 131-48.

7. Satire and the Context of Corrective Comedy

The true end of Satyre, is the amendment of Vices by correction. And he who writes Honestly, is no more an Enemy to the Offendour, than the Physician to the Patient, when he prescribes harsh remedies to an inveterate Disease...⁹⁴

Satire never leaveth till he make a man laugh at folly, and at length ashamed, to laugh at himself, which he cannot do without avoiding the folly...⁹⁵

It must be owned, that this extravagant Disposition in the Reader towards unseasonable Mirth, drives all Parties upon being witty where they can, as being conscious of its powerful operation in Controversy; Ridicule having from the Hands of a skilful Disputant, the same Effect in barbarous Minds, with the new invented Darts of Marius, that, so weak as to break in the throw, and pierce no farther than the Outside, yet sticking there, they more entangle and incommode the Combatant, than those Arms which fly stronger, and strike deeper. However, an Abuse it is, and one of the most Pernicious, of the Liberty of the Press. For what greater Affront to the Severity of Reason, the Sublimity of Truth, and the Sanctity of Religion, than to subject them to the impure Touch of every scurrilous Buffoon?⁹⁶

Much of the critical approach to satire in this century has been coloured by the notion that the only source of literary meaning that really matters is the autobiographical, that literature must primarily be expressive of the personality of the author. Such an

⁹⁴ John Dryden, "To the Reader", Absalom and Achitophel, [1681], Works, ed. Swedenborg et al., II:5.

⁹⁵ Sir Philip Sidney, A Defence of Poetry, p. 44

⁹⁶ William Warburton, "Dedication to the Freethinkers", The Divine Legation of Moses... (London, 1738), pp. xiif.

outlook assumes that the satirist is a creature of frustration and petty vengeance, not always very wholesome, and usually more than a bit distasteful. The defensive criticism of the 17th and 18th century abounds with references to the "spleen" of the angry, peevish satirist; in the saeva indignatio of Juvenal there is classical precedent, although the traditional distinction between satire and mere invective is usually clear in classic times. It seems to have been an exercise of considerable difficulty for critics and biographers to separate, for instance, the popular stereotypical image of Swift (frustrated and ill-natured because his political ambitions were so thwarted) from the perception of an ethically committed satirist (genuinely concerned with exposing and eliminating certain species of human folly). One of the major schools of criticism still insists that the essence of such satires as the Dunciad is misanthropy, a "universal shriek of loathing and despair,"⁹⁷

On the other hand, the opposite critical practice emphasizes the purposeful, traditional, rhetorical aspect of satire, and leaves the question of personal motivation to the realm of conjecture.

⁹⁷ Gilbert Highet, as quoted by Maynard Mack, "The Muse of Satire", Yale Review, XLI (1951): 83. Mack's essay is a corrective to the tendency here described. Still, it should be noted, in the interest of fairness, that Mack shades his quotation of Highet to contribute to his own presentation. Highet does consider the formal and traditional aspects of satire, but the personal motive (and what he concludes is the satiric temperament: peevish and vengeful) comes first. See The Anatomy of Satire (Princeton, 1962), pp. 238ff.

Satire aims at correction and teaching, exposure of vice and the public shaming of its perpetrators and advocates, and it employs more or less conventional methods. It must be kept in mind that the satirist's effect derives from a perceptible clash of contraries, the divergence of daily practice from the (ostensibly) common literary or social ideals.

The question of what constitutes an appropriate target for corrective laughter provoked much debate. Dr. Johnson expressed the feeling of the more conservative element by insisting that the object of censure should be patterns of wicked behaviour, rather than erring individuals. His Dictionary provides this distinction:

[Satire is] a poem in which wickedness or folly is censured. Proper satire is distinguished by the generality of the reflections, from a lampoon which is aimed against a particular person; but they are too frequently confounded...⁹⁸

This is all very well, but Johnson's attitude was more equivocal than this definition indicates, for (as his Lives of the Poets) and his opinions recorded by Boswell manifestly demonstrate), he feared that satire is all fundamentally ill-natured in origin. Thus, he himself "confounds" the genres in other definitions:

Libel: A Satire; defamatory writing; a lampoon.
To Libel: To spread defamation, written or printed...
To Libel: To satirise; to lampoon.
Lampoon: (Bailey derives it from lampons a drunken song...) A personal satire; abuse; censure written not to reform but to vex.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ A Dictionary of the English Language (1755; London, 1837), II, 558.

⁹⁹ Ibid., II, 44, 17. Johnson's own compassionate response to lampoon may be found in his own satire, London [1738], ll. 166-9;

Gone are all his careful distinctions; yet such a conflation of genres is not unique to Dr. Johnson. The implicit identification of the attritional comic forms with simple abuse and detraction is extremely widespread. The attack on individuals was easily interpreted as jealousy, spite, or malice. A satiric temperament was linked with this ill-natured attitude, a petty misanthropy called "sourness". Such a temperament was often blamed as a cause of Swift's decline:

Another cause of this decay in his understanding, was that sourness of temper which his disappointments first created in him: and the indulgence of his passions perpetually increased. This also inflamed his spirit of satire, and with that his aversion to mankind. For satire is a kind of anti-flattering glass, which shows us nothing but deformities, in the objects we contemplate in it: and deformities naturally create aversions.¹⁰⁰

Deformity, of course, in a relative term, and a normative standard is implicit in the word itself. Such a criticism simply fails to recognize the design of the satirist to create and employ aversion as a tactic referential to an ethical or literary norm.

Of all the Grievs that harass the Distrest,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful Jest,
Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous Heart
Than when a Blockhead's Insult points the Dart.

The Poems of Samuel Johnson (Oxford, 1974),
p. 177.

¹⁰⁰Patrick Delany, Observations Upon Lord Orrery's Remarks On the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift (London, 1754), p. 144. Cf. Orrery, whose own analysis is really very similar, Remarks (London, 1752), pp. 122ff. et passim. Fielding owned a copy of Orrery's controversial but popular biography.

The same attitude can be seen in the objection to general satire -- if the wider patterns of behaviour which are the "proper" targets of satire are too general, the satirist is accused of misanthropy. Any satire which accuses mankind, as a species, of folly libels the dignity of human nature:

It is the business of the Libertine to degrade his species, and debase the dignity of human nature, and thereby destroy the most efficacious incitements to lovely and laudable actions: but that a writer of Boileau's purity of manners, should represent his kind in the dark and disagreeable colours he has done, with all the malignity of a discontented HOBBIIST, is a lamentable perversion of fine talents, and is a real injury to society.¹⁰¹

Here again the argument of impropriety is conjoined with the suggestion of discontent and mental imbalance.

A more difficult criticism for satire's advocates to answer is one suggesting its inefficacy:

Yet what can satire, whether grave or gay?
It may correct a foible, may chastise
The freaks of fashion, regulate the dress,
Retrench a sword-blade, or displace a patch;
But where are its sublimer trophies found?
What vice has it subdu'd? Whose hearts reclaim'd
By rigour, or whom laughed into reform?
Alas, Leviathan is not so tam'd:

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Joseph Warton, An Essay on The Genius and Writings of Pope [1782], as quoted by Bertrand A. Goldgar, "Satires on Man and 'The Dignity of Human Nature'", PMLA, LXXX (1965), pp. 535f. Goldgar's analysis of this aspect of the critical battle fought against satire is very useful. What Goldgar neglects to mention (although many of Swift's more sympathetic critics point it out) is that the accusation of misanthropy can be answered by reference to Swift's description of man as rationis capax. The widespread folly and vice he saw in the world was not the result of universal depravity, but evidence of failure to exercise proper moral and rational choices -- attributable to poor education, poor example set by the "great", and poor instruction by members of a weakened church.

Laugh'd at, he laughs again; and stricken hard
 Turns to the stroke his adamantine scales
 That fear no discipline of human hands.¹⁰²

Though Cowper's doubt is expressed late in the century [1783-5] -- and expressed at the beginning of a new poetic era -- it is doubt of long standing. What satire most often produced, argued its opponents pointing to the case of Dryden, was simply more satire. Addison felt the doubt profoundly enough to suggest that satire's objects of correction must be the smaller, superficial things, most likely to be "corrigible":

What vice or frailty can a discourse correct which
 censures the whole species alike...? A satire should
 expose nothing but what is corrigible, and make a
 due discrimination between those who are, and those
 who are not, the proper objects of it.¹⁰³

Addison's delineation of the proper boundaries of satire begs the question of the means and limits of human ameliorization. That political satire could be singularly powerful is amply demonstrated by the relation of Fielding's farces to the Theatre Licensing Act of 1738; Butler's Hudibras was immensely successful in making enthusiasm appear ridiculous to generations of readers. That satire could be effective in its negative function in the literary field is especially apparent in the satirical demolitions of pretentious literary blockheads, including Dryden's MacFlecknoe, Pope's Dunciad,

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William Cowper, The Task, II, 315-25; The Poetical Works of William Cowper, ed. H.S. Milford (London, 1934), 4th ed., p. 153.

¹⁰³

The Spectator, No. 209 [1711], ed. G.G. Smith (London, 1945), II, 122f. See Goldgar, pp. 537ff., to whom I owe this citation.

and Fielding's farces and anti-Cibberian passages in the novels. Yet none of these examples, and perhaps none which could be selected from a large number of "successful" satires, have had the sweeping effect on the manners and morals of the general populace which the apologists for satire insist is its final end.

To deal with this question, it will be necessary to look back at the way the satirical moment is apprehended. Within the range of comic works described as satirical there are many degrees of difference. On the simplest level, the reader is involved in a momentary act of comparison between two easily recognizable elements -- stock or common (but "wrong") behaviour, and the ideal requirements of socially acceptable behaviour. The recognition of the comic incongruity is almost immediate. When Fielding uses the word "Great" or "Greatness" in Jonathan Wild, the reader soon learns to replace the literal definition (nobility, virtue, moral and social excellence) with a new ironic definition (rapacity, cruelty, self-interest). The effect and charm of verbal irony lies in the almost automatic transference of apparent and implicit meaning; Kierkegaard has said that the ironic figure of speech "is like a riddle and its solution
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possessed simultaneously." Other relatively immediate satirical techniques include such moments as the revelation of the discrepancy between a hypocrite's protestations and actions, barely-disguised references to the character or actions of real people in the public

eye, the use of incongruously elegant language to describe something obviously unworthy, and so forth.

On the other end of the scale, the distance between the two elements is far greater. The surface element may invite the reader's underestimation -- it may seem trivial, wrongheaded, confusing, or even just plain silly at first. To discover the beneficial heart of the communication, the reader must open it, with a degree of inferential participation which can be quite demanding.

Douglas Duncan has described this ironic process:

Far from being invited to share its secret, we are challenged to see that it exists. Its meaning is to be found in our responses, and its pervasiveness in the fact that we are, or should be, engaged all the time. If we fail to perceive it, it is we who are deluded; we become its victims.¹⁰⁵

Behind this process there generally lies a philosophical conviction which has its expression in ironic form. Certain kinds of truth, and usually the most important kinds, must be subjectively understood, not merely accepted verbatim from authority. In a more sober context, Whichcote contrasted "received dictates" with individual thought and enquiry: "Men are wanting to themselves, if they do not see with
¹⁰⁶
 their own eyes." In a like vein, Samuel Clarke insisted that the

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Duncan, p. 1. Duncan explains that this irony is an important condition of humanist literary strategy: "Every writer is an ironist at the expense of his audience when he bids for a response without drawing attention to what he is doing. That is to say that irony was implicit in the humanist notion of literature as rhetoric." (Loc. cit.)

¹⁰⁶ Select Sermons [1698], as quoted by H.R. McAdoo, The Spirit of Anglicanism, p. 87.

subjective appropriation of religious and ethical understanding was essential to Protestantism. Every Christian must "of necessity at last understand with his own understanding, and believe with his own, not another's faith."¹⁰⁷

Coming to the public from the outside, then, was widely recognized as a disadvantageous approach. Fielding touched on this point somewhat light-heartedly in his poem, "To a Friend on the Choice of a Wife":

'Tis hard (Experience long so taught the wise)
Not to provoke the Person we advise.¹⁰⁸

The alternative method of approach is internal. Shaftesbury recommends that the serious writer adopt "a certain knack or legerdemain" in argument, which he terms "soliloquy". By adapting the process by which the writer arrives at certain truths to the process by which he communicates them, he encourages an inward turning on the part of the reader, and ultimately facilitates

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As quoted by R.N. Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England (London, 1954), p. 43. There is a modern equivalent to this emphasis in Michael Polyani's Tacit Dimension (Garden City, N.Y., 1967), p. 17: "We meet with another indication of the wide functions of indwelling when we find acceptance to moral teachings described as their interiorization. To interiorize is to identify ourselves with the teachings in question by making them function as the proximal term of a tacit moral knowledge, as applied in practice. This establishes the tacit framework for our moral acts and judgments."

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Miscellanies, I, 42.

the reader's adoption of the argument and the principle involved.

The complex kind of satire, when it has been opened, can turn upon the reader like the parable. The laughter directed at folly in general becomes focused upon the reader's own folly; as Sidney suggests, man's laughter at himself is not comfortable, and leads him to avoid folly in the future.

P.K. Elkin has observed that warnings against the misuse of satire were common to both its practitioners and its opponents. Nonetheless, neither party quarrels with the implicit assumption that, when error is removed, reason will be free to act:

Augustan satire was firmly rooted in the comforting conviction of the age that men are free and responsible beings, who can set about improving themselves and their society by an exercise of reason -- of those higher powers of will, understanding, and mind, which make civilization possible.¹¹⁰

The ultimate appeal to reason is common to both extremes of the satirical continuum. In his prolific literary career, Fielding drew on nearly every available satiric variation. In his early works, he made enthusiastic use of both particular and general satire. In his "Essay on Conversation", he joined the ranks of apologists for the Augustan tradition of Raillery, a subgenre of particular satire which he describes as "playing on peccadillos", mockery, ridicule of an individual by praising his faults as if they were

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"Advice to an Author", Characteristics, ed. John M. Robertson (1711; Indianapolis, 1964), I, 103ff.

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P.K. Elkin, The Augustan Defence of Satire (Oxford, 1972), p. 5. Elkin's study should be taken into account as a corrective to the arguments of satire's enemies in the 18th century.

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 virtues, and vice-versa. Although Fielding probably never wholly abandoned personal reference, its relative importance in his overall comic scheme diminished rapidly with the advent of his novel-writing career. In his Preface to Joseph Andrews, Fielding forswears the individual attack of raillery and lampoon:

And here I solemnly protest, I have no Intention to vilify or asperse any one; for though everything is copied from the Book of Nature, and scarce a Character or Action produced which I have not taken from my own Observations and Experience, yet I have used the utmost Care to obscure the Persons by such different Circumstances, Degrees, and Colours, that it will be impossible to guess at them with any degree of Certainty; and if it ever happens otherwise, it is only where the Failure characterized is so minute, that it is a Foible only which the Party himself may laugh at as well as any other. (p. 10)

Again, Fielding insists "I describe not Men but Manners not an Individual, but a Species." (WA, III:1:189) Fielding's experience is relegated to the status of source material for generalized observations in art.

Reason also plays a part in the recognition of the "true Ridiculous", the true province of the comic writer, located, according to Fielding, in the discrepancy between public appearance and private reality:

The only Source of the true Ridiculous (as it appears to me) is Affectation. But tho' it arises from one Spring only, when we consider the infinite Streams into which this one branches, we shall presently cease to admire at the copious Field it affords to an Observer. Now Affectation proceeds

¹¹¹Miscellanies, I, 152. Cf. Norman Knox, The Word Irony and Its Context, 1500-1755 (Durham, N.C., 1961) for a discussion of the history of irony, and especially of the ironic techniques of praise-by-blame and blame-by-praise.

from one of these Causes, Vanity or Hypocrisy: for as Vanity puts us on affecting false Characters, in order to purchase Applause; so Hypocrisy sets us on an Endeavour to avoid Censure by concealing our Vices under an Appearance of their opposite Virtues....From the Discovery of this Affectation arises the Ridiculous -- which always strikes the Reader with Surprise and Pleasure...

(JA, pp. 7f)¹¹²

To ridicule means to expose to laughter. The effect of laughter upon its human object is frequently one of humiliation, rejection, scorn, and exclusion. Does such an activity necessarily involve unkindness?

According to the most influential theorist, it does. Thomas Hobbes's idea of laughter is not inconsistent with his general philosophical perspective. If human society is a perpetual state of siege, in which the natural relation between men is one of enmity, and in which self-preservation is the paramount objective, then laughter must operate as a mechanism expressive of some stage of the struggle:

I may therefore conclude, that the passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from sudden conception of some eminence in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others.¹¹³

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For a brief account of Fielding's precursors in defining the Ridiculous, see Battestin's note on this passage, loc. cit. See also The Champion (April 15, 1740), Henley, XV, 279: "Vanity is the true source of Ridicule." Cf. The Covent-Garden Journal, No. 55 (July 18, 1752), II, 59ff.; which supplies a more Jonsonian definition, outlining the obstruction of Good Breeding by excessive Humour.

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As quoted by Scott McMillin, ed., Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy (New York, 1973), p. 343.

This laughter includes the hilarity resulting from the sight of a person falling in the mud, comic pleasure resulting from the assurance of a difference between a fool on the stage and the wiser audience, and the exultant crow of victory in any struggle (laughter evinced by the misfortunes of others). Fielding will admit that it exists as a natural reflex action, "one of the First
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 Efforts of the Mind" but it is not rooted in any good propensity in man. This is the Laughter Bergson calls the
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 "momentary anesthesia of the heart". Just as his conception of human nature differs from that of Hobbes on the side of optimism, Fielding's conception of laughter is broader and more humane. The effect of laughter is not necessarily injurious;

Mr. Hobbes tells us, that Laughter arises from Pride, which is far from being a good-natured Passion. And ...I would not severely discountenance all Indulgence of it, since Laughter, while confined to Vice and Folly, is no very cruel Punishment on the Object, and may be attended with good Consequences to him...¹¹⁶

Although these corrective effects attendant upon either internalized or public laughter mitigate in part its negativity, Fielding is not comfortable with its motivation in the human psyche. He

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"An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men", Miscellanies, I, 159.

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Wylie Sypher, "The Meanings of Comedy", in Comedy: Meaning and Form, ed. Robert W. Corrigan (San Francisco, 1965), p. 24.

116

Loc. cit.

continues:

Yet, we shall, I believe, find, on a careful Examination into its Motive, that it is not produced from Good-Nature ...However Self-Love may make us pleased with seeing a Blemish in another which we are ourselves free from, yet Compassion on the first Reflection of any Unhappiness in the Object, immediately puts a Stop to it in good Minds. For Instance; suppose a Person well drest should tumble in a dirty Place in the Street; I am afraid there are few who would not laugh at the Accident: Now what is this Laughter other than a convulsive Extasy, occasioned by the Contemplation of our own Happiness, compared with the unfortunate Person's! a Pleasure which seems to savour of Ill-nature: but as this is one of those first, and as it were, spontaneous Movements of the Soul, which few, as I have said, attend to, and none can prevent; so it doth not constitute the Character. When we come to reflect on the Uneasiness this Person suffers, Laughter, in a good and delicate Mind, will begin to change itself into Compassion; and in Proportion as this latter operates on us, we may be said to have more or less Good-Nature: but should any fatal Consequence, such as a violent Bruise, or the breaking of a Bone, attend the Fall, the Man who should still continue to laugh, would be entitled to the basest and vilest 117 Appellation with which any Language can stigmatize him.

Fielding was able to reconcile the Hobbesian reaction with his own conception of human nature only by classifying it in a group of instinctive actions. There are controls, nonetheless; Fielding was convinced that man's real character is not determined by mechanical processes and reflexes, but by volitional movements, such as the all-important one toward compassion. Furthermore, he detected a crucial flaw in Hobbes's theory of laughter, for Hobbes is unable to explain why some cases of infirmity in others are conducive to laughter while others are not. Most of mankind (with the pitiful exception of the lunatic) will not laugh at the misery, pain, and

grief which afflict the world, although the conditions for laughter set out by Hobbes prevail. This failing in the Hobbesian theory is frequently burlesqued by Fielding, as in the Preface to

Joseph Andrews:

What could exceed the Absurdity of an Author, who should write the Comedy of Nero, with the merry Incident of ripping up his Mother's Belly; or what would give a greater Shock to Humanity, than an Attempt to expose the Miseries of Poverty and Distress to Ridicule? (p. 9)¹¹⁸

The limits of laughter, then, are defined by compassion and a kind of compassionate propriety. Such a propriety is consistent with Aristotle's definition of comedy as "an imitation of men who are inferior but not altogether vicious." Again, Aristotle insists that "the ludicrous is a species of ugliness ...which is not painful or injurious."¹¹⁹ George Converse Fiske points out that Cicero's notion of the laughable lies in the exposure of the disgraceful in a manner not disgraceful, and that Horace also accepts similar limitations to comedy:

True comic power, in the best sense of the word, implies certain stylistic qualities, notably restraint and the

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Cf. Fielding's Jacobite's Journal, No. 17 (March 26, 1748), ed. W.B. Coley (Middletown and Oxford, 1975), p. 213. Here he declares that the political emergency is too grave and potentially horrifying to allow the use of ridicule: "To consider such attempts as these in a ludicrous Light, would be as absurd as the Conceit of a Fellow in Bartholomew-Fair, who exhibited the comical Humours of Nero ripping up his Mother's Belly..."

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Poetics, V, 1449a; Aristotle on Poetry and Style, tr. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis, 1958), p. 10.

use of the liberal type of humour; it is not by itself enough to extend the jowl of the hearer in a laugh.¹²⁰

Fielding makes use of both kinds of laughter -- the reflex laughter which depends on a shared perception of the Ridiculous (the gap in Affectation between folly and a normative system), as well as the more profound philosophical laughter described above. Not all Fielding's humour is ethical humour, but it is with this aspect that we are primarily concerned here.

The conjunction of affected, hypocritical behaviour and an objective ethical norm brings contradiction into being. Why, then, is laughter the fitting response to such contradiction, instead of grave censure and disapprobation?

The analysis of any simple joke will reveal that the property of evoking laughter, the quality of ludicrousness, is derived from the absurdity inherent in contradiction. Any joke will serve the purpose of analysis; the category of "elephant jokes" lends itself to our purposes because of the accentuated absurdity. The joke is in the answer to the question, "Why did the elephant stand on the marshmallow?" -- "To keep from falling into the hot chocolate." Now, assuming for the sake of the

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The Plain Style in the Scipionic Circle, pp. 82f.

argument that the joke is actually funny, the source of the humour can be traced, characteristically, to a fundamental incongruity. In this case, it is the silly muddling of the limitations of size and habitat of an enormous animal species with the small, banal incidents and appliances of daily life among humans. It is this incongruity we laugh at, and most simple humour can be traced to a similar incongruity between a particular incident or characteristic and some sort of higher principle. Marie Collins Swabey, discussing the origin of comic laughter, explains:

It is the perception of a local incongruity as incapable of truth or reality against the normative background of a universal relevance that affords the basic satisfaction of the comic perception.¹²¹

Fielding's "true Ridiculous" originates in the divergence between the particular moment of affected conduct and an absolute standard against which it is measured and found wanting. If affectation can be made ludicrous, the reader must be able to perceive both elements.

When the appeal is made to commonly accepted norms in satire, the process is one of recognition; the comic author who is aware of and concerned by the distance between an ethical ideal and quotidian practice appeals "to obvious perceptions of
¹²²
the obvious in sanity."

¹²¹Comic Laughter (Hamden, Conn., 1970), p. 18. Wylie Sypher notes that this laughter is like that of romantic irony, defined by Schopenhauer as a laughter of disillusion, "simply the sudden perception of incongruity' between our ideals and the actualities before us." Op. cit., p. 26.

¹²²Comic Laughter, p. 30.

The comic and ethical movement of Fielding's major novels is not primarily satirical, however. Like the parabolic forms of Lucianic satire discussed above, the work is so designed that the reader must not only judge correctly, but must also re-create for himself the standards by which he must judge. As Fielding's reader perceives and judges affectation, gradually a positive standard emerges in his own thought. In this way the ethical standard (of which affectation is a comic infraction) is subjectively experienced. It is no longer merely an external pressure, a function of a self-regulating society. That Fielding's reader is required to participate in the process of surveying and judging affectation in society indicates that the perception of the ethical imperative must be realized on an individual level.

Two points -- an ethical conviction and a perception of the divagations from the ethical in particular behaviour -- are needed to establish perspective. It is this double vision which is at the root of not simply satire, but irony.

CHAPTER II

DIALOGUE AND QUESTION IN JOSEPH ANDREWS

1) Questions: Appealing to Individual Reason and the Doctrine of Assent

Men are wanting to themselves, if they do not see with their own eyes.¹

For, I think, we may as rationally hope to see with other Mens Eyes, as to know by other Mens Understandings.²

Joseph Andrews contains within its busy structure a number of dialogues concerning various subjects which Fielding took to heart. His novels include a program designed to encourage his readers to assent to his values; in order to examine these issues and his manner of presenting them to the reader, it will be necessary first to look at several aspects of the thought of Fielding's time.

Common to the lay philosophy and the rational theology of the Restoration and 18th century is the conviction that true understanding of matters of principle may not be acquired simply by admitting external influence, but must emerge from a process of individual examination and independent development.³ The widespread insistence on the importance of such a process is one of the most noteworthy results of the humanist

¹ Benjamin Whichcote, as quoted by H. R. McAdoo, The Spirit of Anglicanism, p. 87.

² John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding [1690-1710], ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975), I.IV.3; p. 101.

³ Although there was a great deal of opposition to the use of reason in religion throughout the period, this enquiry will concern itself with the stream of humanist thought which accepts and encourages it, and which (still flourishing in the 18th century) can be seen as having a profound influence on Fielding.

renovation of the dignity of human reason. Sir Thomas More's verses on Pico's "The Nature and Dignity of Man" characteristically emphasize that reason is God's image in man:

Remembre how God hath made the resonable
 Lyke unto his image and fygyre,
 And for the suffred paynes intollerable
 That he for aungel never wolde endure.
 Regarde o man thyne excellent nature:
 Thou that with aungell arte made to bene egall,
 For very shame be not the devylles thrall.⁴

Reason is one of man's principal weapons against the devil's blandishments, and (given the grace of God⁵) is capable of dissolving

⁴In Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: His Life..., tr. Sir Thomas More [1510], ed. J. M. Rigg (London, 1890). This verse comes from More's own additions to the "Wepens of Spirytual Batayle", which he entitles with an Erasmian pun: "The .XII. Wepens Have We More At Length Declared as Hit Folowyth"; p. 65, emphasis added.

⁵Richard Hooker explains that grace is requisite to the operation of all faculties, including the understanding: "This we shall always desire to be understood, that there is no kind of faculty or power in man or any other creature, which can rightly performe the functions allotted to it, without perpetual aid and concurrence of that supreme cause of all things." Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity [1593], ed. Georges Edelen (Books I-IV) [henceforth abbreviated "LEP"], The Folger Library Edition of the Works of Richard Hooker (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1976), I.8.11; p. 92. Cf. Benjamin Whichcote: "There is no inconsistency between the grace of God and the calling upon men carefully to use, improve, and employ the principles of God's creation." As quoted by Tulloch, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy, II, 99.

Tulloch states that Hooker formed no "school", but that his thought was taken up and developed toward the end of the 17th century, especially by Whichcote and his colleagues (II, 82f). Hooker's influence, however, can be seen throughout the century, in Stillingfleet and the Great Tew Circle, and on through the progress of Anglican thought. As a corrective to Tulloch's assertion, see J. S. Marshall, Hooker and the Anglican Tradition, and H. R. Trevor-Roper, "The Good & Great Works of Richard Hooker", New York Review of Books, XXIV, 19 (November 24, 1977): 48-55.

It must be acknowledged, however, that Hooker's thought was adapted, evolved, and even appropriated to support notions well outside the body of his initial contribution. Peter Munz, writing about Hooker's political

the thralldom of spiritual weakness and error. After Hooker, Anglican thought held that the inner, inherent faculty of reason had been provided for man's discovery of the implanted directive of divine law—a natural law which is infused in man as it is throughout the universe. Law is not a matter of abstract concepts, but a "directive rule unto goodness of operation." Thus, it directs mankind to action consistent with its universal requirement, behaviour in a manner in which things tend to their own perfection.⁶

By the latter half of the 17th century, the notion of God's image in man—which for Thomas More signified a rational capacity to engage in spiritual battle—was expanded to include the idea of stewardship. Men are given a bountiful share of potential helps, and are required to return (to the best of their ability) in kind. Robert South, preaching in 1662 on the text "Man was Created in God's Image" (Genesis I, 27), explained God's image as

That Universal Rectitude of all the faculties of the Soul, by which they stand apt and disposed to their respective Offices and Operations.⁷

thought, offers this useful caveat: "He has too often been considered the father of Anglicanism and has thus usually been interpreted as the conscious originator of an idea which, though it developed largely on the basis that he furnished, neither had been envisaged nor would have been approved by him." The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought (1952; Westport, Conn., 1952), p. 13. [Fielding owned a contemporary biography of Hooker.]

⁶ LEP, I.3.1; p. 63.

⁷ Sermons Preached Upon Several Occasions (London, 1679), p. 124. Compare with Isaac Barrow, who considers the divine image in man to be the inclination every man has towards virtue; discussing "The Duty and Reward of Bounty to the Poor", he insists: "The very constitution, frame and temper of our nature directeth and inclineth us thereto; whence by observing those duties, we observe our own nature, we improve our own

Reason is ultimately the means of quickening man's spiritual and active relationship with God. It apprises him of the nature of his duty and obligations, and enables him to make correct choices of actions consistent with his duty and nature. Benjamin Whichcote elaborates on this point:

That which is the height and excellency of human nature, viz., our reason, is not laid aside nor discharged, much less is it confounded by any of the materials of religion; but awakened, excited, employed, directed, and improved by it. For the mind and understanding of man is that faculty whereby man is made capable of God and apprehensive of him, receptive from him and able to make returns upon him and acknowledgments to him. Bring that with you, or else you are not capable receivers. Unless you drink in these moral principles, unless you do receive them by reason, the reason of things by the reason of your mind, your religion is but shallow and superficial.⁸

nature, we improve it, we advance it to the best perfection it is capable of; by neglecting them, we thwart, we impair, we debase the same—haec nostri pars optima sensus; the best of our natural inclinations (those sacred reliques of God's image originally stamped on our minds) do sensibly prompt, and vehemently urge us to mercy and pity..." Sermon XXXI, The Works of the Learned Isaac Barrow (London, 1716), I, 322. [Fielding had a copy of the 1741 edition of Barrow in his library, to which he referred frequently; see Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, passim.]

⁸ From Select Sermons [1698], The Cambridge Platonists, ed. G. R. Cragg, p. 63. Whichcote's insistence upon the necessity of the active use of reason in religion drew sharp criticism from the Calvinist faction of the Church of England. In his Commencement Sermon (1651), Whichcote set forth "The proposal for progress and growth in knowledge—That an ingenuous-spirited Christian, after application to God, and diligent use of meanes to finde-out truth; might fairly propose, without offence taken, what upon search he finds cause to believe; and whereon he will venture his owne soule..." As quoted by R. A. Greene, "Whichcote, Wilkins, 'Ingenuity,' and the Reasonableness of Christianity." p. 233. Whichcote's Commencement Sermon drew sharp criticism from Tuckney, who saw the claims for "ingenuity" as an attack on the doctrine of free grace, and as a form of "liberty of prophesying" and religious individualism which undercut the "sound words" of the Westminster Assembly's Confessions and Catechism. For an account of the Tuckney-Whichcote correspondence, see Greene, pp. 227-35; cf. Tulloch, II, 45-98.

In the active carrying-out of moral law, the assent of the individual's reason is likewise essential, as Hooker emphasizes:

Finally, whatsoever we do, if our own secret judgment consents not unto it as fit and good to be done, the doing it to us is sin, although the thing itself be allowable.⁹

H. R. McAdoo has demonstrated that this attitude toward authority and reason embodies a conviction that "the truth shall make you free", and that it is this theological method which is distinctively Anglican. McAdoo explains:

This concept of authority corresponds to that of the New Testament in respect of that very thing which is often imputed to it as an objection; namely, that it leaves so much for the individual to do for himself.... I may add that this ideal represents also the method of the early Church. Certainly, among Christians of the first four centuries...there was a requirement made on the intelligence and patience of the individual at least as great as that made by the English Church.¹⁰

Although the rational capacity needed to undertake the grave individual responsibility implicit in this method was thought to be inherent, its application was by no means expected to be automatic. Like every search for truth, the method could encounter any number of obstacles—opinion, error, custom, habit, intellectual laziness, spiritual weakness, among others—which divert the searcher or distort the evidence. The

⁹ Preface, LEP, 3.1; p. 12. Greene (p. 239) in his account of "ingenuity" demonstrates the history of this concept in liberal Anglicanism, noting that "Whichcote continually preaches the necessity for men to comprehend the truths of religion in an intelligent way: if a man 'doth not admit what he receives, with satisfaction to the Reason of his Mind, he doth not receive it as an intelligent Agent, but he receives [sic] it as a Vessel receives Water; he is continens rather than recipiens.'"

¹⁰ McAdoo, p. 412.

analogy to Bacon's "Idols" is clear.¹¹ Most of Locke's contemporaries agreed with his criticism of the unthinking acceptance of borrowed principles; he asserts that this plays into the hands of Custom, and involves men in a deadly intellectual inertia:

This is evidently the case of all Children and young Folk; and Custom, a greater power than Nature, seldom failing to make them worship for Divine, what she hath inured them to bow their Minds, and submit their Understandings to, it is no wonder, that grown Men, either perplexed in the necessary affairs of Life, or hot in the pursuit of Pleasures, should not seriously sit down to examine their own Tenets; especially when one of their Principles is, That Principles ought not to be questioned.¹²

¹¹ See the Novum Organum, XXXVIII-LXVIII, Philosophic Works, pp. 263-74. Cf. Whichcote's Letters [1651]: "They who fullie come-up to Scripture; and set themselves with ingenuitie to find-out the sense; seeking to God, to guide them; being not under the power of anie lust, or corruption, or worldlie interest, will not substantiallie differ in their resolved judgements about verie materiall things." Greene, p. 235.

The currency of Bacon's term as a generic category of obstacles to ingenuous learning may be seen in Cudworth's dismissal of the materialists' notion that Good Will and Benevolence spring from Imbecility as "but another Idol of the Atheist's Den." The True Intellectual System of the Universe (London, 1678), p. 886. [Fielding owned a copy of Cudworth's massive treatise.]

¹² Essay Concerning Human Understanding, I.III.25; p. 82. Locke's reasons for insisting upon individual assent to knowledge rather than acceptance of the external authority of philosophical or religious tradition are clear in his empirical theory of knowledge. As such, Locke differs from the divines who predate him, and influences those who follow; both groups, however, do (for varying reasons) support the claim that the most important knowledge must be subjectively apprehended. Nonetheless, the similarity of Locke's argument to that of the liberal Anglicans is interesting. Cf. George Rust, A Discourse of the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion [1683] "...it appears clearly indecorous and unworthy of a Christian to draw his Religion with his Mothers Milk, and to attribute his receiving it, not to the Ingenuous Disquisition of Reason, but to the Laws of his Country, his Education, to the Dictates of some learned Man in whom he has an Implicit Faith, and such like Prejudices as these." Greene, p. 250.

That this concept is common to the skeptical tradition of philosophical thought can be seen in Montaigne's comment: "We take other men's knowledge and opinions upon trust; which is an idle and superficial

If each man must "of necessity at last understand with his own understanding, and believe with his own, not another's faith,"¹³ and if this process may be expected to meet with resistance such as Locke describes, then the author with a concern for the communication of religious or ethical knowledge may find himself in a quandary. Indeed, the difficulty of giving any kind of "advice" is a philosophical and literary commonplace in the 17th and 18th centuries. Fielding acknowledges the problem (albeit wryly) in his poem, "To a Friend on the Choice of a Wife":

'Tis hard (Experience long so taught the wise)
Not to provoke the Person we advise.¹⁴

The answer to this difficulty, as we have seen, lies in resisting the temptation to apply knowledge externally, like a poultice. It must be recognized that no philosophical method (or literary adaptation or equivalent thereof) expects the substance of inquiry or exposition to be generated in the respondent *ex nihilo*. There is always some degree of knowledge upon which to operate, whether it is innate, learned by exposure to society, or

learning. We must make it our own. We are in this very like him who, having need of fire, went to a neighbour's house to fetch it, and finding a very good one there, sat down to warm himself without remembering to carry any with him home." Referring to excessive dependence upon the wisdom of philosophers, Montaigne continues: "I might have found it myself, had I been trained to make use of my own reason. I do not like this relative and mendicant understanding; for though we could become learned by other men's learning, a man can never be wise but by his own wisdom." "Of Pedantry", *Essays*, I, 129f; cf. "Of the Education of Children", *op. cit.*, I, 145-6.

¹³ Samuel Clarke, as quoted by R. N. Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England, p. 43.

¹⁴ Miscellanies, I, 42.

discovered in self-evident truths (rebus ipsis dictantibus). Since the time of Socrates, valid philosophical method has depended largely on this principle, as R. G. Collingwood explains:

In a philosophical inquiry what we are trying to do is not to discover something of which until now we have been ignorant, but to know better something which in some sense we knew already; not to know it better in the sense of coming to know more about it, but to know it in a different and better way—actually instead of potentially, or explicitly instead of implicitly...¹⁵

Socrates initiated his inquiries by soliciting definitions and explanations of matters of fundamental importance. He then proceeded to ask questions, frequently forcing his respondent into an awareness of the link between certain of his premises and their contradictory. The force of such questioning must direct the respondent to an inward turning, and a more careful examination of his assumptions and uncritically accepted principles. It was as an adaptation of this method that Shaftesbury recommended that the author take advantage of the nature of thought as question and response, and present his reader with a dialogue in one voice:

Go to the poets, and they will present you with many instances. Nothing is more common with them, than this sort of soliloquy. A person of profound parts, or perhaps of ordinary capacity, happens on some occasion to commit a fault. He is concerned for it. He comes alone upon the stage; looks about him to see if anybody be near; then takes himself to task, without sparing himself in the least. You would wonder to hear how close he pushes matters, and how thoroughly he carried on the business of self-dissection. By virtue of this soliloquy he becomes two distinct persons. He is pupil and preceptor. He teaches, and he learns.¹⁶

¹⁵ An Essay on Philosophical Method (Oxford, 1933), p. 11.

¹⁶ "Soliloquy or Advice to an Author", Characteristics... [1711], I, 107 ff. The influence of the Cambridge Platonists is evident; cf. Benjamin Whichcote, for whose set of Sermons Shaftesbury wrote a preface: "In

Shaftesbury's advice is that the author should adapt the internal, questioning dialogue—in accordance with the Delphic injunction, "Know thyself"—first to his own thought, and then to his literary method of communicating it.

Returning to the question of Lucian's adaptation of the dialogue form for satiric purposes, we need to seek his influence in areas beyond employing the dramatic use of conversation. In the question and response of his characters he presents a systematic reduction of posturing and absurd opinions. Like the philosophical dialogue, the heart of the satirical dialogue is the question. Fielding frequently acknowledged his debt to Lucian—when he proposed publication of a translation, he ventured "that no Man seems so likely to translate an Author well, as he who hath formed his Stile upon that very Author"¹⁷—and the debt extends beyond his experiments in specifically Lucianic genres. Fielding built the question into his novels.

Whenever the reader is called upon to make a judgment, to select two alternatives in an ostensibly ambiguous statement, to share (in moments

rational and in all intellectual nature, you have first that which we call the speech of a man's mind with itself; the mind doth parley with itself, debates the thing thoroughly. Then you have the overt acts, and afterwards you have the mind's sense put into language. This is the way of operation in intellectual natures, to speak with ourselves before we speak with others; and it doth not become us to make too much haste with the latter before the former be over." The Cambridge Platonists, ed. G. R. Cragg, p. 67.

The original is Plato's definition of thought as dialogue: "Thinking and discourse are the same thing, except that what we call thinking is, precisely, the inward dialogue carried on by the mind itself without spoken sound." Sophist, 263e; Collected Dialogues, p. 1011; cf. Theaetetus, 189e, pp. 895ff.

¹⁷ Covent-Garden Journal, No. 52 (June 30, 1752), II, 50.

of dramatic irony) information not accessible to characters in the novel, and to use such information to arrive at a clearer picture of a given situation without explicit instructions, or to decide which character is capable of providing reliable information—in each of these cases, the reader is being asked a kind of question. By charting the stock responses which the average (or the hypothetical) reader makes, and by demonstrating the inadequacy of many of these responses, Fielding achieves an effect which is most comic when it is most serious.

2) Questions: What is Truly Valuable?

Although (as James A. Work has pointed out) Fielding was not a theologian, he was vitally concerned with Christianity as a way of life,¹⁸ and with the practical morality associated with theology of the Anglican tradition after Hooker. This tradition stressed the redemptive power of divine law in society¹⁹ giving rise to the liberal Anglicanism of Hales, Whichcote²⁰, the Cambridge Platonists, their Latitudinarian successors, as well as Fielding's own declared favourites, Barrow, South, and Clarke. Two of the primary characteristics of this tradition—the emphasis on the place of reason in the discovery, testing, and refinement of religion, and the emphasis on morality inherent in the system of justification by works—are extremely important structural and thematic principles in Joseph Andrews.

The novel features two heroes and two thematic movements which record the state of two heroic Christian virtues in England—temperance (chastity), and charity. Fielding's selection of these two virtues is far from arbitrary. Charity is the primary social directive of Christian teaching, requiring the care and love of one's neighbour (I Corinthians 13, Matthew 22). Chastity, in its particular application, concerns the moderation of sexual passion, but in the larger context, it becomes the

¹⁸"Henry Fielding, Christian Censor", p. 145.

¹⁹J. S. Marshall (p. 74) explains this as the fundamental difference between the Roman eschatology and the Anglican commitment to social and political regeneration.

²⁰Tuckney warned Whichcote against Hooker in the exchange of letters in which he sought to correct Whichcote's liberalizing tendencies, especially the doctrine of justification by works, and the role of "ingenuity". "Eight Letters of Dr. Anthony Tuckney and Dr. Benjamin Whichcote...", in Moral and Religious Aphorisms, ed. Dr. Jeffery, rev. ed. Samuel Salter (London, 1753), p. 80.

primary personal directive, the rational moderation of all animal or passionate appetites. Underlying the novel, as it underlies Christian life, is the conflict between the inclination toward gratification of the sensual appetites at any cost, and a life which is marked by the moderation of the drive for self-gratification. This life is a life of duty, which requires an active struggle and attempt to make full use of the talents divinely provided. (Luke 12: 48, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.")

The reader is called upon to recognize this thematic strain immediately, by means of a device common to classical and humanist writing (and which will appear again in this study): definition through allusion to another literary text which the reader is likely or certain to know. Fielding's naming of the titular hero points to the Old Testament exemplar of chastity, Joseph, refusing the advances of Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39). The point is deliberately underscored when, at the moment Lady Booby's lust comes into play, Fielding ceases to call his hero "Joey", declaring pointedly, and even ponderously, that "for a good Reason we shall hereafter call [him] JOSEPH." (I:y:29) Joseph's chastity is given additional referential significance (and comic impact) by his familial ties with Richardson's prudently chaste heroine, Pamela. In naming his other hero, Parson Abraham Adams, Fielding suggests a link with both Adam, the first of our line, and Abraham, the Old Testament exemplar of patriarchal responsibility and active charity (Gen. 18: 19). The essential characteristic of each of these heroes, and the quality which they exercise throughout the various complications of the plot, consists in the virtues which their respective names suggest.

Fielding, in his Dedication to Tom Jones, explains that the presentation of characters embodying Goodness and Innocence recommends these virtuous tendencies to the reader with a powerful attraction:

For an Example is a kind of Picture, in which Virtue becomes as it were an Object of Sight, and strikes us with an Idea of that Loveliness, which Plato asserts there is in her naked Charms. (TJ, p. 7)²¹

²¹ Richard Hooker, discussing the tendency of man among all things to seek perfection, notes that because the "desire" so to do may be unconscious, external examples may prove valuable: "With Plato what thing more usuall, then to excite men unto the love of wisdom, by showing how much wise men are thereby exalted above men; how knowledge doth raise them up into heaven; how it maketh them, though not Gods, yet as gods, high, admirable and divine?" LEP, I.5.3; p. 74. Fielding also stressed the responsibility of those in the public eye to provide their social inferiors with good examples: see his "Inquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers", Henley, XIII, see esp. pp. 21ff. A similar point of view can also be found in Richard Allestree's The Whole Duty of Man (1657; London, 1719), p. 368. "A third duty of the Master is to set good Example of honesty and godliness to his Servants, without which 'tis not all the exhortations or reproofs he can use, will ever do good...", p. 368. Cf. Isaac Barrow's sermon, "The Reward of Honouring God", Works, I, pp. 36f.: "'Tis a most notorious thing, both to reason and in experience, what extreme advantage great persons have, especially by the influence of their practice, to bring God himself, as it were, into credit: how much it is in their power easily to render piety a thing in fashion and request. For in what they do, they are never alone, or are ill attended; whither they go, they carry the world along with them, as well when they go the right way, as when they run astray. The custom of living well, no less than other modes and garbs, will soon be convey'd and propagated from the court, the city and country will readily draw good manners thence, (good manners truly so called, not only superficial forms of civility, but real practices of goodness.)" &c. The resemblance of this argument to Fielding's in the essay above noted is striking (as is the proximity of the definition of good manners; cf. Fielding's notes of "Good Breeding", "An Essay on Conversation", Miscellanies, I, 124ff. Cf. also "A dialogue between a Gentleman from London...and an Honest Alderman of the Country Party", in The Jacobite's Journal and Other Related Writings, ed. W. B. Coley, The Wesleyan Edition (Middletown & Oxford, 1975), pp. 56-7: the sympathetic voice blames Discontent on a desire to imitate higher styles of living. See also Fielding's praise of the monitory function of Hogarth's satiric prints: "I almost dare affirm that those two works of his, which he calls the Rake's and the Harlot's Progress, are calculated more to serve the cause of virtue, and for the preservation of mankind, than all the folios of morality ever written; and a sober family should no more be without them, than without the Whole Duty of Man." The Champion (June 10, 1740), Henley, XV, 331.

The manner in which both Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams serve as exempla, as Christian heroes worthy of emulation, has been demonstrated ably by Battestin.²² He suggests, however, that the mode of reader response is primarily one of recognition and of sympathetic imitation. Such a reading is very well, as far as it goes, but it does not take into account the presence of a number of very real contradictions within the heroic characters, nor does it account for apparent exceptions in their conduct to the rules they represent. Battestin's argument seems to be that they serve as models of Christian life in their imitation of Christ; this view needs only to be qualified by the recognition that they are humanly imperfect models, characters whose nature is revealed through a long process of unfolding. The object of attention, then, should be their effort to imitate Christ. Rather than exempla, the heroic characters each seem to be a sort of nexus, a centre about which the complex series of the novel's significant activities revolves. Their honest endeavour to live Christian lives provides implicit commentary on the uncharitable and the unchastened. Fielding hints parodically that if the function of example is understood to operate too simply, it cannot be efficacious—see the dissolute Puppet Master's speech on the Force of Example (TJ, XII:v:640).

Fielding's pilgrims wander through a spiritual desert, a society in which, despite professions of Christianity, individual is pitted against individual in a fragmenting struggle for material prosperity and social security. Rather than portraying a just commonwealth in which prosperity benefits the deserving, Fielding's England seems to be a dystopian marketplace in which human life is both goods and currency. In his "Essay on the

²²The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, Chapter III, "The Good Man as Hero".

Knowledge of the Characters of Men", Fielding contemptuously labels this way of life "The Art of Thriving", contrasting it with its good-natured, benevolent opposite.

This Art of Thriving being the very Reverse of that Doctrine of the Stoics; by which Men were taught to consider themselves as Fellow-Citizens of the World, and to labour jointly for the common Good, without any private Distinction of their own: Whereas This, on the contrary, points out to every individual his own particular and separate Advantage, to which he is to sacrifice the Interest of all others; which he is to consider his Summum Bonum, to pursue with his utmost Diligence and Industry, and to acquire by any Means whatsoever. Now when this noble End is once established, Deceit must immediately suggest itself as the necessary Means: for as it is impossible that any Man endowed with rational Faculties, and being in a State of Freedom, should willingly agree, without some Motive of Love or Friendship, absolutely to sacrifice his own Interest to that of another; it becomes necessary to impose upon him, to persuade him, that his own Good is designed, and that he will be a Gainer by coming into these Schemes, which are, in Reality, calculated for his Destruction. And this, if I mistake not, is the very Essence of that Excellent Art, called the Art of Politics. Thus while the crafty and designing Part of Mankind, consulting only their separate Advantage, endeavour to maintain one constant Imposition on others, the whole World becomes a vast Masquerade, where the greatest Part appear disguised under false Vizors and Habits.²³

This masquerade is the object of Fielding's relentless attack. The impetus of his comedy springs from his design to unmask pretensions of virtue, whether assumed to disguise, or to rationalize fundamentally selfish motivations and actions. It is this masquerade, under the designation "Affectation", which he singles out in the Preface to Joseph Andrews as the source of the true Ridiculous. (pp. 7 ff.)²⁴

²³ Miscellanies, I, 154 f. The parody of Thomas Hobbes' description of the natural condition of mankind (Leviathan [1651], I, xiii; ed. C. B. Macpherson [Harmondsworth, 1968], pp. 183 ff.) is incisive. See also the description of "Carelessness of the Soul" implicit in self-interest, Preface, The Whole Duty of Man, sig. A3v; cf. Isaac Barrow's sermon, "The

Dialogue operates on two levels within the novel. On the first level, there is a pattern of definition offered by the novel's characters and their actions; this becomes the subject of question, commentary, and perhaps refutation, and questioning is effected by reference to the speech and example of other characters. In other words, the presence of positive, exemplary characters demonstrates the insufficiency of the actions and determinations of other characters. Secondly, the reader is asked certain questions, frequently without explicit authorial direction, primarily, "Is this what it claims to be?", and "Is this acceptable?"

The questions asked in both of these dialogues pertain to a moral code which was at least professed by the society of which Fielding's characters (and readers) were a part. None of the characters questioned on the first level are innovators. They mask their actions with at least the commonly recognized name of virtue, as spoken frequently (if not practised) by society at large. The reader is invited to join Fielding as his inquiry reveals the common distance between the knowledge of the name and the practice of the actual virtue, as well as the exemplary identity of knowledge and practice. As in the philosophical inquiry, the starting point for the satirical inquiry is partial knowledge—the characters' profession of Christianity.

Profitableness of Godliness", Works, I, 9-18, which attacks the notion that piety is an enemy to profit (and, in the process, redefines "profit").

²⁴That the Masquerade is an ongoing concern for Fielding can be seen throughout his work, as, for instance, in this passage from Tom Jones: "Some have considered the larger Part of Mankind in the Light of Actors, as personating Characters no more their own, and to which, in fact, they have no better title, than the Player hath to be in Earnest thought the King or Emperor whom he represents. Thus the Hypocrite may be said to be a Player; and indeed the Greeks called them both by one and the same Name." (VII:i:324)

The originator of the method here under discussion explained his intention in the Apology:

All I do as I go about is to try to persuade you, both young and old, to make your chief concern not your valuables but the soul and its improvement—what I say is "Virtue does not come from valuables, but from virtue valuables and all other good things come to men in their private and public affairs."²⁵

The closeness of the parallel between Fielding's novel and the Socratic dialogue is illuminated by the enlistment of the Socratic direction in Christian dialogue. Take, for instance, the dialogue between Christ and the soul of the disciple which makes up the second half of the Imitation of Christ: it opens with Christ's injunction:

Let not the mistaken Value of any Thing thou art, or doest, delude thee with false Appearances of Worth and Perfection: Let not thy Affections be seduced to follow vain and wretched Objects, or think any Advantage can deserve thy Praise or admiration, thy Love and Pains; except such only as are fix'd and Eternal.²⁶

It is certainly significant that Tom enters the Thriving society of dystopian London when he meets "the Queen of the Fairies"—Lady Bella-ston—at a Masked Ball.

²⁵ Apology, 30a-b. I have here drawn upon M. F. Burnyeat's essay, "Virtues in Action", in The Philosophy of Socrates, ed. G. Vlastos (Garden City, 1971), because the translation in the Cairns & Hamilton edition does not use the word "valuable". Burnyeat points out its significance: "No doubt some listeners, like some modern translators, would understand Socrates to be making the implausible claim that virtue pays in a straightforwardly financial sense, although to confine the thrice-repeated 'valuables'...to money is to miss the Socratic challenge to common notions of what is a valuable possession." p. 210.

²⁶ Thomas à Kempis, The Christian's Pattern; Or, A Treatise of the Imitation of Jesus Christ, tr. George Stanhope, 13th ed. (London, 1742), p. 121.

The argument of such devotional literature is toward the revaluation of priorities. It is an appeal to common sense which contrasts the "Carelessness of the Soul" implicit in the Art of Thriving with the greater value of the Soul:

MAN, we know, is made up of two parts, a BODY and a SOUL: The Body only the husk or shell of the Soul, a lump of flesh, subject to many Diseases and Pains while it lives, and at last to Death it self; and then 'tis so far from being valued, that 'tis not to be endured above ground, but laid to rot in the earth. Yet to this viler part of us we perform a great deal of Care; all the labour and toil we are at, is to maintain that. But the more precious part, the Soul, is little thought of, no care taken how it fares, but, as if it were a thing that nothing concern'd us, is left quite neglected, never consider'd by us.

This Carelessness of the Soul is the root of all the sin we commit, and therefore whosoever intends to set upon a Christian course, must in the first place amend that. To the doing whereof, there needs no deep learning, or extraordinary parts; the simplest man living (that is not a natural fool) hath understanding enough for it, if he will but act in this by the same rules of common Reason, whereby he proceeds in his worldly business.²⁷

Fielding's dialogues within his novel share the essential question of the heart of these appeals—"What is truly valuable?" In asking this question, he is calling upon the reader to exercise his rational powers of comparison. Hooker's explanation of the reasonableness of weighing what is valuable is a clear call to self-inquiry and rationally guided choice:

If therefore it should be demaunded, what reason there is why the will of man, which doth necessarily shun harme and covet whatsoever is pleasant and sweete, should be commanded to count the pleasures of sinne gall, and notwithstanding the bitter accidents wherwith virtuous actions

²⁷ "PREFACE, Of the Necessity of Caring For the Soul", The Whole Duty of Man, sig. A3v. The significance of the fact that these are the two devotional books Joseph Andrews has read (I:iii:24f) will emerge below.

are compast, yet stil to rejoyce and delight in them; surely this could never stand with reason, but that wisdom thus prescribing, groundeth her lawes upon an infallible rule of comparison, which is, that small difficulties, when exceeding great good is sure to ensue; and on the other hand momentanie benefites, when the hurt which they drawe after them is unspeakable, are not at all to be respected.²⁸

The characters in the novel make choices of several sorts, and the reader is invited to judge whether the implications and consequences of these actions are consistent with the principles by which the choices were made. Such a tactic of inquiry, as we shall see, is well suited to fictional examination of morals, or the principles of Christianity as a way of life.

²⁸LEP, I.viii.5:p. 85. The question of what is truly valuable is certainly linked with the question of what is essential in Christian practice. For a survey of the concept of things essential and things indifferent, see Bernard J. Verkamp's history of the growth of adiaphorism in the English Reformation, The Indifferent Mean (Athens, Ohio & Detroit, Michigan, 1977), especially Verkamp's account of the Erasmian influence, pp. 11ff., 36 ff., et passim.

3) A Dialogue on the Clergy

A Clergyman is a successor of Christ's disciples: a character which not only includes an idea of all the moral Virtues, such as temperance, charity, patience, &c. but he must be humble, charitable, benevolent, void of envy, void of pride, void of vanity, void of rapaciousness, gentle, candid, truly sorry for the sins and misfortunes of men, and rejoicing in their virtue and happiness. This good man is entrusted with the care of our souls, over which he is to watch as a shepherd for his sheep: to feed the rich with precept and example, and the poor with meat also. To live in daily communication with his flock, and chiefly with those who want him most (as the poor and distressed), nay, and after his blessed Master's example, to eat with publicans and sinners; but with a view of reclaiming them with his admonitions, not of fattening himself with their dainties.²⁹

Fielding places Adams at the centre of an extended dialogue which explores the question of the duties of the clergy, and the respect which is due to their order. About a year before work on Joseph Andrews began, Fielding wrote a series of articles in The Champion, intended to counteract popular tendencies of disrespect and contempt. Fielding outlines the desiderata, the conditions of calling, ministry, education, and active endeavour for the spiritual and material well-being of parishioners which constitute the duties of the clergyman. There is nothing very controversial in Fielding's "Apology for the Clergy", except, perhaps, that he expected the clergyman to take the terms of his ministry very seriously indeed.³⁰

In Parson Adams, the reader is offered a coherent and sympathetic example

²⁹The Champion (April 19, 1740), Henley, XV, 238.

³⁰The Champion (March 29, April 5, 12, 19, 1740), Henley, XV, 260-65, 270-73, 273-79, 283-87. See Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, Chap. VIII, for a full account of the background of Fielding's Apology.

of this seriousness. Fielding's fictional apology, however, extends beyond the straightforward, didactic presentation of the Champion. Throughout Joseph Andrews, a kind of negative or "shadow" presentation is developed, a series of bad examples—how not to go about taking care of souls—which provides a context in which Adams' exemplary nature takes on additional dimension and impact.

Fielding explains the gravity of his concern in the first instalment of the "Apology for the Clergy":

Now it seems to me a most apparent truth that the greater honour which we entertain for our Creator, the greater abomination we shall have for those who pervert His holy institutions, and have the impudence to wear the livery of His more immediate service, whilst they act against it.³¹

Fielding grants that, because of human frailty, it is practically impossible to preserve the body of the Church from some "rotten members", and he notes the generally effective caution with which prospective clergymen are educated and eventually admitted into holy orders. Singling out particular abuses of the prerogatives and duties is necessary, he argues, to counteract the distressingly prevalent contempt which the "rotten members" bring upon the entire order:

If, notwithstanding all this care, a few unworthy members creep in, it is certainly doing a serviceable office to detect and expose them; nay, it is what the sound and uncorrupt part should not only be pleased with, but themselves endeavour to execute, especially if they are suspicious of, or offended at contempt and ridicule, which can never fall with any weight on the order itself, or on any clergyman, who is not really a scandal to it.³²

³¹ The Champion (March 29, 1740), Henley, XV, 261.

³² Ibid., XV, 262.

Fielding emphasises in his Preface to Joseph Andrews that the vices "of a very black Kind" in the novel are not intended to be laughed off: "they are never set forth as the objects of Ridicule but Detestation." (p. 10) Though the actions of the corrupt or incomplete clergymen may initially appear ludicrous, the careful reader becomes aware that their deficiencies are too grave for laughter.

The first of the series of imperfect examples is Parson Barnabas, who is called to Joseph's deathbed—as it is believed to be—but who first pauses for tea, and then for punch (twice), before he makes his visit. By the time he comes to Joseph's bedside, the injured man's meditation on virtue, love, and resignation to the prospect of impending death has reached a level of ecstatic apostrophe and rhapsody. But Barnabas leaves him, exclaiming "that he was very light-headed, and had uttered nothing but a Rhapsody of Nonsense all the time he stayed in the Room: (I:xiii:59)

In this rhapsody, Joseph cries out that Innocence and Virtue, as well as his honest love for Fanny, can teach him "to resign myself to the Divine Will without repining." Upon the pastor's return, ironically, it is the lack of just such a resignation with which Joseph is charged. Barnabas contends that all human passion, especially love, must interfere with a proper acceptance of Divine Will. Joseph is naturally puzzled, and the questions which ensue launch a race through the catechism, which ends only with Barnabas's complete inability to explain to Joseph his duty of forgiveness. Barnabas escapes by instructing him to pray, and rushes off in characteristic haste for yet more punch—"The Ingredients for Punch were all in Readiness; but no one would squeeze the Oranges till he came." (I: xiii:60) This deflating touch, and others much like it, underscore the

impression that Barnabas has neither a special calling nor skill in his line of work—and he seems to believe he is involved in a sort of higher trade or profession. Parsoning is guaranteed a market, as is doctoring; Barnabas's professional chumminess with his colleagues and with the local surgeon is significant. The unnamed, ignorant parson also curries favour with his friends in the other "professions". (II:xi:149) Such an attitude can only foster complacency, which is evident in Barnabas's hasty and perfunctory execution of his ministerial duties.

In his portrait of Barnabas, Fielding continues his lifelong campaign against "the honest method of selling ourselves", the Art of Thriving which has created

an age when every thing is venal; and when there is scarce one among the mighty who would not be equally ashamed at being thought not to set some price on himself, as he would at being imagined to set too low a one.³³

Barnabas repeatedly betrays his conviction that his service merits a just price. When he engages in a professional discussion with his colleague Adams, he complains of the difficulties of the sermon market:

Barnabas greatly discouraged poor Adams; he said, "The Age was so wicked, that no body read Sermons: Would you think it, Mr. Adams, (said he) I once intended to print a Volume of Sermons myself, and they had the Approbation of two or three Bishops: but what do you think the Bookseller offered me?" "Twelve Guineas perhaps (cried Adams.)" "Not Twelve Pence, I assure you," answered Barnabas, "nay the Dog refused me a Concordance in Exchange.—At last, I offered to give him the printing them, for the sake of dedicating them to that very Gentleman who just now drove his own Coach into the Inn, and I assure you, he had the Impudence to refuse my Offer:

³³ The True Patriot, No. 4 (November 26, 1745), No. 7 (December 17, 1745), Henley, XIV, 20, 26. The second quotation is from a letter signed "Abraham Adams".

by which means I lost a good Living, that was afterwards given away in exchange for a Pointer, to one who—but I will not say anything against the Cloth." (I:xvi:75f)

This attempt to sell a flattering dedication for the price of a good living is contrasted with Adams' refusal to consider his office as a commodity. He declares, "I would not do an ill thing to be made a bishop." Indeed, it appears that he would not commit a misdemeanour to keep his position as a curate, of which both Sir Thomas and Lady Booby threaten to deprive him.

Finally, when the Methodist reformer Whitefield's name comes up in the conversation about the sermon market, Barnabas cries out in horror, significantly, against the one doctrine worth salvaging from Methodist diatribe, the attack on the luxury of the higher clergy. Barnabas's real concern is made obvious by his fear of possible discomfort, and his disregard for spiritual dangers in Antinomian doctrine; his outrage goes so far as to call Whitefield's attack more grave than the threat of the Deists and Freethinkers:

He would reduce us to the Example of the Primitive Ages forsooth! and would insinuate to the People, that a Clergyman ought to be always preaching and praying. He pretends to understand the Scripture literally, and would make Mankind believe, that the Poverty and low Estate, which was recommended to the Church in its Infancy, and was only temporary Doctrine adapted to her under Persecution, was to be preserved in her flourishing and established State. (I:xvii:81)

Barnabas hates the thought of any reformation of ecclesiastical materialism before he has a chance to benefit from it. On the other hand, Adams acknowledges the validity of such a charge:

I am as great an Enemy to the Luxury and Splendour of the Clergy as he can be. I do not, more than he, by the flourishing Estate of the Church, understand the Palaces,

Equipages, Dress, Furniture, rich Dainties, and vast Fortunes of her Ministers. Surely those things, which savour so strongly of this World, become not the Servants of one who professed his Kingdom was not of it..." (I:xvii:82)

The attack on church luxury is by no means new with the Methodists. Hooker undertook to answer a charge by the Puritans which was pretty much identical to Whitefield's concern. Suspicious of the evidence in scripture for the Puritans' insistence upon "Apostolic Poverty", Hooker argued that the revival of Apostolic practice in an overly literal-minded way would be as dangerous as it would be meaningless. The essential nature of the Apostolic mission was the ministry of the Gospel, which today would benefit by the reasonable support of the successors in the same mission:

The chiefest thing which lay reformers yawne for is, that the Cleargie may through conformitie in state and condition be Apostolicall, poore as the Apostles of Christ were poore....Were it for the glorie of God and the good of his Church in deede that the Cleargie should be left even as bare as the Apostles when they had neither staffe nor scrip, that God which should lay upon them the condition of his Apostles, would I hope, endue them with the selfesame affection which was in that holie Apostle, whose words concerning his owne right vertuous contentment of hart, As well how to want as to abound [Phil. 4:12], are a most fit episcopall emprise.³⁴

The clergyman should be content with his lot; material prosperity is acceptable in the Church and its servants only in so far as it assists in the real ministry. The true flourishing of the Church can be seen in the well-being of the cure of souls.

On the other hand, a deficiency of material support can have a deleterious effect, albeit primarily practical, upon the clergyman's

³⁴LEP, Preface, 4.3; pp. 22f. Cf. The Champion (April 5, 1740), Henley, XV, 273.

access in his ministry. The work cannot be done when he must scramble
 to make ends meet.³⁵ That this should be necessary at all reflects
 badly upon the Church's arrangements for supporting its ministers, and
 upon the local patrons and parishioners as well, whose final responsibility
 for their own minister was too often neglected. Such support was con-
 sidered part of the Christian's duty to God himself:

He who hath given all our time, requires some part of it to be
 paid back again as rent or tribute of the whole.³⁶

The traditional system of tithing was enforced by the warning that with-
 holding proper contributions constituted high theft and sacrilege. The
Whole Duty of Man explains, under the heading of duties attendant upon
 the proper honour of God:

There was among the Jews, and hath always been in all Christian
 Nations, something allotted by the law of the Nation, for the
 support and maintenance of those that attend the service of God.
 And it is just and necessary it should be so, that those who by
 undertaking that calling are taken off from the ways of gaining
 a livelihood in the world, should be provided for by them whose
 souls they watch over....It is most unreasonable for men to
 grudge the bestowing a few carnal things, the outward necessities
 of this temporal life, on them from whom they receive spiritual
 things, even instruction and assistance towards the obtaining of
 an eternal life.³⁷

dam is forced to argue, unsuccessfully, with Sir Thomas Booby, who wishes
 to diminish the level of tithing—yet the regulations concerning the duty

⁵ Thus, Hooker comments, "True it is, that the kingdome of God must be
 the first thing in our purposes and desires. But in as much as righteous
 life presupposeth life, in as much as to live virtuously it is impossible
 except we live, therefore the first impediment, which naturally we
 endeavor to remove, is penurie and want of things without which we cannot
 live." LEP, I.10,2; p. 97.

⁵ The Whole Duty of Man, II, 17; p.41.

⁷ Ibid., II, 15-16; pp.41f. In this statement, Allestree is not quite
 historically accurate; tithing was originally voluntary duty, and was
 not enforced by law until the tenth century; A. Tindal Hart, The Eighteenth
Century Country Parson (Shrewsbury, 1955), p. 95.

f tithing must be flexible. In a brief portrait of a country clergyman living in a state of humble happiness, Fielding's journalistic persona, Captain Hercules Vinegar, expresses a warm approval for the moderation here in evidence:

My friend excused himself from not treating me with a roasted pig (a dish I am particularly fond of) by telling us that as times were hard, he had relinquished those tithes to his parishioners.³⁸

For the prosperous, powerful farmer-Parson Trulliber, tithes are an absolute prerogative. He wields great secular power in his parish (his parishioners fear him), and he threatens Adams with the "Tithing-Man", whose duties include the discipline of recalcitrant parishioners and vagabonds. His identification of tithing with the exercise of power peaks for itself. (II: xiv: 167)³⁹

It is particularly ironic that the only man of the cloth, besides Adams, who shows any disapproval for the value mankind sets on riches is a Papist priest, travelling incognito. That a Papist should advocate such an attitude when the clergy of the Church of England both practically and vocally deny it, is an open rebuke to the luxurious clergy.

Trulliber's concern is for his herd of swine,⁴⁰ and his calling

³⁸ The Champion (February 26, 1739-40), Henley, XV, 221. Henley has "titles", which I have here restored to the reading in the first collected edition (London, 1741).

³⁹ But see Hart, "Most country parsons in the eighteenth century were farmers, even the better-to-do....", p.100. Yet, Fielding notes that the practice was expressly forbidden by law; The Champion (April 12, 1740), Henley, XV, 278.

⁴⁰ Douglas Brooks argues, perhaps over-ingeniously, for an allegorical reading of the Parson Trulliber passage. Brooks documents the Homeric allusions (to Eumaeus, Gryllus, Circe), and the iconographic juxtaposition of the glutton and his emblem, the pig. "Abraham Adams and Parson Trulliber: The Meaning of Joseph Andrews, Book II, Chapter 14." Modern Language Review (1968): 794-801.

a clergyman is something assumed, like a garment, or like the assumption of an honorific title, such as "justice of the peace". Fielding is explicit in his condemnation of the commerciality of the Trullibers and Barnabases:

Without being righteous over-much, we may, I think, conclude, that if the clergy are not to abandon all they have to their ministry, neither are they to get immense estates by it; and I would recommend it to the consideration of those who do, whether they do not make a trade of divinity? Whether they are not those buyers and sellers who should be drove out of the temple? Or lastly, whether they do not in the language of Peter to Simon, sell the gift of God for money?⁴¹

Because of the gravity of the clergyman's responsibility to his flock, failure to exercise his duties, or to provide a good example, is truly attestable. Fielding states unequivocally, "A bad clergyman is the worst of men."⁴² To understand the badness of some of the clergymen in Joseph Andrews, the reader must compare their sense of responsibility with that demonstrated by Parson Adams, who is unusually tender with his flock:

They followed this good Man's Advice; as indeed his Word was little less a Law in his Parish: for as he had shewn his Parishioners by a uniform Behaviour for thirty-five Years duration, that he had their Good entirely at heart; so they consulted him on every Occasion, and very seldom acted contrary to his Opinion. (I:xi:48f.)

He treats Fanny and Joseph as if they were his own children, "saying,

¹The Champion (April 15, 1740), Henley, XV, 273.

²The Champion (April 19, 1740), Henley, XV, 285. Fielding's warning concerning the retribution awaiting bad clergymen at the day of judgment is even stronger: "They will then be taught that the duty of the shepherd is not fleecing only. And will find themselves obliged to account not only for the lost souls, but the lost tithes too, which they took of common right, or, in other words, without doing any thing for them." Ibid., XV, 287.

he looked on all those whom God had entrusted to his Cure, in that relation." (II: xvi: 172) Under pressure from the presence in her parlor of Lady Booby, Squire Booby, and an unusually "distinguished" company, Mrs. Adams scolds her husband, calling his concern for Joseph and Fanny, and implicitly his lack of respect for the standards of what is valuable held by most of the world, "a pack of Nonsense." (IV: xi: 321) It is typical of Fielding's method that such a judgment is made by a character whose nature, as understood by the reader, undercuts the statement. A great deal is to be learned about Adams' ideas about his duty in his conversations and arguments with his uncomprehending wife.

Adams' patriarchal responsibility is set in contrast not only with the lack of that quality in his fellow clergymen, but also with a similar failing in secular authority. This is particularly evident in the way in which human law is turned to serve the privileged, and especially in the case of Lady Booby, who manipulates law to serve her selfish purposes, and completely ignores her own obligations to her country tenants. The contrast is made explicit in the passage describing the simultaneous return of Adams and Lady Booby to the Parish (II:i:277f.)

One of the distractions from parochial duties was the temptation to enter the field of controversy. It was a period of acrimonious debate, and battles of tracts and sermons such as the trinitarian controversy, led to impatience and contempt for the participants.⁴³ Adams, perhaps, is interested in entering the fray. The reader never knows

⁴³ R. S. Stromberg, p.49. Archbishop Herring, in 1777, complained, "I abhor every tendency to the trinitarian controversy....The manner in which it is always managed is the disgrace and ruin of Christianity." As quoted by G. R. Cragg, Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge, 1964), p.33.

exactly what is in his sermons, since he keeps forgetting to bring them with him. After the initial amusement subsides, it becomes apparent that Adams is distinguished from his colleagues, and others who discuss religion and morality, by his embodying the ideals he discusses. Others argue their ideas, but fail to put them into practice. Fielding satirizes this detachment in his most acerbic manner when Peter Pounce approves of Parson Adams' definition of Charity as "a generous Disposition to relieve the Distressed."

"There is something in that Definition, answered Peter, which I like well enough; it is, as you say, a Disposition—and does not so much consist in the Act as the Disposition to do it..."
(III:xiii.274)

Peter Pounce is Fielding's apologist for the Art of Thriving, as we shall see; his statement is characteristic of the age. Language without content—as Trulliber's angry reply to Adams, "Dost preach to me,....dost pretend to instruct me in my Duty?" (II:xiv:167)—is the general rule. Barnabas is a semiskilled debater, but no divine. Duty, including that of the clergyman, is a directive unto goodness, not a piece of abstract knowledge.

In this sense, then, although Adams leaves his sermons behind, his actions speak better (if not louder) than words. His only publication is the report of his goodness which his flock will testify to each other—unless, at the risk of straining an already overtaxed metaphor, one includes the final publication of the banns of marriage for his two favourite parishioners, Fanny and Joseph.

The most important question of duty in the clergyman's life, however, is the question of charity. Because this matter touches all walks of life, it will be taken up in a more general discussion, in which Parson Adams will again figure largely.

The clergymen we have seen have all offered answers to the question, "What is really valuable?" Fielding has so designed this dialogue that the reader must recognize in the conversation (and alternation of example) between Adams and his colleagues, that only justice, freedom from want and oppression, and spiritual well being in his parishioners are valid answers for the clergyman.

4) The Imitation of Christ: Religion in Church or in Life

We worship God best when we resemble him most.⁴⁴

Quite early in the novel (I:iii:24), Joseph tells Parson Adams of the good books he has read, which include the Bible, The Whole Duty of Man, and Thomas à Kempis (the Imitation of Christ). Adams heartily approves of Joseph's reading, and congratulates him on the extent to which he appears to have benefited by it. Because his conception of human nature recognized the potential for vice and evil as well as for good, Fielding constantly expressed his concern for moral education of the young, and his selection of reading material for Joseph—which must be recognized by the attentive reader as a formative influence upon Joseph's character—is significant. The importance of the Bible is self-evident; the other two devotional tracts, however, are a more curious selection. Of course, their popularity was immense. In his study of "best-sellers" between 1660 and 1711, C. John Sommerville lists both in the highest ranks of popularity, the Whole Duty of Man enjoying as many as forty-five editions, which would allow a copy for every tenth family in Great Britain.⁴⁵ In one of his many recommendations of Hogarth as a powerful warning against vice, as we have already noted, Fielding acknowledges the importance of the wide distribution of such material:

⁴⁴ Benjamin Whichcote, Moral and Religious Aphorisms... (No. 248), p.425.

⁴⁵ Popular Religion in Restoration England, University of Florida monographs: Social Sciences; no.59 (Gainesville, 1977), p.29.

I almost dare affirm that those two works of his, which he calls the *Rake's* and the *Harlot's Progress*, are calculate more to serve the cause of virtue, and for the preservation of mankind, than all the folios of morality ever written; and a sober family should no more be without them, than without the *Whole Duty of Man*.⁴⁶

Though it falls a little short of the phenomenal popularity of the *Whole Duty of Man*, the *Imitation of Christ*, known in its English translations—or versions—as *The Christian's Pattern* or *The Following of Christ*, was continually reprinted throughout the period of Sommersville's study. Surprisingly, it suffered no diminution of popularity, despite the manifold changes in the tastes of the reading public.⁴⁷

Despite the apparent ubiquity of these two books, it is not a satisfactory explanation to suggest Fielding named them as Joseph's texts simply because of their popularity. In comparing the substantive content of the texts themselves, after noting their concurrence on the subject of duty, the modern reader may be puzzled by the frequency with which they contradict each other in matters of several other doctrines. The thematic focus of the *Imitation of Christ* reveals its origin (in the fifteenth century) in the Roman Catholic devotional tradition: the vanity of the world, human limitations, and the need for resignation to God's will. The *Whole Duty of Man*, on the other hand, an early document of liberal Anglicanism, suggests that man's nature is not absolutely depraved, but capable of attaining (with God's grace) a condition of happiness,

⁴⁶*The Champion* (June 10, 1740), Henley, XV, 331.

⁴⁷Sommerville, p. 33.

which results only from certain kinds of conduct.⁴⁸ The nature of this pattern of conduct is defined by that aspect of universal, divine law which is embodied in, and which defines, man, and is known as Duty. Both books also emphasize the importance of good works, "the making our calling and election sure",⁴⁹ or what could be called "conditional election". But, despite their differences, both books culminate in a similar definition of human nature as a condition of possibilities, which can be directed toward perfection only in the exercise of duty. Both books also make a point of contrasting the rewards of a dutiful (and, therefore, truly human) life with the pursuit of interest in immediate sensual gratification.

Accompanying the gift of life itself are gifts of varying degrees of possibility, which it is man's duty to make the most of. Parson Adams' singularly awkward question—whether, as a young man of Industry and Application, Joseph regretted the inability to increase his knowledge decreed by his parentage—draws an answer which encapsulates a great

⁴⁸ John Wesley included a sizeable extract from the Whole Duty of Man in his Christian Library because of its historical importance in combating the "disease" of Antinomianism (the doctrine, originating with Luther, of justification by faith). His approving comments are worth noting: "Consider the time when it was wrote. Never was there more talk of faith in Christ, of justification by faith, and of the fruits of the Spirit. And scarce ever was there less practice of plain, moral duties, of justice, mercy and truth. At such a time it was particularly needful to inculcate what was so generally neglected." As quoted by A.W. Harrison, Arminianism (London, 1937), p.218. For further discussion of this controversy as it affected Fielding, see section 5 of this chapter.

⁴⁹ The Whole Duty of Man, IX.7; p.192. Cf. The Christian's Pattern, I.i.3; p.2: "Certain it is, that Distinctions and Notions, tho' never so subtle, do not make a Man Just and Holy: But a careful and conscientious Life recommends us to the Favour and Love of God."

part of the message of popular tracts on duty:

To which he answered, "he hoped he had profited somewhat better from the Books he had read, than to lament his Condition in this World. That for his part, he was perfectly content with the State to which he was called, that he should endeavour to improve his Talent, which was all required of him, but not repine at his own Lot, nor envy those of his Betters." (I:iii:24f)

Battestin notes here that "The parable of the talents was frequently used by divines to inculcate the lesson that one must submit to the divine will, accepting without envy one's station in society and labouring to act well in it." (p.25) He refers to a similar message in sermons by Fielding's "favourite divines", Barrow and Clarke, yet does not remark on the source in the two texts which Joseph and Adams discuss. But the essential point remains, that duty involves both resignation to the limiting decrees of Providence, and the active use and development of the favourable dispositions of Providence, whether in matters of estate or ability. In this sense, then, Adams' question is not so far off the mark as it appears to be for Joseph, and perhaps for the reader. Joseph's attributes of industry, honesty, and mental acuity are as much a part of his providential gift as are the conditions of his birth and social status. They entail a responsibility of development, a matter more serious than his place on (or ascent of) the social ladder. While patience and contentment are certainly necessary virtues, they are only a part of the larger picture.

When religious or moral teachings attain the status of aphorism or homily, Fielding holds, they become more dangerous than useful. The injunction concerning contentment in one's social lot usurps the entire field of meaning in the interpretation of the parable of the talents; prerogative is supported while obligation (both private or personal and

public) is neglected. Fielding's method of exposing such a selective, literal-minded reading of the parable is to put it in the speeches of obviously ridiculous characters. Most of his cast of comic characters are concerned, if not obsessed, with their social standing. Pamela's protestations of humility and resignation to God's will only serve to emphasize her pride of place, with which it is much easier to be content now it has been so vastly improved. (IV:vii:302) Mrs. Slipslop is fantastically jealous of her prerogatives and perquisites. Several characters exclaim indignantly when reminded of aspects of their duty or responsibility, as when Mrs. Tow-wouse begins to show symptoms of benevolence (when she discovers evidence that the object may be able to pay for her attention): "Hold your simple Tongue, and don't instruct me in my Business." (I:xv:66), or when Parson Trulliber indignantly fumes at Adams, "Dost pretend to instruct me in my Duty?" (II:xiv:167) Lady Booby's extension of this attitude results in an assumption of absolute prerogative, supported by her Lawyer's assurance, "The Laws of this Land are not so vulgar, to permit a mean Fellow to contend with one of your Ladyship's Fortune." (IV:iii:285) What is expected of a person of status is predictable, decorous behaviour, which Fielding describes ironically when Lady Booby is unexpectedly polite to Pamela, her new sister-in-law: "For she was perfectly polite, nor had any Vice inconsistent with Good-breeding." (IV:v:288)

Fielding here indulges in one of his favourite tricks, the repeated, emphatic use of a particular word until it becomes a sort of ironic signal or crux, demonstrating to the careful reader that the

accepted social standard has strayed radically from the value originally represented by the term; perhaps the best known example is "greatness" in Jonathan Wild. Eleanor Hutchens calls this technique "connotative irony"—it is Fielding's specialty:

It is verbal irony of an oblique kind: not the well-recognized device of using a word to signify its direct opposite, but the subtler one of making the literal meaning fit the context while the connotative significance clashes with it.⁵⁰

The literal meaning fits the literal context, but the reader is given a wider context within which he must arrive—by his own inferential activity—at conclusions which clash with the literal meaning. In this case, the terms "good breeding" or "well bred" originally indicated honour, nobility, and an elevated standard of ethical behaviour, to be expected of those born into the upper ranks of a society whose degrees are acceptable in the eyes of God. Common usage of the term, as represented in Fielding's novels, has been reduced to mere consideration of appearance, birth, and social reputation. Fielding restores the original meaning of good breeding in his "Essay on Conversation":

The Word I mean is Good Breeding; a Word, I apprehend, not at first confined to Externals, much less to any particular Dress or Attitude of the Body: nor were the Qualifications expressed by it to be furnished by a Milliner, a Taylor, or a Perriwig-maker; no, nor even a Dancing-Master himself. According to the Idea I myself conceive from this Word, I should not have scrupled to call Socrates a well-bred Man, though I believe he was very little instructed by any of the Persons I have above enumerated. In short, by Good Breeding (notwithstanding the corrupt use of the Word in a very different Sense) I mean the Art of pleasing,

⁵⁰ Eleanor Hutchens, Irony in Tom Jones, (University, Alabama, 1965), p. 9. Hutchens' term "connotational irony" will figure largely later in this enquiry.

or contributing as much as possible to the Ease and Happiness of those with whom you converse.⁵¹

That which dignifies man is the active exercise of virtue, not the trappings of external appearance, decorum, or social acceptability.

Good Breeding then...is expressed two different Ways, viz. in our Actions and our Words, and our Conduct in both may be reduced to that concise, comprehensive Rule in Scripture; Do unto all Men as you would they should do unto you. Indeed, concise as this Rule is, and plain as it appears, what are all Treatises on Ethics, but Comments upon it?⁵²

It is not absolutely necessary for the reader of Joseph Andrews to draw upon this particular redefinition, for the use of connotational irony makes the contrast between the corrupt and original definitions obvious to any reader capable of seeing through obvious affectation and hypocrisy. And Fielding, as we shall see, is by no means above giving his reader a push in the right direction. The description of Lady Booby's manners, mentioned briefly above, is a case in point. Fielding "praises" her for her unexpected politeness, adding that none of her vices are inconsistent with Good Breeding. The two definitions of the term seem to coexist for a very brief moment, in a highly explosive mixture, until the reader recognizes the implication that Lady Booby's sort of Good Breeding can accommodate every sort of vice except those which might

⁵¹ Miscellanies, I, 123. The Whole Duty of Man (p.15) links the desire of pleasing with the desire of enjoying as the "fruits of love": "... 'tis known by all, that he that loves any person is very desirous to prove himself to him; and according to the degree of love, so is the desire more or less; where we love earnestly, we are very earnest and careful to please." Allestree and Fielding both insist that the role of social law is based on love.

⁵² Miscellanies, I, 124. Fielding provides an example of this ideal in Sophia Western, who "had constantly that Desire of pleasing which may be called the happiest of all Desires in this, that it scarce ever fails of attaining its Ends, when not disgraced by Affectation." TJ, XIII:v:705.

trouble the surface decorum. To reject the validity of such a definition is for the sagacious reader the work of but an instant.

A great proportion of Fielding's satirical force is directed against characters who appropriate the vocabulary of virtue to rationalize or explain their own self-interested actions. The exposure of such hypocrisy and affectation results in an explicit denial of the validity of certain kinds of behaviour, and an implicit affirmation of solidier, less sophisticated values. As his explanation in the "Essay on Conversation" reveals, Fielding was convinced that Good Breeding—and, indeed, all virtue—is really a very simple matter. As man's life touches other men, it must be regulated by the Golden Rule. By contrasting the simplicity and the real viability of such a life with the labyrinthine and self-defeating complexities of the selfish life, Fielding appeals to the reader's common sense to restore the original significance to terms of value. It is important to recognize that such an appeal, during the process of which the opposing view is demolished, may well be creative of, rather than referential to, the faculty of common sense.

The duty of attending to the happiness and comfort of others cannot be separated from the other duties God requires of men. Fielding's satirical attack on empty and over-formal religion, and on the doctrine that faith alone is sufficient, without practical effect on the believer's life, and that the believer is justified without good works—all move towards a restatement of the centrality of the duty of charity. Fielding is suspicious of the way in which the outward forms of ecclesiastical practice can too easily replace the real essence of religion. Such a suspicion, perhaps, has its historical source in the mystery-dispelling

rationalism of the Erasmian school of thought.⁵³ Closer to Fielding's own time were the somewhat inflammatory teachings of Bishop Hoadly, who denied that the Church had any intrinsic authority, either temporal or judicial. Hoadly insisted that religion is primarily a matter of the relationship between the individual believer and Christ himself, who alone has true authority:

As the Church of Christ is the Kingdom of Christ, He himself is King: and in this it is implied, that He is himself the sole Law-giver to his Subjects, and himself the sole Judge of their Behaviour, in the Affairs of Conscience and Eternal Salvation. And in this Sense therefore, His Kingdom is not of this World; that He hath, in those Points, left behind Him, no visible, humane Authority; no Viceregents, who can be said properly to supply his Place; no Interpreters upon whom his subjects are absolutely to depend; no Judges over the Consciences or Religion of his People. For if this were so, that any such absolute Viceregent Authority, either for the making new Laws, or interpreting Old Ones, or judging his Subjects, in Religious Matters, were lodged in any Men upon Earth; the Consequence would be, that what still retains the Name of the Church of Christ, would not be the Kingdom of Christ, but the Kingdom of those Men, vested with such Authority.⁵⁴

⁵³ Verkamp describes the proliferation of ceremonies, together with Erasmus' resistance, in his chapter entitled "The Intolerable Burden": "For the Christian still on the way toward perfection, this meant that ceremonial matters were not to be considered 'ends in themselves.' To 'stop at' ceremonies, to conceive of them as the 'beginning and end of sanctity' or the 'sum of religion,' to afford them priority over charity, to cling to them as if one's Christian identity depended upon them, or to put one's trust in them as if they held the key to one's salvation, would be 'sublime stupidity,' Erasmus said. Being adiaphora, ceremonies are at best 'what philosophers call imperfect goals,' which, as such, may be 'used' to further piety and help one to reach the final goal of spiritual union with Christ, but are never to be performed merely for their own sake, or apart from the spirit of love." The Indifferent Mean, p. 37.

⁵⁴ Benjamin Hoadly, "A Sermon preach'd before the King at the Royal Chapel at St James's on Sunday March 31, 1717", in Religious Thought in the Eighteenth Century, ed. J.C. Martin & J.S. Boys Smith (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 250-51. This sermon, together with his Preservative against the Principles and Practices of the Non-Jurors (1716) drew charges of heresy, and Hoadly was roundly attacked by William Law, among others. For a brief account of the Bangorian controversy, see John Redwood,

For Hoadly, religion is not a matter of ecclesiastical intervention between man and God. He therefore defines the true Church or Kingdom of Christ in terms which resemble the saying of Jesus, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

It is the Number of Men, whether Small or Great, whether Dispersed or united, who truly and sincerely are Subjects to Jesus Christ alone, as their Law-giver and Judge, in matters relating to the Favour of God, and their Eternal Salvation.⁵⁵

Hoadly's factional ideas caused great consternation amongst the members of the Church—understandably, since his premise tended to undercut the Church's authority.

Although Fielding did not agree entirely with Hoadly's argument—his recognition of the value of the institutions of the Church may be seen in his *Apology for the Clergy*, and in his portrayal of Adams—he was decidedly in sympathy with Hoadly's emphasis on the primacy of personal religious and moral responsibility. Parson Adams himself recommends Hoadly's book, A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament, calling it

"a Book written (If I may venture on the Expression) with the Pen of an Angel, and calculated to restore the true Use of Christianity, and of that Sacred Institution: for what could

Reason, Ridicule, and Revelation (London, 1976), pp. 179f. For an account of Hoadly's influence on Fielding, see Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 97; and for a note on Hoadly's "favourite sermon" about the parable of the Good Samaritan, and its relation to the Good Samaritan passage in Joseph Andrews, see Ronald Paulson, "Models and Paradigms: Joseph Andrews, Hogarth's Good Samaritan, and Fenelon's Télémaque", Modern Language Notes 91 (1976); 1186-1207.

⁵⁵ ibid., p. 253. Fielding's selective allegiance may be seen in the fact that both The Whole Duty of Man and The Imitation of Christ take a conventional stand on sacramental observance.

tend more to the noble Purposes of Religion, than frequent cheerful Meetings among the Members of a Society, in which they should in the Presence of one another, and in the Service of the supreme Being, make Promises of being good, friendly and benevolent to each other?" (I:xvii:83)

Hoadly's description of the original purpose of the Sacrament of the Eucharist from primitive practice is clearly understood and accepted by Parson Adams. His definition is obviously Adams's source, and it seems likely that Fielding had his own copy before him:

It is an Employment very proper, and very agreeable to this Institution, to revive in our Minds, upon this occasion, the Force of all those Arguments upon which We believe in Christ; to own ourselves His Disciples; to confess, and heartily condemn, all our Deviations from His Laws, and Precepts; to acknowledge before God our Obligations to live as His Disciples, who expect to be happy upon his terms only; to express our sincere Thankfulness for his Doctrine, Example, Life, and Death; to profess our Dependence upon Him, as our only Head; and lastly, to revive and enlarge our affectionate Union and Sympathy with all other Members of the same Body throughout the World.⁵⁶

What is remarkable in this passage is the complete absence of the mysteries associated with the Last Supper, and especially the idea that the participation in such a ritual can impart special infusions of grace. Hoadly's scale of values is clear—the cardinal importance of a Christian Life completely overshadows any reliance on traditional ritual practice within the confines of the Church. In the Preface, Hoadly is adamant:

But on the other hand, to magnify the Meaning of figurative Expressions into Certain Benefits never spoken of plainly in other places; so as to annex to this One Duty such Blessings and Privileges as belong only to the whole System of Christian Practice, is an Error (supposing it one) of quite another Nature. It seems to me to pervert the Design of the Gospel; as it leads Men to make Themselves easy in the Performance of This, as distinct

⁵⁶ A Plain Account... (London, 1735), pp. 104-5.

from Those Duties, upon which our Acquittance at the Day of Judgment is constantly and uniformly put. It is apt to make Them expect what GOD has never promised: and, not resting here, it tends to make Them negligent of those Great Matters of the Gospel, without which He has declared None to be entitled to the Promises and Privileges of it.⁵⁷

Fielding's purpose in referring to the Plain Account should be clear; his lifelong concern with Christian ethics and practical morality naturally led him to mistrust anything which interfered with or pretended to provide a substitute for the matter of living a Christian life. In Joseph Andrews, his suspicion of what Hoadly calls making oneself "easy" is manifested in a series of satirical moments in which various characters reveal how cursory religious practice, when conducted entirely by rote, can be. The text, it might be suggested, is from the "complete divinity" of the Sermon on the Mount:

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (Matthew 6:5)

The worst culprits, of course, are the meretricious characters who affect a pious vocabulary, but exhibit no inclination to put the principles they discuss into practice. Fielding is fond of exaggerating distances such as this, and he carries the separation of "This, as distinct from Those Duties" to the point of absurdity, particularly in his presentation of several characters who seem to be shocked at the impropriety of religious matters discussed outside the confines of the Church—after all, there is a place and time for everything, as a publican tells Parson Adams.

⁵⁷ Preface, A Plain Account..., p. vi.

Upon which the Host taking up the Cup, with a Smile drank a Health to Hereafter: adding, "he was for something present." "Why," says Adams very gravely, "Do you not believe another World?" To which the Host answered, "yes, he was no Atheist." "And you believe you have an immortal Soul?" cries Adams: He answered, "God forbid he should not." "And Heaven and Hell?" said the Parson. The Host then bid him "not to be prophane: for those were Things not to be mentioned nor thought of but in Church." Adams asked him, "why he went to Church, if what he learned there had no Influence on his Conduct in Life?" "I go to Church," answered the Host, "to say my Prayers and behave godly." (II:iii:100)

Ludicrous compartmentalization of moral and religious issues appears frequently. Mrs. Adams scolds her husband for seeking to apply Scriptural texts to real life:

The Wife answered, "it was Blasphemy to talk Scripture out of Church; that such things were very proper to be said in the Pulpit: but that it was prophane to talk them in common Discourse." (IV:xi:323)

The very attitude toward participation in figural ritual which Hoadly censures can be seen in the way church attendance is considered a kind of public evidence of sanctity. Fielding describes a certain gossip as "a Lady whose discreet and starch Carriage, together with a constant Attendance at Church three times a day, had utterly defeated many malicious Attacks on her own Reputation." (II:vi:125f) Passages such as this are barbed in many directions—the "Lady" referred to is a gossip, a destroyer of reputations, an activity which Fielding considers one of the lowest of human vices.⁵⁸ Her method of protecting herself, ironically, is not to place herself above reproach with a virtuous life. Instead, she affects an appearance which resists attack; she has

⁵⁸ See, for instance, The Champion (March 4, 1739-40), Henley, XV, 227 ff.; cf. "An Essay on Knowledge of the Characters of Men", Miscellanies, I, 170, and "An Essay on Conversation", Miscellanies, I, 147.

experienced many such attacks, motivated (as are her own, Fielding intimates) by malice. Constant attendance at church only gives her license to continue her own private vices. This short passage has a unique sort of humour. The ironies unwind with an effect of the gratifying clarification of complexities—the Lady's monstrously complicated system of survival is revealed to be a ludicrous effort to avoid a relatively simple solution. With all its brevity, the description of the Lady meets all the conditions of Fielding's "true Ridiculous", as well as those of Plato's philosophical laughter.

The determination that Church is like a medicine for external use only receives its most thorough explosion in Shamela, and particularly in Fielding's savage but hilarious mockery of the Methodist controversy in the teachings of Parson Williams, recorded for posterity by the charming heroine herself:

Well, on Sunday Parson Williams came, according to his promise, and an excellent sermon he preached; his text was, Be not righteous over-much; and, indeed, he handled it in a very fine way: he showed us that the Bible doth not require too much goodness of us, and that people very often call things goodness that are not so. That to go to church, and to pray, and to sing psalms, and to honour the clergy, and to repent, is true religion; and 'tis not doing good to one another, for that is one of the greatest sins we can commit, when we don't do it for the sake of religion. That those people who talk of virtue and morality, are the wickedest of all persons. That 'tis not what we do, but what we believe, that must save us...

Williams assures Shamela that she is free to do whatever she wants, as long as she maintains this magically justifying faith. If she is

⁵⁹An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews, ed. Martin C. Battestin, from the 2nd ed., 1741 (Boston, 1961), p. 319. Cf. p. 310: "Let me do what I will, I say my prayers as often as another, and I read in good books, as often as I have leisure; and Parson Williams says, that will make amends."

conscious of doing wrong, she can simply exercise her faculty of penitence, and all will be well. Her method of penitence, particularly after trysts with Williams, is to read good books: "So he left me, and I promised to be penitent, and go on with my reading in good books."⁶⁰ The extent to which any part of the teaching of these books penetrated may be judged by her use of The Whole Duty of Man, while preparing to seduce Mr. Booby:

I immediately run up into my room, and stript, and washed, and drest myself as well as I could, and put on my prettiest round-ear'd cap, and pulled down my stays, to show as much as I could of my bosom (for Parson Williams says, that is the most beautiful part of a woman), and then I practised over all my airs before the glass, and then I sat down and read a chapter in The Whole Duty of Man.⁶¹

Parson Tickletext, infatuated with the vision of Pamela "with all the pride of ornament cast off", recommends Richardson's novel as "alone sufficient to teach us as much morality as we want"—that is, the morality we may desire, not the morality we need:

Dost thou not teach us to pray, to sing psalms, and to honour the clergy? Are not these the whole duty of man? Forgive me, O author of Pamela, mentioning the name of a book so unequal to thine...⁶²

Parson Tickletext's specialty, as his name declares, is the extraction of comfortable doctrine from any text. In claiming that Pamela improves upon the teachings of The Whole Duty of Man, and in his articulation of what he considers are its major points, Tickletext mutilates the spirit of the latter book exactly as Shamela's edition is mutilated—

⁶⁰Shamela, p. 321.

⁶¹Shamela, p. 322.

⁶²Shamela, p. 305.

"with only the duty to one's neighbour torn out."⁶³ At the end of Shamela's letters, Tickletext expresses his annoyance at being the victim of an imposture, but there is no indication in his closing letter that the experience has changed his views. The significant change, of course, must be sought in the reader, who has witnessed the devastation of the specious definition of duty as proffered by Tickletext, Williams, and Shamela herself. The real significance and validity of The Whole Duty of Man is not reaffirmed by Fielding until Joseph Andrews mentions it, and embodies some of its central principles, in the novel which follows.

⁶³ Shamela, p. 327. Battestin notes (p. 327) that Shamela's library of tracts, plays, and pornography reveals her to be "without taste, morals, or sound religion."

- 5) "All must be false that thwart this One great End": The Dialogue on Charity

For Modes of Faith, let graceless Zealots fight;
 His can't be wrong whose life is in the right:
 In Faith and Hope the world will disagree
 But all Mankind's concern is Charity:
 All must be false that thwart this One great End,
 And all of God, that bless Mankind, or mend.⁶⁴

If you expect to be born with, you must first learn to bear
 with your Brethren, and exercise the good Nature you expect,
 as oft as Occasion offers. For Men are best taught by Examples,
 and the Measure we mete gives us a Right to receive the same
 again.⁶⁵

We may consider, that there is no sort of duties which God hath
 more expressly commanded, nor more earnestly inculcated, than
 these of bounty and mercy toward our brethren; whence evidently
 the great moment of them and their high value in God's esteem
 may be inferred....So near to the heart of piety doth the holy
 scripture lay the practice of these duties: and no wonder; for
 it often expressly declares charity to be the fulfilling of
 God's law, as the best expression of all our duty toward God,
 of faith in him, love and reverence of him, and as either for-
 mally containing, or naturally producing all our duty toward our
 neighbour....Let us consider, that nothing is more like to him,
 than beneficence and mercy; and that consequently nothing can
 be more grateful to him: that nothing is more disagreeable and
 contrary to the essential disposition of God, than illiberality
 and unmercifulness; and therefore that nothing can be more dis-
 tasteful to him.⁶⁶

The dialogue on charity is the most distinctive and central part
 of Fielding's pattern of indirect ethical communication in Joseph Andrews.

⁶⁴ Alexander Pope, Essay on Man, III, 305-10; The Poems of Alexander Pope,
 ed. John Butt et al (London & New Haven, 1939-69) III.i, 124f.

⁶⁵ George Stanhope, The Christian's Pattern..., p. 86.

⁶⁶ Isaac Barrow, "The Duty and Reward of Bounty to the Poor", Sermon
 XXXI, Works, I, 306, 308, 317.

Both positive and negative examples are provided, the subject is discussed at length among the novel's characters, and the reader is presented with a series of events which he must interpret correctly, in spite of a plethora of incorrect evaluations on the part of many characters, and the frequent use of an ostensibly ambivalent attitude on the part of Fielding's narrator.

The primary component of Fielding's technique of indirection is the setting. The society Fielding depicts in his novel is a sort of anti-Utopia or dystopia, a world upside down, whose operative values are diametrically opposed to the Christian values which its members profess. The individuals who actually live Christian lives, who understand and live by the true nature of virtue, seem to be anomalous, peculiar, and even ludicrous by society's standards. But Fielding is convinced that the only laughable attitude is the affectation of virtue by the dystopian society, and the affectation of charity (completely removed from the practice of that cardinal virtue) springs from vanity. In a mock-encomium on Vanity early in the novel, Fielding links the failure to exercise charity with the vanity of a life which places the self above all other considerations:

It is, to pamper up thee, thou Harlot, that we attempt to withdraw from others what we do not want, or to with-hold from them what they do. (I:xv:69)

In this respect, it will be recognized that Joseph Andrews is as much an anti-Leviathan as an anti-Pamela. In insisting on a basis for human morality outside self-preservation and interest, Fielding does not err in the direction of complete, blind optimism. Man's nature is capable of great good and great evil, of beneficence and malignity,

as Wilson observes:

"...there is a Malignity in the Nature of Man, which when not weeded out, or at least covered by a good Education and Politeness, delights in making another uneasy or dissatisfied with himself."⁶⁷ (III:iii:217)

The war of all on all is a degenerate state, however, not to be accepted as the basic premise of social law or morality. The Hobbesian state becomes the target of Fielding's sustained satire, deriving largely from the simple revelation of the petty vanity of all purely self-interested motivation.⁶⁸ The novel includes a parade of examples of

⁶⁷Fielding's attitude is clearly evident in his legal writings: "How many cruelties, indeed, do we daily hear of, to which it seems not easy to assign any other motive than barbarity itself? In serious and sorrowful truth, doth not history, as well as our own experience, afford us too great reasons to suspect, that there is in some minds a sensation directly opposite to that of benevolence, and which delights and feeds itself with acts of cruelty and inhumanity?" "A Clear State of the Case of Elizabeth Canning", Henley, XIII, 230. See also Fielding's reflections of the prevalence of cruelty and slander, and the rarity of practical benevolence, in his poem, "Of Good Nature":

"Dwells there a base Malignity in Men,
That 'scapes the Tiger's Cave, or Lion's Den?
Does our Fear dread, or does our Envy hate
To see another happy, good, or great?
Or does the Gift of Fame, like Money, seem?
Think we, we lose, where'er we give Esteem?"

ll. 95-100, Miscellanies, I, 34f. Cf. Amelia [1751], III:1, Henley, VI, 109. Cf. Montaigne: "Our being is cemented with sickly qualities: ...for even in the midst of compassion we feel within I know not what tart-sweet titillation of ill-natured pleasure in seeing others suffer." "Of Profit and Honesty", Essays, II, 252.

⁶⁸This places Fielding squarely in a widely-respected tradition of writing in opposition to Hobbes, which included most of the liberal Anglican writers favoured by Fielding (Clarke, South and Barrow not excepted)—see Samuel I. Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan (Cambridge, 1969). See also Fielding's parody of Hobbes above, II.2, and his use of argumentum ad hominum against Hobbes, below, VI.2.

how not to behave, each character providing a faulty definition of charity which suits the Art of Thriving, but falls short of the real demands of Christian duty, and is therefore revealed as something less than human.

The central episode, and the first of a series of references to Scriptural parables, is the Good Samaritan passage. Joseph is robbed, beaten, and left naked by the side of the highway. When a coachload of travellers approaches, Fielding offers his readers a gallery of indifferent Samaritans: the practical coachman who won't stop for fear of losing time, and who won't give Joseph one of his extra coats for fear of getting it bloody; a "proper" Lady whose morality is offended by the thought of riding with a naked man; a gentleman whose only concern is that the robbers might still be about; a lawyer who advises that Joseph ought to be brought into the coach, not because of his need, but because the passengers could be held liable in a court of law; a wit who makes a joke of Joseph's misery... and a poor postillion, a minor employee of the coach-line, who insists that they stop, and who gives Joseph his coat, his only outer garment, and shocks the pious travellers with an oath. His charity is great, because his own need is great.

The gross contrast between the passengers' adherence to the insufficient language of affected piety and the poor postillion's practical charity becomes a pattern of ironic doubleness which moves through the entire course of the novel. The passengers exemplify a cheerful, selfish complacency which is licensed by that adage which has somehow

gained near-Scriptural authority: "Charity begins at home." (I:xii:53)⁶⁹

Prudence dictates the degree to which charity is allowed active scope in the world of Thrivers. The great virtue is reduced to the act of giving, and giving is controlled by poor laws. Free-lance or spontaneous giving is regarded as pure foolishness, and even culpable, as the great Vice of Prodigality. Peter Pounce, the reader is informed with heavy irony, had not "all the Features of Prodigality; for he never gave a Shilling." (IV:ix:312)

Mrs. Tow-wouse, fearing that by sheltering the invalid Joseph she might incur financial loss, flies into a rage at her husband's quiet, ineffectual, benevolent intentions:

"I shall send him packing as soon as I am up, I assure you."
 "My Dear," said he, "common Charity won't suffer you to do that."
 "Common Charity, a F—t!" says she, "Common Charity teaches us to provide for ourselves, and our Families; and I and mine won't be ruined by your Charity, I assure you." (I:xiii:59)

It is difficult to imagine what Charity teaches this, if not the common version, or substitute, which begins (and usually ends) at home.⁷⁰ The ordinary requirements of Charity do not demand that personal or familial

⁶⁹"Charity begins at home. It is a nasty phrase normally used by nasty people....The users of this phrase really mean that charity ends at home — ends, in fact, in their own home where, judging by the appearance of the people who love the phrase, they dispel very little charity even in their own homes. I would not be surprised if a large percentage of the wife-beaters and baby-batterers are people who constantly indulge in preaching the totally immoral gospel that charity begins at home." Peter Walker, in The Encyclopedia of Delusions, ed. Ronald Duncan and Miranda Weston Smith (New York, 1979), p. 220.

⁷⁰Whichcote comments on the false glosses of covetousness which corrupt society invents: "There is nothing in all the Scripture that is put in worse Company than this....Yet Covetousness shelters itself under honest Names. It is sometimes thought to be Diligence, Prudence, and Forecast; Good Husbandry, Cautiousness, Wariness. So often do Men ruin themselves by entertaining this Viper under gilded Names." Select Sermons, I, 128.

necessities should be neglected in favour of the needy, but this reservation too often extends itself into an absolute dispensation. Mrs.

Tow-wouse exercises a common Charity consistent with her character, a combination of "extreme Turbulency of Temper, Avarice, and an Insensibility of human Misery, with a Degree of Hypocrisy." (III:i:190)

When she is informed that Joseph appears to be a gentleman, she suddenly changes her tune, assuming the language of piety:

This somewhat abated the severity of Mrs. Tow-wouse's Countenance. She said, "God forbid she should not discharge the duty of a Christian, since the poor Gentleman was brought to her House. She had a natural antipathy to Vagabonds: but could pity the Misfortunes of a Christian as soon as another." (I:xv:66)

The limitations of her concept of duty are made comically obvious by her exclusion of vagabonds (the truly needy) from the rank of Christians (or Gentlemen). When the duty of charity is reduced to a matter of occasional giving, the further reduction, to expedient giving, is inevitable.

Christ's teachings concerning material wealth and the great importance of beneficence underly this passage, and others much like it. These uncomfortable teachings provide an ironic subtext, the implicit reference to which creates a community of shared values between the author and his reader, and a standard by which Mrs. Tow-wouse and her common Charity are to be judged (and found wanting) by the reader.

Other characters offer their own peculiar definitions of charity. Wilson tells of a town beau who offers to take his challenge to another "out of pure Charity." (III:iii:205) This charity is merely a solicitous disposition to assist in the maintenance of a meretricious reputation, to maintain "honour", yet another notably abused word. On another

occasion, Mrs. Slip-slop professes herself amazed that any woman could be unaffected by the sight of the handsome Joseph, crying out that "she who hath no Compulsion for thee is a Myhummetman, and I will maintain it." (II:v:125) Her malapropism for compassion accentuates, instead of obscuring, her meaning of carnal interest.⁷¹ Parson Trulliber resembles Mrs. Tow-wouse in his amazement and indignation that he should be expected to exercise charity. He tells Adams, "I know what Charity is, better than to give to Vagabonds." His wife adds, with a curious note of reservation, "Besides, if we were inclined, the Poors Rate obliges us to give so much Charity." (II:xiv:167; emphasis added) What can Mrs. Trulliber mean? Even if they were inclined to grant Adams' request...? The Poor Law requires a donation, and discourages, replaces, or forbids acts of specific charity? They are compelled to give so much that they cannot afford more? Giving through "the Poors Rate" renders any other charity superfluous, or even impious? Whatever Mrs. Trulliber had in mind, it was not a very clear or acceptable kind of charity.

Isaac Barrow explains that the duty of bounty to the poor cannot be restricted to a matter of more or less formal giving of personal goods and wealth:

For our goods, our wealth, and our estate, are indeed none of them simply, or properly our own, so that we have an absolute property in them, or an entire disposal of them: No, we are utterly incapable of such a right unto them, or power over them: God necessarily is the true and absolute proprietary of them. They are called the gifts of God; but we must not understand that God, by giving them to us, hath parted with his own right

⁷¹ For a note on a similarly ironic use of the word "Compassion" see below, V.3.

to them: They are deposited with us in trust, not alienated from him; they are committed to us as stewards, not transferred upon us as master: They are so ours, that we have no authority to use them according to our will and fancy, but are obliged to manage them according to God's direction and order....God then having enjoined, that after we have satisfied our necessities, and supplied our reasonable occasions, we should employ the rest to the relief of our poor neighbours; that if we have two coats (one more than we need) we should impart one to him that hath none [Luke 3.11] ; ...God by the poor man's voice (or by his need and misery) demanding his own from us, we are very unjust if we presume to withhold it; doubly unjust we are, both toward God, and toward our neighbour: We are unfaithful stewards, misapplying the goods of our master, and crossing his order: we are wrongful usurpers, detaining from our neighbour that which God hath allotted him: We are in the court of conscience no better than robbers, (under vizards of legal right and possession) spoiling our poor brother of his goods; his, I say, by the very same title as any thing can be ours, by the free donation of God...⁷²

Barrow is not anticipating Proudhon's dictum, "Property is theft"; he is arguing for a proper use of property. If the source of the providential gift of material well-being is forgotten, and the responsibility incumbent upon the just steward of such gifts is ignored, charity cannot prevail, and injustice appears. The greater the gifts, the greater the duty of charity, and failure to act accordingly is a serious moral offense:

If we are ambitious of having a property in somewhat or affect to call any thing our own, 'tis only by nobly giving what we can accomplish our desire; that will certainly appropriate our goods to our use and benefit: But from basely keeping, or vainly embezzeling them, they become not our possession and enjoyment, but our theft and our bane.⁷³

⁷² "The Duty and Reward of Bounty to the Poor", Works, I, 312-13. The concept of obligation is commonplace; see, for instance, John Pomfret's "The Choice" [1700], The Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse, ed. David Nichol Smith (Oxford, 1926), p. 2:

And all, that Objects of true Pitty were
Shou'd be Relieved with what my Wants cou'd spare,
For what our Maker has too largely giv'n,
Shou'd be returned, in Gratitude, to Heav'n.

⁷³ Barrow, loc. cit.

Thus it can be seen that such characters as Mrs. Tow-wouse do not "stand on their rights" of property, but forfeit them in their failure to share with the needy. The Whole Duty of Man explains that reluctance to exercise the duty of charity may spring from a misguided fear of injustice to the giver (in being imposed upon) which might deprive the giver of his due:

Men look upon their Acts of Mercy as things purely voluntary, that they have no obligation to, and the effect of it is this, that they are apt to think very highly of themselves, when they have performed any, though never so mean, but never blame themselves, though they omit all: which is a very dangerous, but withal a very natural fruit of the former persuasion.⁷⁴

The error, of course, originates in the consideration of charity only as it affects the active party; such an obligation, which reasons not the need, is easily discharged by small, formalized acts of giving.

In the light of such a philosophy of wealth and charity, the events of the "Good Samaritan" episode in Joseph Andrews take on added significance. The poor man wears God's livery:

God therefore lendeth the poor man his own name, and alloweth him to crave our succour for his sake. (When the poor man asketh us in God's name, or for God's sake, he doth not usurp or forge, he hath good authority, and a true ground for doing so:) God gives him credit from himself unto us for what he wants, and bids us charge what he receiveth on his own account....But if we stop our ears, or shut our hands from the poor, God interprets it as a harsh repulse, and an heinous affront put upon himself.: We doing it to one who bears his name, and wears his livery, (for the poor man's rags are badges of his relation unto God,) he thereby judges, that we have little good will, little respect, little compassion toward himself...⁷⁵

⁷⁴ P. 360.

⁷⁵ Barrow, loc. cit. Cf. Matthew 25.33-46 (Especially 45: "Then he shall answer them, saying Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.") Cf. The Whole

The refusal of the passengers to answer Joseph's call for help appears to be caution, but is actually injustice, impiety, and theft. When Joseph is brought into the carriage, it is because of the lawyer's fear of prosecution—here Fielding touches on a recurring theme, the insufficiency of merely temporal law. Curiously enough, the parable of the Good Samaritan was delivered in response to a lawyer's question; the greatest law is the law of piety, and it is inextricably bound together with the law of charity:

Master, which is the great commandment of the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. {Matthew 5.38-42}

The parable emerges as a response to the lawyer's question, "And who is my neighbour?" — The same question is put to the coach's passengers, and the reader, armed with the clarity of the biblical reference and the postillion's example, is enabled to see the insufficiency of their responses. Other references make the case much stronger. The coachman has two coats, and his refusal to give one to Joseph is a visible example of the opposite of Luke's injunction, which Barrow cites as the authority for the poor man's claim upon the more fortunate. The coachman's refusal also serves to underscore the high form of charity practised—despite his oaths and his later conviction

Duty of Man, pp. 361ff.

Also relevant here is the parable of the unprofitable servant who hid (laid up) his talent instead of increasing it. (Matthew 25.14-30) When Trulliber speaks of laying up his treasure, and when Squire Western is described as knowing "the just Value and Use of Money, viz. to lay it up" (TJ, VI:2:278), the implicit, corrective Scriptural reference deepens the irony.

and transportation for robbery— by the postillion. Indeed, this later robbery supplies an additional ironic note, for the postillion's crime in the eyes of the secular law (robbing a hen-roost), must appear to the reader as relatively innocuous. The pattern of inexorably transparent doubleness is completed in the lawyer's substitution of legalistic concern for the danger of being legally responsible for the death of the victim of the crime, in the place of the responsibility inculcated by Barrow, speaking for a long line of Christian teachers. There is a resemblance between the two attitudes, which affords the reader a taste of grim humour as it is perceived.

In contrast to all these forms of home-charity, the example of Parson Adams is remarkably positive. He offers Joseph free use of all the little supply of money he has brought with him on his journey (I: xv:67); he expects to find charity everywhere, is grieved at its absence, and is joyful when he finds it (II:xv:67; cf. Trulliber, before he shows his true colours, II:xiv:166). Adams rejoices in the active charity of Wilson and his children (III:iv:227; III:vi:233). The contrast persists, even in his own home. His eldest daughter echoes the language of the dystopian society, calling Fanny a "Vagabond Slut", and insisting that she would not give her "a Halfpenny, 'tho I had a Million of Money; no, tho' she was starving." She is answered by Adams' son, little Dick, whose spontaneous charity pleases his father immensely. (IV:xi:323)

The reader is presented with a series of encounters between true charity and its affected, self-interested substitute. Fielding's profound commitment to the doctrine of justification by works can be

seen in the way in which the spokesmen for justification by faith alone are shown to be selfish, complacent, immoral, and ridiculous figures. The most flamboyant of these encounters is the interview between Parson Adams and Parson Trulliber.

The pig-keeping cleric's first action, after learning that his visitor is a clergyman (a position whose status lies somewhat below that of the expected pig dealer) is to lock up his parlour and instruct his wife to draw a little of the worst ale in the kitchen. He reprimands Adams for his appearance and his lack of a horse, as not seemly or suiting the Dignity of the Cloth. Just as Adams starts to turn the conversation toward a request for assistance, Trulliber spares no pains to let him know he is "warm", or rich. Adams offers Trulliber the opportunity to exercise his bounty, saying, "I am convinced you will joyfully embrace such an Opportunity of laying up a Treasure in a better Place than any this World affords." (II:xiv:165) Trulliber's surprise is depicted by Fielding with a splendid parallel series of comic reversals of expectation. The ambiguity of the word "warmth" (with its double suggestion of wealth and warmth of heart) explodes, as Trulliber rages against Adams' demand on his charity. He obviously takes the scriptural phrase, laying up Treasure, quite literally, and excuses his wealth with the complacent "virtue" of contentment and faith:

"Sir, I believe I know where to lay my little Treasure up as well as another; I thank G-- if I am not so warm as some, I am content; that is a Blessing greater than Riches; and he to whom that is given need ask no more. To be content with a little is greater than to possess the World, which a Man may possess without being so. Lay up my Treasure! what matters where a Man's Treasure is, whose Heart is in the Scriptures? There is the Treasure of a Christian." (II:xiv:166)

Parson Adams, in his innocence failing to recognize the hypocritical substance of this effusion—and it is a failure which the reader, who ought to recognize the biblical references peppering Trulliber's speech should not share—commends his colleague. But Adams defines Treasure in the heavenly sense, while Trulliber refers to worldly wealth. Continuing to request aid, Adams is obviously not blessed with the same degree of content as is Trulliber, and his importuning reveals him to be—yes, once more, a Vagabond. Trulliber's resistance increases, showing him to be what Barrow calls a "griple wretch":

But the griple wretch, who will bestow nothing on his poor brother for God's sake, is evidently an infidel, having none at all, or very heathenish conceits of God....All God's promises of recompence, and threatnings of punishment, he takes for idle fictions: Heaven and hell are but Utopia's in his conceit; the joys of one, offered to the charitable person, are but pleasant fancies; the torments of the other, denounced to the uncharitable, but fearful dreams. All other things are but names; money and lands are the only real things unto him: all the happiness he can conceive or wish is contained in bags and barns; these are the sole points of his faith, and objects of his confidence.⁷⁶

The failure to recognize the primacy of charity and good works is a failure to acknowledge man's duties to God—in short, it smacks of atheism. A scheme of values which does not include charity, and which insists that benevolence is unnecessary or absurd, must be shown for what it is:

Again it is a wretched Ill-natured Maxim, which these Atheists have, That there is Nulla Naturalis Charitas, No Natural Charity, but that Omnis Benevolentia oritur ex Imbecillitate & Metu, All from Imbecillity and Fear; that is, from being either obnoxious to anothers Power, or standing in need of his Help. So that all that is called Love and Friendship amongst Men, is according to these really nothing, but either a crouching under Anothers

⁷⁶Op. cit., p. 316.

Power, whom they cannot resist; or else Mercatura quaedam Utilitatem, a certain kind of Merchandizing for Utilities. ⁷⁷

Fielding places himself in the ethical tradition which resisted the moral relativism and utilitarianism implicit in materialism and atheism. Trulliber's radical separation of faith and practice, as Fielding asks his reader to recognize, is nothing short of infidelity. Adams is shocked by Trulliber's tag-laden speech, and responds to his dogged insistence that he knows what Charity is (better than to give to Vagabonds), by telling him, "I am sorry...that you do know what Charity is, since you practice it no better." Adams suspects that such a gap between knowledge and practice stems from the doctrine of justification by faith, and he counsels Trulliber: "I must tell you, if you trust to your Knowledge for your Justification, you will find yourself deceived, tho' you should add faith to it without good Works." Trulliber chooses to interpret this as an attack upon Faith, and his sanctimonious rage increases. But Adams insists his repeated references to Scriptures are sacrilegious, in the light of his refusal to put Christian principles

⁷⁷ Ralph Cudworth, The True Intellectual System, p. 662. Cudworth cites Cicero's condemnation of atheism and materialism in De natura deorum, I.213. Cf. Callicles' definition of "natural Justice", Gorgias, 490b, and Thrasymachus ("injustice pays and justice doesn't pay"), Republic I, 348c-d, and Socrates' attack on merely relative definitions of justice. Cudworth's condemnation of the atheistic denial of absolute values, particularly benevolence, is powerful: "But that there is no higher Spring of Life in Rational Animals, than Contracted Self-Love, and that all Good-Will and Benevolence, arises only from Indigency and Imbecillity, and That no Being whatsoever is concerned in the welfare of any other thing, but only what it self stands in Need of, and Lastly therefore, That what is Irresistably Powerful and needs Nothing; would have no manner of Benevolence, nor concern it self in the Good and Welfare of any thing whatsoever; This is but another Idol of the Atheists Den; and only argues their Bad Nature, Low-Sunck Minds, and Gross Immorality." Op. cit., pp. 885-6.

into action, and tells him, "Name not the Scriptures." Hypocrisy is the Art of avoiding "Censure by concealing our Vices under an Appearance of their opposite Virtues," Fielding warns in the Preface (p. 8).

Trulliber's hypocritical indignation is exposed finally by Adams, as the false Abraham (worshipped for his power, II:xiv:164) accuses the true Abraham of the very crime he personifies:

"How, not name the Scriptures! Do you disbelieve the Scriptures?" cries Trulliber. "No, but you do," answered Adams, "if I may reason from your Practice: for their commands are so explicate, and their Rewards and Punishments so immense, that it is impossible a Man should stedfastly believe without obeying. Now, there is no Command more express, no Duty more frequently enjoined than Charity. Whoever therefore is void of Charity, I make no scruple of pronouncing that he is no Christian."
(II:xiv:167)

The distance between Trulliber and understanding of Adams's words is manifested in the words of his threatening language; like Mrs. Towhouse, Trulliber sees the appellation "Christian" as an indication of social status, and he blusters:

"I would not advise thee, (says Trulliber) to say that I am no Christian. I won't take it of you: for I believe I am as good a Man as thyself;" (and indeed, tho' he was now rather too corpulent for athletic Exercises, he had in his Youth been one of the best Boxers and Cudgelplayers in the County.) His Wife seeing him clench his Fist, interposed, and begged him not to fight, but shew himself a true Christian, and take the Law of him. (II:xiv:167f.)

Trulliber's persistent wrong-headedness is again demonstrated by his vulgar use of the phrase, "as good a Man", ironically indicating that he measures human worth by violence and power. The "good" to which he refers is not a moral standard but a measure of pugilistic prowess. His threats differ from the aggressive manner of Adams in the fact that he defends his unjust life and unchristian dogma, while Adams

does just the opposite. Mrs. Trulliber complements her husband's heathenish attitude by advocating that it would be more Christian to punish Adams' insolence with the Law instead of with fisticuffs.

Trulliber's reputation in his parish is grounded in awe and fear. It is his wealth and power, however, which instill respect in his parishioners, and they fear not God but Trulliber's anger. Yet it is not his inattention to matters religious, nor his preoccupation with his piggery, nor even his failure to share his wealth with the needy which constitutes Trulliber's greatest sin against the law of charity. Rather, it is his failure to provide an effective example of charity to his parishioners, for he is in a position to influence them greatly for their own and for the public good. This matter figures largely in Thomas à Kempis's exhortations on "the Honour of the Priesthood":

Do not imagine any Part of thy Privilege to consist in an Exemption from the Duties incumbent upon common Christians. Alas! thy Burden is not less, but greater; thy Temptations more and fiercer, thy Danger more imminent, for being thus distinguished. For it will be expected, that the Sanctity of thy Manners, the Severity of thy Virtue, the Conquest of thy Passions, the Perfection of thy Holiness, the Fervency and Zeal of thy Devotion, should distinguish thee as visibly, as eminently, as thy Garb and the Profession do. That thou shouldst be cloathed and adorned with that Righteousness, that Innocence, that Gravity, of which thy Robe is a significant Emblem; and as thou art become a Leader, thou shouldst likewise be a Pattern to the Flock.⁷⁸

⁷⁸The Christian's Pattern, pp. 301-2. Fielding often expressed his conviction of the importance of clerical example, as in a letter signed Abraham Adams, in The True Patriot, No. 7 (December 17, 1745): "Indeed I have always thought, that moderation in the shepherd was the best, if not only, way to bring home all the straggling sheep to his flock." Henley, XIV, 23. Cf. the character of the humble country clergyman, The Champion (February 26, 1739-40), Henley, XV, 221-2, and the "Apology for the Clergy", as noted above.

The few unworthy members of the clergy—Barnabas, Trulliber, and so forth—no longer conform to the pattern here set out. They are concerned with externals, not perceiving that unless they signify an inward condition they are meaningless; Trulliber, for instance, censures Adams for a disregard for the Dignity of the Cloth in his dress and equipage. As we have seen, Fielding believes, and attempts to convince his readers, that the true dignity of the order lies not in the vestments, nor in the respect paid to the order, but in the virtues which alone merit such respect. The distance in affectation and hypocrisy between the clerical duty professed and practised is ridiculous, comic in Trulliber's swinishness and Barnabas' puzzled vagueness. Nevertheless, the implications are far from trivial. Trulliber is to be condemned, not for his disgusting manner, nor for his particular refusal to assist the needy Adams, but for his neglect of the spiritual well-being of his parishioners and his failure to provide the example necessary to encourage charity among them. Their refusal to help Adams is clearly linked to his influence:

Adams was now greatly perplexed: but as he knew that he could easily have borrowed such a Sum in his own Parish, and as he knew he would have lent it himself to any Mortal in Distress; so he took fresh Courage, and sallied out all round the Parish, but to no Purpose; he returned as pennyless as he went, groaning and lamenting, that it was possible in a Country professing Christianity, for a Wretch to starve in the midst of his Fellow-Creatures who abounded. (II:xv:169)

(It is worth noting that Adams is willing to extend his bounty to "any Mortal"; he is concerned for the needy, not for those "Christians" whose status and economic sufficiency prevent them from falling into the despised category of "Vagabonds".) That Trulliber's parishioners

exercise only the "charity" which begins at home should not be surprising to the reader who is conscious of the hypocritical example he furnishes them. The hostess of the Inn entertains Joseph and Fanny with an account of Trulliber's Goodness:

And indeed he had not only a very good Character, as to other Qualities, in the Neighbourhood, but was reputed as a Man of great Charity: for tho' he never gave a Farthing, he had always that Word in his Mouth. (II:xv:169)

The dialogue on charity continues, at its most explicit in the moral reflections of Joseph, who follows Barrow in placing a strong incentive to charity in the desire of honour:

"I have often wondered, Sir," said Joseph, "to observe so few Instance of Charity among Mankind; for tho' the Goodness of Man's Heart did not incline him to relieve the Distresses of his Fellow-Creatures, methinks the Desire of Honour should move him to it."⁷⁹ (III:vi:233)

Joseph's concept is made manifest in the succession of characters who are pretenders to honour, without any real claim to virtue—in their exposure, and in the recognition of the quiet honour of benevolence, the reader is led to concur with this scheme of values.

Fielding's inquiry into the question of property, wealth, and bounty takes on the formal characteristics of dialogue in the encounter between Adams and the appropriately named Peter Pounce; the chapter is entitled "A curious Dialogue which passed between Mr. Abraham Adams and Mr. Peter Pounce..." Peter Pounce is Lady Booby's Steward, an occupation

⁷⁹Battestin refers to Barrow, op. cit., as an instance of the notion that charity is the source of true honour. This is also found throughout Fielding's work, in the argument that true Good Breeding is a matter of the ethical values of Good Nature, not merely a matter of wealth or aristocratic birth. See "An Essay on Conversation", Miscellanies, I, 125.

which has distinct resonances with the gospel teachings concerning the responsibility of wealth. Pounce, however, has missed no occasion to make a profit for himself from his employment, and, like Trulliber, he professes to be content with this fact, as he smugly assures Adams:

"I thank God I have a little," replied the other, "with which I am content and envy no man: I have a little, Mr. Adams, with which I do as much good as I can." Adams answered, that Riches without Charity were nothing worth; for that they were only a Blessing to him who made them a Blessing to others. "You and I," said Peter, "have different Notions of Charity. I own, as it is generally used, I do not like the Word, nor do I think it becomes one of us Gentlemen; it is a mean Parson-like Quality; tho' I would not infer many Parsons have it neither." "Sir," said Adams, "my Definition of Charity is a generous Disposition to relieve the Distressed." "There is something in that Definition," answered Peter, "which I like well enough; it is, as you say, a Disposition — and does not so much consist in the Act as in the Disposition to do it; but alas, Mr. Adams, who are meant by the Distressed? Believe me, the Distresses of Mankind are mostly imaginary, and it would be rather Folly than Goodness to relieve them." (III:xiii:274; emphasis added)

Pounce's singling out of the word "Disposition" acts as a kind of signal that the meaning has been split, or shifted into a dystopian mode—to feel such an inclination, he suggests, is quite sufficient. He goes on in a fashion which makes Scrooge's "Are there no Prisons? Are there no Workhouses?" sound like sheer philanthropy. He is a caricature, but his arguments are the logical extensions of the wedge driven between the naming of the virtue of charity and its practice which we have seen in the "home-charity" of Fielding's dystopia.

Because his critical eye is firmly fixed upon practical morality, Fielding suggests that there is little practical difference between cynical hypocrites such as Peter Pounce and adherents of "the detestable Doctrine of Faith against good Works," whose beliefs may well have as little bearing upon their day-to-day lives, and whose doctrines seem to

afford cover for a certain noxious breed of canting hypocrites, Adams takes up this cause with great zeal:

Can anything be more derogatory to the Honour of God, than for Men to imagine that the All-wise Being will hereafter say to the Good and Virtuous, Notwithstanding the Purity of thy Life, notwithstanding that constant Rule of Virtue and Goodness in which you walked upon Earth, still as thou did'st not believe every thing in the true Orthodox manner, thy want of Faith shall condemn thee? Or on the other side, can any Doctrine have a more pernicious Influence on Society than a Persuasion, that it will be a good Plea for the Villain at the last day; Lord, it is true I never obeyed one of thy Commandments, yet punish me not, for I believe them all? (I:xvii:82)⁸⁰

Adams is not attacking any clearly-formulated doctrine here, although the belief that faith supplanted works did sometimes recur.⁸¹ Methodist divines insisted that man's first concern is the operation of grace to effect a salvation which is far greater, far more wonderful, than any abundance

⁸⁰ Cf. John Smith, Select Discourses [1660]: "Far be it from me to disparage in the least the merits of Christ's blood, his becoming obedient unto death, whereby we are justified. But I doubt, sometimes, some of our notions about justification may puff us up in far higher conceits of ourselves than God hath of us; and that we profanely make the unspotted righteousness of Christ serve only as a covering to wrap our filthy vices in; and when we have done, think ourselves in as good credit with God as we are with ourselves, and that we may become heaven's darlings as much as we are our own." As quoted by Harrison, Arminianism, p. 170.

⁸¹ A.W. Harrison insists Luther's stress on faith versus works lent itself to literal interpretation, and Wesley himself was later concerned to combat this error: "Luther himself, in his exaggerated and picturesque style, had sometimes made it appear that human sin was a necessary background for the divine grace. Pecca fortiter that grace may abound. An exaggerated Calvinism made some of the elect believe that ethical standards were non-existent so far as they were concerned. Wesley found signs of this tendency even in his own society at Manchester as early as 1756, and by 1770 he discovered that Antinomianism had 'spread like wildfire.'" Arminianism, p. 203.

of good works could possibly merit. Wesley anticipated the objection Adams raises, and declared with no hesitation that faith implies good works:

The first usual objection to this is...that to preach salvation, or justification, by faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works. To which a short answer might be given: "It would be so, if we spake as some do, of a faith which was separate from these; but we speak of a faith which is not so, but necessarily productive of all good works, and all holiness".... It is no new objection, but as old as St Paul's time: for even then it was asked, "Do we not make void the law through faith?" We answer, first, all who preach not faith do manifestly make void the law; either directly and grossly, by limitations and comments that eat out all the spirit of the text; or indirectly, by not pointing out the only means whereby it is possible to perform it. Whereas, secondly, "we establish the law", both by showing its full extent and spiritual meaning; and by calling all to that living way, whereby "the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in them."⁸²

Both parties, it must be recognized, called for the presence of both faith and good works, and differed only in the priority of these elements.

⁸² John Wesley, "Salvation by Faith: A Gospel for Sinners" [1783], in Religious Thought in the Eighteenth Century, ed. J.M. Creed & J.S.B. Smith, pp. 159f. Fielding's awareness of the split in the evangelical movement (c. 1741) between strict Calvinists and those preaching a doctrine of Universal Redemption, can be seen in the fact that Adams focuses his attack on Whitefield, without mentioning John or Charles Wesley.

For the Anglican mediation, see Hooker, who also argues the necessary coexistence of faith and works: "This last and highest estate of perfection whereof we speake is received of men in the nature of a reward. (Math. 5:12. Rejoyce and be glad for great is your Reward in heaven...) Rewards doe alwaies presuppose such duties performed as are rewardable. Our naturall meanes therefore unto blesennes are our workes." Hooker acknowledges also the "supernatural way" of compassionate redemption despite man's sin, a way which depends upon faith; still, he cautions, faith requires action consistent with the object of faith: "Not that God doth require nothing unto happines at the handes of man save onely a naked beliefe (for hope and charitie we may not exclude) but that without beliefe all other things are as nothing, and it the ground of those other divine virtues." LEP, I, ii. 5-6; p. 115.

Wesley placed faith before works, not in place of works; others, however, resisted the growth of mere "ethicism", which they felt threatened to eclipse faith:

The evangelical preachers, in fact, roundly declared that good works, moral behaviour, humanity or benevolence, and even the formal practice of religion were of themselves of little or no avail. Actually they did harm by lulling the soul into a false sense of security and self-sufficiency.⁸³

The common enemy is a complacent, mechanical interpretation. The two extremes are equally dangerous—the sense of independent merit, which encourages a mercenary adding up of good works toward a reward, or on the other hand a sense of personal justification which is regarded as a guaranteed and uncancellable ticket to heaven, without reference to meritorious action. The middle way between these extremes is well demonstrated by the Whole Duty of Man, which makes use of an argument which suggests that election is conditional; the author warns against frivolous wasting of time:

And when it is remembred how great a work we have here to do, the making our calling and election sure; the securing our Title to Heaven hereafter, and how uncertain we are what time shall be allowed us for that purpose; it will appear our time is that which of all other things we ought most industriously to improve.⁸⁴

⁸³ Hart, The Eighteenth Century Country Parson, p. 43. This argument of the Calvinistic evangelicals is a mirror image of that proffered by their opponents. Harrison notes, for instance, that George Bull was moved to write his Harmonia Apostolica [1669] by his disquiet with the antinomian doctrine; he had found "the houses in his parishes filled with books that so exalted faith and grace as to undermine morality. He pointed out that true faith always linked with obedience and that the works of charity that make faith perfect are more than bare signs of faith." Arminianism, p. 163.

⁸⁴ P. 192.

Like many other critics of the Antinomian doctrine, Fielding deliberately overstates his case in Adams' impassioned declaration. In extending the logical consequences of the doctrine to the point of absurdity, Fielding warns his readers that it provides no check or safeguard against false profession and hypocrisy. Indeed, wherever a character in Fielding's works employs the vocabulary of faith and grace, the cautious reader will want to examine the sincerity of that character's convictions as evidenced in his actions. There is only one defense against hypocrisy—the examination of the relation or misrelation of profession and practice—and this examination is the task which Fielding sets his reader when he presents sequences of charitable and uncharitable characters, speeches, and actions.

And surely the Actions of Men seem to be the justest Interpreters of their Thoughts, and the truest Standards by which we may judge them. By their Fruits you shall know them Matt. 7.16, 20, is a Saying of great Wisdom, as well as Authority. And indeed this is so certain a Method of acquiring the Knowledge, I contend for, that at first Appearance, it seems absolutely perfect, and to want no manner of Assistance.⁸⁵

Fielding attaches a caveat to his recommendation of this outlook, warning against the dangers of accepting either men's words or their public reputation (character) against the evidence of their actions—"Actions are their own best Expositors..." In the dialogue between Adams and

⁸⁵"An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men", Miscellanjes, I, 162. There are, as well, countless precedents for such a warning in classical philosophy. Montaigne avers, "The conduct of our lives is the true mirror of our doctrine," citing Cicero's Tusculan Questions, ii.4: "Who considers his own discipline, not as a vain ostentation of science, but as a law and rule of life; and who obeys his own decrees, and the laws he has prescribed to himself..." "Of the Education of Children," Essays, I, 168.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 163.

Peter Pounce, the verbal substance of the discussion about charity is supplemented by the contrasting examples of charity and avarice. The dialogue is given an added dimension by its continual call for the attention of the reader, who is required to discriminate between the claims of charity and the glib language of those who prefer to call their private vices by the names of publicly applauded virtues. This language is dangerously sophistical, in that it turns the power of reason to the defense of covetous, selfish pleasure. Isaac Barrow explains:

The truth is, the covetous or illiberal man is therefore incapable of being truly pious, because his heart is possessed with vain devotion toward somewhat beside God, which in effect is his sole divinity; he is justly styled an idolater, for that he directs and employs the chief affections of his mind upon an idol of clay....Other vicious inclinations combat reason, and often battle it, but seldom so vanquish it, as that a man doth approve or applaud himself in his miscarriages: but the covetous humour seizeth on our reason it self, and seateth it self therein; inducing it to favour and countenance what is done amiss. The voluptuous man is swayed by the violence of his appetite, but the covetous is seduced by the dictate of his judgment: he therefore scrapes and hoards, and lets go nothing, because he esteems wealth the best thing in the world, and then judges himself most wise, when he is most base.⁸⁷

The danger for the reader lies in the very familiarity of the reasonable explanations offered for illiberality; there is a palpable link here between Fielding's dystopian society and the world in which the reader lives. One of the stock assumptions which may be elaborated upon without much resistance by the reader is, once again, the matter of the rights of property. Secular law too often lends itself to the rationalizing of illiberal practices, as Fielding was only too aware. In the Champion, Fielding spoke strongly against the complicity of the

⁸⁷ Op. cit., p. 317.

legal system in enforcing the tyrannical hold which the privileged merchants held on their poorer customers. People who have been reduced to conditions of financial hardship and debt, he insists, are proper objects of charity, instead of the punitive measures of the debtor's law; compassion is particularly due to

such as sometimes by inadvertency, sometimes by misfortunes, and sometimes by the noblest acts of friendship, and through the rapaciousness, impatience, and unmercifulness of creditors, more savage than wolves, and the impious severity of our laws, are snatched away from their poor families, from the little comforts of the conversation of their relations and acquaintance, from a possibility of employing their faculties for the service of themselves, their wives or their children, from the benefit of wholesome air in common with the brute creation....It is certain, that the laws, at present...do put in the power of every proud, ill-natured, cruel, rapacious creditor to satisfy his revenge, his malice, or his avarice this way on any person who owes him a few shillings more than he can pay him; but let a Christian take care how he uses it, and remember that as surely as he forgives not his neighbour his trespasses, so surely will his Father in heaven deny to forgive him...⁸⁸

In Joseph Andrews, the issue arises during the interpolated tale of Wilson, when a tailor causes Wilson to be arrested for a debt of thirty-five pounds. Adams greets the account of this difficulty with his characteristically innocent expectation of mercy:

"But this could not last long," said Adams, "for doubtless the Taylor released you the moment he was truly acquainted with your Affairs; and knew that your Circumstances would not permit you to pay him." (III:iii:219)

The creditor, however, demanded immediate payment, and would not agree to allow Wilson a chance to work toward repayment, although he knew that

⁸⁸ The Champion (February 16 & 19, 1739-40), Works, XV, 206, 212.

See Fielding's articulate condemnation of the spirit of revenge in secular law as inconsistent with the Christian law of charity (in a speech delivered by Dr. Harrison), Amelia, IX:viii; Henley, VII, 165ff (emphasis added).

"nothing but Incapacity" could keep Wilson from doing so. The tailor stands on his legal right:

He answered, His Patience was worn out; that I had put him off from time to time; that he wanted the Money; that he had put it into a Lawyer's hands; and if I did not pay him immediately, or find Security, I must lie in Gaol and expect no Mercy. (III: iii:219)

The tailor's unwillingness to allow the debt to continue outstanding, despite the legality of his action—and law here is revealed as the instrument of "reasonable" illiberality—surprises and outrages Adams:

"He may expect Mercy," cries Adams starting from his Chair, "where he will find none. How can such a Wretch repeat the Lord's Prayer, where the Word which is translated, I know not for what Reason, Trespases, is in the Original Debts? And as surely as we do not forgive others their Debts when they are unable to pay them; so surely shall we ourselves be unforgiven, when we are in no condition of paying." (III:iii:219)

If being called upon to give more to the needy than extracted by tithing and "the Poors Rate" is onerous and incomprehensible for those who live by the Art of Thriving, how much more incredible must Adams' notion of property and wealth appear! This is the closest Fielding comes to outright revolutionary thought; he goes so far as to recommend a just mode of reparation in the article in the Champion already cited:

But perhaps it will be asked me, whether I would raise a fund large enough to pay off the debt of the nation, or whether I would impoverish all the rich to enrich the poor? I own...I have a fund in view for that purpose, and could heartily wish to see a law, by which all ill-gotten estates should be applied to so good an end; and indeed, this would be no more than lex talionis, to make these estates repair, in their dissolution, the mischiefs they had occasioned in their creation; and to convert a fund which hath been amassed by preying on the miseries of mankind to the relief of those miseries. In short, all estates which have been gotten by plunder, cheating, or extortion, which would include most prime ministers, scriveners, pawnbrokers, stock-jobbers and petty attorneys, should be

applied to this use.⁸⁹

The satirical tone of the passage's conclusion should alert the reader to the fact that Fielding's utopian recommendation is only partly serious. He is by no means a leveller, and argues only against misuse of wealth and property. That he did not oppose the class order itself is everywhere apparent, especially in his praise of benevolence in those in high places ("Of Good Nature", "Of True Greatness", the Dedication to Tom Jones, &c.), and in his depiction of wealthy and benevolent characters in the novels (such as Mr. Allworthy in Tom Jones). In the lower orders, Fielding holds, a certain degree of contentment is necessary; in the next number of the Champion, he argues that luxury is the source of a great deal of the difficulties of his contemporary society. He endeavours to show "that the chief source of our distresses was the attempt to preserve appearances beyond our circumstances."⁹⁰ In a letter to the True Patriot, signed Abraham Adams, Fielding follows Barrow in linking the excessive desire for material wealth with all other forms of immorality, especially deceit and the failure to exercise the duty of charity:

Luxury is a...vice, which is so far from being acknowledged as criminal, that it is ostentatiously affected. Now this is not only a vice in itself, but it is in reality a privation of all

⁸⁹

The Champion, (February 16, 1739-40), Henley, XV, 207. Cf. "Of Good Nature", especially ll. 45-52, Miscellanies, I, 32. See also the comic heroic metaphor in Tom Jones, VII:iii:334f.

⁹⁰The Champion (February 19, 1739-40), Henley, XV, 207. Fielding also held that luxury was the source of much of his age's crime, and censured the great for failing to provide suitable example of moderation; see "An Inquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers...", Henley, XIII, 5-129.

virtue. For first, in lower fortunes, it prevents men from being honest; and, in higher situations, it excludes that virtue without which no man can be a Christian, namely charity. For as surely as charity covereth a multitude of sins, so must a multitude of dishes, jewels, houses, horses, servants, &c., cover all charity.⁹¹

The dystopian society of Joseph Andrews is one in which the Christian life has been replaced by the Art of Thriving, which "points out to every Individual his own particular and separate Advantage, to which he is to sacrifice the Interest of all others; which he is to consider as his Summum Bonum, to pursue with his utmost Diligence and Industry, and to acquire by all Means whatever."⁹² The principle means of pursuing such an end must be deceitful, since others must be convinced (or coerced) to sacrifice their own interests. Therefore, skill in deception and the acquisition of wealth and power go hand in hand. With this perverse scheme of values in operation, active charity can have few practitioners:

But, indeed, who wonders that men are so backward in sacrificing any of their wealth to their consciences, who before had sacrificed their consciences to the acquisition of that very wealth. Can we expect to find charity in an age, when scarce any refuse to own the most profligate rapaciousness! when no man is ashamed of avowing the pursuit of riches through every dirty road and track? To speak out, in an age when every thing is venal; and when there is scarce one among the mighty who would not be equally ashamed at being thought not to set some price on himself, as he would at being imagined to set too low a one?⁹³

⁹¹The True Patriot, No. 7 (December 17, 1745), Henley, XIV, 27.

⁹²"An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men", Miscellanies, I, 154f.

⁹³The True Patriot, No. 7, Henley, XIV, 28.

The systemization of deceit comes complete with its own vocabulary of evaluative language, which, as we have seen, superficially resembles the language descriptive of more solid values ("warm", "Christian", &c.). But because Fielding's reader has been alerted to the real significance of this vocabulary, and has been trained to see through several common species of deception, and because the ironic tone of the narrative commentary invites him to restore the original meanings of important moral terms, the novel becomes an important and effective instrument in reducing sophistry. At the close of the dialogue between Parson Adams and Peter Pounce, the dishonest steward acts in a manner which provides a clear demonstration of the affectation of virtue—he claims that he is above envy, a vice with which he has not been reproached, and from which (having already laid up his little treasure) he is fairly safe. He expresses his confidence in his worth by calling himself a Man of Figure, which turns out to be a term of approbation in the thriving society, indicating prodigious status, wealth, and power, but devoid of any moral significance. He scoffs at Adams:

"Yes, Sir, as shabby Fellows as yourself, whom no Man of my Figure, without that Vice of Good-nature about him, would suffer to ride in a Chariot with him." (III:xiii:276)

Peter Pounce means his phrase about Good Nature to be sarcastically amusing—it amuses him—but ironically it bears more truth than he realizes, though bound in complex irony. Pounce condescends to ride with a shabby Parson, because it gives him the opportunity to insult him; he attacks every moral value his companion is certain to treasure. Although on the level of jest Pounce is deliberately trying to goad Adams, he really believes that Good Nature is a Vice, which may be

indulged in, whimsically, but must not interfere with the serious matters of worldly life. The reader has been provided with evidence sufficient to dismiss him with loathing. When Parson Adams leaps out of his carriage, the reader both applauds and shares in the dramatic, comically heroic action.

This incident provides a telling figural illustration of the reader's participation in the dialogue on charity. As the sophistry mustered up to defend the Art of Thriving is undercut and exposed, the positive values it attempts to replace are implicitly reinforced. This process is effective on several levels, ranging from an incompletely articulated form in which unpleasant attitudes are united with unpleasant characters, to more sophisticated ironic movements, as when two opposing definitions of a vitally important moral term struggle for acceptance. As such, the dialogue is one of the principal components of the teeming, complex structure of the novel.

CHAPTER III

JOSEPH ANDREWS: SATIRE AND THE VIA MEDIA

1) A Just Balance of Power: Passion, Conscience, and Moderation

And if virtue, like nature, is more precise and better than any art, we must conclude that virtue aims at the median. I am referring to moral virtue: for it is moral virtue that is concerned with emotions and actions, and it is in emotions and actions that excess, deficiency, and the median are found. Thus we can experience fear, confidence, desire, anger, pity, and generally any kind of pleasure and pain either too much or too little, and in either case not properly. But to experience all this at the right time, toward the right objects, for the right reason, and in the right manner --- that is the median and the best course, the course that is a mark of virtue.¹

The economy of the body hath often been compared to that of the state, so may also that of the mind; as a just balance of power can only support any degree of liberty in a political constitution, so must the exact balance of the passions preserve order and regularity in the mind.²

One of the few notions in which all of the religious philosophers, ethicists, and moral psychologists with whose work Fielding was familiar concurred, is that the primary force in human motivation is a simple desire for pleasure, together with an aversion to misery. Although its fixed end is the gratification of pleasurable inclinations, the appetitive factor is not altogether trustworthy. This may be explained by the fact that appetite is "short-sighted", and tends to aim at immediate gratification, and is incapable of addressing itself to greater or long-term interests without the aid of moral judgment. One of the most succinct

¹Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, II, 6, 1160b; p. 43.

²Henry Fielding, The Champion (February 2, 1739-40), Henley XV, 178-9.

explanations of this condition is provided by Plato's Phaedrus:

Within each one of us there are two sorts of ruling or guiding principles that we follow. One is an innate desire for pleasure, and the other an acquired judgment that aims at what is best. Sometimes these internal guides are in accord, sometimes at variance; now one gains the mastery, now the other. And when judgment guides us rationally toward what is best, and has the mastery, that mastery is called temperance, but when desire drags us irrationally toward pleasure, and has come to rule within us, the name given to that rule is wantonness.³

The extent of acceptance of this premise can be seen in the fact that, in the midst of his argument against innate principles in the mind, Locke acknowledges Appetite and Aversion as innate. He does insist, of course, that they are "Inclinations of the Appetite to Good, not Impressions of truth on the Understanding."⁴ As such, Appetite predates, but ought not dominate, the reasoning and optative power of will. Appetite provides an almost involuntary motion, the dynamic of human life, which must be directed to its proper end. The mainstream of Anglican thought springs from Hooker's exposition of the manner in which man's control of appetite brings him toward a realization of his potential for good.

The object of appetite is whatsoever sensible good may be wished for; the object of wil is that good which reason doth leade us to seeke. Affections, as joy, and griefe, and feare, and anger, with such like; being as it were the sundry fashions and formes of appetite, can neyther rise at the conceipt of a thing indifferent, nor yet choose but rise

³ Phaedrus, 237d-e. Cf. Plato's definition of the wise man as one who "will always be found attuning the harmonies of his body for the concord in his soul." Republic, IX, 591c. Montaigne assigns the invention of the via media to Plato: "A man ought to moderate himself between the hatred of pain and the love of pleasure; and Plato [Laws, vii.] lest down a middle path of life between the two." "Of Managing the Will", Essays, II, 493.

⁴ Essay Concerning Human Understanding, I,iii.3. See also Thomas Hobbes Leviathan, I. vi; pp. 119 ff.

at the sight of some things. Wherefore it is not altogether in our power, whether we will be stirred with affections or no; whereas actions which issue from the disposition of the will are in the power thereof to be performed or staid. Finally appetite is the wills solicitor, and the will is appetites controller ...⁵

The Anglican emphasis in the area of moral psychology is directed first to the refining of this "controlling" aspect of individual will. Each individual is seen as a battleground, and temperance is the only weapon of his own which lies to man's hand. It is a battle which, as Plato indicated, can go either way, a battle of potentialities or capacities:

Both Heaven and Hell have their foundation within us. Heaven primarily lies in a refined temper, in an internal reconciliation to the nature of God and to the rule of righteousness. The guilt of conscience and enmity to righteousness is the fuel of Hell.⁶

Both the imagery of battle, and the centrality of the requirement of self-mastery, show a marked affinity with the writings of the Stoic philosophers. In what must be his most complete expression of his convictions in this matter, Fielding draws on Cicero to furnish himself with an epigraph - "Totum in eo est, ut imperes tibi."⁷ It will prove valuable to this enquiry to examine several of his arguments in detail.

⁵ LEP, I. 7.2; p. 78. For a discussion of the influence of Aquinas on Hooker in the matter of Man's striving toward God as his goal, see Marshall, Hooker and the Anglican Tradition, especially Chapter VIII, "Hooker as the Author of a Summa."

⁶ Benjamin Whichcote, Moral and Religious Aphorisms, No. 100; Cragg, The Cambridge Platonists, p. 124.

⁷ The Champion (February 2, 1739-40), Henley, XV, 177-81. The vital importance of the differences with Stoicism will emerge below.

The article opens with a declaration of principle which is consistent with the spirit of the Ciceronian tag:

The conquest of one's self is justly preferred by wise men to that of armies and kingdoms. This is that courage which is so ardently recommended in our religion.... Whoever carefully surveys his own mind, will find sufficient enemies to combat within; an army of obstinate passions that will hold him in tight play, will often force his reason to retreat; and if they are at length subdued, it will not be without much labour resolution.⁸

When reason chances to lose the battle, Fielding warns, it suffers a complete overthrow, and submits to the absolute mastery and tyranny of the victorious passion. It is in every man's best interest to ensure that he does not enter this contention - for enter he must - unequipped. It is to this end that Fielding earnestly recommends the study of the means by which the attack of these enemies may be resisted, so we may "arrive at that perfection which hath been recommended by the wisest of antiquity, and fulfil that glorious precept vince teipsum." Fielding expresses surprise that little help is readily available, in the form of codified, clear, accessible "rules for the attaining of so desirable a conquest", in all the writings of the philosophers and divines on the subject. An explanation of the method passions take in their attack follows, together with a further recommendation of self-knowledge as a necessary aid in this campaign.

Fielding's last argument is a cautionary appeal to the argument of interest, the hedonic calculus which weighs the relative value of pleasure or good attainable through action; in this case, the reader is called upon to compare the value of immediate, sensual pleasures ..

⁸ Loc. cit.

with the rewards of virtue:

Did a man, when first attacked by avarice, consider the eternal watchings, care, fear, heart-aches, all the pains and terrors which that passion must infallibly bring upon him, he would be safe from its dominion; but his passions have dazzled his reason, with showing the beautiful objects near and in a full blaze, while the other ideas are kept at a distance, and out of his sight.⁹

Fielding's Anglican dialogues consistently centre upon an appeal to common sense. The emphasis upon self-examination which can be found throughout his writing, together with the satiric attack on common bedazzlement and the dangerous rhetoric of false glosses, combine in a program of exhortation to the reader to use that element which makes him a man---reason---to make him a good man. We will return to several of the points made in this Champion article, notably the vital importance of self-knowledge, and the question of interest and the hedonic calculus, as our enquiry proceeds. For now, it will be sufficient to acknowledge Fielding's operative conviction that the central factor in practical morality on the individual level is the rational control of appetite and passion.

Fielding's concern about vice, however, does not imply a recommendation of correction by a simple inversion of wrongly conceived polarities of conduct. When censuring avarice, for instance, its diametric opposite cannot be advocated, for the opposite of overvaluing material wealth (implicit in the compulsive seeking and hoarding of money) is dispersing it wastefully, or undervaluing it. The possession of material wealth carries with it a degree of responsibility, which must include both the necessities of self-maintenance and an active charity. Such a

⁹Loc. cit.

responsibility cannot be exercised unless a mean between the extremes of avarice and prodigality is sought. Christian ethics inherited from Aristotle the concept of moral conduct as a continuum, in which man must seek the mean, and, by controlling his appetites, avoid undesirable extremes.¹⁰ It is characteristic of Anglican thought that the Aristotelian continuum is conjoined with the concept of duty. If the law governing man is understood as a directive to the improvement of his talents, or his growth to perfection of his kind, then his duty necessarily involves proper use of his faculties, his time, and all the conditions of his nature as a man.

For the same reason that a Man is obliged, to preserve his own Being at all; he is bound likewise to preserve himself, as far as he is able, in the right use of all his Faculties; that is, to keep himself constantly in such temper both of Body and Mind, by regulating his Appetites and Passions, as may best fit and enable him to perform his Duty in all other Instances. For, as it matters not whether a Soldier deserts his Post, or by Drunkenness renders himself incapable of performing his Duty in it: So, for a Man to disable himself by any Intemperance or Passion, from performing the necessary Duties of Life; is, at least for that time, the same thing as depriving himself of Life....

¹⁰ Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book II. Cf. Eudemian Ethics, II, iii, 1-13, where Aristotle lists the virtuous means, together with their deficient and excessive extremes, in table form. For an expansion of this tabular classification in Anglican thought, see Bishop John Wilkins, An Essay Toward a Real Character... (London, 1668), especially his definitions of Habitudes of Soul, pp. 197ff. Despite the neat array of alternatives suggested by the tabular form, the mean is to be found in a continuum of specific self-control. Marshall offers this cautionary explanation: "In this kind of control the doctrine of the mean does not apply to actions and passions which are directed to inappropriate ends....The mean of the passions, and the actions which flow from them, is in no sense a mere arithmetical mid-point between too much and too little. It is a middle point relative to circumstances. What is too much food for an old man may have been too little food when he was younger, or what is too little for a boxer may be too much food for an invalid. The mean is just the right amount of hunger or fear in relation to an appropriate object." Hooker and the Anglican Tradition, pp. 98^f.

So that all the additional Obligations which a Man is in any way under, to forbear committing the most flagrant Crimes; lie equally upon him to govern his Passions and restrain his Appetites; without doing which, he can never secure himself effectually, from being betrayed into the commission of all Iniquity.¹¹

Thus, temperance becomes the most important psychological factor in morality. It is only the active use of reason, once again, which is capable of achieving the mediating balance, and it is only possible when reason actively controls will.

To bring appetite and inclination under the dominion of Reason, is worthy of a rational and sensible being; but to make Reason subservient to pleasure, and its use to consist only in procuring it, is the principle of all vice, and the utmost corruption of all moral judgment.¹²

The passions are not to be suppressed or eliminated, but controlled; in such an attitude can be seen the essential difference between the Anglican and Stoical attitudes.¹³ As a function of the desire for physical well-being, the passions are consistent with intellectual desire (for knowledge) and spiritual desire (for union with God). Hooker explains:

It is an axiom of nature that natural desire cannot utterly be frustrate. This desire of ours being natural should be frustrate, if that which may satisfie the same were a thing impossible for man to aspire unto. Man doth seeke a triple perfection, first, a sensuall, consisting in those things which life it selfe requireth either as necessary supplements, or as beauties and ornaments therof; then an intellectuall, consisting in those

¹¹ Samuel Clarke, Boyle Lecture, 1705, pp. 102-3.

¹² John Jackson, A Discourse concerning Virtue and Religion... [1732] as quoted by John Redwood, Reason, Ridicule, and Religion, p. 212.

¹³ Of course, Anglicanism comprehended strains of Christian stoicism (see Stanhope's version of Thomas à Kempis), but the most important strain of belief--at least for this enquiry--rejected the stoical repression of passion, as outlined below. For Fielding's notion of the proper admixture, see his description of Mr. Allworthy's emotional balance, TJ, VI:iii:281.

things which none underneth man is either capable of or acquainted with; lastly a spirituall and divine, consisting in those things whereunto we tend by supernatural meanes here, but cannot here attaine unto them.¹⁴

The passions are not in themselves antithetical to a virtuous life.

Indeed they may well have their proper use, as anger (or transient hatred) for injustice or cruelty, or sorrow and pity for the misfortunes of others.

Stoical suppression of passion is a fundamental negation of humanity,

according to this view.¹⁵ As Robert South eloquently pointed out, when

Jesus took on human form, he took on human passion:

For we must know, that in as much as man is a compound and mixture of Flesh as well as Spirit, the soul during its abode in the body does all things by the mediation of these Passions, and inferiour affections. And here the Opinion of the Stoicks was famous and singular, who lookt upon all these as sinful defects and Irregularities, as so many deviations from right Reason, making Passion to be only another word for Perturbation. Sorrow in their esteem was a sin scarce to be expiated by another, to pity was a fault, to rejoyce an extravagance, and the Apostle's advice, to be angry and sin not, was a contradiction in their Philosophy. But in this, they were constantly outvoted by other Sects of Philosophers, neither for fame, nor number lesse than themselves: So that all arguments brought against them from Divinity would come by way of overplus to their Confutation. To us let this be sufficient, that our Saviour Christ, who took upon

¹⁴LEP, I. 11. 4; p. 91.

¹⁵Cf. John Maxwell's attack on the criminal uniformity of countenance of the Stoical Wise-Man, whose "haughty sullen Insensibility" is only one of his "superlative Extravagancies": "Their invariable Constancy of Temper was no Virtue, but an inconsistency with true Virtue, which exerciseth on various Occasions Anger, Mildness, Boldness, Fearfulness, Joy, Sorrow." "Concerning the Imperfectness of the Heathen Morality...", Prefatory Essay in Richard Cumberland's Treatise of the Laws of Nature (London, 1727), pp. xlviii ff. [Fielding had a copy of this edition in his library.]

him all our natural infirmities, but none of our sinful, has been seen to weep, to be sorrowful, to Pity, and to be Angry.¹⁶

Although man cannot be excessive in the pursuit of virtue in itself, as Aristotle notes, nonetheless as a passion itself love of virtue must be tempered. Saint Paul warns every man "not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly..." (Romans 12:3). Montaigne - who quotes the passage thus (in Cotton's translation): "Be not wiser than you should, but be soberly wise" --- comments: "A Man may both be too much in love with virtue, and excessive in just action."¹⁷ Parson Adams' excessive adherence to the doctrines of Stoicism is finally exposed by his loving response to his child's narrow escape.

The aspect of the rational mind which is responsible for the moderation of the passions and the direction of the will is Conscience, an "inward Judgment" which all men necessarily pass on their actions in their own minds.¹⁸ The identification of the function of conscience

¹⁶"Sermon Preached at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Novemb. 9, 1662", Sermons Preached Upon Several Occasions (Oxford, 1679), pp. 137-8. Henry More's "Antidote Against Atheism" includes an account of the "fitness of the Passions of Man's Mind", which demonstrates that the passions may serve as "Instruments", given to man by Divine Providence. A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings, 2nd ed. (1662; New York, 1978), p. 82. Cf. Tulloch, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy, II, 401-2.

¹⁷"Of Moderation", Essays, I, 200.

¹⁸Samuel Clarke, Boyle Lectures, 1705, p. 189. Paul H. Kocher traces the concept of rational conscience to Aquinas, observing that Elizabethan divines found it vital in the struggle against false melancholic guilt. Kocher notes William Perkins' definition of conscience [1605] as "a function of reason applying the general moral law to the individual particular circumstances." Science and Religion in Elizabethan England (San Marino, Calif., 1953), p. 301.

as a moderating force, or the faculty responsible for temperance, can be seen in Barrow's sermon on "The Profitableness of Godliness".

There is scarce in nature any thing so wild, so intractable, so unintelligible as a man who hath no bridle of conscience to guide or check him. A prophane man is like a ship, without anchor to stay him, or rudder to steer him, or compass to guide him; so that he is tost with any wind, and driven with any wave none knoweth whither; whither bodily temper doth sway him, or passion doth hurry him, or interest doth pull him, or example leadeth him, or company inveigleth and haleth him, or humour transporteth him; whither any such variable and unaccountable causes determine him, or divers of them together distract him; whence he so rambleth and hovereth, that he can seldom himself tell what in any case he should do, nor can another guess it; so that you cannot at any time know where to find him.... Nothing therefore can be more unmanly than such a person, nothing can be more unpleasant than to have to do with him.

But a Pious man, being steddily governed by conscience, and a regard to certain principles, doth both understand himself, and is intelligible to others; he presently descrieth what in any case he is to do, and can render an account of his acting; you may know him clearly, and assuredly tell what he will do, and may therefore fully confide in him.¹⁹

Conscience, then, is not an intuitive apprehension, but a conscious and rational power of considering alternatives of action. The neglect of conscience leads to a depraved, wild state, less than bestial ---for even animals are constant, following their own instinctual, natural law. Without the steady governance of conscience, human life is unmanly or inhumane, falling far short of the potential dignity of human nature which is centred in the rational faculty.

¹⁹ Works, I, 19. Fielding's recommendations of Barrow and Hoadly are clearly related to the parallel in their notions of conscience. Hoadly's controversial Low-Church doctrine was founded on the primacy of conscience; any attempt to set up an ecclesiastical tyranny was for him abhorrent, because it divests "Jesus Christ of his Empire in his own Kingdom; set[s] the obedience of his Subjects loose from Himself, and teach[es] them to prostitute their Consciences at the feet of Others, who have no right in such a manner to trample upon them." "Christ's Kingdom Not of his World", in Religious Thought in the Eighteenth Century, ed. J.C. Martin and J.S.B. Smith (Cambridge, 1934), p. 259. The best account of Fielding's notion of conscience can be found in his description of Tom Jones, TJ, IV: vi: 171ff.

The Platonic assertion that virtue is the health of the soul²⁰ is recognizable in Aristotle's doctrine of the mean in moral actions. The health of the soul is man's true nature, and with God's grace, and the assistance of a reasoning faculty free from idols, superstition, listlessness, and indolence, man can move closer to the restoration of this state.

On the other hand, a society of men who neglect this movement, and who act without conscience or moderation, cannot fail to be truly like the uncovenanted society described by Hobbes as a war "of every man, against every man."²¹ Despite the mutual agreements Hobbes premises as the foundation of law in society, the dependence upon fear and self-protection proves to be an insufficient regulatory moral influence. In the society which Fielding portrays in Joseph Andrews, a society which resembles that depicted by Hogarth, the Hobbesian motive to form a commonwealth actually preserves the warlike state Hobbes believed it would correct. In contrast with the relativistic legalism of the materialistic viewpoint, the Anglican insistence upon man's duty as a participation in an absolute, universal, divine law becomes increasingly attractive. The pursuit of immediate pleasure or interest which drives the masters of the Art of Thriving aggravates the condition of battle against other men, and against one's own humanity. It is such a life, Fielding comments in the Preface to Joseph Andrews, which "every where furnishes an accurate Observer with the Ridiculous." (p. 5)

²⁰Gorgias, 463e-466a; pp. 184 ff.

²¹Leviathan, I. xiii; pp. 184 ff.

The careful reader can discern the mean as it is obliquely represented by an author in the very ridiculousness of the deficient or excessive extremes of conduct in the author's characters. This is the thrust of the Abbé Bellegarde's analysis of the social function of ridicule, in his Reflexions sur le ridicule [1696], to which Fielding refers in the Preface (p. 7). It is Bellegarde's thesis that the pressure brought to bear upon individual conduct by society's general expectations can be a powerful influence for the private as well as the public good. Only by adopting a certain decorum, which he calls "the Art of Living", can the individual hope to protect himself against the vengeful spirit of ridicule.²²

In an article in the Covent-Garden Journal, Fielding takes up the question of ridicule and its moderating influence, and develops an important connection between Bellegarde's notions and the Jonsonian comedy of humours.²³ Giving to moderation the title "good Breeding", Fielding deliberately locates the Ridiculous in extreme behaviour. The means of avoiding ridicule must be found in the active moderation of ridiculous tendencies:

For indeed good Breeding is little more than the Art of rooting out all those Seeds of Humour which Nature had originally implanted in our Minds.²⁴

To define what exactly this "Humour" is, Fielding first draws on Congreve, who in a letter to John Dennis defines it as "a singular and unavoidable

²² Jean Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde, Reflexions upon Ridicule, I, 2, et passim.

²³ See Marston La France, "Fielding's Use of the 'Humor' Tradition", Bucknell Review, 17(1969)3: 53-63.

²⁴ The Covent-Garden Journal, 55 (July 18, 1752), II, 60.

Manner of saying or doing any thing peculiar and natural to one Man only."²⁵

Jonson's definition, which Fielding extracts from Every Man out of his Humour, is stronger:

Here then we have another pretty adequate Notion of Humour, which is indeed nothing more than a violent Bent or Disposition of the Mind to some particular Point.²⁶

Fielding further refines the concept:

I will venture to make a small Addition to the Sentiments of the two great Masters I have mentioned, by which I apprehend my Description of Humour will pretty well coincide with the general Opinion. By Humour, then I suppose, is generally intended a violent Impulse of the Mind, determining it to some particular Point, by which a Man becomes ridiculously distinguished from all other Men.²⁷

Fielding's ensuing argument makes the connection between the moderation of humour and morality explicit:

If there be any Truth in what I have now said, nothing can more clearly follow than the manifest Repugnancy between Humour and good Breeding. The latter being the Art of conducting yourself by certain common and general Rules, by which Means, if they were universally observed, the whole World would appear (as all Courtiers actually do) to be, in their external Behaviour at least, but one and the same Person.

I have not room at present, if I were able, to enumerate the Rules of good Breeding: I shall only mention one, which is a Summary of them all. This is the most golden of all Rules, no less than that of doing to all Men as you would they should do unto you.

In the Deviation from this Law...all that we call Humour principally consists.²⁸

In the paper that follows, Fielding clinches his argument by equating "the true Seeds of Humour in the Human Mind" with "violent and inordinate

²⁵ Ibid., p. 60.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 62.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 63.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 63.

Desires", and the emphasis on temperance takes on increased significance:

Now Humour arises from the very opposite Behaviour, from throwing the Reins on the Neck of our favorite Passion, and giving it a full Scope and Indulgence.²⁹

Fielding's vocabulary is not entirely innovative, but his satirical method is unusual. In a process resembling triangulation, he presents humourous, excessive characters and actions, as well as corrupt or diseased values in the body of society, and leaves it to the reader to discover the unspoken but implicit mean. The just balance of power is discoverable in its very absence in dystopian society, and confirmed by its active presence in positive, exemplary characters.

²⁹ Covent-Garden Journal, No. 56 (July 25, 1752); II, 64-5.

2) Joseph's Chastity and the Mask of "Spirit"

Though virtue and wisdom be in reality the opposites to folly and vice, they are not so in appearance. Indeed, it requires a nicer eye to distinguish them, than is commonly believed. The two latter are continually industrious to disguise themselves, and wear the habits of the former. They know their native deformity and endeavour to conceal it; which the world, always judging by the outside, easily suffers them to accomplish. Actions of the worst nature have, by assistance of false glosses, been accompanied with honour, and men have often arrived at the highest fame by deserving the highest infamy...³⁰

In the matter of love and sexual attraction, the reader of Joseph Andrews is presented with a fabric of common social assumptions, which may be identified as the personal or sexual version of the Art of Thriving. With its ends established as power, interest, and selfish pleasure, the Art of Sexual Thriving is a vital part of the marketplace of human lives.

³⁰ Henry Fielding, The Champion (March 4, 1739-49), Henley, XV. The false gloss as a signal of corruption or inversion of value is for Fielding an invaluable ironic device; the false gloss, "Greatness", occupies the very centre of Jonathan Wild. Fielding's use of this and other forms of verbal irony will be discussed at length below.

Fielding's notion is remarkably close to Whichcote's notion of "false measures of truth, which do obtain in the world where truth doth not take place; and they are the longest sword, the loudest lungs, and the most voices. 1. The longest sword; and then the Mahometans must have it; and before them the great disturbers of mankind, whom we call conquerors, as Alexander and Caesar. 2. If the loudest lungs must carry it, then the Baal-worshipers must have it from Elijah; for he had but one still voice, but they cry from morning to night. 3. If the most voices; then the condemners of our Savior must have it: for they all cry, 'Crucify, crucify.' Therefore these are false measures." "Whatsoever Things are True", in Cragg, The Cambridge Platonists, p. 409. The false gloss appears as a central device in a number of Fielding's immediate predecessors and contemporaries. For an account of the centrality of the double interpretation of evaluative terms in fictional representation of dystopian society of folly and self-interested vice (especially in John Gay's Beggar's Opera [1728], see Ian Donaldson, The World Upside-Down, chapter VIII.

Although these assumptions are most frequently offered without explicit commentary, Fielding undercuts them by concentrating ironically upon a series of "false glosses." When the recently widowed Lady Booby brings her household to London, she is hopeful that the "civilized" atmosphere of town life will turn Joseph toward her. She is initially disappointed that "his Morals remained entirely corrupted", but as he grows accustomed to the diversions of London, she grows more hopeful:

His Lady, who had often said of him that Joey was the handsomest, and genteelest Footman in the Kingdom, but that it was a pity that he wanted Spirit, began to find that Fault no longer; on the contrary, she was frequently heard to cry out, Aye, there is some Life in this Fellow. She saw plainly the Effects which Town-Air hath on the soberest Constitutions (I: iv: 27).

"Spirit" is the socially acceptable term (or gloss) for an aggressive willingness to take advantage of a pleasurable or otherwise rewarding opportunity, regardless of any moral consideration. In a similar fashion, Lady Booby's ludicrous advances are described with exaggerated politeness as "those innocent Freedoms which Women of Figure may permit without the least sully of their Virtue." (I: iv: 27) The socially acceptable term for Reputation is Virtue; the word itself has no real, intrinsic meaning in the context of society's inverted values. This is confirmed by Lady Booby's opinion that anything which interferes with the natural inclination to gain selfish ends must be folly. When Lady Booby awakes from a stirring dream of Joseph, she attributes his waking coldness toward her to "his Youth, his Folly, his Awe, his Religion". (IV:i:278) Lady Booby blithely associates these four possible motivations as though they were equally foolish; they all interfere with the summum bonum of the Thriving world, one's own Advantage.

Many of Fielding's characters show a similar confidence that they know where their best interests lie. This confidence is manifested in efforts to promote a "prudent" approach to the market value of sex and marriage. Prudence, once again, is a false gloss, indicating mercenary discretion and expediency, rather than the traditional virtue of practical wisdom which distinguishes between real and false goods. In the digression which tells the tale of Leonora or "the Unfortunate Jilt", the Aunt urges Leonora to abandon her promise to her fiance in order that a more "eligible" match may be brought forward. To her objections that "the World" will condemn her as a jilt, the Aunt answers:

"The World is always on the side of Prudence...and would surely condemn you if you sacrifice your Interest to any Motive whatever. O, I know the World very well, and you shew your Ignorance, my Dear, by your Objection. O' my Conscience, the World is Wiser. I have lived longer in it than you, and I assure you there is not any thing worth our Regard besides Money..." (II: iv: iii)

The betrayal or sale of innocence is always accompanied with the claim to superior wisdom, and the identification of mere virtue with ignorance and folly. It is significant, then, that Leonora's Aunt sets the seal on her praise of worldly wisdom with an oath on her conscience, a faculty she chooses to live without.

Joseph takes the example of his sister Pamela as the model of chastity in her struggles against the improper advances of her employer. But when she minces into Lady Booby's parlor, late in the novel, it is immediately obvious that something is wrong. Fielding makes it clear that her famous chastity was only a prudential gambit; she has bartered her resistance for social position. The success of this gambit allows her to assume the pride incumbent upon one in her new position. Her attitude

toward her brother's intention of making a less "eligible" match---an "unworthy" marriage, exploiting the explosive doubleness of "worth"---is quite revealing. She denounces his disregard for his own interest in desiring to marry a lowly chambermaid:

"She was my equal," answered Pamela, "but I am no longer Pamela Andrews, I am now this Gentleman's Lady, and as such I am above her---I hope I shall never behave with unbecoming Pride; but at the same time I shall always endeavour to know myself, and question not the Assistance of Grace to that purpose." (IV:vii: 302)

Fielding has again provided the worldly-wise character with a sense of the superiority of her own knowledge. For Pamela, this is a knowledge of social station; her attitude is a parodic inversion of the Delphic injunction. Her pride of place is rationalized in terms of grace, which (because it works externally) eliminates the inconveniences of self-examination or moral action. This passage---the false glosses on pride and self-knowledge---introduces a thrust at the doctrine of justification by faith. Fielding's discomfort with this doctrine because of its minimization of practical morality is revealed explicitly in Adams' tirade (I: xvii: 82), and in the broad satire of Shamela. The language of this doctrine, Fielding was convinced, was eminently suited for self-serving cant. Pamela's advice to Joseph concerning aids in resisting unprofitable love features the utility of depending on grace: "It would become you better, Brother, to pray for the Assistance of Grace against such a Passion, than to indulge in it." (IV: vii: 302) A literal or out-of-context reading of this phrase might not immediately reveal its eloquent irony. There is really nothing "wrong" with Joseph's "Passion" for Fanny, except the fact of its "ineligibility", and the Prudence which assures him may be provided by Grace is not consistent with the language

of piety which she affects. It is one of Fielding's finest ironic touches to present his exemplar of thriving, prudential chastity piously chiding his exemplar of true chastity for his failure to meet her high standards.

As Fielding often warns his readers, folly and vice are well-equipped to assume the appearance of their opposites. Pamela's speech is loaded with moral terminology, and the burden of her advice to Joseph is the necessity of suppressing passion. However, as it becomes clear that Pamela's reasons for advocating such a measure are far from disinterested, and as the reader sides with Joseph in the controversy over his love for Fanny, it appears that Pamela seeks to apply temperance only to inconvenient passions. The Pamela of Joseph Andrews speaks with more refinement, but her moral language and her values---above all her inimitable practicality---are identical with those of Shamela.

The passions are only dangerous or evil in their abuse, and need to be moderated, to be properly employed, not completely eradicated. Fielding has no sympathy with old Sir Thomas Booby's failure to perform his marital duties, or with Beau Didapper's dilettante approach to sex, no more than he has for the bestiality of the several would-be rapists. The answer to the demands of sexuality is to be found neither in the deficient nor the excessive extreme, but in the middle way of proper use and moderation. Parson Adams explains: "All Passions are criminal in their Excess, and even Love itself, if it is not subservient to our Duty, may render us blind to it." (IV: viii: 308)

Joseph's love for Fanny often threatens to overflow the embankments of his keen sense of duty. When Fanny first consents to marry him,

he wants the ceremony completed at once: "Joseph, having thanked her on his Knees, and embraced her with an Eagerness, which she now almost returned, leapt up in Rapture, and awakened the Parson, earnestly begging him, 'that he would that Instant join their Hands together.'"

(II: xiii: 160) Joseph again urges an unseemly haste when he fears that his family's opposition might prevent the marriage. Parson Adams endeavours to explain his uneasiness with the idea that Joseph's haste springs neither from a concern to protect the union, nor from emotions consistent with honourable love, but only from impatience

(IV: viii: 307). But the clearest expression of what Parson Adams wants to explain is, appropriately, Joseph's own. After fighting off another man attempting to rape Fanny, Joseph is understandably moved by the sight of Fanny's bosom, uncovered in the struggle. She perceives that he is staring, blushes, and covers himself.

Joseph saw the Uneasiness she suffered, and immediately removed his eyes from an Object, in surveying which he had felt the greatest Delight which the Organs of Sight were capable of conveying to his Soul. So great was his Fear of offending her, and so truly did his Passion for her deserve the noble Name of Love (IV: vii: 305).

Respect tempers his physical passion for Fanny, and the reader is provided with Fielding's alternative to the false temperance recommended by Pamela.

Still, it is not difficult for the reader to mistake the situation. If Joseph and Fanny's relationship is considered only on the level of the simple sexual transaction, few readers, perhaps, would think consummation a few days before the marriage ceremony so terrible a thing, especially in the case of two good young people who so obviously love each other. The danger of such a mistake is increased by the traditional public image of Fielding as an advocate of exuberant carnality. Despite the manner of

presentation adopted by the author, somewhat disingenuously, the matter at hand is not simply a matter of timing, or, for that matter, the relative harmlessness of a sexual act. We have seen that the laws governing humanity---including the laws of moderation---exist not of themselves, but as a direction in the means whereby all things tend to their own perfection. The reader must remember that marriage does not exist to legitimize sex, but to sanctify a wider bond which is emotional, intellectual, spiritual, as well as physical. The bad marriages in the novel testify to this. Love must include the desire to please, and fear to offend, and therefore includes a relationship of duty to the loved one. Failure to respect any one of these essential levels of this union must then be a complete failure.

If Joseph insisted on "enjoying" Fanny before the appointed time, it would constitute a failure to recognize her worth on any but the physical level. Thus, it would be rape, as much a violation as that attempted by Beau Didapper's pimp. Should the reader make the incorrect answer to Fielding's implicit question---"Wouldn't this be all right?"---he will be corrected. And, significantly, the correction comes from Joseph himself, who is tempted, but recognizes that Fanny's external, physical beauty is her "least Perfection; nor do I know a Virtue which that young Creature is not possest of" (IV: vii: 301).

It is Joseph's duty---and honour---to love Fanny with a mature, well-balanced love. The way in which he learns to temper his passion for her is very important: although he hears repeated lectures about moderation from Parson Adams, Joseph's eventual understanding comes not from without, but as a natural consequence of his examination of his love,

and of the worth of that love's object.

It should not be understood by this, however, that the reader's task is simply a matter of listening to the most compelling voice in the dialogue. Fielding surrounds Joseph - especially in the first half of the novel - with an aura of absurdity. The reader must ask himself why (if?) the idea of a chaste male is laughable, and the discussion here undertaken is intended to indicate the danger of laughing at the wrong thing ---in this case, genuine virtue.

Joseph is tempted and sorely tried; often he is only too ready to succumb. He is successfully chaste only when he comes to understand temperance from within. Fielding's satirization of general patterns of vice, embodied in and expressed by false glosses, is carried out by ridiculing affectation and by restoring the true meaning to evaluative terms, assisting the reader to correctly gloss the false glosses.

3) Parson Adams: Simplicity and "that Vice of Good Nature"

Mr. Abraham Adams was...a Man of good Sense, good Parts, and good Nature; but was at the same time as entirely ignorant of the Ways of this World, as an Infant just entered into it could possibly be. As he had never any Intention to deceive, so he never suspected such a Design in others. He was generous, friendly and brave to an Excess; but Simplicity was his Characteristic: he did, no more than Mr. Colley Cibber, apprehend any such Passions as Malice and Envy to exist in Mankind, which was indeed less remarkable in a Country Parson than in a Gentleman who hath past his Life behind the Scenes, a Place which hath been seldom thought the School of Innocence; and where a very little Observation would have convinced the great Apologist that those Passions have a real Existence in the human Mind (I.iii: 23).

Fielding's initial description of Parson Adams contains a typically explosive mixture of frank approval and peculiar equivocation. The three goods named (good Sense, good Parts, good Nature) are the greatest gifts Fielding knows to bestow upon a character decidedly in his favour. Still, the language of the passage in which Adams is so blessed is somewhat disingenuous. The importance of the gift---or, rather, the reader's awareness of its importance---is quickly obscured by Fielding's distracting shift of attention into the next clause. Using the connective "but" in a fashion which very often suggests that the preceding statement ought to be discounted---as when a reluctant guest tells a would-be host, "I'd love to come, but I really can't..."---Fielding suggests that the most important factor in Adams' character is, after all, his Simplicity. The reader is here invited, and the invitation is repeated constantly during the history of the good Parson's misadventures, to dismiss him as a fool, or to laugh him off as an eccentric. For the reader to do so, of course, would be to adopt in his interpretation the false gloss which the passage ironically affects: the fallacious identification of Good Nature with Folly, of Innocence

with Ignorance.

Fielding's novels abound with traps of this kind. Unless self-corrected according to the author's design, the reader is in danger of misreading. The danger is often difficult to avoid, for Fielding slips smoothly from one kind of narrative voice into another, often without overt warning. In the passage in question, he moves with the mid-sentence shift ("but") from tacit approval of Adams' virtue to a deceptively bland statement of the inverted society's opinion. Adams' innocence is thus renamed ignorance, a much less attractive title, and his failure to mark the widespread practice of deception among his fellow men is linked with an implicit suggestion that the failure to practice deception is only a little less foolish than the failure to notice it.

Nonetheless, the narrator's temporary adoption of the vocabulary of false glosses may be spotted easily enough by the careful reader. Of what exactly is Adams ignorant? The "Ways of the World", the reader is told, just as he learns of Adams' failures in the art of deceit. Fielding has defined the Ways of the World with a double irony, which exposes the falsity of the worldly attitude temporarily assumed by his narrator. As soon as the reader recognizes that Fielding has defined worldly wisdom as the Art of Thriving---the false gloss of "Prudence" is at work again---the oblique compliment to Adams must become manifest.

The passage continues with the declaration that Adams is "generous, friendly, and brave to an Excess; but Simplicity was his Characteristic . . ." In a parallel construction, the conjunction again distracts the reader from the first clause. By whose standards are these traits excessive? By hastening to assure the reader that Adams' primary character-

istic is Simplicity, the narrative voice appears to suggest that Simplicity outweighs (or, more likely, explains) the three "excessive" characteristics. Fielding's language begs several questions. What kind of "simple" behaviour, in a Christian context, can be too generous, too friendly, or too brave? It is Fielding's use of the term "Excess" which signals to the attentive reader that something is amiss. The narrative voice has once more adopted the terminology of the inverted society. In a society which adheres to insufficient definitions of these three words, and which seeks just enough virtue to suit its convenience, too much of real virtue may well be troublesome. The reader is given the task of reversing the affective flow of the sentences shifted with distracting conjunctions, and of reinvesting the evaluative terms with Fielding's actual meaning. The three virtuous traits in Adams' character are, together with the three gifts of temperament in the earlier sentence, the really solid part of his character. They are means on a continuum of moral alternatives, and as such they cannot be excessively pursued or acted out.³¹

Fielding goes on to compare Adams to the arch-dunce, Colley Cibber. The ostensible basis of comparison is a common inability to perceive malice and envy in men; Adams is as "simple" as Cibber. But the

³¹Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics, II. 7, 1107a; p. 44: "Just as there cannot be an excess and a deficiency of self-control and courage--because the intermediate is, in a sense, an extreme--so there cannot be a mean, excess, and deficiency in their respective opposites: their opposites are wrong regardless of how they are performed; for in general, there is no such thing as the mean of an excess or deficiency, or the excess and deficiency of a mean."

comparison is not a simple one. Fielding adds that the circumstances of Cibber's life must prove his naiveté affected, and therefore ridiculous. In contrast, the real innocence displayed by Adams turns back the narrator's proffered criticism. That Fielding parodies Cibber in a language which many contemporary readers must have recognized as Cibber's own adds relish to the pattern of anti-Cibberian satire which enriches the earlier parts of the novel. It also isolates Adams as in a spotlight. The subtle undermining of his character on specious grounds (as subtle as a stage whisper) by means of the temporary assumption of a worldly narrative voice, only serves to reinforce the reader's growing sense of Adams' real worth.

To a great extent, this reinforcement is achieved by an oblique, ironic effect. Fielding causes certain characters to judge Adams in a manner which must appear to the reader as completely and comically inadequate. In rejecting false glosses, and joining with the author in a community of disapproval, the reader participates in the shadowing-forth of the novel's scheme of positive values. This oblique effect can be seen operating in the reader's rejection of the false gloss "excessive" as applied to Adams' generosity, friendship, and courage, by the narrator as well as a string of secondary characters.

Charity and generosity are closely linked with friendship, or friendliness, a virtue held in high regard by classical ethicists, especially Aristotle and Cicero.³² Naturally, it also figures largely among the virtues inculcated by Christian teaching. As a disposition to

³² Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Books VIII and IX; Cicero, De Amicitia.

wish for the good of others, it is a species of charity; The Whole Duty of Man divides the duty of charity into two aspects, one concerning the affections, and the other concerning actions:

Charity in the Affections is a sincere kindness which disposes us to wish all good to others, and that in all their capacities, in the same manner that Justice obligeth us to wish no hurt to any Man, in respect either of his Soul, his Body, his Goods, or his Credit; so this first³³ part of Charity binds us to wish all good to them in all these.

Fielding expresses his adherence to this teaching on numerous occasions; in the "Essay on Conversation", for instance, he sets forth the principles governing social contact under the heading, "Good Breeding":

Good Breeding then, or the Art of pleasing in Conversation, is expressed two different Ways, viz. in our Actions and our Words, and our Conduct in both may be reduced to that concise, comprehensive Rule in Scripture; Do unto all Men as you would they should do unto you.³⁴

Parson Adams exemplifies this teaching, both in action and in affection. The primary instance of this Christian practice is his attitude toward his parishioners, which is close, friendly, and even familial, and completely unlike the practice of Parsons Barnabas and Trulliber. He is often censured for this eccentricity, particularly by his own wife, who calls his concern "a pack of Nonsense" (IV: xi: 32). Furthermore, he takes the hardships and joys of his friends very much to heart, and he extends his faculty of sympathy to an extraordinarily wide range of people. When concerned for them, angry, or worried, he dances about, sometimes snapping his fingers or rubbing his hands together with satisfaction. When Joseph and Fanny are unexpectedly reunited, the reader is directed

³³Op. cit., p. 138.

³⁴Miscellanies, I, 124.

to note Adams' response: he is discovered

dancing about the Room in a Rapture of Joy. Some Philosophers may perhaps doubt, whether he was not the happiest of the three; for the Goodness of his Heart enjoyed the Blessings which were exulting in the Breasts of both the other two, together with his own (II: xii: 155).

When Joseph comes into his new fortune, the reader (like the other characters) witnesses Adams' singular expression of joy:

Parson Adams, who now first perceived Joseph's new Apparel, burst into Tears with Joy, and fell to rubbing his Hands and snapping his Fingers, as if he had been mad (IV: v: 292).

As if he had been mad---the phrase implies more than it really states, and the implication is misleading. Adams is not mad (although notably eccentric),³⁵ and the reader needs to keep the context of Adams' characterization in mind if he is to avoid the mistakes made by Fielding's other characters. Adams differs from the rest of the party "welcoming" Joseph into his new life in his friendly sincerity and disinterested sympathy. Squire Booby is condescending (in our modern sense), Pamela is grudgingly cordial (but proud), and Lady Booby is selfishly and salaciously hopeful for another chance to get Joseph for herself. Nothing could be more foreign to this company than the thought of disinterested pleasure in the happiness of others. In their eyes, Adams seems mad, but the reader has been provided with enough direction to align himself on the author's side in this campaign of general satire.

Parson Adams is also brave "to an Excess". His courage is evident in his defense of unpopular or uncomfortable doctrine, in his

³⁵ The alert reader will recognize in this passage--and in the general pattern of Fielding's characterization of Adams--a distinct resonance with the notion of the wise fool of St. Paul and Erasmus.

defence of the dignity of the clergy, in his defiance of the corrupt standards of the ~~the~~ society around him, in his refusal to accept its false glosses, and in his ready assistance to the distressed and his resistance to injustice and oppression. His aid to Joseph and Fanny is a case in point. Sometimes his efforts are supported by his prodigious physical strength, and he is not unwilling to check threats of violence with promise of return in kind (I: xv,xvii; II: ii,ix; III:v, &c.). The consistent element in all the instances of pugnacity is clearly Adams' desire to protect what is truly valuable. Joseph refuses to part with a piece of gold, given to him by Fanny as a keepsake, although it is required as evidence against his attackers. For Joseph, the gold is not valuable in and of itself (as it was to his attackers), nor is he concerned that his attackers should be charged with a capital offence (which would require the gold as evidence) if it meant he would have to give the keepsake up, even temporarily. Adams approves of his devotion:

[Joseph] had fastened it with a Ribband to his Arm, and solemnly vowed, that nothing but irresistible Force should ever separate them; in which Resolution, Mr. Adams, clenching a Fist rather less than the Knuckle of an Ox, declared he would support him (I: Xv: 67).

Such descriptions, of course, contradict the normal expectation of the reader in the matter of the proper conduct of parsons. The apparent unseemliness of Adams' behaviour often outweighs, and usually obscures, the implicitly laudable intentions. Frequently, his efforts are intended to prevent somebody from harming somebody else. He stops Mrs. Tow-wouse as she is about to beat Betty, her maid, with a spit. She "was prevented from executing any dreadful Purpose by Mr. Adams who confined her Arms

with the Strength of a Wrist, which Hercules would not have been ashamed of" (I: xvii: 85). Adams runs from the side of the hypocritical professor of courage and patriotism, snapping his fingers furiously and brandishing his Crabstick, to aid a woman in distress (I: ix: 137). Joseph is barely able to restrain him from pursuing the rascals who shoot the dog belonging to Wilson's little children (III: v: 228). Frequently, his temper is not fully under control (especially in the Alehouse identification incident, II:ii:96). Here he has immersed himself in his Aeschylus, and (as is usually the case when so occupied) he has forgotten where he is. Without looking about him, he asks for directions of a fellow who assumes he is being deliberately baited. When Adams hears himself insulted, he forgets that his order is not apparent in his costume, and reprimands the insulting fellow in a tone which suggests his conviction that telling a clergyman to "be d---n'd" is beyond the pale. Still, a careful examination of the passage reveals that it hinges not on his temper, but on his absent-mindedness.

The consistency in such episodes, again, is to be found in Adams' intention; generally the ostensible foolishness or ill-temper is a kind of misdirection (as in a conjuring routine), which allows Fielding to work toward a "surprise" effect. Consider Adams' action when Beau Didapper draws his sword against Joseph, who has just presented him with a sound box on his ear for offending Fanny.

The Beau, as soon as he recovered himself, drew his Hanger, which Adams observing, snatched up the Lid of a Pot in his left Hand, and covering himself with it as with a Shield, without any Weapon of Offence in his hand, stept in before Joseph, and exposed himself to the enraged Beau, who threatened such Perdition and Destruction, that it frightened the Women, who were all got in a huddle together, out of their Wits; even to hear his Denunciations of Vengeance (IV: xi: 32).

Beau Didapper has drawn his sword in a company which is bound to be somewhat impressed, yet likely to prevent him from having to use it. His weapon of choice is words: dire threats and denunciations. The reader is already familiar with the Beau's character by the time this scene occurs, but Adams is not. The hilarity of the scene, the anti-heroic description of the combatants (especially the mundane nature of Adams' equipage), all contribute to a comic effect which obscures the real courage and devotion to his friend which marks Adams' action. The reader is required to make the vital distinction between the amusing and the ridiculous.

This distinction is not always so easily apprehended or maintained. The wealth of amusing detail about Adams builds up to create a cumulative effect which might lead some readers to misjudge Adams as a ridiculous character. The slapstick comedy of some of his struggles, especially the battle of the ox's blood (II: v: 118ff) and the charge of the dogs (III: vi: 237ff) as well as the seeming impropriety of a clergyman going about clenching his fist at assorted bullies and villains, all contribute to this effect. But the case is not so simple, as Adams demonstrates. When the assembled company chides Joseph for striking the Beau, Adams insists: "It becomes any Man to be the Champion of the Innocent" (IV: xi: 321). A telling truth, this statement serves as a kind of clear light to illuminate the fundamental integrity of Adams' intentions, and transforms the potentially destructive nature of the reader's laughter into laughter of sympathy and delight. The false glosses adopted by characters who consider Adams' defense of the innocent to be "excessive" friendship and courage are exposed, recognized by the

reader as ridiculously poor judges.

As for his "excessive" defense of his own dignity, it must be remembered that Adams insists only on proper respect, and resorts to the threat of the clenched fist only upon provocation. If on occasion his anger is admittedly excessive and reprehensible, it must be remembered that he is humanly susceptible to passions, and that he earnestly tries to keep them under control (as his recommendation of Christian stoicism suggests). However, the reader must not confuse his pugnacious moments with his legitimate anger; Jesus himself was meek, but never mild. As we have seen, directed toward its proper objects (cruelty, injustice, oppression, venality) anger has its rightful place. Adams demonstrates his ability to withstand improper anger quite early in the novel, when he is teased by a Surgeon for "pretensions" to learning (I: xiv: 6lff). The encounter is one of a kind in which Fielding took great delight: the attack of a false professor upon a true professor of the quality in question. Adams quietly allows his tormentor to have his fun, without any attempt at revenge or repartee. Indeed, Fielding presents the whole conversation in a manner designed to emphasize Adams' deference and calm. During the entire passage, he is called simply "a grave Person" or "a Gentleman", and it is only several pages later that the reader is provided with his identity. The passage then takes on a backward-glancing irony, for the reader already knows enough of the extent of Adams' learning to recognize that, should he be so inclined, he could easily retaliate and turn the charlatanish Surgeon's barbs back to their originator. The reader is thereby obliquely encouraged to admire Adams' restraint at the same time that he comes to recognize the hidden, ironic possibilities of

the encounter.

Let us return for a moment to the passage in which Fielding first describes Parson Adams. It is a description informed by a certain tension between descriptive elements, a clash of genuine value and social custom. In a sense, then, the passage is a brief dialogue. Out of one voice, that of Fielding's narrator, emerge two voices talking about one word, "Simplicity", in two different senses. According to one of these voices, Adams is to be admired for his attributes; according to the other, he is to be mistrusted for "going too far". The second voice considers Adams' simplicity a matter of defective apprehension of his own particular advantage, while the first voice provides a shadowed point of reference for the reader, whose job is to examine the alternatives. In reading passages such as this one, the rejection of the inadequate alternative may be made more or less consciously, but it is an action carefully built into the novel's structure, and impossible to overlook without serious misreading.

Adams' reluctance to acknowledge malice and envy in others, a trait about which Fielding's narrator (in his "second voice") is quite facetious, does not blind him to the existence of evil. He only hesitates to assign the worst motives to actions when motivation is unclear. In a world which values self-serving prudence above all, such a lack of protective circumspection is hard to comprehend. But Fielding's reader is led, gradually and carefully, to a recognition that what the worldly wise call folly is a higher kind of wisdom. The conclusive evidence in Fielding's argument is that Adams demonstrates that the deceitful, self-aggrandizing, Thriving way of life and pursuit

of immediate pleasure is not successful on its own terms. It does not produce happiness. The greatest visible contrast between Adams and his negative counterparts is in the perception of the happiness which springs from doing good. This concept, sometimes called laudable epicureanism, does not offer pleasure as a reward or incentive for doing good. Instead, it argues that happiness is an indication that the via media, the life directed by the virtues which lie along the mean, must indeed be the ideal and proper life for man. It can be seen, therefore, that the pattern of characterization and incident which follows the initial description of Parson Adams offers the reader a false, but correctable, definition of excess. As he is led to reject the inadequate glosses offered by various characters, the reader is encouraged to adopt a new perspective, one which is aligned with the mean acknowledged by a long line of ethicists and Christian philosophers.

CHAPTER IV

TOM JONES: DELIBERATE ARTIFICIALITY OF FORM

Bacon says nature betrays herself more easily when manhandled by art than if you leave her to her own devices. ¹

There appears a gap between the familiar repertoire in the novel and one's own observation of it. These gaps heighten our awareness, and their effectiveness lies in the fact that they conceal something of vital importance....By negating the familiar, the irony indicates that now something is to be communicated of which hitherto there has been no proper conception. ²

We warn thee not to hastily to condemn any of the Incidents in this our History, as impertinent and foreign to our main Design, because thou dost not immediately conceive in what Manner such Incident may conduce to that Design. This Work may, indeed, be considered as a great Creation of our own; and for a little Rep- tile of a Critic to presume to find Fault with any of its Parts, without knowing the Manner in which the Whole is connected, is a most presumptuous Absurdity. (TJ, X:i:523)

¹Bertolt Brecht, The Messingkauf Dialogues, tr. John Willet (London, 1965), p. 23.

²Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader (Baltimore & London, 1974), p. 33. I have found Iser's approach to reading useful. There are many points in which we agree substantially; however, it will become evident as this enquiry progresses that our conclusions differ at least as substantially.

1) Interrupting the Illusion: Self-Reference, Question, and Comic Theatre

Machine. There, Sir, is a Scene in Heroicks, between a Cobler and his Wife; now you shall have a Scene in mere Prose between several Gods.

Fustian. I should have thought it more natural for the Gods to have talk'd in Heroicks, and the Cobler and his Wife in Prose.

Machine. You think it would have been more natural, so do I, and for that very Reason have avoided it; for the Chief Beauty of an Entertainment, Sir, is to be unnatural. ³

Gal. Supper's upon Table, Madam.

Dor. Ah! This will do for the Catastrophe, nothing cou'd ha' been more natural. They shall dispute strenuously on both Sides, as we have done, without any Body's yielding; Then a little Lacquey shall come to say Supper's serv'd up, upon which they shall all rise, and each take his Seat at Table.

Uran. The Play cou'd not finish better, and we had as good conclude here. ⁴

Witwoud. Heyday! What, are you all got together like players at the end of the last act? ⁵

The history of the relationship of the play and its audience is a fascinating study, but it must be left to another student of the experience of literature to undertake. It will, however, prove useful to the enquiry at hand to touch upon several points in this history, as an aid toward understanding the evolution and innovation of Fielding's new "Species of writing".

³ Henry Fielding, Tumble-Down Dick (London, 1736), p. 15.

⁴ Molière, The School for Women Criticized [1663], "Scene the Last", in The Dramatic Works of Molière, tr. John Ozell (1714; New York, 1967), II, 188.

⁵ William Congreve, The Way of the World [1700], V.i.; in Six Restoration Plays, ed. J.H. Wilson (Boston, 1959), p. 387.

Joel B. Altman has posited that the history of theatre can be divided into two streams or aesthetic directions. One stream moves outward, the other moves inward; one kind of play seems to present a closed but comprehensible world, the other reaches out to question the audience. Altman suggests that the appeal of the latter form is to the sense of wonder which Aristotle credits as the beginning of philosophy. His distinction is not intended to suggest that only the latter form serves as a vehicle of thought, but to differentiate between the respective modes of transmission. Therefore, he calls the first mode "Demonstrative", and the second "Explorative".⁶ To explain the function of these modes, Altman turns to the example of Terentian comedy and the problem of interpretation by later commentators:

A Terentian comedy was a running controversy waged by characters whose ruminations, inquiries, laments, and rejoicings were imaged responses to the need for proofs required to win the argument.⁷

The commentators tended to view the comedies either as sources of apothegmatic wisdom which could be usefully extracted---"bits of sententious wisdom that rooted the scenes of Terence in conventional moral experience"---or else they viewed the comedies as a kind of dialogue---"an ongoing debate in which amusing individuals attempted to prove their theses...by inventing arguments and rebutting those of their opponents."⁸ The tradition of drama of question (or enquiry or controversy) was also rooted in rhetorical education, and strengthened by the humanistic dialogues of Erasmus and More:

⁶ Joel B. Altman, The Tudor Play of Mind, pp. 1, 23ff.

⁷ Altman, p. 143.

⁸ Altman, p. 143.

The conclusion drawn---that the plays are essentially questions and not statements at all---suggests a much wider moral function for them than has commonly been supposed. For if my argument is sound, the plays functioned as media for intellectual and emotional exploration for minds that were accustomed to examine the many sides of a given theme, to entertain opposing ideals, and by so exercising the understanding, to move toward some fuller apprehension of truth that could be discerned only through the total action of the drama. Thus the experience of the play was the thing. The corollary of this hypothesis is that such an experience was, in some measure, set apart from that of ordinary life, so as to provide a leisured otium wherein the auditor was freed to discover or recall---and then to contemplate---ideas and feelings not always accessible or expressible in the life of a hierarchical Christian society.⁹

The demonstrative play is based on discernible syllogism, but the explorative play moves outward, not focusing on abstract assertion, and often remaining inconclusive or open-ended.¹⁰ A great number of Tudor plays, Altman concludes, follow this latter pattern; Douglas Duncan's study of Ben Jonson and "lusus" parallels Altman's findings.

Both Altman and Duncan note that the question (or dialogue) operates both within the play (in conversation between characters) and in extension by implicating and amusing the audience as well. The tactic can be vastly amusing, as it often is with Jonson, but it is nonetheless always challenging. Duncan traces the development through the humanist masters of word-play (under the tutelage of Erasmus and his literary master, Lucian), culminating in what he calls the "Art of Teasing", a mode of

⁹Altman, p. 6.

¹⁰The hermeneutical critics have observed that aporia (puzzlement) is usually the result of questioning, especially as applied by Socrates. "As opposed to methodical deduction, in discussion the question prevails over the answer. Good discussions are provocations to think further..." P. Christopher Smith, Translator's Introduction, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Dialogue and Dialectic (New Haven & London, 1980), p. x; emphasis added. See also Sallie TeSelle's account of "the watchword of the new hermeneutic", which emphasizes the experience rather than the content of literature: "We do not interpret the parable, but the parable interprets us....Metaphors

questioning which derives its impact at least partly from the admixture of jest and earnest. It is, Duncan explains,

a process of educative testing, variously playful or hostile, whereby the moral intelligence of the public was to be trained by being subjected to attempts to undermine or confuse it. In drama, it took the form of alerting the audience's attention to the moral anomalies which are apt to arise in the theatre when natural instincts and sympathies are allowed to respond freely to the authority, wit, glamour or eloquence of the actors on the stage.¹¹

The dramatic Art of Teasing, then, adapted or invented a large arsenal of devices calculated to draw the audience's attention to the "deceptive" possibilities of theatrical representation. The relegation of the sympathetic appreciation of characters in the plot to the status of a secondary means to an end is a characteristic of "Menippean" fiction, a category defined by Northrop Frye (and taken up by Duncan)¹², which places literary integrity in thought, not simple fictional verisimilitude.

Pointing out to the audience the artificial nature of the play interrupts their concentration on the potentially over-absorbing levels of dramatic fiction; the teasing dramatists developed numerous techniques to carry this out, which fosters what Altman calls "a relationship of raffish badinage with the audience".¹³ Other critics, however, quarrel with this; the foremost opponent is probably Ann Righter, whose study of Shakespeare

cannot be 'interpreted'---a metaphor does not have a message, it is a message." Speaking in Parables, pp. 71f.

¹¹Duncan, p. 2.

¹²Anatomy of Criticism, pp. 308ff.; cf. Duncan, pp. 14ff., et passim. See below (IV.4) for a discussion of Fielding's Menippean characterization.

¹³Altman, p. 16.

and his forebears includes an impressive summary of disruptive or disjunctive tactics. But she argues for the evolution of drama from early, participatory forms, to the more "mature", "self-contained" forms. She sees the self-conscious bridges between illusion and reality as occasional, pro-tempore measures:

Almost invariably, Plautine violations of dramatic illusion are completely functional. Most of them seem to have been designed for the express purpose of surprising a large, noisy, and notoriously wayward audience into attention at moments when some necessary question of the play required its understanding.¹⁴

Righter's account of the active involvement of the medieval audience outlines a theory of the "Tyranny of the Audience"; this "Tyranny" effectively retarded the development of the pure form, the self-contained drama of the Renaissance. Her analysis, however, of the forms of deliberate artificiality in the history of the theatre is quite impressive, even if she tends to treat breaking the illusion as a form of atavism. Particularly compelling is her account of the stage-as-life (and vice-versa) metaphor, and her explanation of the Shakespearean play-within-a-play and its precedents.¹⁵

Another valuable suggestion Righter offers is that the artificial, illusion-breaking techniques (which Duncan sees as so important to the Art of Teasing) have their origin in farce. She cites Plautus as an early case of self-consciousness, "the sense of a sly joke with the audience".¹⁶

¹⁴ Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 44.

¹⁵ Righter, pp. 59ff., 94ff., et passim.

¹⁶ Righter, p. 66.

Examining the influence of farce in the 17th and 18th century furnishes a wealth of self-conscious, self-referential material. The most successful and influential practitioner was Molière, who is credited with some of the first "rehearsal plays" (L'Impromptu de Versailles, for instance), and who responded to the critical censure of one of his plays (L'Ecole des Femmes) with a farcical attack on his critics (La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes). Alvin Eustis explains Molière's deliberate artificialities as a parodic technique:

Further analysis of Molière's plays makes it increasingly apparent that he goes to considerable lengths to prevent suspense from building up or romantic sentiment from invading the spectator. Foremost among all his devices is parody.¹⁷

Although it may be more difficult to determine the purpose behind Molière's questioning than it is in the case of other dramatists¹⁸, the operative principle remains the same:

Irony reveals itself as the guiding principle. Themes, structures,

¹⁷ Molière as Ironic Commentator (The Hague & Paris, 1973), p. 101.

¹⁸ Eustis acknowledges this difficulty candidly in his discussion of ideology (p. 199): "The fact that the critics have been at odds in determining for whom, and in the name of what, he speaks shows that the question is unanswerable. It seems safe to conclude that he neither accepted nor refused, approved or disapproved of contemporary society, because the necessity of taking such a position probably did not enter his head. My conclusion contradicts of course the present trend of Molière criticism." Eustis maintains---and it is not an entirely convincing argument---that Molière's thought is "ineffable" because of his irony (p. 218): "The synthesis between his ideas and his art is effected by this pervasive irony, which results in the seeming paradox that Molière is farther removed from his characters than the ideologists have believed, since with a few notable exceptions he is not a secret sharer of ideas or sentiments with any of them, but that at the same time he is more present in his work than the aestheticians have believed by intervening as a character in his own right and, most of all, by his constant irony at the expense of every one of his characters, including the one named Molière."

To maintain, as Eustis does, that irony can be universally applied is at best misleading---this matter will be discussed at length below.

technical devices are all intended to prevent the dramatic illusion from gripping the audience or letting it live vicariously. What at first glance appears to be serious is the very element without which the comic would be incomplete. That is to say, the seemingly serious in this theater is not mingled with the comic in order simply to keep pathos from developing, or to give a cross-section of life, but to reveal how absurd the heroic and pathetic are when they stray into the world of comedy, where their values, however legitimate elsewhere, can only be spurious.¹⁹

The forcible juxtaposition of conflicting dramatic conventions is also the primary formal component of farce, and it has the capacity of providing both ludicrous and serious effects, as is demonstrated by Lucian's "trick" of self-reference in his dramatic²⁰, satirical dialogues. One of the many deflationary techniques in Lucian's arsenal consists of the presentation of the gods speaking lines which parody the words of terrestrial poets, and often referring to themselves as though they were actors delivering lines assigned to them by not over-generous authors. In the opening verses of Zeus Rants, for instance, Hermes and Athena ask Zeus what is troubling him. His answer is a parodic allusion to the opening lines of Euripides' Orestes; Athena's reply fixes his place, merci-

¹⁹ Eustis, p. 217.

²⁰ Christopher Robinson would object to the term "dramatic" precisely because of the profusion of deliberate artificialities, clearly indicating a definition of drama which implies evolution from what Righter calls "tyrannical" audience demands (catered to by artificiality) to a more mature, self-justifying form: "In practice, however, the Lucianic dialogue is anti-theatrical, for reasons which also apply in part to Senecan tragedy. Both genres are armchair theatre, with techniques especially designed to give the reader the illusion of setting, costume, and action. Lucian's characters identify and describe one another, evoke the physical circumstances of their meeting, give warning of the approach of other characters 'offstage', in a fashion that is a replacement of drama, not a recipe for it. Lucian and His Influence in Europe, p. 100. Many of the devices Robinson names are standard practice in the dialogue (including those of Plato); as a corrective to this attitude, see A. Bellinger, "Lucian's Dramatic Technique", Yale Classical Studies, I (1928), pp. 3-40. Bellinger is not displeased with artificiality, and praises Lucian for those very elements about which Robinson has such reservations.

lessly, not atop Olympus but (with typically Lucianic bathos) in the prosaic realm of purely literary imagination and artifice. Zeus cavils at his role:

Zeus: There's nothing dreadful to express in speech,
 No cruel hap, no stage catastrophe,
 That I do not surpass a dozen lines!
Athena: Apollo! What a prelude to your speech!

Later in the same dialogue, Zeus reprimands his messenger for failing to use the high language expected of one doing the business of the gods:

Hermes: Hear ye, gods, assemble in meeting! Don't delay!
 Come! We are to meet about important matters.
Zeus: Is that the sort of proclamation you make, Hermes,
 so bald and simple and prosaic, and that too when you
 are calling them together on business of the greatest
 importance?
Hermes: Why, how do you want me to do it, Zeus?
Zeus: How do I want you to do it? Ennoble your proclamation,
 I tell you, with metre and high-sounding, poetical words so
 that they may be more eager to assemble. 21

In a like manner, Lucian's characters often refer to their surroundings as though they were on theatrical sets. In Charon, or the Inspectors, several mountains have been piled up to afford Charon and his guide, Hermes, a good view of the world from which to take a critical, panoramic survey of human life. Charon banters, "Put out your hand, Hermes. This is an uncommonly big piece of stage-machinery that you are mounting me on." 22

Lucian's deliberate, farcical exaggeration of the formal conventions of dramatic presentation serve to undercut the sense of the gods' grandeur, to support the parodic use of poetic languages in their mouths, to draw attention to the movement of bathos, and, in short, to emphasize the "antitheatrical" elements of the dialogue to guarantee

²¹ Lucian, tr. A.R. Harmon, II, 91, 99.
²² Ibid., p. 407

both amusement and detachment on the part of his reader.

About the same time as Molière was active in France, a new vogue for "rehearsal plays" arose in England, starting with Buckingham's burlesque, The Rehearsal (first produced in 1671). A farcical critique of theatrical aspirations and conventions, Buckingham's play features a poetaster-playwright in the process of rehearsing, exhibiting, and attempting to explain his monstrously absurd production -- a wonderfully foolish play, never concluded, and set inside a framework of another sharply satirical play. Here too the effect of ironic community -- or even collusion -- between Buckingham and his audience in the ridicule of Bayes is enhanced by jocular comments about the inherent artificiality of the play's microcosm. The Rehearsal is designed to be as manifestly artificial as the play it contains. Such commentary combines with related staging and acting techniques -- actors playing dramatic parts yet still recognizable (perhaps by a "trademark" in costumery) as themselves; actors stepping forward to address the audience in confidential (and sometimes improvised) "asides"; explicit violations of the "Unities" and the miscellaneous proprieties of drama;²³ prologues and epilogues discussing the play, the acting, and the critics in an "objective" manner; and so forth. As the artificiality of the genre was emphasized, in the wave of farces and rehearsal plays that lasted from the Restoration at least until the Licensing Act

²³ Self-consciously parodied (within a play) by Sir George Etherege, The Man of Mode (1676), II.ii: "I'll wager my life there's not an article but he has broken -- talked to the vizards i' the pit, waited upon the ladies from the boxes to their coaches, gone behind the scenes, and fawned upon those little insignificant creatures, the players..." Six Restoration Plays, p. 108.

of 1737, a new audience of urbane, witty, detached spectators was developed.

As an author of farces for the English stage, Fielding drew on all these sources, and his travesties of pretentious dramatic fashions and conventions were devastating. The principle of the farcical "Entertainment" is to invert everything, to make all unnatural, and surprise the audience into laughter. In his total demolition of heroic tragedy, for instance, he flouts all dramatic and realistic laws -- the diminutive hero of Tom Thumb is victorious in battle, but tragically eaten by a cow, and (in the final indignity) his ghost is slain by his rival.²⁴ Fielding's Preface to the annotated version justifies the whole extravaganza with arguments out of Aristotle, who defined Tragedy as "the Imitation of a short, but Perfect action".²⁵ The play is not only a tragedy about tragedies (as its title suggests), but it is the Tragedy to

²⁴ Mrs. Pilkington relates that Swift was greatly delighted with this scene (unfortunately excised from the second version, The Tragedy of Tragedies, in 1730): "The Dean told me, he did remember that he had not laugh'd above twice in his Life; once at some Trick a Mountebank's Merry-Andrew play'd; and the other time was at the Circumstance of Tom Thumb's killing the Ghost; and I can assure Mr. Fielding, the Dean had a high Opinion of his Wit, which must be a Pleasure to him, as no Man was ever better qualified to judge, possessing it so eminently himself." Memoirs (London, 1748-54), III, 155f. See Samuel Macey, "Theatrical Satire: A Protest from the Stage Against Poor Taste in Theatrical Entertainment", The Varied Pattern, ed. P. Hughes and D. Williams (Toronto, 1971), pp.121-9, for an account of the critical aspect of self-referential farce.

²⁵ "H. Scriblerus Secundus, His Preface", The Tragedy of Tragedies 1731; (Edinburgh, 1970), p. 44. Emphasis is added.

end all Tragedies.

This characteristic self-reference is common to many of Fielding's farces, especially The Historical Register (1737) and The Author's Farce (1730). Most of his plays include self-referential comedy, parody of recognizable texts, and a "chinese boxes" framework of play-within-play. As such, he was completely familiar with the range of tactics available for breaking the theatrical illusion, of "conspiring" with the audience against the characters in his own plays, and of turning the order of literary expectation upside-down. In the rest of this chapter, we shall observe the development of these tactics in his novel-writing.

²⁶ Recent criticism of the novel has devoted considerable attention to the ontological implications of self-referentiality. Although the majority of this criticism focuses on more recent writing, some valuable insights can be gleaned; see especially Robert Alter, Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975). Alter (p. x) defines the genre: "A self-conscious novel, briefly, is a novel that systematically flaunts its own condition of artifice and that by so doing probes into the problematic relationship between real-seeming artifice and reality." As this enquiry progresses, it will become apparent that I disagree with Alter, primarily in that I understand Fielding's deliberate artificiality and self-reference as a means which points not at the novel itself, but beyond.

There is also some critical controversy concerning this matter; on the tendency in some modern literature to accord self-referentiality a dominant role, see Christopher Ricks' review article, "Phew! Oops! Oof!", New York Review of Books, XXVIII, 12 (July 16, 1981): "The grace of self-reflection, by which some part of art's attention is well turned upon itself, has rightly been valued highly by much recent criticism, especially as a power for wit and humour, and as a reminder, in its admission of its own art, that 'the truest poetry is the most feigning'...But the principle, like all others, has always been tempted to escalate its claims, to make itself the one thing necessary, as if art's own nature were the only thing with which art were ever occupied. Then a proper self-attention becomes solipsism and self-regard, and poems are held to have no other subject than their own poemness...Self-reflection is a good partner, but it is not good enough to be any art's master." (p.43)

2) Narrative Options for the Novel

In his seminal study of the mechanics of the novel, The Craft of Fiction, Percy Lubbock outlines a useful distinction between two basic alternative narrative stances available to the novelist. These he names the "pictorial" and the "dramatic":

It is a question... of the reader's relation to the writer; in one case the reader faces towards the story-teller and listens to him, in the other he turns toward the story and watches it. 27

The pictorial method entails the presentation of all narrative material explicitly through the mediating consciousness of a narrator, whose presence, to some degree, is always felt. The dramatic method concerns itself with a presentation which will seem to the reader to be an immediate vision. Lubbock explains:

In the drama of the stage, in the acted play, the spectator evidently has no direct concern with the author at all, while the action is proceeding. The author places their parts in the mouths of the players, and leaves them to make their own impression, leaves us, the audience, to make what we can of it. The motion of life is before us, the recording, registering mind of the author is eliminated. 28

Of course, the presence of an author can never really be eliminated, although the "author" as a self-conscious voice written into the novel can be refined to varying degrees of inobtrusiveness. The critical myth that showing is inherently superior was described and dispelled by Wayne Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction.²⁹

The real difference between the two options lies in the manner of the appeal to the individual reader's subjectivity. With the dramatic method, the novelist's intention is to suppress the reader's consciousness

27

28 Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (1921; London, 1965) p. 111.

29 Loc. cit.

The Rhetoric of Fiction, esp. Chapters 2, 3, and 4. The new linguistic

of the book as an artifact; the reader is invited to immerse himself in psychological involvement, total acceptance and experience of the fictional world. Lubbock, confessedly in the dramatic school of Henry James, is an apologist for this approach:

We are much more inclined to forget, if we can, that the book is an object of art, and treat it as a piece of the life around us. 30

The pictorial method brings the narrative voice into the foreground, and sometimes includes the physical and intellectual processes of writing as part of the narrative material. Until Booth (and sometimes in spite of Booth), many modern critics have felt this technique to be an infraction of canonized aesthetic law. Ian Watt, for instance, discussing the "authenticity" of Fielding's narrative style, objects:

Reading Tom Jones we do not imagine that we are eavesdropping on a new exploration of reality; the prose immediately informs us that exploratory operations have long since been accomplished, that we

school, while acknowledging the importance of Booth's terminology, holds that the observation that all narrative is mediated is "taken for granted in European structuralist approaches to fiction," and that the Russian Formalists long ago provided the distinction between "'fabula' -- story material as pure chronological sequence -- and 'suzet', the plot as arranged and edited by the shaping of a storyteller, i.e. the finished narrative work as we experience it in a text; no longer pure story but a selective narrative act". Modern French theorists use the terms "histoire" and "discours" indicating "story-matter and its manner of delivery". Roger Fowler, Linguistics and the Novel (London, 1977), pp. 78-9. It should be pointed out that this distinction, as it affects the processing, re-assembling, or synthesizing of chronological story material, is much older than Fowler indicates; see below, Chapter IV, iii, for the classical distinction between two kinds of narrative ordo.

30 The Craft of Fiction, p.6.

are to be spared that labour, and presented instead with a sifted and clarified report of the findings....Fielding's stylistic virtues tend to interfere with his technique as a novelist, because a patent selectiveness of vision destroys our belief in the reality of report, or at least diverts our attention from the content of the report to the skill of the reporter. 31

Fielding's stylistic virtues, of course, are the special feature of his technique as a novelist. Watt's complaint reveals the prejudice against highly-visible selectivity (telling) as opposed to self-effacing or disguised selectivity (showing). The very nature of fictional narrative, of course, is necessarily selective. Without selectivity, the mimetic principle cannot function; without the refined and codified forms of language, the writer would be like a geographer attempting to produce a life-sized map of the world.

The standards by which success is judged by the dramatic and pictorial schools differ significantly. For the dramatic author to be successful, the illusion must be convincing, and the reader must be able to enter into a "willing suspension of disbelief". The pictorial author must achieve a personal rapport with his reader; this is most often accomplished by the creation of a fully characterized narrative persona, who colours (and is coloured by) the narrative material he presents.

The mimetic options also vary. Novelists may choose a position somewhere along a continuum between verisimilitude and conscious artificiality. Distinguishing between pragmatic referential texts (correctable by our knowledge of reality), and fictional texts (potentially capable of deviating from facts), Karlheinz Stierle suggests that some fictional texts invite a reception as similar to the pragmatic as possible:

There is a form of reception with regard to fictional texts that one could call quasi-pragmatic. In quasi-pragmatic reception the boundaries of the fictional

³¹ The Rise of the Novel (London, 1963), pp. 30-31.

text are transcended through an illusion created by the reader himself. This illusion may be compared to pragmatic reception, which is always overstepping the boundaries of the text in an attempt to fill the gap between word and world...The reading of fiction in terms of mimetic illusion is an elementary form of reception that has a relative right of its own. Depending on the vividness of the illusion, the reader may be compelled to identify with fictional roles. 32

The quasi-pragmatic texts are fictions whose appeal to the reader suggests the documentation of recognizable reality, and the offer of this reality for experience. On the other end of the continuum are fictions which acknowledge their artificiality, and offer a text for experience, and by seeing through it, analysis. This distinction has existed -- at least in practice, if not in critical theory -- for some time. During the 18th and early 19th centuries, however, with the sentimental emphasis on feeling and sympathetic involvement in literature, and with the Romantic emphasis on elevated expression of (elevated) personality, the concept of literature as a vehicle (or as the transitive form of knowledge) was gradually eclipsed. The critical prejudice against "moralistic" literature, in which the "content" takes precedence over the mimetic illusion of the literary artifact, is still hard to kill. 33

32 "The Reading of Fictional Texts", in The Reader in the Text, ed Susan R. Suleiman & Inge Crosman (Princeton, 1980), p. 85.

33 An extreme case of this phenomenon can be seen in W. Somerset Maugham's "edited" version of Tom Jones, with as much narrative commentary cut as could be managed. The consensus of critical opinion seems to be that the mimetic illusion must be primary. Susanne Langer insists: "The moral content is thematic material, which, like everything that enters into a work of art, has to serve to make the primary illusion and articulate the pattern of 'felt life' the artist intends". "The Comic Rhythm" (from Feeling and Form, 1953), in Comedy: Meaning and Form, ed. Robert Corrigan (San Francisco, 1963), p. 119.

Langer's characteristic assumption seems to be that the "felt life" -- and her appropriation of Henry James' term is significant -- is the proper end, and (as dramatic criticism has suffered from moralism in interpretation), the moral or thematic element must remain simply constitutive of this end. The principle seems analogous to that maintained by Anne Righter.

One innovator in this century -- although it could be argued that he was re-inventing an older method -- was Bertolt Brecht. He contrasted the former emphasis on the mimetic reproduction of reality, with the latter, which he calls "mastering" reality. In his writings on theatre, Brecht respectively designates these two approaches Naturalism and Realism:

Naturalistic performances give one the illusion of being at a real place....The playwrights in question were naturally just as ingenious in arranging the incidents as the non-naturalists had been. They cut, combined, made characters meet at unlikely places, treated certain incidents more broadly and others more delicately, and so on. They stopped short as soon as there was any danger of spoiling one's illusion of reality. 34

Brecht's differentiation is more than a formal evaluation. In his effort to reform the theatre of his day, he proposes an aesthetic shift from art which is simply mimetic to art which is politically (and ethically) committed. He does not disavow all the techniques of Naturalism, but states that his Realistic theatre attempts to go deeper:

The crux of the matter is that true realism has to do more than just make reality recognizable in the theatre. One has to be able to see through it too. One has to be able to see the laws that decide how the processes of life develop. These laws can't be spotted by the camera. Nor can they be spotted if the audience borrows its heart from one of the characters involved. 35

Brecht insists that the emphasis on psychological involvement, or empathy, with characters -- a condition of good Naturalistic art -- precludes the deeper vision he feels is the artist's responsibility to make available to his audience:

³⁴ Bertolt Brecht, The Messingkauf Dialogues, p. 25.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

Plunged in self-identification with the protagonist's feelings, virtually the whole audience failed to take part in the moral decisions of which the plot is made. 36

It is Brecht's contention that the audience should play an active part in the theatrical experience. His own theatre attempts to be more open-ended, to be dialectical in nature. Each member of the audience must engage not only his powers of observation, but also his powers of judgment. Total empathetic identification with characters only clouds the issues, and so Brecht endeavours to combat this tendency by means of a host of effects which forcibly interrupt it. These he calls "Alienation effects" (or "A-effects").

To grasp what Brecht means to achieve by the operation of these A-effects, it will be useful to examine one aspect of the nature of verbal communication. It is possible to differentiate intellectually between objects and the words used to describe or symbolically represent them. In most ordinary circumstances, the consciousness of this distinction disappears; the distance between the object signified and the signifying word is closed by an act (albeit unconscious) of will, or the operation of a conventional association. Opening this gap between word and meaning is usually startling; Rabelais and Lewis Carroll delight in doing just this, and Gargantua and Pantagruel and Through the Looking Glass positively reel with the absurdity of misrelation between word

³⁶ "A Dialogue About Acting", in Brecht on Theatre, ed., tr. John Willet (New York, 1964), p. 28

and meaning.³⁷ In ordinary communication, however, the mind operates with a kind of "overdrive", a working complex of unquestioned assumptions, in much the same way as certain areas of the brain control involuntary muscles. Unless interrupted deliberately, either by repetition of one word until it seems silly, or by literary techniques, the overdrive operates to keep the consciousness of the distance between word and meaning suppressed.

Brecht recognized that a similar effect appears in the aesthetic or experiential involvement of audiences in the theatre. At some level, the audience knows it is watching a play, and accepts any number of artificial symbolic conventions unquestioningly. Likewise, the reader must admit that he is reading fiction when reading a novel. G.G. Sedgwick has pointed out that this condition can be considered ironic, because the audience is involved simultaneously with the double, conflicting impulses of sympathy and detachment:

There can be no play without a spectator; he too is part of the performance....Taking a hint from the

³⁷ It is just such a misrelation, of course, which is the stock-in-trade of verbal irony. Fielding employs it when he inverts the word "Greatness" to signify its opposite in Jonathan Wild, and when he causes his characters to signal to the reader their dystopian values by means of a wilfull selection and focus on one word, radically divorced from its meaningful, normative context (Peter Pounce's approval of "Disposition" to benevolence without practical application; the "Good Breeding" so dear to the hearts of Pamela, Squire Booby, Mrs. Western, etc.). This kind of verbal irony depends on a recognition and renewal of the evaluative meaning of such terms, which must take place in the reader's imaginative participation in ridicule and rejection of insufficient definitions. M.A. Screech explains: "It is precisely because authoritatively imposed meanings, accepted by convention, are normative that departures from the norm are laughably comic. Anyone who divorces sense from verbal signs in this way is mad, diabolically wicked, or just comic." Rabelais, p. 31. For further discussion of verbal irony, see above (II. 4 and 5, and below, IV. 5, V. 2).

romanticists, we have come to apply the term irony to the fusion in a spectator's mind of superior knowledge and detached sympathy, and this somewhat vague shape I shall label, just for this occasion, with the name "general dramatic irony". The whole attitude of the interested spectator is ironic; by the very fact that he is such a spectator, he is an ironist. And "general irony" is a name for the proper pleasure of the theatre. 38

Sedgwick's definition may be expanded to cover all the literary arts; his general irony could then be called formal irony, because there is implicit in the reader's relationship with the work some degree of detachment derived from the recognition of its artificial nature. Yet the conscious recognition of this formal irony is suppressed in a great deal of literature, and this is what is meant by willing suspension of disbelief. A spectator at a play ordinarily does not filter his perception through a constant, consciously active idea of the artificial circumstances. Rather, the illusion is allowed to dominate for the moment, to take possession of the spectator. An author or playwright, as we have seen, can utilize this distance if he brings it to the attention of his audience and his reader. By replacing the "immersion" of the audience with a detached viewpoint ³⁹ -- and this is the essence of Brecht's doctrine -- the audience is manoeuvred into viewing the artificial world of the play (or, for the reader, the fictional world) critically. Brecht calls this enlargement of focus "epic"; it is an enlargement because the audience's (or reader's) role is given room in which his own judgment can be brought into play. Furthermore, these judgments are themselves placed in a wider frame of reference.

³⁸ Of Irony, Especially in Drama (Toronto, 1967), p. 33.

³⁹ The detachment is from the action on stage; Brecht is (and would like his audience to be) ardently committed to political principles.

To facilitate the extraction of his audience from the empathetic state, Brecht employs a number of techniques which, by pointing out the nature of the work in progress as artifice, are intended to startle the audience, and to make them draw back into a conscious detachment.

Brecht cites several precedents in literary history for the use of A-effects. The ancient Greek drama employed the intervention and commentary of a chorus. The Chinese theatre developed an acting technique which was distinctly non-mimetic (in any Western sense): the actors remain self-consciously actors, always aware (and displaying their awareness) of the audience, without attempting to create the formal illusion of the "fourth wall" through which the audience views the action.⁴⁰ Forcing the audience to recognize the artificiality of the form during the progress of the work is of paramount importance to Brecht:

As we cannot invite the audience to fling itself into the story as if it were a river, and let itself be carried vaguely hither and thither, the individual

⁴⁰ "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting", in Brecht on Theatre, pp.91-99. It is curious that these techniques were familiar to Fielding; in the Covent-Garden Journal, No. 62 (Sept. 16, 1752), II, 94, one of his fictional correspondents discusses the artificial use of the chorus: "Another use...for the Chorus...is to explain the Characters and Sentiments of the several Personages in the Drama, to the audience. Now, sir, there is a Nation in the World which has found out a way of doing this very effectually without interrupting the Action -- and that is the Chinese; these People always make the Characters of the Drama come upon the Stage before the Play begins, and tell who they are, as thus Sir.

Enter Dramatis Personae.

1. I am Taw-Maw-shaw, King of Tonchin, Brother to Hunfish, am to be dethroned by my Brother, and killed with the Sabre of the renowned Schimshaw.
2. I am Hunfish, Brother to Taw-Maw-shaw, I am to dethrone him, and usurp his Crown.
3. I am Schimshaw Master of the great Sabre which is to kill the King Taw-Maw-shaw." (Covent-Garden Journal, II, 94.)

It should be noted that Brecht does not list as historical precedents of the use of Alienation the medieval plays (which sought

episodes have to be knotted together in such a way that the knots are easily noticed. The episodes must not succeed one another indistinguishably but must give us a chance to interpose our judgment. 41

Fielding's novels include a wide variety of such visible knots, interruptions, reminders of the artificiality of the text, all of which contribute to the enlargement of the reader's view to an epic scale.

to engage the audience), the comedies of Molière and the English Restoration, the tradition of the Elizabethan explorative play, or the English farce, all of which use techniques of self-reference (and sometimes true Alienation). This may well be because the serious, exploratory nature of much of this material (including the comic) was not widely recognized by directors, audiences, and critics until relatively recently.

⁴¹ "A Short Organum to the Theatre", in Brecht on Theatre, p.201.

3) Visible Knots: "Fielding", the Narrator

Tom Jones is technically a very complex novel. It is presented to the reader as though it were the work of a discernible author, whose self-conscious presence dominates the entire work. This voice, although it speaks in the first person, is not Fielding's own; rather, it emanates from a narrative persona, a character on the first level of the author's fictional creation.⁴² The reader approaches the story of the hero's adventures through a mediating consciousness, which is garrulous, sententious, charming, witty, and constantly preoccupied with his own fictional techniques -- as the process of writing the story is itself included in the narration, Fielding establishes an alienation effect which pervades the whole novel.

Despite the narrator's ubiquitous declarations concerning the nature of his art, the exact boundaries of his function, upon examination, prove to be somewhat elusive. The novel itself provides several analogies which contribute to an obliquely formed definition of this function -- the Master of Revels, the Puppetmaster, and the Historian. The first of these images is set forth immediately, in the first pages of the novel (the chapter is appropriately entitled The Introduction to the Work, or Bill of Fare to the Feast). The claim is made that the work which follows is not to be considered a closed, elite communication, but an open market for his particular literary wares. The story is

⁴² My discussion of point-of-view here (and throughout this enquiry) owes much to Wayne Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, 1961); for the valuable distinction between the "I" who narrates and the author, see pp. 83, 150, et passim. Also useful is Booth's The Rhetoric of Irony (Chicago, 1974). It must be noted that much of Fielding's deliberate artificiality seems to draw on the example of Miguel de Cervantes, who, in Don Quixote [1605], multiplied narrative personae, interrupted the narrative, discussed the process

described as the commodity provided by a metaphorical inn, or "Ordinary".

(I:1:31 ff.)⁴³ From the very outset, then, the novel is pointedly treated as an object, a commodity, and the reader is given a warning (or a "Bill of Fare") listing the kinds of material which will follow. One of the implications of this declaration is that what follows will be entirely the production of the master of the house:

But the whole, to continue the same Metaphor, consists
in the Cookery of the Author; for, as Mr. Pope tells us,
True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest,
What oft' was thought, but ne'er so well exprest.
....In like manner, the Excellence of the mental Enter-
tainment consists less in the Subject, than in the
Author's Skill in well dressing it up. (I:1:33)⁴⁴

Like so many of the narrator's declarations which follow in abundance, this statement is curiously disingenuous. The reader is invited to admire the author's wit, and the analogy employed is elaborate and fanciful, but as determinedly mundane as the primary level of one of Donne's conceits. It is suggested that the reader will find in this Ordinary matter which is the same, but different; this mixture of confident bravado and the under cutting effect of self-deprecation and self-effacement is only part of a

and progress of the novel's events and composition; his characters even seem to know they are in a book (Sancho says, "So if it ever be my Lot to be serv'd so again, I'll e'en shrink up my Shoulders, hold my Breath, and shut my Eyes, and then let happy be lucky, let the Blanket and Fortune e'en toss on to the End o' the Chapter." Don Quixote, tr. Peter Motteux, rev. ed. John Ozell (n.d.; New York, 1930), p. 143.

⁴³ The metaphor of the inn seems to be a common image of liberality; cf. the Golden Remains of the Ever Memorable Mr. John Hales: "Let it not offend any that I have made Christianity rather an inn to receive all than a private house to receive some few." H.R. McAdoo, The Spirit of Anglicanism, p. 17. The metaphor occurs frequently in classical writing; Ben Johnson was also fond of using it.

⁴⁴ Cf. Richard Flecknoe's "To the Reader":
Authors use to make you feasts,
Books the fare, and you the Guests.
Judgment Caterer, and Wit
The Cook, to dress and Season it.

program designed to keep the reader on his toes.

Another major analogy of narrative control is the recurring image of the Puppetmaster. The analogy is theatrical, in that the operator of marionettes (or, for that matter, the playwright) is in complete control of his creatures. The prerogatives of such power include total access to the characters' state of mind (an access known to critics as omniscience). Fielding's narrator often draws on this capability:

Sophia, when her Arm was bound up, retired: For she was not willing...to be present at the Operation on Jones. Indeed one Objection which she had to Bleeding, (tho' she did not make it) was the Delay which it would occasion...
(IV:ix:204)

The narrator frequently backtracks, providing the reader with previously withheld, privileged information:

Now, as this was a Discovery of great Consequence, it may be necessary to trace it from the Fountainhead. We shall therefore very minutely lay open those previous Matters by which it was produced; and for that Purpose, we shall be obliged to reveal all the Secrets of a little Family, with which my reader is at present entirely unacquainted...
(II:ii:81)

Consistent with his program of keeping the mechanics of the novel in the foreground, the narrator lays claim to the privileges of omniscience quite openly:

But as there are no Perfections of the Mind which do not discover themselves, in that perfect Intimacy, to which we intend to introduce our Reader, with this charming young Creature... (IV:ii:157)

On occasion, he is even more explicit:

All which upon the Table set,
The Author, who provides you meat,
Comes, and prays his Guests to fall
Unto't, and says th'are welcome all."

Epigrams of all Sorts, Made at several Times, on Several Occasions (London, 1671), n.p. (Sig. B4r [?])

Now we, who are admitted behind the Scenes of this great Theatre of Nature, (and no Author ought to write any Thing besides Dictionaries and Spelling-Books who hath not this Privilege)...(VII:i:327)

The creator of the theatrical microcosm is invested not only with omniscience, but also with that other divine attribute, omnipotence. In this manner he can manipulate his characters openly, cause them to go places and do things without explanation. Indeed, the boldness of his disregard for the dictates of probability can be considered yet another deliberate artificiality. An explanation is provided for the innumerable coincidental encounters, conclusions, and incidents which are all clearly tailored to suite the labyrinthine complexity of his plot -- he attributes it all to chance, fortune, or Providence.

Whether Fortune, who now and then shews some Compassion in her wantonest Tricks, might not take Pity of the Squire; and as she had determined not to let him overtake his Daughter, might not resolve to make him Amends some other Way, I will not assert...(XII:ii:622f)

One Day, this young Couple accidentally met in the Garden...(V:vi:237)

Thus Fortune, after having diverted herself, according to Custom, with two or three Frolicks, at last disposed all Matters to the Advantage of our Heroine...(VI:ix:358)

Whether it was that Fortune was apprehensive lest Jones should sink under the Weight of his Adversity, and that she might thus lose any future Opportunity of tormenting him; or whether she really abated somewhat of her Severity towards him, she seemed a little to relax her Persecution...(XVII:v:892)

The active influence of Fortune is so frequently cited, and the providential conventions of the time so frequently called into active service, that the reader becomes inured to their presence. Under this partially transparent cover, the narrator makes the necessary adjustments and manipulations. That this cover is primarily a screen for manipulation is not kept secret; perhaps the most explicit admission

of the manipulation of characters and events occurs in the final book:

If the Reader will please to refresh his Memory, by turning to the Scene at Upton in the Ninth Book, he will be apt to admire the many strange Accidents which unfortunately prevented any Interview between Partridge and Mrs. Waters, when she spent a whole Day there with Mr. Jones. Instances of this Kind we may frequently observe in Life, where the greatest Events are produced by a nice Train of little Circumstances; and more than one Example of this may be discovered by the accurate Eye, in this our History. (XVIII:ii:916)

Here the narrator is positively preening himself over the consummately clever way in which he has arranged everything. In so doing, he drops a hint (only one of very many) about a submerged train of circumstances which runs through the novel, consisting of many secretly ambiguous statements and incidents, the ironic significance of which emerges only with the overview provided by a second reading.⁴⁵ Fortune is used again in this case with the purpose of clouding the issue. As he so often does the narrator disingenuously insists that he be taken at his word. Even though the ambiguity (together with its ironic resolution) of hidden motivations and actions becomes visible to the reader once the key to the mystery has been provided, the narrator pretends to be bound by the operations of Fortune in the world, which he insists are beyond his knowledge and control:

Perfect Calms at Sea are always suspected by the experienced Mariner to be Forerunners of a Storm: And I know some Persons, who, without being generally the Devotees of Superstition, are apt to apprehend, that great and unusual Peace or Tranquility, will be attended with its

⁴⁵ Although the key to the mystery -- the true story of Jones' birth -- is withheld to the very end, the novel is almost saturated with hints and ambiguities; this "irony of second reading" will be discussed at length below (V.3).

opposite: For which Reason the Antients used, on such Occasions, to sacrifice to the Goddess Nemesis; a Deity who was thought by them to look with an invidious Eye on human Felicity, and to have a peculiar Delight in overturning it.

As we are very far from believing in any such Heathen Goddess, or from encouraging any Superstition, so we wish Mr. John Fr-----, or some other such Philosopher, would bestir himself a little, in order to find out the real Cause of this sudden Transition, from good to bad Fortune, which hath been so often remarked, and of which we shall proceed to give an Instance; for it is our Province to relate Facts, and we shall leave Causes to Persons of much higher Genius. (II:iv:86f.)

Despite his apparent interest in the topic, evidenced by the little essay he delivers, Fielding's narrative persona neatly sidesteps the question of the limits of the operation of Fortune within his work, simply by announcing that such speculations are not within his power. The fictive world has become self-sustaining, and the narrator has assumed the third role. He insists he is a historian, and his job is simply to relate facts as he finds them.

The third analogy of the narrator's function lies in this posture -- he turns all questioning aside by maintaining that he is reporting an external, objective, historical series of events. It is the historian's task to relate facts in such a way that the causal links and patterns of historical reality will become evident to the reader. The claim to be reporting history is, of course, a claim of superior insight -- again the reader is assured that the narrator is in control, has all the facts at his finger-tips, and will provide him with all necessary explanations. Fielding wrote in The Champion about the nature of history-writing. Significantly, he draws a parallel to stage-machinery:

It may, I believe, be affirmed that the generality of mankind (I mean such as are at all acquainted with history) know much more of former times than their own. Most of us may be considered like the spectators of one of Mr. Rich's entertainments; we see things only in the light in which that truly ingenious and learned entertainmatic author is pleased to exhibit them, without perceiving the several strings, wires, clock-work, &c., which conduct the machine; and thus we are diverted with the sights of serpents, dragons and armies, whereas indeed those objects are not other than pieces of stuffed cloth, painted wood, and hobby horses, as such of his particular friends as are admitted behind the scenes, without any danger of interrupting his movements, very well know.

In the same manner we are deceived in the grand pantomimes played on the stage of life, where there is often no less difference between the appearances and reality of men and things, and where those who are utter strangers to the springs of the political motion, judging by habits, posts or titles, have actually mistaken men for heroes, patriots and politicians, who have been in fact as mere machines as any used by the aforesaid Mr. Rich: for when a man is absolutely void of capacity, it matters not whether his skin be stuffed with guts or straw, or whether his face be made of wood or brass. 46

The context of these observations is one of political satire, but they bear a certain relevance to the matter here under scrutiny. Events of contemporary history are manipulated by invisible hands, and are seldom what they seem to a casual observer. Again Fielding portrays a dystopian world, the same masquerade which is carried on by exponents of the Art of Thriving. The historian is in a unique position to expose the frauds of the past for the instruction of his contemporary readers (and this Fielding proceeds to do in the Champion article, recounting some sham triumphs staged by Caligula, and drawing explicit parallels to his own time, commenting that Caligula's success in fooling the Romans is not surprising, "if we consider the several tricks played since by ministers and statesmen."). The world depicted in Tom Jones

⁴⁶ The Champion (April 22, 1740), Henley, XV, 287f.

is rife with the corruption and the masquerade of the Art of Thriving, and (particularly considering the delayed revelation of the key to the mystery) Tom Jones must be read like a history, backwards in time:

It is history which strips off the mask and shows things in their true light; but this is not written or at least published until the ensuing age, and for the good of posterity. 47

In this declaration, Fielding adheres to the practical laws of writing history which prevailed in his day -- long before the notion of "objectivity" became fashionable, history (despite token acknowledgment of the demands of verity) was almost universally polemical. 48 Fielding's history is a polemical unmasking of commonly acceptable shams.

Still, when Fielding calls himself an historian, and his novel an history, he is purposefully somewhat playful. He defines the role largely in negative terms:

As Truth distinguishes our Writings, from those idle Romances which are filled with Monsters, the Productions, not of Nature, but of distempered Brains...(IV.i;150)

What seems to be the point of such commentary is that, as an historian, he is dedicated to a realistic principle, and (especially when unmasking sham results in laughter), there is no room for mere fanciful invention:

A Comic Writer should of all others be the least excused for deviating from Nature...Every thing is copied from the Book of Nature, and scarce a Character or Action produced which I have not taken from my own Observations and Experience...(JA,Preface, pp.4,10)

To support his claim of historical veracity, he places Tom Jones in a recognizable geographical setting, as well as a very precisely indicated historical period. The band of soldiers Jones encounters in Book VII are marching against the Jacobite insurgents; in Book XII, Sophia is

47 Ibid., p. 289

48 See H. Butterfield, The Whig Interpretation of History (New York, 1965).

mistaken for the Pretender's consort, Jenny Cameron.

Although Fielding's realism is more often a matter of faithful representation of human nature than of fidelity to actual historical fact, in order to guarantee that the reader will accept the wealth of detail necessary to his plotmaking, his narrator insists he is simply documenting verifiable facts. When in the role of the historian, the narrator stoutly maintains that the subject matter is independent, autonomous, and not at all of his own invention:

...about five Years before the Time in which this History chuses to set out. (I:ii:35; my emphasis)

But so Matters fell out, and so I must relate them; and if any Reader is shocked at their appearing unnatural, I cannot help it. I must remind such Persons, that I am not writing a System, but a History, and I am not obliged to reconcile every Matter to the received Notions concerning Truth and Nature. (IXX:viii:651)

In maintaining that he is only documenting "what really happened", the narrator gives himself license to present his story (and his views) without impertinent questioning.

It can easily be seen that when Fielding's narrator calls himself an historian, he is assuming one of several poses, which he only uses when it suits his convenience. The degree of control over subject matter exerted by the narrator as Puppetmaster is very different from, if not in direct contradiction with, the minimal control claimed by the narrator as Historian.

This apparent contradiction, nonetheless, is a source of amusement instead of difficulty. The narrator changes his stance and manipulates his various roles with great flair and lively good humour -- and, because of the playful manner in which he shifts from stance to stance (always drawing the reader's attention to what he is doing), it

could be said that all three narrative stances here outlined are subsumed by the function of Master of Revels.

The change of narrative stance, once again, is always a matter of play, and is manifestly artificial. Occasionally, for example, despite earlier protestations of omniscience, the narrator goes so far as to pretend (coily) that the task of unravelling the complexities of a situation is beyond him, that he has no illuminating foreknowledge of the autonomous story, and is bound by its chronological sequence:

In Regard to Sophia it is more than probable, that we shall somewhere or other provide a good Husband for her in the End, either Blifil, or my Lord, or Somebody else... (XVII:i:875)

The narrator is really teasing the reader here, withholding crucial developments of his story until the proper moment for revelation. He does not exactly lie to the reader, for his ambiguous phrases, "it is more than probable" and "or Somebody else", eventually prove to be adequate. Indeed, although at that moment Jones' suit seems entirely without hope, he does prove to be the "good Husband" provided. The narrator is thus proven to be a devious prognosticator.

This passage also serves to demonstrate what is perhaps Fielding's most frequent use of the Historian stance -- to gloss over, explain away, or distract attention from certain developments of the plot line. To explain his scrupulous documentation of detail, the significance of which has not yet been established, the narrator frequently cites the authority of classical historians:

Some Readers may perhaps be pleased with these minute Circumstances, in relating of which, we follow the Example of Plutarch, one of the best of our brother Historians; and others to whom they appear trivial, will, we hope, at least pardon them, as we are never prolix

on such Occasions. ⁴⁹

This kind of reference has a tricky double function. In the first place, certainly, the "slight thing" is capable of assisting in the description or revelation of character. The reader is warned not to dismiss any detail as insignificant or irrelevant -- it might cast light on a character, or (although the narrator does not state this directly), it might prove to have an important place in a pattern not yet revealed. In both cases, the narrator draws the reader's attention (frankly and obliquely) to the complexity of the plot, and declares his absolute sovereignty over his material:

Though this Incident will probably appear of little Consequence to many of our Readers, yet, trifling as it was, it had so violent an Effect on poor Jones, that we thought it our Duty to relate it. In reality, there are many little Circumstances too often omitted by injudicious Historians, from which Events of the utmost Importance arise. The World may indeed be considered as a vast Machine, in which the great Wheels are originally set in Motion by those which are very minute, and almost imperceptible to any but the strongest Eyes.
(V:iv:225)

The narrator indicates that his work is logically coherent, that care and attention have been paid to elaborating the processes of cause and effect, even if this is not immediately apparent to the reader. The reader is thereby cautioned that his careful attention will be necessary, that he must develop the "strongest eyes" (and to become the "sagacious reader") if he is to comprehend the full extent of the mechanism's perfection.

Allowing his narrator to shift into whatever stance benefits him, Fielding opens the field for the most useful tool the historian

⁴⁹ Battestin footnotes this reference, noting Plutarch's life-writing method: "...a slight thing like a phrase or jest often makes a greater revelation of character than battles..." (Life of Alexander).

has to offer the novelist: the control of time. Ancient rhetoricians used to draw a distinction between two kinds of temporal narration, the ordo naturalis, which followed the strict chronological sequence of events as they happened, and the ordo artificialis, which left itself free to unfold its material in any pattern which might prove useful. The latter approach is able to move about in time, stepping backwards to clarify certain developments, and it can maintain more than one stream of events, integrating them only when necessary. The narrator who employs this method is able to summarize; by so doing, the nexus of vision and interpretation is shifted back from the reader to the narrator. In summarizing, the dramatic moves toward the pictorial (to return briefly to Lubbock's terminology).

-Fielding intends this distinction to be drawn when he calls his novel a History; histories, as Andrew Wright has observed, are selective and synthetic (whereas chronicles are bound by chronological order and require less selectivity and interpretive arrangement).⁵⁰

Tho' we have properly enough entitled this our Work, a History, and not a Life; nor an Apology for a Life, as is more in Fashion; yet we intend in it rather to pursue the Method of those Writers who profess to disclose the Revolutions of Countries, than to imitate 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 Aeras when the greatest Scenes have been transacted on the human Stage. (II:i:75)

We have seen Fielding's narrator (as Historian) invoke the authorial privilege of including detail, and the apparently conflicting privilege of omitting detail -- he declares his intention of dwelling only on

⁵⁰ Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast (London, 1965) p. 39.

what is important in the construction of a causally coherent account:

When any extraordinary Scene presents itself (as we trust will often be the Case) we shall spare no Pains nor Paper to open it at large to our Reader; but if whole Years should pass without producing any thing worthy his Notice, we shall not be afraid of a Chasm in our History; but shall hasten on to Matters of Consequence, and leave such Periods of Time totally unobserved.
(II:i:76)

This process is rarely employed without explicit underscoring. When the narrator finds it useful to condense time, he announces to his reader that he will adapt his pace of writing to the nature of the activity at hand:

We will therefore take our Leave of these good People, attend his Lordship and his fair Companions, who made such good Expedition, that they performed a Journey of ninety Miles in two Days, and on the second Evening arrived in London, without having encountered any one Adventure on the Road worthy the Dignity of this History to relate. Our Pen, therefore, shall imitate the Expedition which it describes, and our History shall keep Pace with the Travellers who are its Subject. Good Writers will indeed do well to imitate the ingenious Traveller in this Instance, who always proportions his Stay at any Place to the Beauties, Elegancies, and Curiosities, which it affords. (XI:ix:612)

It is impossible to ascertain the degree to which the journey is a metaphor for the writing, or the technique a metaphor for the journey. Be this as it may, the narrator has once again drawn the reader's attention away from the movement of his characters through the complexities of plot, and focused it on the temporal mechanism of the novel, maintaining, in full view, the ordo artificialis, the mediated (pictorial) presentation of chronology.

The reminders of this mode of presentation are ubiquitous. The linear development of the plot (and subplot) is constantly interrupted to allow the narrator to backtrack so he can deal with some other

area of interest. The headings of many chapters announce such movement openly:

Wherein the History goes back to commemorate a trifling Incident that happened some Years since; but which, trifling as it was, had some future Consequences. (IV:iii:158)

In which the History goes backward. (X:vii:554)

In which the History is obliged to look back. (XVI:vi:857)

All these manipulations of time are clearly announced, either with chapter headings, or else with some sort of overt comment by the narrator:

Such was the Conclusion of this Adventure of the Bird, and of the Dialogue occasioned by it, which we could not help recounting to our Reader, though it happened some years before that Stage, or Period of Time, at which our History is now arrived. (IV:iv:164f.)

Before we proceed with what now happened to our Lovers, it may be proper to recount what had past in the Hall, during their tender Interview. (VI:ix:300)

Before we proceed any farther in our History, it may be proper to look a little back, in order to account for the extraordinary Appearance of Sophia and her Father at the Inn at Upton. (X:viii:554)

The great battle scene at Upton (in Book IX) features an interesting passage in which time is unnaturally, and spectacularly, interrupted. Andrew Wright points out that the furious action is arrested suddenly to fix a static picture or tableau:

It is a Question whether the Landlord or the Landlady was the most expeditious in returning his Blow. My Landlord, whose Hands were empty, fell to with his Fist, and the good Wife, uplifting her Broom, and aiming at the Head of Jones, had probably put an immediate end to the Fray, and to Jones likewise, had not the Descent of this Broom been prevented, -- not by the miraculous Intervention of any Heathen Deity, but by a very natural, tho' fortunate Accident; viz. by the Arrival of Partridge; who entered the House at that Instant (for Fear had caused

him to run every Step from the Hill) and who, seeing the Danger which threatned his Master, or Companion, (which you chuse to call him) prevented so sad a Catastrophe, by catching hold of the Landlady's Arm, as it was brandished aloft in the Air.

The Landlady soon perceived the Impediment which prevented her Blow; and being unable to rescue her Arm from the Hands of Partridge, she let fall the Broom... (IX:iii:502)

The language of this passage (and particularly of the last sentence of the first paragraph) is highly complex and elegantly formal. The parenthetical explanation and qualification, the "not...but..." formation, and the irresolution of the sentence until its last part, all serve to freeze the time between the raising of the broom and the stopping of the downward swing by the fortuitous intervention of Partridge's hand. Wright contends that the effect of such passages is to replace dramatic action with a fictional approximation of pictorial representation -- and the inevitable comparison is with Hogarth.⁵¹

The effect of the time-stoppage is to freeze the action, to present it to the reader, not from the heated, involved perspective of

⁵¹ Wright, pp. 122ff. The comparison is actively encouraged by Fielding, who frequently refers to Hogarth's works as a sort of adjunct-illustration of the novel: "I would attempt to draw her Picture; but that is done already by a more able Master, Mr. Hogarth himself, to whom she sat many Years ago, and hath been lately exhibited by that Gentleman in his Print of a Winter's Morning, of which she was no improper Emblem, and may be seen walking (for walk she doth in the Print) to Covent-Garden Church, with a starved Foot-boy behind carrying her Prayer-book." (I:xi:66) See also X:viii:555; VI:iii:282; II:iii:82; and III:vi:138. Hogarth is cited as the illustration of the difference between comic art and mere caricature; see above on Fielding's appreciation of the value of the example provided by Hogarth's cautionary, comic art.

Many critics have examined Hogarth's relation to Fielding; the major work is still R.E. Moore, Hogarth's Literary Relationships, (Minneapolis, Minn., 1948). See also R. Paulson, "Models and Paradigms: Joseph Andrews, Hogarth's Good Samaritan, and Fenelon's Telemaque", Modern

the participants of the struggle, but from the outside.⁵² In the process, the activities of the characters, forced out of emotional context, become comically absurd -- and the narrator once again draws attention to himself as the purveyor of the tableau. He presents his account of the battle in a calm, speculative tone, casually suggesting what might have happened had Partridge not "fortunately" intervened. For the moment, the fact that he designed exactly what happened is deliberately submerged, and the narrator toys with hypothetical alternative plot possibilities. This emphasizes that the primary epistemological level of the novel is the mind of the narrator -- which always takes precedence -- and not the world of Tom Jones and his fellow-characters.

Related to this epistemological reminder is the consciousness which Fielding cultivates in his readers of the degree to which the temporal integrity of the characters is subjected to narrative purpose. That is, the artificial order in which events are presented is made to impinge upon the reader's sense of the temporal continuity of characters

Language Notes, 91 (1976), pp. 1186-1207, and the same author's "The Pictorial Circuit and Related Structures in 18th-Century England", in The Varied Pattern, eds. P. Hughes & David Williams (Toronto, 1971), pp. 165-187. See also F. Antal, "The Moral Purpose of Hogarth's Art", Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, XV (1952), pp. 169-97.

⁵² "Fielding's scenes, though time-bound in a sense that no painting can ever be, suggest simultaneity...There is a sense not of the passage of time, not of developing action but of gradual revelation of a depicted scene -- it is as though one were looking carefully at a picture until the whole fell into shape....Narrative matter is all but excluded,...pictorial detail is emphasized (and presented in the order so to speak of seeing...), and finally...this described scene occurs within a very thoroughly contrived framework." Wright, p. 133.

in their own world. The narrator suggests that their time, and their entire existence, is absolutely determined by his own sequential ordering, as the reader is allowed to discover it:

As we have now brought Sophia into safe Hands, the Reader will, I apprehend, be contented to deposit her there a while, and to look a little after other Personages, and particularly poor Jones, whom we have left long enough to do Pennance for his past Offences, which, as is the Nature of Vice, brought sufficient Punishment upon him themselves. (XI:x:618)

The narrator, in this passage, compels the reader's perspective to override "actual" linear time sequence -- so much so that it becomes apparent that he often regards his characters primarily as the material of his craft. They are in no way autonomous, but are always explicitly under his direct control. In this way, sympathetic interest in the characters is interrupted (although not discouraged altogether), and this creates in the reader a degree of detachment which will allow him to see through them, a phenomenon which will be discussed below.

All these devices described here have the common effect of drawing the reader's attention to the voice of the narrator as he tells the story and comments both upon the events and the processes of telling. This pattern is supplemented by an ongoing program of "characterizing" the narrator. The first aspect of Fielding's characterization of his fictional counterpart is the tone of voice. As we have seen, he moves from one variation of narrative mode to another with consummate ease, always pleased with himself, always drawing the reader's attention to his versatility, dexterity, grasp of aphoristic wisdom, and literary genius. He is a master of technique. He plays with all the stops let out. He is variously jovial, sly, pompous, arch, pious, acid, obstreperous, devious, sentimental, allusive, elusive, generous, railing,

insinuating, satirical, vain, sententious, bemused, angry, self-effacing, kindly -- the list of conditions could extend indefinitely. He slips from one to the other, as we have already noted, with ease; there are few (if any) awkward modulations -- this is not to say that they are seamless or invisible, but appropriate. Even as he lectures, teases, toys with the reader, his authority is never diminished. He is always in absolute control.⁵³ His participation in the novel is complete. In addition to serving as the mediating consciousness through which Fielding delivers his novel, the narrator is further characterized in a theatrical image, stepping to the foreground in the formal role of Chorus to address his audience directly:

I ask Pardon for this short Appearance, by Way of Chorus on the Stage. It is in Reality for my own Sake, that while I am discovering the Rocks on which Innocence and Goodness often split, I may not be misunderstood to recommend the very Means to my worthy Readers, by which I intend to shew them they will be undone. And this, as I could not prevail on any of my Actors to speak, I myself was obliged to declare.
(III:vii:l4lf.)

⁵³ Fielding's development of a narrative persona whose handling of the narrative material is at once highly polished artifice, and is itself the focus of the reader's attention, has of course been discussed by numerous critics. See Glenn W. Hatfield: "In Pamela it is the writing of the journal which is part of the action, not the writing of the novel, which is never overtly acknowledged by Richardson at all. It is rather Fielding...who truly makes the writing of the novel a part of its action. If we therefore find that the author, struggling with his materials, is the most dramatic 'presence' in the novel, the sharpest objective image, this is not a flaw but a triumph in Fielding's art." Henry Fielding and the Language of Irony (Chicago, 1968), p. 199. See also Roger Robinson: "Tom Jones is positively a virtuoso performance, with the introductory chapters contributing to the variety of expertise displayed and also explicitly drawing attention to it, making us aware of the actual processes of literary creation and replacing the pretence of authenticity of Defoe and Richardson with an open invitation to enjoy the artifice." "Henry Fielding and the English Rococo", in Studies in the Eighteenth Century, ed. R.I. Brissenden (Toronto,

Fielding's narrator enriches his story with an abundance of choral comments on the ongoing events and the novel itself, directly didactic pronouncements, movements of corrective laughter, little stories, flights of stylized language (including mock-heroic), interpretive or cautionary asides to the reader, literary and political satire, and so forth. Because these passages are not immediately concerned with the fortunes of the novel's internal characters, they are sometimes called "intrusions". Such an approach suggests that the narrator's entry into the foreground is a manifestation of an external force which threatens the integrity of the essential fictional text.⁵⁴ But these choral movements, which are called parabases by Saintsbury⁵⁵, serve to separate the characterized narrator from his material, to bring him forward in the reader's mind's eye in yet another narrative role (an actor on the stage, playing the part of the author delivering an apology for the play).

The physical presence of the narrative persona is evoked frequently, when he endeavours to locate himself evocatively in a particular time and space. In his Invocation to the Muse, he cries:

Comfort me by a solemn Assurance, that when the little
Parlour in which I sit at this Instant, shall be reduced

1968), II, 95.

See also Wayne Booth, op. cit.; Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function (New York, 1953), p.65; Ian Watt, op. cit.; Irving Ehrenpreis, Fielding: Tom Jones (London, 1964), p. 8; Robert Alter, "Fielding and the Uses of Style", in 20th Century Interpretations of Tom Jones, ed. M.C. Battestin (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968), pp. 104f.; John Preston, The Created Self (London, 1970), p.96; Sheldon Sacks, Fiction and the Shape of Belief, pp. 70ff.; et cetera.

⁵⁴ See for instance Ford Madox Ford: "Tom Jones contains an immense amount of rather nauseous special-pleading, most of it packed away into solid wads of hypocrisy at the headings of parts or chapters. These can in consequence be skipped and the picaresque story with its mildly salacious details can without difficulty be followed." The English Novel (London, 1920), p.78. George Saintsbury, in his

to a worse furnished Box, I shall be read, with Honour,
by those who never knew nor saw me, and whom I shall
neither know nor see. (XIII:i:683)

At his most human, vulnerable moment, when he considers his own death and the survival of his creation, Fielding's narrator is almost visible to the reader -- yet the scene is set with exquisite artificiality, in the midst of overblown, highly "poetic" language. The reader is drawn to remark the narrator's pleasure in presenting such a true-to-life, sentimental picture, and the resulting effect, though by no means unfriendly, is not precisely what the narrator seems to have had in mind. (Here, then, is one example of the way in which the distance between Fielding and his narrative persona is exploited ironically.)

In his chapter entitled "A Farewel to the Reader", a new analogy is drawn:

We are now, Reader, arrived at the last Stage of our long Journey. As we have therefore travelled together through so many Pages, let us behave to one another like Fellow-Travellers in a Stage-Coach, who have passed several Days in the Company of each other; and who, notwithstanding any Bickerings or little Animosities which may have occurred on the Road, generally make up all

inimitable fashion, reprimands such criticism: "For my own part I have always considered this objection as one of the feeblest in all that critical theory with which I am fairly acquainted...It is said that these digressions are faulty because they 'interrupt the muffins' -- because the serene development of plot and character is entirely broken into by them...Another objection...is that the things are impertinent sermonizings -- intrusions of the author's own thoughts, sentiments, and opinions; excesses of the heresy of instruction, etc., etc. This is an even less exquisite song than the other...The objection betrays both bumptiousness and critical paralogism. One need not be the meekest man on earth, or the least self-confident, to have a very shrewd suspicion that, on the whole, the opinions, sentiments, judgments of a man of genius may be at least not improbably worth attending to, and will still more probably be well-expressed." The Peace of the Augustans (London, 1948), pp.127f.

55 Ibid., p.124: "Graecum est, and some call it pedantic; but it is the only single word in any language for those episodic addresses,

at last, and mount, for the last Time, into their Vehicle with Chearfulness and Good-Humour; since, after this one Stage, it may possibly happen to us, as it commonly happens to them, never to meet more. (XVIII:i:913) ⁵⁶

The characterization of the narrator has been developed in such a way that the reader is led to feel that he has entered into a relationship of friendly confidence with him. ⁵⁷ As he sees this relationship drawing to a close, in his comments in the first chapter of the last book,

from the author to the reader, which are so characteristic of Fielding and Thackeray, which irritate some people so much, and perhaps delight others all the more because of this irritation."

⁵⁶ Compare this with a similar passage employed by the central persona of The Champion, Capt. Hercules Vinegar, as an image of the substantive content of his journal: "I consider my paper as a sort of stage coach, a vehicle in which every one hath a right to take a place. If any letter therefore should hereafter appear in it, which may give offence to particular persons, they can have no more anger to me on that account, than they would show to the master of a stage, who had brought their enemy to town." The Champion (January 10, 1739-40), Henley, XV, 146.

⁵⁷ This reader-narrator relationship seems quite similar to that encouraged by Montaigne in his Essays, which are not systematic expositions of their nominal subjects, but internal dialogues or soliloquies about what has been said by various authorities concerning these subjects, what Montaigne thinks of these comments, what Montaigne is reminded of as he writes, how to go about discovering the truth of the matter (and how not to). The over-all effect is one not of arguing or convincing, but of sharing with the reader; it is not a process of "getting to know Montaigne", as Wayne Booth warns (Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 228) about the distance between real author and persona. The character of essaying or experimenting is pervasive—something indicated by the definition of "Essay": "Proofe, tryall, experiment; an offer, attempt; a tast, or touch of a thing to know it by..." (Cotgrave's Dictionary [London, 1611]).

Montaigne usually limits his self-referential "parabases" to the opening sentences of the essays: "Well, but some one will say to me, this design of making a man's self the subject of his writing, were indeed excusable in rare and famous men..." ("Of Giving the Lie", Essays, II, 118). "This faggotting up of so many divers pieces is so done that I never set pen to paper, but when I have too much idle time, and never anywhere but at home; so that it is composed after divers interruptions and intervals; occasions keeping me sometimes many months elsewhere. As to the rest, I never correct my first by any second conceptions; I, peradventure, may alter a word or so: but 'tis only to vary the phrase, and not to destroy my former meaning. I

he hints at certain changes in what remains -- as we can see in the part of the chapter quoted above, he suggests that certain parts of the journey may have been, if not acrimonious, at least contentious. This suggestion will remind my own readers that, behind the artificialities of form, certain questions are being asked. The narrator's charm, the confidence (or amused mistrust) he inspires in the reader of Tom Jones act to further a complex pattern of development in their relationship. This pattern has been carefully designed by Fielding to lead his readers into particular ethical perceptions and judgments, an aspect of the novel which this enquiry will take up in Chapter V.

Fielding's choice of narrative form, then, is consistently pictorial, in a sense which both meets and enriches Lubbock's term. The

have a mind to represent the progress of my humors, and that every one may see each piece as it came from the forge. ("Of the Resemblance of Children to their Fathers", Essays, II, 219). "In fine, all this hodge-podge which I scribble here, is nothing but a register of the essays of my own life, which, for the internal soundness, is exemplary enough, to take instruction against the grain; but as to bodily health, not man can furnish out more profitable experience than I, who present it pure, and no way uncorrupted by art or opinion." ("Of Experience", Essays, II, 577).

Like "Fielding", "Montaigne" is not always perfectly frank, and the imaged personality often disguises affective strategy; see, for instance, the multiple paradoxes in the opening to the essay, "Of Vanity": "There is, peradventure, no more manifest vanity than to write of it so vainly." (Essays, II, 426)

Cathleen M. Bauschatz has recently offered some commentary on the element of self-reference in Montaigne's Essays; she provides a good starting-point for an investigation of a "questioning" rhetoric in Montaigne, although she unfortunately limits her definition of reading to the status of a simple adjunct of language; "Montaigne's Conception of Reading...", in The Reader in the Text, pp. 264-91.

It would also be tempting to locate self-referential influence in Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, were it not for the fact that Fielding offers little evidence of having read it or having considered it an important book.

reader approaches the story through a narrative persona, who occupies the conceptual position of both author-creator and commentator-chorus. Because this narrator is concerned with discussing the mechanics of the novel as well as with relating the plot, character descriptions, and incidents of the story, the reader is kept in a constant state of awareness of the explicit nature of the Book as an aesthetic object. This helps prevent the reader from comfortably assenting to the verisimilitude of particular detail, and experiencing "the illusion of being at a real place". In this way, Fielding creates and maintains a conscious distance between the reader and the story of Tom Jones, allowing room for literary activity of another kind.

4) Visible Knots: Characterization

We may divide characters into flat and round.⁵⁸

According to E.M. Forster, a flat character is one which is distinguished by a single, unique attribute; it remains with him, and can be discerned in (and explains) whatever he does, almost as though he had evolved from the earlier technique of personification.

In their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality...The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence. ⁵⁹

While it cannot be maintained that Fielding's characterization is always this simple -- most of his secondary characters are quite flat, of course -- even the most fully developed characters remain somewhat flat. This "flatness" is brought about partly by Fielding's strategy of alienation, which fosters in the reader a sense of detachment; the reader is expected to collate the information furnished by the narrator about each personality with his own observations of their actions. Fielding's principle, that men must be judged not by their public characters but by their actions, carries over to the novel. His most sympathetic characters embody Benevolence and Good-Nature, sometimes readily visible (as in the case of Allworthy), and sometimes partly blocked (as in the case of Tom Jones). In the long run, the reader is encouraged to judge Fielding's characters by the degree to which their actions are consistent with the principles thus exemplified.

⁵⁸ E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (1927; Harmondsworth, 1962), p.75.

⁵⁹ Loc. Cit. N.A. Scott, Jr., explains the operation of this kind of comedy: "The comic is a contradiction in the relation of the human individual to the created orders of existence which arises out of an over-specialization of some instinct or faculty of self, or out of an inordinate inclination of the self in some direction, to the neglect

Fielding does not consider characterization as an end in itself, although his major characters are sufficiently well-articulated to avoid the dangers implicit in Forster's critical term. As we shall see, the "integrity" of characters is frequently disturbed, partly by formal A-effects, and partly by uses or roles which are artificial, various, and sometimes even contradictory. Northrop Frye distinguishes fiction in which characters are subordinated to intellectual play by the term "Menippean", and such a distinction goes a long way toward explaining the difference between Fielding's methods and those employed by authors who make a point of building up the independent value of character. 60

of the other avenues through which it ought also to gain expression. And it is this predilection of the self to identify itself too completely with some special interest or project...by which the self is blinded to the integral character of its humanity and thus thrown out of gear with the fundamental norms and orders of human existence. But, in the comic action, this contradiction in the individual's relation to the created orders of life 'does not involve the spectator in suffering or pity,' (quoting Auden) for he is not led to identify himself with the protagonist who does, indeed, become, in the course of the action, the butt of his laughter." "The Bias of Comedy", in Comedy: Meaning and Form, ed. R.W. Corrigan, pp. 104f.; emphasis added.

This so-called "flatness" is also common to characters in the Comedy of Humours; see Marston LaFrance, "Fielding's Use of the 'Humour' Tradition", Bucknell Review, XVII, 3(1969), pp. 53-63.

60 Anatomy of Criticism (1957; New York, 1965), pp. 308ff. I owe this citation to Duncan (pp. 14ff., 38, 67ff., 128f., et passim), who calls these characters "mouthpieces", and extends Frye's term into an insight invaluable to an enquiry such as this one.

Another useful distinction, closer to Forster than to Frye, is offered by Edwin Muir. In the "novel of action", he proposes, characters are static -- the action of the plot need not originate in personal development or change during the progress of the work, as is the case with the more dynamic presentation of the "novel of character". In the novel of action, characters are possessed of certain key attributes. Rather than making extensive use of access to the mental workings of individual characters to trace patterns of growth and change, the novelist of action reveals the nature of his characters in a series of incidents more or less illustrative of their nature:

They are like a familiar landscape, which now and then surprises us when a particular effect of light and shadow alters it, or we see it from a new prospect.. The alteration (characters) undergo is less a temporal one than unfolding in a continuously widening present. Their weaknesses, their vanities, their foibles, they possess from the beginning and never lose to the end; and what actually does change is not these, but our knowledge of these. 61

In Joseph Andrews, none of the major characters undergoes any transformation, although Joseph learns to practice moderation (which is a virtue he possessed from the start, but needed frequently to apply). The exceptions to this rule are to be found in the two balanced interpolated narratives, that of Wilson, who starts in dystopia and works his way back to health of the soul (JA, III:iii-iv), and that of Leonora, or the Unfortunate Jilt (JA, II:iv,vi), who starts in a state of innocence, is tempted by the Art of Thriving, falls, and is punished with loneliness and isolation. As for Tom Jones, only the title character is dynamic, in the sense of a progression toward knowledge, or a major change (Mr. Allworthy, as will appear below, may be added to this category); the rest unfold, giving Fielding great

⁶¹ Edwin Muir, The Structure of the Novel (London, 1960), pp.24f.

freedom to exercise his art of dramatic irony.

It cannot be too frequently stressed that Fielding requires his reader to evaluate character in the light of action:

And Surely the Actions of Men seem to be the justest Interpreters of their Thoughts, and the truest Standards by which we may judge them. By their Fruits you shall know them is a Saying of great Wisdom, as well as Authority. 62

The personal advocacy formed by sympathetic identification with characters may block the reader's judgment, and he may err by accepting the characters' explanations, excuses, or rationalizations. As is frequently the case in Menippean fiction, alienating effects are employed. These tend to counteract the moments in which consuming identification, sympathy, or empathy with the characters may be developed by the reader. This is not to say that Fielding is unconcerned for his characters, nor that his readers are discouraged from liking, accepting, and hoping for the success and happiness of his protagonists. Rather, the sagacious reader should maintain enough distance from his characters to develop a double vision -- any discrepancy between profession and action, any shift of motive, any well-concealed hypocrisy must become visible to the reader. The novel is, in a sense, a process of training the reader in the required sagacity. As we will demonstrate, the narrator is devious, frequently misleading in

62 "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men", Miscellanies, I, 162. William Empson perceptively concludes, "I take it he refused to believe that the 'inside' of a person's mind (as given by Richardson in a letter, perhaps) is much use for telling you the real source of his motives. You learn that from what he does, and therefore a novelist ought to devise an illustrative plot." "Tom Jones", in Fielding, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962), p.135. Bernard Harrison, in Fielding's Tom Jones, offers a decisive practical illustration of the efficacy of this method, p.20: "At the point at which...we feel first that Blifil is a scoundrel (i.e., when he releases Sophia's bird), authorial comment is as strikingly absent as is the revelation of inner consciousness: the characters just talk."

these matters, unreliable (in the sense that his own function shifts, and he is capable of calculated deception and teasing), and generally playful, unpredictable, challenging, and sportive.

We have already seen that Fielding's narrator often discusses his characters as though they were not independent, organic entities, but objective parts of his material. Having introduced Sophia, he observes that she is to be the heroine of the book, with whom he himself is in love, as will be the reader. Therefore, he maintains, it would not be dignified and proper to introduce her at the end of a book (III:x:149). This is all very well, but the fact remains (although the reader's attention is directed elsewhere) that he has introduced her already. He interrupts himself, and his reader's expectations, reducing his heroine to the status of a structural component, not much more important than a participle or a point of punctuation. When he resumes his introduction of his heroine (IV:ii:154ff.), it is only after a short chapter of parabolic commentary on writing Histories (comically and artificially deflated by the title, Containing five Pages of Paper), which itself constitutes a very striking interruption. The style of the chapter describing Sophia is ludicrously high, and has been undercut in advance both by the fancy narrative footwork, and by the title of the chapter, which again deflates by its artificial, self-mocking tone (A Short Hint of what we can do in the Sublime...). The formal considerations of fiction are introduced repeatedly, interrupting every approach to individual characters. Practically every chapter in the novel concludes with some such "intrusion" of the world of authorship into the

world of character.

Sophia is also distanced by relentless idealization. On several occasions the narrator declines to enter her mind, although he will allow himself the access of omniscience whenever it suits his purpose:

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. (IV:xiv:208)

In Pursuance, therefore, of her Father's peremptory Command, Sophia now admitted Mr. Blifil's Visit. Scenes, like this, when painted at large, afford, as we have observed, very little Entertainment to the Reader. Here, therefore, we shall strictly adhere to a Rule of Horace, by which Writers are directed to pass over all those matters, which they despair of placing in a shining Light. (VII:vi:344) 63

The extent of the narrator's control over the material is emphasized yet again as he cites a rule from classical authority to justify his methods. There is, however, a curious circumstance connected with this distancing effect. In both passages, the reader has been given enough information to judge for himself what her mental state must be in the specific situations outlined. It seems as though the narrator is reluctant to disturb his heroine at times like these, and leaves much to the inferential activity of his reader -- she will behave, the operative principle seems to declare, exactly as the reader expects her to behave: in the ideal fashion suggested by the narrator's early descriptions. But not even Sophia is safe from irony. Fielding's narrator incessantly produces equivocal observations, inconsistently

⁶³ Battestin (TJ, p.208) here cites Ars Poetica, 149-50: "and what he fears he cannot make attractive with his touch he abandons." This gives rise to some ambiguity -- is the subject too high or too low to present well?

denies his ability to discover the hidden motivations of his characters, assumes and discards formal limitations at will, and so forth. This attitude -- and because it is overwhelmingly self-conscious it might strike the reader as almost coy -- serves to open up a field of ambiguity, which it is the reader's job to resolve. As is so often the case, however, the narrator provides the reader with numerous signals or implicit directions to assist in resolving the ambiguity. Often, as we have seen, this may involve the affectation of a "voice" expressing opinions which the reader will recognize as invalid (on terms which Fielding has already made clear). When Sophia falls in love with Tom, the narrator disingenuously mocks her:

Parva leves capiunt Animos, "Small Things affect light Minds," was the Sentiment of a great Master of the Passion of Love. And certain it is, that from this Day Sophia began to have some little Kindness for Tom Jones, and no little aversion for his companion. (IV:v:165)

The narrator's temporary, facetious adoption of the standards of the Thriving society, which regards love as a disease, is clearly indicated, and the reader's ordinary response will be to invert the statement to obtain the implicit, positive meaning: falling in love is serious and beautiful, not light-minded.

When Sophia is brought a letter from Jones -- he is in extreme disgrace -- she sees fit to refuse it. However, she does recant a bit, protesting to Mrs. Miller, who has carried the letter to her:

"Well, Madam" says Sophia, "I cannot help it, if you will force it upon me. -- Certainly you may leave it whether I will or no." What Sophia meant, or whether she meant any thing, I will not presume to determine; but Mrs. Miller actually understood this as a Hint, and presently laying the Letter down on the Table took her Leave, having first begged Permission to wait again on Sophia, which request had neither Assent nor Denial.

The Letter lay upon the Table no longer than till
 Mrs. Miller was out of Sight; for then Sophia
 opened and read it. (XVII:vi:896)

Fielding's narrator never states explicitly whether Sophia intended to lead Mrs. Miller to her action, nor whether Mrs. Miller's understanding of Sophia's speech as a hint was in fact correct. The sense of ambiguity is continued by Sophia's neutral non-response to Mrs. Miller's request for permission to make a return visit. But what literally appears to be an unweighted account is ironically explained by her action immediately upon being left alone. Having promised her father not to enter into any communication with Jones, she is clearly reluctant to be seen going back on her word in public. She is still anxious to hear news from him, and she responds with an ingenuous little quibble. The reader is in a position similar to that which obtains in the theatre in moments of dramatic irony -- he is privileged to see both sides of the matter. Indeed, the reader may well be seeing more here than Sophia herself consciously understands. This passage serves to demonstrate that the psychology of motivation and action can be imparted to the reader clearly (and amusingly), without the use of techniques of internal speculation and interpretation. When the responses of a character are familiar, normal, and expected, the reader is granted the characterizing insight implicit in that very normality. This is to say, Sophia's curiosity and interest in Tom's letter is expected, as well as congenial to the reader's favourable disposition toward Tom and Sophia. Her behaviour confirms the image, inculcated both directly and obliquely by the narrator, of an unaffected, warm, natural, honest young woman -- her honesty is emphasized by the transparent awkwardness with which she

equivocates.

In passages in which characters undergo extreme emotional stress or exhilaration -- moments when other novelists might be tempted to aspire to the sublime -- Fielding's narrator more often chooses to describe the emotion from outside the character, making use of any of a number of distancing effects.⁶⁴ When Tom is banished by Mr. Allworthy, the description of his sorrow and distress is notable for its cool, off-hand, matter-of-fact tone:

Here 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. (VI:xii:312)

The description is entirely external and generalized. The reader is "shown" Tom's pain, but is not encouraged to feel it with him. In fact, the reader has been provided with privileged information not available to Tom -- that his exile has been brought about by Blifil's machinations. Tom is convinced, though the reader is not, that it is a matter of deserved punishment. He suffers the despair brought about by adversity seemingly beyond help, while the reader is provided with evidence of the possibility of improvement.

Character is also established reflexively, by the highly formal means of contrast.⁶⁵ Books III and IV, which cover the period of Tom's youth, are constructed around an elaborately balanced system of doubleness. Both Tom and Blifil are characterized primarily by a series of

⁶⁴ Even the ultimate scene of Tom and Sophia's reconciliation is interrupted by Squire Western (XVIII:xii:974); Ian Donaldson explains this as "a broad outlet for the accumulated high spirits which have been building up." The World Upside-Down, p.142.

⁶⁵ C.J. Rawson calls this movement "couplet rhetoric", commenting on "the dance-like decorum of neat stylistic interchange, the ceremonious finality of elegant, symmetrical pairings." Henry Fielding and the Augustan Ideal Under Stress (London, 1972), p.44. H.K. Miller

incidents which demonstrate (in their actions) the radical differences in their values and personalities. Tom's behaviour establishes him from the very outset as impulsive, reckless, but kind-hearted and generous. Blifil, on the other hand, is an avaricious, malicious hypocrite, and that from a very early age. Blifil manages, with what should strike the reader as remarkable ease, to win over his fellow-characters with his protestations of disinterested concern for others and his heavily-publicized piety. He is very quickly shown to be what Coleridge scathingly called an accurate "matter-of-fact liar".⁶⁶ Here especially, the reader is allowed to share "privileged" information -- the truth behind Blifil's mask, the circumstances of Tom's actions represented to Allworthy as crimes -- and from this detached perspective, he is allowed to watch the personal development of two antithetical characters. The

points out that the formalized "movement of balance" is a device characteristic of Lucianic satire; Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies, pp. 375ff.

See also Ian Donaldson's account of the ironic device used in Restoration Comedy, which he calls reverse comic levelling: "Here people of apparently different ethical beliefs, ranks and dignities, etc., are brought by the movement of comedy to recognize their mutual kinship and equality. Comic levelling can also operate in reverse: in this case a comedy begins with two or more people who are apparently very evenly matched in strength and basically similar in their ambitions and their ethical codes, and proceeds...to draw out their differences to allow victory (and some measure of approval) to one party, defeat (and some measure of disapproval) to another." The World Upside-Down, p.128.

⁶⁶ In Henry Fielding: A Critical Anthology (Harmondsworth, 1973), p.204. Cf. Eleanor Hutchens, Irony in Tom Jones, p.49: "Blifil is the master of the plausible lie."

narrator's most frequent tack is, having provided the reader with certain telling points of reference concerning Tom and Blifil, to report incidents with an ostensibly neutral, objective tone. The reader's superior knowledge enables him to see both affectation and the deeper reality. Dramatic irony is used in this way throughout the novel, showing the reader what is really the true condition of the characters, through the pattern of appearances.

G.G. Sedgewick outlines the dynamic component at the heart of all forms of dramatic irony:

There is in all of them something that can be called a conflict of forces...In all them, one at least of the forces is ignorant of his situation; the situation as it seems to him differs from the situation as it is; he is ignorant that Appearance is being contradicted by Reality; he would act differently if he knew...The spectator in the theatre always sees and knows both the appearance and the reality; and he senses the contradiction between what the ignorant character does and what he would do. 67

The elaborate complexity of the plot of Tom Jones depends a great deal upon dramatic irony. Tom's banishment is a result of Blifil's manipulation of truths and half-truths and distortions of fact. In fact, Blifil's character is disclosed to the reader almost entirely by the gradual revelation of his schemes and their implications, rather than overt narrative observations about his personality.

Fielding's use of dramatic irony alienates the reader even more when his narrator makes a point of calling attention to precisely

⁶⁷ Of Irony, Especially in Drama, pp. 48f. Also useful is A.R. Humphreys, "Fielding's Irony", Review of English Studies, XVIII (1942): 183-96. See below (Chapter V) for a more detailed account of dramatic irony as it conditions the reader's response to the novel.

what he is doing:

Hard therefore was it, and perhaps in the Opinion of many sagacious Readers, very absurd and monstrous, that he should principally owe his present Misfortune to the supposed Want of Delicacy with which he so abounded... (XII:viii:651)

...the Mistress would have turned away her Maid for a corrupt Hussy, if she had known as much as the Reader... (X:vii:551)

This unexpected Encounter surprized the Ladies much more than I believe it will the sagacious Reader, who must have imagined that the strange Lady could be no other than Mrs. Fitzpatrick, the Cousin of Miss Western, whom we before-mentioned to have sallied from the Inn a few Minutes after her. (XI:ii:573)

Before we proceed any farther, that the Reader may not be mistaken in imagining the Landlady knew more than she did, nor surprized that she knew so much, it may be necessary to inform him, that the Lieutenant had acquainted her that the Name of Sophia had been the occasion of the Quarrel; and as for the rest of her Knowledge, the sagacious Reader will observe how she came by it in the preceding Scene. (VIII:iii:411)

For the Reader is greatly mistaken, if he conceives that Thwackum appeared to Mr. Allworthy in the same Light as he doth to him in this History... (III:v:135)

As is the case in Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones contains a broad portrait of a society tainted with self-interest, and masquerading under the affectation of virtue. In his bright, self-conscious way, the narrator employs dramatic irony to expose conflicting appearance and reality. The characters thus exposed are rendered transparent. The point is for the reader to see not the full portrait of personality, but to see through their description, their own accounts of themselves, to the full implications of what they put into practice.

It will be noted that this form of deliberate artificiality

depends upon the sharpness of the reader's perceptions, which Fielding addresses, encourages, and develops, and which he tests and refines by deliberately misleading him from time to time.

Fielding's methods of characterization are consistently distanced, either through strictly external description, "flat" characterization, the deliberate interruption of moments of access to psychological insight by manifest artificialities of form (A-effects), or by the very formal perfection of equilibrium in the movement of contrast and dramatic irony which introduces the reader to the divergent natures and careers of Tom Jones and Blifil. The resultant sense of detachment is no accident, and it is no failure of novelistic technique; rather, it makes it possible for the reader to see the conflicts between self-interest and the affectation of virtue which are ironically exposed during the course of the narration, through the characters. Arnold Kettle sums up Fielding's technique:

We do not get very close to Tom and Sophia. Fielding deliberately keeps them at a distance...Now this deliberate refusal to bring us really close to his characters, so that all the time he tends to describe rather than convey a situation...is essential to his comic method. He asks that the reader should survey life rather than experience it. 68

Fielding's novel, as we shall see, requires of the reader a great deal. The watchfulness required by the shift of perspective described in this chapter is only the beginning of a complex shift in the whole epistemological process of reading.

⁶⁸ Arnold Kettle, An Introduction to the English Novel (New York, 1960), I, p.80.

5) Visible Knots: Language and Form

We have taken every Occasion of interspersing through the whole sundry Similes, Descriptions, and other kind of poetical Embellishments. These are, indeed, designed to...refresh the Mind, whenever those Slumbers which in a long Work are apt to invade the Reader as well as the Writer, shall begin to creep upon him. Without Interruptions of this kind, the best Narrative of plain Matter of Fact must overpower every Reader... (IV:i:151)

Set in the midst of an analogy comparing his novel to the effects of Ale, Fielding's narrator both praises and mocks his literary production. He is a master of language; significantly, he is not in the least reluctant to point this out to the reader:

Our Intention, in short, is to introduce our Heroine with the utmost Solemnity in our Power, with an Elevation of Stile, and all other Circumstances proper to raise the Veneration of our Reader. (IV:i:154)

The intention of solemnity is belied by the self-conscious humour of the "critical" discussion which precedes and warrants the high style of Sophia's introduction, also indicated without overmuch of modesty in the chapter title (IV:ii). The "Sublime" produced with such fanfare is conventional poetic diction, hyperbolically inflated, ornamented with classical references, apostrophes to the winds and the kingdom of the birds -- and it is a high style into which the narrator never wanders without considerable discussion. The first sentence introduces a shift in tone, a hiatus in the busy world of the novel (and the process of writing it):

Hushed be every ruder Breath. May the Heathen Ruler of the Winds confine in iron Chains the boisterous Limbs of noisy Boreas, and the sharp-pointed Nose of bitter-biting Eurus. Do thou, sweet Zephyrus, rising from thy fragrant Bed, mount the western Sky, and lead on those delicious Gales, the charms of which call forth the

lovely Flora from her Chamber, perfumed with pearly Dews, when on the first of June, her Birth-day, the blooming Maid, in loose Attire, gently trips it over the verdant Mead, where every Flower rises to do her Homage, till the whole Field becomes enamelled, and Colours contend with Sweets which shall ravish her most.

So charming may she now appear; and you the feather'd Choristers of Nature, whose sweetest Notes not even Handel can excel, tune your melodious Throats, to celebrate her Appearance. From Love proceeds your Music, and to Love it returns. Awaken therefore that gentle Passion in every Swain: for lo! adorned with all the Charms in which Nature can array her; bedecked with Beauty, Youth, Sprightliness, Innocence, Modesty, and Tenderness, breathing Sweetness from her rosy Lips, and darting Brightness from her sparkling Eyes, the lovely Sophia comes. (IV:ii:154f.)

Fielding's self-conscious exercise in the high style, the "Idea of Female Perfection, which our Pencil will be able to draw" (IV.i; 154) borrows its language of comparison from the pastoral school of poetry. In the paragraphs which follow those here cited, the reader is invited to fill in the picture from his own experience, and the experience to which the narrator appeals (or alludes) is primarily aesthetic experience. She is compared to various popular representations of female beauty (the Venus de Medici, Godfrey Kneller's portraits of Queen Mary's ladies) and verses commemorating them. The highly-charged language gradually subsides, and the second half of the chapter is a more calm, though no less literary, description of Sophia's appearance, concluded by the assertion that the beauties thus described, as well as those left for the reader to supply, are an outward sign of an inwardly beautiful condition. The gradual descent from ecstatic poesy to a more functional poetic description has two effects: first, the "experiment" in sublime portraiture is not precisely successful. Longinus declared, "The effect

of elevated language upon an audience is not persuasion but transport." ⁶⁹
 The deliberate artificiality with which the passage is prefaced, and
 the consciously literary quality of the language, interfere with the
 heightening of the reader's emotions. But, curiously enough, Fielding
 does share Longinus' goal of "arousing the subjective activity of the
 reader's or hearer's mind, and inducing it to create its own conception." ⁷⁰
 The mode of subjective activity designed by Fielding, however, is intel-
 lectual and literary, not emotional. That is, the reader is invited
 (and this invitation will be discussed later in this enquiry) to furnish
 his own image of ideal feminine beauty in response to the literary compari-
 sons and the exhortation of the self-conscious narrative persona.

The high style is also used to achieve a bathetic effect. Often
 describing rather mundane events in extraordinarily elevated language,
 the "sublimity" is undercut by an immediate translation into more prosaic
 language:

As in the Month of June, the Damask Rose, which Chance
 hath planted among the Lillies with their candid Hue
 mixes his Vermilion: Or, as some playsome Heifer in
 the pleasant Month of May diffuses her odoriferous
 Breath over the flower Meadows: Or as, in the blooming
 Month of April, the gentle, constant Dove, perched on
 some fair Bough, sits meditating on her Mate; so
 looking a hundred Charms, and breathing as many Sweets,
 her thoughts being fixed on her Tommy, with a Heart as
 good and innocent, as her Face was beautiful: Sophia
 (for it was she herself) lay reclining her lovely Head
 on her Hand... (X:v:542)

⁶⁹ On the Sublime, tr. W. Rhys Roberts (1899), in Criticism: The Major Texts, ed. W.J. Bate (New York, 1970), p.62.

⁷⁰ W.J. Bate, p. 65; cf. Longinus loc. cit., "For, as if instinctively, our soul is uplifted by the true sublime; it takes a proud flight, and is filled with joy, and vaunting, as though it had itself produced what it has heard."

At the moment in which the narrator parenthetically interposes this (superfluous) identification, the paeon is transformed into a double entity. The extremely poetic language is deliberately made distinct from the message it so elegantly bears, by the very necessity of interpretation.

Occasionally this process takes the form of allegory -- again in high style:

But though this victorious Deity (the God of Love) easily expelled his avowed Enemies from the Heart of Jones, he found it more difficult to supplant the Garrison which he himself had placed there. To lay aside all Allegory, the Concern for what must become of poor Molly, greatly disturbed and perplexed the Mind of the worthy Youth. (V:v:226)

The double nature of the communication is here indicated by the explicit naming of the allegorical form. By distancing the idealized language from the prosaic reality, Fielding subtly emphasizes the moral dilemma surrounding Tom's affair with Molly, complicated by his new-found love for Sophia. The high style of the first sentence is rudely undercut by the matter-of-fact prose translation, and the artificial treatment of language and imagery becomes another A-effect.

The narrator plays numerous games with language; the reader senses this is largely for the sheer fun of it, yet language play draws the attention of the reader to the structure of the narrative communication, and to the process of communicating the narrative material itself, and thus should be recognized as a part of the overall strategy of alienation. Consider these bathetic translations:

Twelve Times did the iron Register of Time beat on the sonorous Bell-metal, summoning the Ghosts to rise, and walk their nightly round. -- In plainer Language, it was Twelve o'Clock, and all the Family, as we have said, lay buried in Drink and Sleep...(X:ix:559)

Aurora now first opened her Casement, anglice, the Day began to break... (IX:ii:495)

Just as Sophia arrived at the Conclusion of her Story, there arrived in the Room where the two Ladies were sitting, a Noise, not unlike, in Loudness, to that of a Pack of Hounds just let out from their Kennel; nor in Shrillness, to Cats when caterwauling; or, to Screech-Owls; or, indeed, more like (for what Animal can resemble a human Voice) to those Sounds, which, in the pleasant Mansions of that Gate, which seems to derive its Name from a Duplicity of Tongues, issue from the Mouths, and sometimes from the Nostrils of those fair River Nymphs, ycleped of old the Naiades; in the vulgar Tongue translated Oyster-Wenches: For when, instead of the antient Libations of Milk and Honey and Oil, the rich Distillation from the Juniper-Berry, or, perhaps, from Malt, hath, by the early Devotion of their Votaries, been poured forth in great Abundance, should any daring Tongue, with unhallowed License prophane; i.e. depreciate the delicate fat Milton Oyster, the Plaice sound and firm, the Flounder as much alive as when in the Water, the Shrimp as big as a Prawn, the fine Cod alive but a few Hours ago, or any other of the Treasures, which those Water-Deities, who fish the Sea and Rivers, have committed to the Care of the Nymphs, the angry Naiades lift up their immortal Voices, and the prophane Wretch is struck deaf for his Impiety. (XI:viii:602f.)

This last wonderful flight of language contains one fact relevant to the plot: a great noise arose in the next room. But Fielding has blown it up to epic proportions, inventing a series of mock-heroic similes, investing the fishwives of Billingsgate with mythological status, and packing the whole with a wealth of facetious ironies. Some of the language is translated, but the bulk of the syntactically baroque metaphor is left in the hands of his readers. Deliberate demonstrations of the narrator's verbal and comic skills and language play, passages such as this entertain the reader, and undercut the seriousness of plot activities (as, in this case, the pursuit of Sophia and her cousin).

Such language -- whether or not a translation is openly provided --

is usually a means of comic circumlocution:

The first Thing done, was securing the Body of Northerton, who being delivered into Custody of six Men with a Corporal at their Head, was by them conducted from a Place which he was very willing to leave, but it was unluckily to a Place whither he was very unwilling to go. To say the Truth, so whimsical are the Desires of Ambition, the very Moment this Youth had attained the above-mentioned Honour, he would have been well contented to have retired to some Corner of the World, where the Fame of it should never have reached his Ears. (VII:xii:377)

This elaborate way of saying the Ensign had been incarcerated is a good example of purely comic euphemism; as such, it certainly needs no excuse. Nonetheless, it is frankly a product of the narrator's good humour, and his mind can be seen at work developing the structure of language necessary to the joke. The action is once again removed from the plane of existence which the characters inhabit, and is moved into the playful mediating consciousness itself. In this case, when the reader is concerned for the health of the hero (as he must be at this juncture), the interruption of the flow of the narrative both detaches the reader from the work, and (because of his curiosity and apprehension for the wounded Tom) this forcible detachment is all the more emphatic.

Such is also the case with Fielding's most popular language-play, the mock-heroic metaphors which abound throughout the novel. Sometimes these metaphors are enlisted to speak around certain topics, particularly sexuality. The encounter between Tom and Mrs. Waters is treated comically, mixing the metaphors of courtly and pastoral love with those of epic battle to describe their dalliance. Heroic metaphor is also used to create comic effect through misapplication. When Partridge is attacked by his wife, the high style's syntax is employed, although the

literal nature of the metaphor is not quite on the same level as the machinery of expression:

As fair Grimalkin, who, though the youngest of the Feline Family, degenerates not in Ferocity from the elder Branches of her House, and, though inferior in Strength, is equal in Fierceness to the noble Tyger himself, when a little Mouse, whom it hath long tormented in Sport, escapes from her Clutches for a while, frets, scolds, growls, swears; but if the Trunk, or Box, behind which the Mouse lay hid, be again removed, she flies like Lightning on her Prey, and, with envenomed Wrath, bites, scratches, mumbles, and tears the little Animal.

Not with less Fury did Mrs. Partridge fly on the poor Pedagogue. Her Tongue, Teeth, and Hands, fell all upon him at once. His Wig was in an Instant torn from his Head, his Shirt from his Back, and from his Face descended five Streams of Blood, denoting the Number of Claws with which Nature had unhappily armed the Enemy. (II:iv:89)

In this case, the comparison is just, and the hyperbolic metaphor serves to emphasize the vigor of Mrs. Partridge's domestic warfare. On the other hand, truly heroic metaphors are often distanced by translation, as when Mrs. Deborah Wilkins goes to the village in search of a victim:

Not otherwise than when a Kite, tremendous Bird, is beheld by the feathered Generation soaring aloft, and hovering over their Heads, the amorous Dove, and every innocent little Bird spread wide the Alarm, and fly trembling to their Hiding-places: He proudly beats the Air, conscious of his Dignity, and meditates intended Mischief.

So when the Approach of Mrs. Deborah was proclaimed through the Street, all the Inhabitants ran trembling into their Houses, each Matron dreading lest the Visit should fall to her Lot. She with stately Steps proudly advances over the Field, aloft she bears her tow'ring Head, filled with Conceit of her own Pre-eminence, and Schemes to effect her intended Discovery. (I:vi:47)

The first paragraph is played almost straight -- although there is a hint of a connection ironically drawn between worldly Dignity and Mischief, which is confirmed by the parallel construction in the second paragraph. To liken Mrs. Deborah to a Kite is appropriate (although

the style of the simile is more dignified than she merits); the connection between the nature of the bird of prey and the like nature of rapacious humans is traditional.⁷¹ But Fielding is not content to allow the reader to appreciate the apposite simile, and the narrator adds these comments as a kind of extended translation or authoritative interpretation:

The sagacious Reader will not, from this Simile, imagine these poor People had any Apprehension of the Design with which Mrs. Wilkins was now coming towards them; but as the great Beauty of the Simile may possibly sleep these hundred Years, till some future Commentator shall take this Work in hand, I think proper to lend the Reader a little Assistance in this Place.

It is my intention therefore to signify, that as it is the Nature of a Kite to devour little Birds, so it is the Nature of such Persons as Mrs. Wilkins to insult and tyrannize over little People. (I:vi:47)

The third paragraph seems to assume that there is a danger of reading the simile over-literally, and the narrator expresses a concern that misreading will prevent his favourite pieces from surviving to posterity -- and so he devotes yet another paragraph to explaining it. The really sagacious reader will have perceived the simile's meaning from the start, and the self-conscious elaboration of explanation has an effect of reinforcing the bond with the narrator. This comes about both from a recognition of an amusing affectation of vanity on the narrator's part, and from the ironic movement of exclusion from a community of understanding of any reader capable of missing so obvious a point.

Metaphorical descriptions are frequently deflated by simple

⁷¹ Vide the OED's historical examples, especially Shakespeare's Henry V, II.i.80: "Fetch forth the Lazar Kite of Cressids kinde, Doll Teare-sheete."

inversions of expectation or incongruity, as when Sophia is relieved to hear that a commotion in her inn is not caused by the arrival of her father, but "only" the news of a French invasion of England. (XI:6:593)

The artificiality of technique is inherent in the visible, careful arrangement of material to expose the incongruity which makes such passages funny. One further example will illustrate this principle. One of Fielding's most startling similes is presented in three parts. The first part is flowery and conventionally pastoral:

As when two Doves, or two Wood-pigeons, or as when Strephon and Phillis (for that comes nearest to the Mark) are retired into some pleasant solitary Grove, to enjoy the delightful Conversation of Love; that bashful Boy who cannot speak in Public, and is never a good Companion to more than two at a Time. Here while every Object is serene, should hoarse Thunder burst suddenly through the shattered Clouds, and rumbling roll along the Sky, the frightened Maid starts from the mossy Bank or verdant Turf; the pale Livery of Death succeeds the red Regimentals in which Love had before drest her Cheeks; Fear shakes her whole Frame, and her Lover scarce supports her trembling, tottering Limbs. (VI:ix:300f.)

This pleasant image of surprise is followed immediately by a deliberately incongruous one in which surprise is likened to that occasioned by the appearance of a famous lunatic-impersonator. The long, rhetorical delay of the "as...so" construction is at last completed by the line, "So trembled poor Sophia, so turned she pale at the Noise of her Father..." The effect of this passage may seem inappropriate, if it is seen to undercut the ideal picture of Sophia with the impropriety and indignity of the second image. The overall result, however, is not at all a diminution of Sophia's personal stature, nor of the seriousness of her fear, but instead a sudden consciousness in the reader of the power of incongruous language to shock -- the yoking together of the two radically different images, one sublime, and the

other more than a little ridiculous, has an effect of shock approximating the "fearful" shock of the storm or the madman's appearance. The passage is alienating in two ways: it distances the reader from Sophia by the artificiality of juxtaposing her terror with a comically inappropriate example of terror; in so doing, it draws attention to the narrator's ability to manipulate language and literary forms.

Language is also used to define those characters who use it or misuse it in particular ways. Partridge's characterization is enriched by his comical use of superficial, grammar-book Latin:

The Scraps of Latin, some of which Benjamin applied properly enough, tho' it did not savour of profound Literature, seemed yet to indicate something superior to a common Barber. (VIII:v:419)

In a society which justifies itself by control (and coercion) of evaluative language, Partridge is quite helpless, a condition which is apparent in his inability to distinguish between letter and meaning. It is not that he fails to value language, but that he seems to overvalue it in and of itself, as his knowledge of grammar without a corresponding familiarity with profound literature suggests. When recounting a story to Tom Jones and the Man of the Hill, Partridge, describing a friend, measures his worth in terms of grammatical ability:

"In the Parish where I was born, there lived a Farmer whose Name was Bridle, and he had a Son named Francis, a good hopeful young Fellow; I was at the Grammar School with him, where I remember he was got into Ovid's Epistles, and he could construe you three Lines together sometimes without looking into a Dictionary. Besides all this, he was a very good Lad, never missed Church o' Sundays, and was reckoned one of the best Psalm-Singers in the Parish." (VIII:xi:458)

The latter recommendations only serve to confirm the first great attribute. The peculiar discontinuity of language with thought (and with morality and justice) is more dramatically evident in a later passage,

when Partridge attempts to convince Tom to keep Sophia's purse and money, exclaiming that he had rather be hanged than to mention finding such a windfall.

"By what I can see, Partridge," cries Jones, "hanging is a Matter non longe alienum a Scaevolae studiis."
 "You should say alienus," says Partridge.-- "I remember the Passage; it is an Example under Communis, Alienus, immunis, variis casibus serviunt." "If you do remember it," cries Jones, "I find you don't understand it; but I tell thee, Friend, in plain English, that he who finds another's Property, and wilfully detains it from the known Owner, deserves in Foro Conscientiae, to be hanged no less than if he had stolen it." (XII:xiii:676)

Tom's translation into "plain English" is a movement from letter to meaning, rather than an ordinary interlinguistic translation; Tom's relapse into Latin taggery should warn the reader of this, especially since Tom places the important judgment in the conscience, not in the courts (which could convict for the crime named). Partridge can place Tom's earlier tag only in his grammar book, and his understanding of its meaning in context is badly blocked, and the second tag coupled with Tom's reprimand is not likely to be understood any better. Partridge's only response is to bewail his fate: "I have lived to a fine Purpose truly, if I am to be taught Grammar at this Time of Day." (XII:xiii:677) The effect on the reader of the dramatization of Partridge's block is to warn the reader to pay attention to the full implications of the use of evaluative language. The distance Partridge comically exemplifies between word and meaning is the same distance which is used by the dystopian society to appropriate and invert important evaluative terms.

Fielding also interrupts the flow of the story by "textual"

means, involving primarily the adaptation of the Scriblerian technique of footnoting with mock-learned references, as in Swift's Tale of a Tub and Pope's annotated Dunciad, and also Fielding's own Tragedy of Tragedies, published under the name H. Scriblerus Secundus in 1731. In the midst of a description of a fight in Tom Jones, the narrator obtrudes with a footnote explaining the term "muffled" with reference to a certain Boxing Academy in London (XIII:v:703), a curious intrusion of the "real" world into the fictional cosmos. When a belligerent sergeant misunderstands one of Partridge's snippets of Latin, the narrator provides a footnote to clear up the misinterpretation, although the other Latin tags in the novel are rarely so translated or interpreted. (IX:vi:517) Footnotes provide the opportunity for the narrator to comment ironically on his characters' utterances; Mrs. Western, in her anger at her brother, "quotes" Milton:

"Your ignorance, Brother," returned she, "as the great Milton says, almost subdues my Patience,"* "D--n Milton," answered the Squire, "if he had the impudence to say so to my Face, I'd lend him a Douse, thof he was never so great a Man, Patience!" (VI:xiv:321)

The note (*) suggests that Mrs. Western's ignorance is almost as monumental as her brother's: "The Reader may perhaps subdue his own Patience, if he searches for this in Milton." Other footnotes provide ironically tentative interpretations of malapropisms or other utterances as confused as confusing. Mrs. Western pluckily declares, "English Women are not to be treated like Ciracessian* Slaves." (X:viii:557) Interrupting her angry tirade at her brother with a mock-solemn note ("Possibly Circassian."), the narrator distances her and mocks her all at once.

Fielding also employs footnotes to make ironic commentary on contemporary political matters. In the spirit of his "Modern Glossary"⁷² (the true precursor of Ambrose Bierce's Devil's Dictionary), he approaches the definition of the phrase "the well-wooded Forest of Hampshire" with wry caution: "This is an ambiguous Phrase, and may mean either a Forest well clothed with Wood, or well stript of it." (V:xi:259)

Other footnotes elaborate on opinions delivered in the text. Arguing that "the nicest Strokes" of great playwrights are easier to comprehend when presented by great actors and actresses, a footnote is attached elaborating on the reasons for greatness in the particular people named in the passage. Again, footnotes serve to provide the narrator with yet another opportunity to explain to the reader certain implications of his narrative:

This is the second Person of low Condition whom we have recorded in this History, to have sprung from the Clergy. It is to be hoped that such Instances will, in future Ages, when some Provision is made for the Families of the inferior Clergy, appear stranger than they can be thought at present. (IV:xiv:205)

This is an irruption of the direct didacticism of Fielding's journalism (see especially the "Apology for the Clergy" in The Champion) into the oblique communication of the novel.

Sometimes the footnote interruptions are purely formal, as when the narrator explains a matter of geographical coincidence, referring to an earlier part of his book: "This was the Village where Jones met the Quaker." (X:ix:562) Here the narrator interrupts the action to "help" the reader imagine the route his characters have taken, and to compliment himself indirectly on his own cleverness in carrying it off so neatly.

⁷² The Covent-Garden Journal, No. 4 (January 14, 1752), I, 155ff.

All these varieties of footnotes share one common characteristic: they interrupt the flow of the story with a reminder to the reader that he is experiencing fiction, not reality.

Other interruptions of a similar nature are frequently included in the text, in apposition, as when the narrator pauses to explain to his reader what exactly a "Drum" is:

Having in this Chapter twice mentioned a Drum, a Word which our Posterity, it is hoped, will not understand in the Sense it is here applied, we shall, notwithstanding our present Haste, stop a Moment to describe the Entertainment here meant, and the rather as we can in a Moment describe it.

A Drum then is an Assembly of well dressed Persons of both Sexes, most of whom play at Cards, and the rest do nothing at all; while the Mistress of the House performs the Part of a Landlady at an Inn, and like the Landlady of an Inn prides herself in the Number of her Guests, though she doth not always, like her, get any Thing by it.

No wonder then as so much Spirits must be required to support any Vivacity in these Scenes of Dulness, that we hear Persons of Fashion eternally complaining of the Want of them; a Complaint confined entirely to upper Life. (XVII:vi:897f.)

This passage is a double interruption, for it not only stops the action while it refers to the material and process of the novel (the mention of haste, chapters, etc.), but it also interjects a shift in the narrative persona and a concomitant change in the conceptual flow of reading. Assuming the satirical role of the "innocent" reporting "foreign" behaviour (pioneered by Lucian's True Story, and mastered by Swift in Gulliver's Travels, Fielding in A Journey From This World to the Next, and Goldsmith in the Citizen of the World), the narrator lists the conditions of the Drum "straight-facedly". In doing this, he wryly implies that the practice will eventually and providentially pass away, and thus will require explanation. Joined with the liberal interpretation of affected social cant in the last sentence, his definition reveals the ab-

surdity of the practice, and the shallow interests of the "upper Life", whose affected self-labelling is also obliquely derided.

Outright interruption of the plot in the form of two major digressions (the tales told by the Man of the Hill and Mrs. Fitzgerald) break up the reader's absorption in the main plot-line. Even these interruptions are interrupted, keeping up the reader's awareness of the highly artificial position of the story-within-a-story. During the Man of the Hill's history (VIII:x-xv), Jones interrupts five times, and Partridge fifteen. One such interruption is a digression within a digression, as Partridge irrepressively interpolates a comically foolish ghost story. (VIII:xi:458ff.) In addition, there are four disruptive (and not obviously necessary) changes of chapter. Such chapter changes, incidentally, are standard practice throughout the novel, and invariably draw the reader's attention away from the interrupted story to the level of interrupting narrative itself. In the digressive tales, the reminder of fictional artificiality is doubly effective.

The history of Mrs Fitzpatrick is treated in much the same manner as that of the Man of the Hill. Particularly noteworthy is the textual format: the entire tale is narrated by a character/narrator, and is set down scrupulously enclosed in quotation marks. The reader is presented with a picture of Sophia and her cousin in conversation; Sophia interrupts the tale frequently, and Mrs. Fitzpatrick adds occasional explanatory glosses in parenthesis. Such a tactic sets forth a doubled, ironic situation:

"For my Aunt really conceived me to be what her Lover (as she thought him) called me, and treated me, in all Respects, as a perfect Infant....At last my Lover (for so he was) thought

proper to disclose a Secret which I had known long before."
(XI:iv:584)

Within Harriet Fitzpatrick's story, then, is a redoubled picture of illusion and reality, her aunt's illusion and the real situation. For Fielding's reader, it is dramatic irony simultaneously set forth and explained in a manifestly artificial fashion. Her tale is interrupted again by a whole chapter (XI:vi) devoted to an incident which broke up the temporal continuity of both coach-journey and history-telling. The final blow of artificiality comes when, at the close, the entire story seems to have been a "set-up" for a joke which, in spite of its bad taste (or, perhaps, because of its bad taste) undercuts the seriousness of the narration. It is not made any easier by being placed in the innocent mouth of Sophia:

"Indeed, Harriet, I pity you from my Soul;—But what could you expect? Why, why would you marry an Irishman?" (XI:vii:601)

The passages here extracted illustrate the wide range of techniques Fielding employed to interpose the consciousness of the nature of reading as an aesthetic and intellectual, not an empathetic, experience. The formal conditions of the novel as an artificial aesthetic object are repeatedly brought to the reader's attention, distancing him from involvement in the story of Tom Jones, Sophia, and their world. This distanced awareness, constantly rekindled and developed, creates a detachment in the reader inside of which dramatic irony operates. This is to say that the reader is given knowledge about the characters and plot which is superior to that possessed by the characters themselves. This allows the reader to take an overview of the situations in which the novel's characters find themselves, to come to informed ethical judgments, and to participate thereby in the ethically dialogic superstructure of the novel.

CHAPTER V

THE SAGACIOUS READER

It is a bold Assertion, and yet, I believe, a true one, That all Men of Sense are of one Mind. Here we must understand, Men whose Minds are strong enough to throw off all ridiculous Prejudices of Education, whose Eyes, if I may so express myself, are able to behold Truth without a Glass, such I believe will be very seldom found to depart from the Way of Truth, where some private Passion or Interest is not immediately concerned.¹

But knowledge that is delivered as a thread to be spun on, ought to be delivered and intimated, if it were possible, in the same method wherein it was invented; and so it is possible of knowledge induced.²

An author hazards his projection, not because of something in the "marks", but because of something he assumes to be in the reader.³

Every book ought to be read with the same spirit and in the same-manner as it is writ. (TJ, IV:i:151)

¹Henry Fielding, The Champion (July 5, 1740), as quoted by Andrew Wright, Henry Fielding: Masque and Feast, p. 196.

²Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning, Philosophical Works, p. 124.

³Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum", in Reader Response Criticism, ed. J. Tompkins, p. 183. By "marks", Fish indicates the individual units or "signals" in the text which direct interpretation. Sacks uses the term as found in David Hume's "Of the Standard of Taste", investigating "as a probability the notion that the novelist's beliefs, opinions, and prejudices are expressed in the judgments he conveys of his characters, their actions, and their thoughts; to use other terms, they are expressed as Hume's formal 'marks'—the signals—which persuade his readers to react to those characters, their acts and their thoughts in a manner consonant with the artistic end to which all elements in his work are subordinate." (p. 66)

1) Imagination and the Reader

To make Words serviceable to the end of Communication, it is necessary, (as has been said) that they excite, in the Hearer, exactly the same Idea, they stand for in the Mind of the Speaker. Without this, Men fill one another's Heads with noise and sounds; but convey not thereby their Thoughts, and lay not before one another their Ideas, which is the end of Discourse and Language.⁴

All linguistic activity is viewed as a process of taking apart unit pieces by analysis and putting them back together again by genesis or synthesis...⁵

Linguistic theory conventionally maintains that ordinary communication consists of at least five components: a speaker (utterer), a medium of expression, an expression, a context, and a respondent. In the novel, the speaker is the author (or his persona), the medium is written language in the generic form, the expression is the objective whole of the written work, the context is the wider pattern of social and literary thought which gives the expression immediate relevance for the reader, who is the fifth part. In spite of the solidity of the text, the reader is by no means limited to a role of passive receptivity. Indeed, literature has long been regarded as a process which is only completed in the reader's mind. This view of reading is related to the linguistic theory which requires the respondent to "re-create" the communication independently, and, to a certain degree, subjectively. As well, it accords with Locke's theory of the creative

⁴ John Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding, III.ix.6.

⁵ Walter J. Ong, Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue, p. 267. This is Ong's account of Renaissance theory, out of Galen by Johann Sturm, and popularized by Ramus.

(and re-creative) function of the mind, which develops the basic materials of perception (and of communication) into complex ideas.⁶

As early as 1712, Joseph Addison had already extended Locke's principles to explain the pleasure to be found in art, in the imaginative combination of perception with memory. Addison explains aesthetic pleasure in the 416th number of the Spectator:

In all these Instances, this Secondary Pleasure of the Imagination proceeds from that Action of the Mind, which compares the Ideas arising from the Original Objects, with the Ideas we receive from the Statue, Picture, Description, or Sound that represents them. It is impossible for us to give the necessary Reason, why this Operation of the Mind is attended with so much Pleasure...but we find a great Variety of Entertainments derived from this single Principle: For it is this that not only gives us a relish of Statuary, Painting and Description, but makes us delight in all the Actions and Arts of Mimickry.⁷

The appeal of literature is to this function of the imagination, and Addison's criticism can be seen as a precursor of the Romantic emphasis on the stimulation of the activity of the reader's mind and emotions.⁸ Be this as it may, the Lockean view of reading depends upon the active involvement of the creative, imaginative reader. This participation is most clearly required in matters of description and imagery:

Words, when well chosen, have so great a Force in them, that

⁶Reader response critics do not often make the connection with Locke's psychology. Wolfgang Iser, the dean of the phenomenological sect, defines reading as "sense-making", as "realization"—see "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach", in his The Implied Reader, pp. 274-5. Iser's description seems to parallel my Lockean proposal, although the reference to Locke is not specific.

⁷The Spectator, III, 290ff.

⁸For a full account of this development, see E.L. Tuveson, Imagination as a Means of Grace (Berkeley, 1960), especially Chapter V.

a Description often gives us more lively Ideas than the Sight of Things themselves. The Reader finds a Scene drawn in Stronger Colours, and painted more to the Life in his Imagination, by the help of Words, than by an actual Survey of the Scene which they describe. In this Case the Poet seems to get the better of Nature; he takes, indeed, the Landskip after her, but gives it more vigorous Touches, heightens its Beauty, and so enlivens the whole Piece, that the Images which flow from the Objects themselves appear weak and faint, in Comparison of those that come from the Expressions. The Reason, probably, may be, because in the Survey of any Object, we have only so much of it painted on the Imagination, as comes in at the Eye; but in its Description, the Poet gives us as free a View of it as he pleases, and discovers to us several Parts, that either we did not attend to, or that lay out of our Sight when we first beheld it. As we look on any Object, our Idea of it is, perhaps, made up of two or three simple Ideas; but when the Poet represents it, he may either give us a more complex Idea of it, or only raise in us such Ideas as are most apt to affect the Imagination.⁹

The reader's task, then, is to reassemble the incoming verbal perceptions, initially ordered and communicated by the author, and to do so ideally in as much as possible the same way as the author assembled his words. Modern communications theorists have called this reconstitutive step, or its analogue in verbal communication, "recoding":

It is my opinion that man's peculiar gift as a component in a communication system is his ability to discover new ways to transform, or recode, the information which he receives. It seems to me that the very fact of our limited capacity for processing information has made it necessary for us to discover clever ways to abstract the essential features of our universe and to express these features in simple laws that we are capable of comprehending in a single act of thought. We are constantly taking information given in one form and translating it into alternative forms, searching for ways to map a strange new phenomenon into simpler and more familiar ones. The search is something we call "thinking"; if we are successful, we call it "understanding".¹⁰

⁹ Spectator, No. 416, loc. cit. (emphasis added).

¹⁰ George A. Miller, The Psychology of Communication (New York, 1967), p. 49. For an account of current developments in what has come to be called "Reader Response Criticism", see Susan R. Suleiman, "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism", in The Reader in the

This view of communication is still fundamentally Lockean, especially in its emphasis on the creative aspect of understanding, and on the vital importance in serious communication of the recognition of (or assent to) the significance of the names of complex ideas¹¹—again a matter of creativity ("searching").

Essentially what is being said here is that the aesthetic experience (including reading) is wholly and entirely an imaginative¹² experience, one which can be generated only by the imaginative power of the respondent's (experient's) mind in response to the complex literary artifact. If this is to be recreated in the image intended by its creator, what guarantees—this question plagues modern critics of reader response—are available that the re-creation will be "correct"? One partial answer can be found by calling to mind the distance between Locke's definition of "imagination" and the prevailing modern connotations (imaginary = make-believe, unreal, delusionary). The experience is not generated ex nihilo, and so the careful author, anticipating the exigencies of the experience of reading, can plot strategies specifically directed to affect, direct, or modulate the imaginative recreation

Text, pp. 3-45; and Jane P. Tompkins, "An Introduction to Reader-Response Criticism" in Reader-Response Criticism, ed. J.P. Tompkins, pp. ix-xxvi.

¹¹ Cf. Essay Concerning Human Understanding, II.iv.15.

¹² Imagination is here understood in a pre-Romantic sense. Peter A. Angeles' first two definitions, in the Dictionary of Philosophy, are useful: "1. The power (faculty) of producing images and recombining them in new combinations apart from their actual occurrence in reality. 2. The process of receiving perceptions as images, altering them, and merging them into new patterns or unities." p. 127.

of his work:

The audience as understander, attempting an exact reconstruction in its own mind of the artist's imaginative experience, is engaged on an endless quest. It can carry this reconstruction out only in part....The artist may take his audience's limitations into account when composing his work; in which case they will appear to him not as limitations on the extent to which his work will prove comprehensible, but as conditions determining the subject-matter or meaning of the work itself.¹³

All imaginative literature is by definition oblique, in that it must be reconstructed by an operation of the reader's imagination, which may be called creative or "concreative" reading.¹⁴ That the world within the novel must be conjured up by the reader's active imagination is recognized by many critics; Percy Lubbock observes:

The reader of the novel—by which I mean the critical reader—is himself a novelist; he is the maker of a book which may or may not please his taste when it is finished, but of a book for which he must take his own share of the responsibility. The author does his part, but he cannot transfer his book like a bubble into the brain of the critic; he cannot make sure that the critic will possess his work. The reader must therefore become, for his part, a novelist, never permitting himself to suppose that the creation of the book is solely the affair of the author.¹⁵

Fielding, like other novelists, requires such activity on the part of the reader, inviting him to fill in certain areas of imaginative description. This aspect of his novel-writing, too, is made deliberately artificial. The narrator addresses the reader directly, commenting on

¹³ R.G. Collingwood, The Principles of Art (Oxford, 1938), pp. 311f.

¹⁴ Collingwood, p. 323. "Concreative" is Collingwood's term for art which depends upon the collaborative effort of the audience. His analysis is useful, although his emphasis on the reconstruction of an "exact" copy of the artist's imaginative experience (p. 311) is misleading. More helpful is the view which recognizes the process of reconstruction itself as part of the imaginative authorial design of literature; See Stanley Fish, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics", in Reader-Response Criticism, ed. J.P. Tompkins, pp. 70-100.

¹⁵ The Craft of Fiction, p. 17..

the development of the narration and on mechanical points, now apostrophizing his reader, now warning him, now exhorting him, now teasing him—the reader is necessarily drawn into the narrator's perpetually-voiced concern for the novelistic forms, and is encouraged to participate in the book in a parallel manner, consciously. As the narrator is involved in his own authorship, so is the reader always involved in readership.

Fielding's narrator explicitly encourages his reader's collaboration by drawing him into a position of parallel creativity, which, at one stage, he labels "Sagacity". In passing over large periods of time, the reader is provided with "an Opportunity of employing that Wonderful Sagacity, of which he is Master, by filling up those vacant Spaces of Time with his own Conjectures..." (III:i:116) The reader is expected to visualize, more or less "on his own", various scenes and tableaux of the story. He is encouraged to combine the primary information which the narrator has provided, and to form judgments. Fielding's characters often gain what dimension they may have from such activity on the reader's part. For example, introducing a lengthy passage devoted to a highly idealized and formal description of Sophia, the narrator calls upon the reader to complete the picture from his own experience. (IV:i:154) Although the narrator goes on to assert that he has unlimited access to her internal condition, he also states his intention to let the reader discover for himself that Sophia's beauty is truly an outward sign of an inward condition. Indeed, if

(as Martin C. Battestin has suggested⁶), Sophia is emblematic of her namesake, Wisdom, then the only way the reader can understand her 'perfections' is by subjective experience. As for her appearance, the reader may visualize it in his own imagination, but the narrator insists that the only sure way to understand her character is to observe what she does. Once again, Fielding asserts that actions are the only trustworthy sign of character.

The most frequent subject of confidential communication between the narrator and the reader is concerned with precisely this rule:

Many Accidents from time to time improved both these Passions in her Breast; which, without our recounting, the Reader may well conclude, from what we have before hinted of the different Tempers of these Lads, and how much the one suited with her own Inclinations more than the other. (IV:v:165)

He had a great many other Particularities in his Character, which I shall not mention, as the Reader will himself very easily perceive them, on his farther Acquaintance with this extraordinary Person. (VIII:iv:414)

These passages encourage the reader to exercise his own creative judgment, and at the same time point out the necessity of watching characters critically. The ultimate criterion for this judgment cannot be found in external appearance, social definition or status, nor in public profession. Rather, the reader is directed to consider the behaviour of the character in question, to place all relevant information in context, and only then to make up his mind. Much of the burden of judgment is thus placed on the reader's shoulders, and becomes incorporated into the act of reading itself.

¹⁶"Fielding's Definition of Wisdom: Some Functions of Ambiguity and Emblem in Tom Jones," ELH (English Literary History), XXXVI (1968): 188-217.

As we have noted, this process is never submerged, but is deliberately brought into the novel's foreground. Fielding's narrator incessantly calls upon the reader to take particular elements of information into consideration, to regard them in a certain light, and to come to an unspecified (but not undirected) judgment. In order that the reader may be enabled to place all this in the proper context, the narrator generously shares his superior knowledge with the reader, allowing him to view the ongoing story with the perspective characteristic of dramatic irony. Thus, he develops a relationship of implicit trust with the reader—this trust he exploits in a rather devious way, as we have seen (III:3; et passim). The kind of information thus provided, however, will not always satisfy the demands of immediate understanding. The reader is provided with a view which frequently contains contradictions—for instance, between the public and private character of Blifil—and is left to deduce what the true nature of the situation is. Thus, the secondary power of the imagination (forming complex ideas out of primary materials) becomes the agent of both aesthetic reconstruction and principled discrimination.

2) Dramatic Irony, Verbal Irony, and the Reader

There is in all forms of dramatic irony something that can be called a conflict of forces....In all of them, one at least of the forces is ignorant of his situation; the situation as it seems to him differs from the situation as it is; he is ignorant that Appearance is being contradicted by Reality; he would act differently if he knew....The spectator in the theatre always sees and knows both the appearance and the reality; and he senses the contradiction between what the ignorant character does and what he would do. Dramatic irony, in brief, is the sense of contradiction felt by spectators of a drama who see a character acting in ignorance of his condition.¹⁷

Fielding's entire plot, in its massively labyrinthine complexity, depends extensively upon the select ignorance of certain characters. This conflict of appearance and reality in Tom Jones is pervasive; indeed, it is perhaps the quintessential ingredient of the novel. As such, it is to be expected that the careful reader will discover it operating on numerous levels. Most frequently, the reader is allowed to view incidents within the novel from a privileged perspective:

Jones acquainted the Game-keeper with his Loss, and he as readily went back with him to the Brook, where they searched every Tuft of Grass in the Meadow, as well where Jones had not been, as where he had been; but all to no Purpose, for they found nothing: For indeed, though the Things were then in the Meadow, they omitted to search the only Place where they were deposited, to wit, in the Pockets of the said George; for he had just before found them, and being luckily apprized of their Value, had very carefully put them up for his own Use.

The Game-keeper having exerted as much Diligence in Quest of the lost Goods, as if he had hoped to find them, desired Mr. Jones to recollect if he had been in no other Place; "For sure," said he, "if you had lost them here so lately, the Things must have been here still; for this is a very unlikely Place for any one to pass by;" and indeed it was by great Accident that he himself had passed through that Field....

And indeed, I believe there are few Favours which he would

¹⁷ G.G. Sedgewick, Of Irony, Especially in Drama, pp. 48f.

not have gladly conferred on Mr. Jones; for he bore as much Gratitude towards him as he could, and was as honest as Men who love Money better than any other Thing in the Universe generally are. (XI:xii:314)

In scenes such as this, the dramatic irony is gradually revealed—first the meadow and the lost Pocket-book, then the helpful search, then the revelation of the exact location of the missing item, and then (after a little) acerbic commentary. Commentary usually follows a moment after the reader has been given the ironic insight which will allow him to concur with the narrator's opinion. Elements of reality are introduced into the picture of appearance: Black George masquerades as a faithful, friendly, helpful retainer, but the strongest evidence is Tom's money in his pocket.

Verbal and dramatic irony are combined when "appearance" is clothed with ambiguous, uncertain, or ostensibly acceptable language, only to be exposed by the implicit redefinition afforded by the real circumstances concerned. Because of the complications arising from his intrigue with Lady Bellaston, Tom has been forced to keep to his room, making the excuse that he is ill. The narrator observes laconically:

Jones this Day eat a pretty good Dinner for a sick Man, that is to say, the larger Half of a Shoulder of Mutton. (XIV:v:757)

On the surface, this sentence is fairly innocuous, although there is some humour in the delayed revelation of the size of Tom's meal. In context, however, the impact of the sentence derives from the apparent discrepancy between the ostensible content of the words and the actual meaning. The reader already knows Tom's illness is a masquerade, and the narrator's little irony becomes an indirect yet public announcement of the real circumstances. The ironic movement is framed in such a way

that the other characters do not recognize what is enormously obvious to the reader; the combination of this sharing of privileged information, together with the "private" joking tone of verbal irony, allows the narrator to build up a sense of intimate complicity between himself and his reader, who becomes what may be called a confidante-in-irony. Although this is a relatively minor example, it is characteristic of an ironic movement which recurs throughout the novel, and which is an unlimited source of humour and of reader-narrator complicity. Robert Alter has observed that this ironic community produces in the reader "a sense of intelligent superiority to its objects, or to any hypothetical person who would take it at face value."¹⁸

It is essential in such (author)narrator-reader communications that the content of the statement be distinguishable for the outward form. Søren Kierkegaard, in his treatise on Irony, explains:

In oratorical discourse there frequently occurs a figure of speech which bears the name of irony and whose characteristic is this: to say the opposite of what is meant. With this we already have a determination present in all forms of irony, namely, the phenomenon is not the essence but the opposite of essence. When I speak, the thought or meaning is the essence, the word is the phenomenon. These two moments are absolutely necessary, and it is in this sense that Plato has remarked that all thinking is a dialogue.¹⁹

The reader, in his perception of an ironic statement, must recognize the distance between appearance and reality, between apparent and

¹⁸ Robert Alter, "Fielding and the Uses of Style", Twentieth Century Interpretations of Tom Jones, ed. Battestin, p. 102. See below for further discussion of the ironic "exclusion" of a hypothetical reader.

¹⁹ Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Irony, tr. Lee M. Capel (New York, 1965), p. 111.

implicit meaning.

The ironic figure of speech cancels itself, however, for the speaker presupposes his listeners understand him, hence, through a negation of the immediate phenomenon the essence remains identical with the phenomenon....It is like a riddle and its solution possessed simultaneously.²⁰

The reader is presented with a statement; if he properly understands the context, which is "loaded" by the author, he will complete the communication (and get the joke) with the recognition of the unity of form and content, and of apparent and implicit meaning. Although Kierkegaard calls this movement "cancelling", the level of appearance is not simply abandoned or jettisoned—rather, it is seen through. The note of simultaneity is apt, because it places the emphasis in the matter of verbal irony upon the moment of perception (through phenomenon to essence) of the distance between appearance and reality.

Fielding's reader engages in a synthetic reconstruction of the intentional literary work; ironic phrases and descriptions depend for their impact upon the reader's ability to relate language as it is used (by the characters and the narrator) to the definitive context.

Fielding uses several especially weighted words throughout his novels so frequently (and sometimes so deviously) that the reader is forced to recognize that their meaning exceeds their literal connotation—we have already observed such a strategy with words like "charity" and "wisdom" in Joseph Andrews. A similar effect is in operation in Tom Jones in the manifold use of the word "Prudence" (with its variants):

To say the Truth, Sophia, when very young, discerned that Tom,

²⁰Ibid., pp. 265f.

though an idle, thoughtless, rattling Rascal, was no-body's Enemy but his own; and that Master Blifil, though a prudent, discreet, sober young Gentleman, was at the same Time strongly attached to the Interest of only one single Person; and who that single Person was, the Reader will be able to divine without any Assistance of ours. (IV:v:l65)

Miss Bridget Allworthy...very rightly conceived the Charms of Person in a Woman to be no better than Snares for herself, as well as for others, and yet so discreet was she in her Conduct, that her Prudence was as much on the Guard, as if she had all the Snares to apprehend which were ever laid for her whole Sex. Indeed, I have observed (tho' it may seem unaccountable to the Reader) that this Guard of Prudence, like the Trained Bands, is always readiest to go on Duty where there is no Danger. (I:ii:36f.)

All this tender Sorrow, however, raised no Compassion in her Aunt. On the contrary, she now fell into the most violent Rage.—"And I would rather," she cried, in a most vehement Voice, "follow you to your Grave, than I would see you disgrace yourself and your Family by such a Match. O Heavens! could I have ever suspected that I should live to hear a Niece of Mine declare a Passion for such a Fellow? You are the first—yes, Miss Western, you are the first of your Name who ever entertained so groveling a Thought. A Family so noted for the Prudence of its Women—" Here she run on a full Quarter of an Hour... (VI:v:289)

"Prudence" is invested with several distinct, and sometimes contradictory, meanings, a linguistic situation which we have already called "explosive". Battestin outlines the traditional definition (practical wisdom, "the rational ability to distinguish between goods real and only apparent and, by the proper use of the intellectual faculties of memory, judgement, and foresight, to estimate the future consequences of present actions and events"), as well as the corrupted version ("...ironically, its counterfeit and shadow came to be taken for the thing itself: self-discipline, discretion, foresight, expediency came to be valued for mercenary reasons—not as the way to self-knowledge and virtuous conduct, but as the surest means of prospering in the

world.")²¹ The explosive mixture comes when the reader is allowed to see through affectation of the former to the reality of vanity, selfishness, and hypocrisy. Blifil is a prudent showman, who carefully preserves the appearance of probity, and who calculates his actions in social situations so that his character will be interpreted by those around him in a good light. Bridget Allworthy's reputation for prudence is only camouflage for her lack of that very quality. For Mrs. Western, prudence simply implies a sense of values which does not allow matters such as love to interfere with the serious business of life—marriage and the preservation of social reputation.

All of these uses of the word "prudence" have this much in common: there is a double communication, a distinct contradiction between the false gloss accepted by dystopian society and the implicit, original meaning. The use of the word "Prudence" serves as a kind of signal to the reader that his careful attention is required; incautious reading might accept the false gloss as if it were the real thing, or might invert every case of "Prudence", although true Prudence is needed by several characters (including Tom, and Mr. Allworthy as well).

The reader is offered both appearance and reality of key words in much the same way that audiences are shown characters acting in ignorance of their real condition in dramatic irony. The concurrence of

²¹TJ, p. 36. Cf. Battestin's study, "Fielding's Definition of Wisdom: Some Functions of Ambiguity and Emblem in Tom Jones", ELH, XXXV (1968), pp. 188-217. Other valuable discussions of Prudence may be found in Glen W. Hatfield, Fielding and the Language of Irony, and Eleanor Hutchens, Irony in Tom Jones (University, Alabama, 1965), Chapter V.

dramatic and verbal irony is thus evident in the manner in which some characters accept the surface value of a word while the reader is led to understand the submerged meaning.

Other patterns of verbal irony share this characteristic; the simplest form is verbal irony of direct opposition or inversion—what is said is the opposite of what is meant. This occurs constantly in Tom Jones, as when Partridge in his most credulous moments is called "the sagacious Partridge". Fielding also "translates" more or less obvious passages of verbal irony:

Jones now declared that they must certainly have lost their Way; but this the Guide insisted was impossible; a Word which, in common Conversation, is often used to signify not only improbable, but often what is really very likely, and, sometimes, what hath certainly happened: An hyperbolical Violence like that which is so frequently offered to the Words Infinite and Eternal; by the former of which it is usual to express a Distance of half a Yard; and by the latter, a Duration of five Minutes. And thus it is as usual to assert the Impossibility of losing what is already actually lost. This was, in fact, the Case at present: For notwithstanding all the confident Assertions of the Lad to the contrary, it is certain they were no more in the right Road to Coventry, than the fraudulent, griping, cruel, canting Miser is in the right Road to Heaven. (XII:xi:661)

The doubleness in word-usage here indicates not a limitation of language, but a radical doubleness in the society which uses the words. The word "impossible" is loaded by context, as are several other popularly equivocal terms. The discrepancy between false gloss and real meaning is underscored by narrative commentary, and the reader, recognizing the general pattern of human folly in the specific instance given, joins the confidential, ironic narrator in an implicit community of laughing disapproval. The relationship of confidence is strengthened immeasurably by the sudden explosion of direct didacticism in the

comparison at the end of the passage, which is so phrased that it is not immediately arguable. That is, it is not a replacement of the oblique method, but a complementary process.

In this manner, thematic patterns of verbal irony spring from vital areas of Fielding's ethical concern. This is readily apparent in the use in Tom Jones of the word "wisdom". Over and over again, Fielding places "wisdom" in a certain context, which develops in an incremental effect, ironically exposing for the reader's enjoyment and edification the ludicrous nature of the dystopian society's identification of (mercenary) prudence with (worldly) wisdom. One movement in which this effect is readily apparent is the characterization of Squire Western; as is often Fielding's method, the Squire is treated variously, depending upon his particular function at the moment. Most frequently, he is a "humorous" character, over-specialized, a two-dimensional manifestation of the ideal form of ignorant, choleric, old-school Tory Squire. Part of his comic impact derives from his hypertrophied passion for the hunt, which blocks (and provides Fielding with the imagery to describe this blockage) his expression of human affection, especially in the case of his daughter, Sophia:

The amiable Sophia was now in her eighteenth Year, when she is introduced into this History. Her Father, as hath been said, was fonder of her than of any other human Creature. (IV:iii: 158)

This is not immediately questionable, but several chapters later, the Squire's fondness—and more particularly, Fielding's description of it—takes on a new light which turns the last part of the sentence from an ornament into a qualification:

Mr. Western grew every Day fonder and fonder of Sophia, insomuch that his beloved Dogs themselves almost gave Place to her in his Affections; but as he could not prevail on himself to abandon these, he contrived very cunningly to enjoy their Company, together with that of his Daughter, by insisting on her riding a hunting with him. (IV:xiii:199)

Much later, the Squire leaves his pursuit of Sophia on the road to London, joining a fox-hunt he encounters along the way (XII:ii:622ff.) Taken by themselves, these passages lend colour to the depiction of the eccentric Squire; taken together, they suggest a meaningful pattern in his eccentricities. His hunting-hobby-horse is ostensibly a harmless, if selfish, pastime, but it monopolizes his time, concern, and energy. In addition, he seems to think of other people in terms of property values, and of human relations in terms of property rights:

Every Thing which the Squire held most dear; to wit, his Guns, Dogs, and Horses, were now as much at the Command of Jones, as if they had been his own. (I:x:149)

Built into this ironic progress is the gradual revelation that Squire Western is not just an ignorant booby. He is, to a discomfoting extent, quite self-aware; he is quite conscious of matters concerning his own private advantage:

The Squire, tho', perhaps, he had never read Machiavel, was, however, in many Points, a perfect Politician. He strongly held all those wise Tenets, which are so well inculcated in that Politico-Peripatetic School of Exchange-Alley. He knew the just Value and only Use of Money, viz. to lay it up. He was likewise well skilled in the exact Value of Reversions, Expectations, &c. and had often considered the Amount of his Sister's Fortune, and the Chance which he or his Posterity had of inheriting it. This he was infinitely too wise to sacrifice to a trifling Resentment. (VI:iii:278. My emphasis in the second and last sentences.)

The terms of the Art of Thriving are readily discernible here, and the heavy irony is enriched by the biblical allusion (on "laying up treasure" ,

see above, II:5). As the Squire considers the economic benefits of having good relations with his sister, he embodies the avaricious materialism of the Thriving society. His over-specialization, in this case, is gain; in replacing human contact with material equivalents, he comically diminishes himself. Aligning himself with the inverted values of the dystopian society, he acts in such a way that the false gloss of "wisdom" applies to his nature.

The movement here described, centering about Squire Western, is only one of many parallel movements establishing and undercutting false glosses of the word "wisdom". The gradual development of a new perspective from which to view the Squire is one of the more complex movements, but even in relatively minor passages the word is used to describe acts which have no significance beyond producing the immediate material benefit of the actor:

...Jones, by Golden Arguments, had prevailed with the Boy to attend him back to the Inn whither he had before conducted Sophia; but to his however the Lad consented, upon Condition that the other Guide would wait for him at the Alehouse; because, as the Landlord at Upton was an intimate Acquaintance of the Landlord at Gloucester, it might some Time or other come to the Ears of the latter, that his Horses had been let to more than one Person, and so the Boy might be brought to Account for Money which he wisely intended to put in his own Pocket.
(XII:ix:653)

Here again the verbal irony depends on the contextual perspective of dramatic irony. The reader is allowed to see both the covert theft and the alibi, both the usualness and the petty moral bankruptcy of the young guide's act.²²

²²Cf. XII:ix:653. The irony is underscored by an implicit contrast between the appeal to "wisdom" through "Golden Arguments" and the

The extended, ironic use of false glosses may be understood as a branch of the 18th-century comic attack of Raillery, which, as Fielding explains, consists in "Pleasantly representing real good Qualities in a false light of Shame, and bantering them as ill ones. So Generosity may be treated as Prodigality; Oeconomy as Avarice; true Courage as Fool-Hardiness; and so of the rest."²³ The specific inversion which gives the name of virtue or wisdom to a vice (self-interested, mercenary prudence) is central to Fielding's ironic method. The reader is required to see the ostensible, literal meaning of the word "wisdom" undercut by its practical corruption in society, and is enabled to see through the affectation thus represented.

The "ingenuous" reader, perceiving the violent contradictions in these false glosses, is drawn to answer the implicit questions thus presented. Fielding hereby incorporates into his novels a kind of dialogue which seems to owe much to Erasmus. The false gloss of "wisdom" is a descendent of the method of the Praise of Folly; Fielding's

justice of the Golden Rule. The Argument, then, implies sophisticated relativism and materialism, whereas the Rule implies the absolute nature of moral law. It is interesting to compare this passage to Swift's "Epistle to a Lady":

When my Muse officious ventures
On the Nations representers;
Teaching by what Golden Rules
Into Knaves they turn their Fools..." (lines 155-8)

The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford, 1958), II, 635.

In yet another passage, Fielding makes a Swiftian scatological reference to "Gold-finders" (cleaners of latrines), again emphasizing the moral worthlessness of that metal. (VI:i:269)

²³ "Essay on Conversation", Miscellanies, I:152. See also Norman Knox, The Word Irony and Its Context for a history of the ironic techniques of "blame-by-praise" and "praise-by-blame".

ironic strategy can be explained by reference to an important number of the Covent-Garden Journal, which animadverts upon "a kind of silly Fellows" known as "Wise Men". This wisdom he wryly defines:

By Wisdom here, I mean that Wisdom of this World, which St. Paul expressly tells us is Folly; that Wisdom of the Wise, which, as we read both in Isaiah and in the Corinthians, is threatened with Destruction: Lastly, I here intend that Wisdom in the Abundance of which, as the Preacher tells us, there is much of Grief; which, if true, would be alone sufficient to evince the extreme Folly of those who covet and pursue such Wisdom.

But tho' the Scriptures in the Places above cited, and in many others do very severely treat this Character of worldly or mock Wisdom, they have not, I think, very fully described it, unless perhaps Solomon hath done this ironically under the Name of Folly. An Opinion to which I am much inclined; and indeed what is said in the 10th Chapter of Ecclesiastes of the great Exaltation of a Fool, must be understood of a Fool in Repute, and such is the Wise Man here pointed at.

In the same Manner, the best writers among the Heathens have obscurely and ironically characterised this Wisdom. What is a covetous Man? says Horace, he is both a Fool and a Madman. Now Avarice is the very highest Perfection and as it were Quintessence of this Kind of Wisdom....And with this Opinion the Judgment of the World hath so absolutely coincided, that I am extremely doubtful whether by a Wise Man is generally meant any other than a Man who is pursuing the direct Road to Power or Wealth, however dirty or thorny it may be. A wise Man, in short, in the common Estimation, is he who becomes great or rich; nor are all the Labours he undergoes, or all the Frauds and Villainies which he commits ever taken into the Account, or in the least considered as any Objection to his Wisdom.²⁴

Fielding goes on to explain that it has been the intention of many Divines to demonstrate "that the Man who sacrifices his Hopes in another World to any Acquisitions in this, however wise he may call himself or may be called by others, is in Reality a very silly Fellow."²⁵

²⁴ The Covent-Garden Journal, No. 69 (November 4, 1752), II, 125ff. For a related Erasmian passage, see Captain Hercules Vinegar's plan for a hospital for Fools, The Champion (February 21, 1739-40), Henley, XV, 213-17.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 127.

The ephemeral nature of the pursuit of Avarice and Ambition provides a wealth of evidence that it is a pursuit doomed to failure, even on its own terms, in that it cannot be productive of happiness. He concludes with an exhortation to common sense and philosophical laughter:

But in plain Truth, if it was as certain that there is no other World, as I take it to be certain that there is, he would be the wisest Man who made the most of the Comforts of this, while the Wretch who spends his Days in Cares and Misery that he may die greater or richer than other Men, is the silliest Fellow in the Universe.²⁶

The ironic conflict of forces in the individual passages concerning "wisdom" comes to the reader as an unanswered question—unanswered, but not unanswerable. Verbal irony, because it consists of two elements of significant meaning, can be called "ambiguous", but its ambiguity is (not a permanent condition, but only) the field in which resolution of meaning takes place. In seeing through the affectation of worldly wisdom to the essential silliness of avarice and ambition, and in joining with the narrator in laughter, the reader tacitly assents to the standard against which silliness is measured.

²⁶Ibid., p. 130.

3) Connotative Irony and the Motive Shift

Eleanor Hutchens credits Fielding with the invention of a new form of irony, which she calls "connotative irony". By setting the utterance of false glosses in the context of a corrupt or dystopian society, a false harmony is established, and needs to be corrected by the reader's understanding of the true meaning which the false gloss has replaced:

It is verbal irony of an oblique kind: not the well-recognized device of using a word to signify its direct opposite, but the subtler one of making the literal meaning fit the context while the connotative significance clashes with it. This seemingly small trick does much to produce the impression of control, assurance, and comic awareness of the styles of Fielding and his descendents.²⁷

The literal meaning fits the literal context; it only needs to be added that the reader has been given a wider context, by the direct and oblique influence of the narrator. This wider context, and the reader's own inference and deduction, lead to conclusions which clash with the literal meaning. This irony involves the operation of the reader's own interpretive judgment; given the surface meaning, and directed toward the discovery of the submerged meaning, the reader is enabled to see through illusory affectation to deeper reality. This is the essence of the ironic movement centred about the words "Prudence" and "Wisdom", discussed above.

Connotative irony is not limited to simple verbal applications, however. The reader is frequently shown that the declarations made by

²⁷Eleanor Hutchens, Irony in Tom Jones, p. 9.

characters have an implicit bearing on their true nature much different from what can be understood from their literal statements. Such an effect seems to combine dramatic and connotative irony, and may be called the "motive shift". It is a shift because the reader takes the ironic tone of the narration into consideration, and makes an interpretive shift from ostensible to actual meaning. This occurs when the narrator assigns a patently insufficient motivation to a character's action. Sometimes the explanation is clearly specious, or else contextual evidence is provided which allows the reader to perceive the discrepancy between a character's established nature and his public protestations.

When Jones purchases a sword from the sergeant of a regiment he intends to join, the narrator describes the negotiations with straight-faced solemnity:

The Serjeant now began to harangue in Praise of his Goods.... Here the other stopped him, and begged him to name a Price. The Serjeant, who thought Jones absolutely out of his Senses, and very near his End, was afraid, lest he should injure his Family by asking too little. (VII:xiv:386)

The motive shift in this instance is almost direct reversal. The narrator's analysis of the Sergeant's motives literally suggest his actions are grounded in an altruistic concern for his family's well-being. No translation is provided for the reader, but the context of the surrounding chapters (which focus upon the conflict between military "honour", a false gloss which concerns Fielding deeply, and Christian principles) and the dramatic irony developed as the negotiations proceed, both contribute to guide the reader's inference. The Sergeant, thinking Jones vulnerable, greedily attempts to victimize him.

The bantering techniques of Raillery, lauding characters for virtues which they do not possess, is adapted frequently to the motive shift. This usually takes the form of praising obviously self-interested actions as examples of great altruism:

Mr. Allworthy...told his Sister he had a Present for her; for which she thanked him, imagining, I suppose, it had been a Gown or some Ornament for her Person. Indeed, he very often made her such Presents, and she in Complacence to him spent much time in adorning herself. I say, in Complacence to him, because she always exprest the greatest Contempt for Dress, and for those Ladies who made it their Study. (I:iv:44)

The distance between her expression and the unstated reality is underscored when the reader recalls Bridget Allworthy's attitude toward the matter of personal beauty a few pages before this passage—an attitude of "sour grapes":

This Lady was now somewhat past the Age of 30, an Aera, at which, in the Opinion of the malicious, the Title of Old Maid may, with no Impropriety, be assumed. She was of that Species of Women, whom you rather admire for good Qualities than Beauty, and who are generally called by their own Sex, very good Sort of Women—as good a Sort of Woman, Madam, as you would wish to know. Indeed, she was so far from regretting Want of Beauty, that she never mention'd that Perfection (if it can be called one) without Contempt; and would often thank God she was not as handsome as Miss such a one, whom perhaps Beauty had led into Errors, which she might have otherwise avoided. (I:ii:36)

The distance is even greater when the reader comes upon this passage a second time, with a second reading, and discovers the hidden irony—her Want of Beauty and her Prudence are not active enough in reality to prevent her from falling into precisely the same Errors she professes to abhor.

The motive shift is often keyed or signalled, as with the registered hesitation in "I suppose" of the first passage. The attentive reader learns to recognize these changes of narrative tone, and to

expect that more will be intended than is said.

The motive shift may also be employed for the purpose of comic circumlocution, or elaborately avoiding stating the obvious—the narrator most often presents such circumlocution in a polite fiction, "speculation" about the possible reason behind obvious behaviour:

The Horses being now produced, Jones directly leapt into the Side-Saddle, on which his dear Sophia had rid. The Lad indeed very civilly offered him the Use of his; but he chose the Side-Saddle, probably because it was softer. (XII:ix:653)

This passage contributes to the reader's understanding of the extent of Tom's affection for Sophia through transparent misdirection. Motive shift acts as a tool for characterization by offering the reader a transparently literal description, which needs to be reversed (or translated). Thwackum, for instance, is introduced with a fairly ambiguous description. Fielding does not encourage the reader to remain uncertain about him for long; the ambiguity is determined by a suggestion that the narrator adds, almost as an afterthought:

Having therefore determined to commit these Boys to the Tuition of a private Tutor, Mr. Thwackum was recommended to him for that Office, by a very particular Friend, of whose Understanding Mr. Allworthy had a great Opinion, and whose Integrity he placed much Confidence. This Thwackum was Fellow of a College, where he almost entirely resided; and had a great Reputation for Learning, Religion and Sobriety of Manners. And these were doubtless the Qualifications by which Mr. Allworthy's Friend had been induced to recommend him; tho' indeed this Friend had some Obligations to Thwackum's Family, who were the most considerable Persons in a Borough which that Gentleman represented in Parliament. (III:v:135)

This is a disintegrating passage—it starts out promising a high recommendation, and ends up casting doubt in every direction. Allworthy has confidence in his friend's integrity—but the careful reader may recall that Allworthy's goodness and wisdom do not prevent him from misplacing

his confidence in unworthy persons. Then, the reader is told that Thwackum had a great Reputation for Learning, Religion, and Sobriety; Fielding does not credit the man with the real attributes, but only the appearance of possessing them. That this appearance may well be deceptive is evident in the relationship of interest between the referee and the Tutor's family. The motive attributed by the narrator is far from "doubtless"; indeed, it is beyond doubt not as he ostensibly declares. No direct allegations are made, but the reader has experienced the motive shift, and must judge accordingly.

Fielding's most concentrated use of motive shift is applied in establishing the shadiness of Blifil's character. The reader is given strong hints about his true nature, which serve as landmarks in the misty ambiguity of the literal statement of descriptive passages:

Master Blifil fell very short of his Companion in the amiable Quality of Mercy; but he as greatly exceeded him in one of a much higher Kind, namely, in Justice: In which he followed both the Precepts and Example of Thwackum and Square; for though they would both make frequent use of the Word Mercy, yet it was plain, that in reality Square held it to be inconsistent with the Rule of Right; and Thwackum was for doing Justice, and leaving Mercy to Heaven. The two Gentlemen did indeed somewhat differ in Opinion concerning the Objects of this sublime Virtue; by which Thwackum would probably have destroyed one half of Mankind, and Square the other half. (III:x:147)

If the reader can have any doubt about the ironic inversion of value mockingly adopted by the narrator in the first part of this passage, the alignment of Blifil's "superior" practice with the teachings of the two false sages must correct the literal statement that Justice is superior to mercy.

This literal statement, however, continues to make itself felt,

as Blifil cultivates the appearance of zeal for justice in his campaign against Jones:

Master Blifil then, though he had kept Silence in the Presence of Jones, yet when he had better considered the Matter, could by no Means endure the Thoughts of suffering his Uncle to confer Favours on the Undeserving. (III:x:147)

Blifil coerces small portions of truth to serve his ends, and pursues justice with impeccable timing:

Had this Fact been truly laid before Mr. Allworthy, it might probably have done the Game-keeper very little Mischief. But there is no Zeal blinder than that which is inspired with the Love of Justice against Offenders. Master Blifil had forgot the Distance of the Time. He varied likewise in the Manner of the Fact; and by the hasty Addition of the single Letter S, he considerably altered the Story... (III:x:148)

The "Love of Justice against Offenders" is a false gloss, ironically adopted by the narrator to explain obliquely what Blifil is up to. The language describing his actions is always equivocal, deliberately drawing the reader's attention to the necessity of "translating" Blifil's own statements, as well as the narrator's curiously "detached" tone.

The consciousness of Blifil's masquerade provides the reader with the overview of dramatic irony, which allows him to see through Blifil and through the misdirection and equivocation of the narrator. When Tom sells his Bible to help Black George, Blifil appropriates Tom's generous act, turning it inside out to serve as evidence against him later on. The narrator's only commentary is the suggestion of a string of hypothetical alternative motives for Blifil's act, which the reader recognizes as totally invalid:

Thus it happened to poor Tom; who was no sooner pardoned for selling the Horse, than he was discovered to have some time before sold a fine Bible which Mr. Allworthy gave him, the Money arising from which Sale he had disposed of in the same Manner.

This Bible Master Blifil had purchased, though he had already such another of his own, partly out of Respect for the Book, and partly out of Friendship to Tom, being unwilling that the Bible should be sold out of the Family at half Price. He therefore disbursed the said half Price himself; for he was a very prudent Lad, and so careful of his Money, that he had laid up almost every Penny which he had received from Mr. Allworthy. (III:ix:144)

Blifil's prudence—and it is the first instance of "prudence" after Fielding's ironic paeon in its praise (III:vii:141)—is such that he has laid up his treasure for just such an opportunity as this. Tom sells his Bible, but lives it, in his charity (and responsibility) to Black George. Blifil "preserves" the Bible, to avoid the shame of having it circulate in vulgar hands; out of friendship, which betrays its trust; in pursuit of a mechanical "justice" which is like a weapon to his hand. The contrast between the two young men is perfectly balanced: Blifil and Tom exhibit two kinds of "Respect" for the Bible, materialistic and practically moral; two ways of laying up treasure; two kinds of friendship. Blifil's accomplishment, turning Tom's generosity into the appearance of something vicious, is impressive. What must appear to Blifil's admirers among his fellow-characters as justice and prudence is given to the reader obliquely as cruel ambition and avarice.

The reader is called upon so frequently to judge ironic narrative commentary that the procedure becomes almost automatic; Blifil's pious language, for instance, is read and understood as its opposite. When Tom succeeds in convincing Squire Western to take Black George into his service, Blifil's reaction is described with this kind of irony:

Tom's Success in this Affair soon began to ring over the Country, and various were the Censures past upon it. Some greatly applauding it as an Act of good Nature, others sneering and saying, "No

Wonder that one idle Fellow should love another." Young Blifil was greatly enraged at it. He had long hated Black George in the same Proportion as Jones delighted in him; not from any Offence which he had ever received, but from his great Love to Religion and Virtue: For Black George had the Reputation of a loose kind of Fellow. Blifil therefore represented this as flying in Mr. Allworthy's Face; and declared with great Concern, that it was impossible to find any other Motive for doing Good to such a Wretch. (IV:v:170)

By this time, the reader understands the nature of Blifil's "Love to Religion and Virtue", and when the narrator cites it as a motive for his action, the reader knows he must look elsewhere. Blifil's hatred does not spring from a sense of personal injury, so it must come either from jealousy or from his deep-rooted antipathy to anything connected to Jones, or perhaps from an antipathy to anyone not bound by the gripping compulsion to maintain the Reputation of virtue. Be this as it may, Blifil's concern is on the level of Reputation (both Black George's and his own), and his hatred is clearly more expressive of his own condition than a reflection on Black George. His immediate response to Tom's aid to his friend is to cast as dubious a light upon it as possible.

Blifil is a convincing villain because his hatred seems so arbitrary. The reader is never given any hint about its origin; it is an "unaccountable malignancy", a strong predisposition toward ill-nature. His wickedness emerges in two ways; as it develops, it is balanced and contrasted with the parallel development of Good Nature in Tom. As well, the reader is witness to the clash of Blifil's perversions and distortions of truth with the context provided by conditions of dramatic irony. The motive shift operates to draw the reader's attention to the real reasons behind his actions, while stating them in the terms of the affected appearance which successfully deceives so many of Fielding's

other characters:

Blifil knew Jones very well, tho' he was at above a hundred Yards Distance, and he was as positive to the Sex of his Companion, tho' not to the individual Person. He started, blessed himself, and uttered a very solemn Ejaculation.

Thwackum express'd some Surprise at these sudden Emotions, and asked the Reason of them. To which Blifil answered, "he was certain he had seen a Fellow and Wench retire together among the Bushes, which he doubted not was with some wicked Purpose." As to the Name of Jones, he thought proper to conceal it, and why he did so must be left to the Judgment of the sagacious Reader: For we never chuse to assign Motives to the Actions of Men, when there is any possibility of our being mistaken.
(V:x:258)

The tone of withholding judgment is typically disingenuous, for there is, of course, no possible mistaking of the nature of Blifil's machinations. The reader is called upon to make the necessary connections independently—although the contextual evidence of Blifil's nature makes the task fairly simple. The narrator's pretense of neutrality is, in effect, a mock-alignment with the dystopian world within the novel. The narrator temporarily waives his rights of omniscience, affecting the simplicity which never sees "farther into People than they desired to let him." (JA, II:x:144) This encourages the reader to exercise his "Sagacity", to reverse or translate the narrator's ironic neutrality; it also makes the reader more conscious of the degree to which his knowledge is superior to that of the characters of the novel.

The most common variation of this effect occurs in the numerous instances in which the narrator feigns ignorance or claims inability to make use of the access to his characters allowed by the omniscient powers he had earlier claimed so stridently. By deliberately leaving questions unanswered, delaying, sidetracking, and forestalling his reader, the narrator creates pockets of ambiguity and contradiction.

Yet, as we have seen, none of these moments are wholly static or fixed in ambiguity. Rather, most seem to possess potential ironic resolution, to be effected by the reader's judgment, in response to oblique authorial direction.

Indeed, this direction often takes the form of apparent misdirection, an obviously specious hypothesis, or a series of alternative interpretations. The falseness of these choices must be deduced from the context of the novel. The pretense of limited omniscience is mustered against negative characters, shifting the resolution of heavily-loaded ambiguous expression (of an insinuating, satirical tone) to the reader. When a narrative statement of this kind is tempered with qualifications and limitations, it is doubly ironic, because it not only contains a meaning different from its literal significance, but also pretends on the literal surface to be noncommittal and objective, while in reality it contains a sharply critical message.

Mr. Allworthy had no sooner lifted up his Eyes, and thanked Heaven for these Hopes of Recovery, than Mr. Blifil drew near with a very dejected Aspect, and having applied his Handkerchief to his Eye, either to wipe away his Tears, or to do as Ovid somewhere expresses himself on another Occasion, Si nullus erit, tamen excute nullum. If there be none, then wipe away that none. He communicated to his Uncle what the Reader hath been just before acquainted with. (V:viii:249f.)

Although the structure of the language in this passage is that of the objective presentation of real choice, the reader knows that Blifil's tears may well be false. Whenever the narrator adopts this "objective" voice, presenting a hypothetical range of choice, the actual choice is directed by context, and is almost instantaneous. When Northerton attacks Mrs. Waters, the narrator speculates, again without ostensible

resolution, whether or not the crime was premeditated:

Whether the execrable Scheme which he now attempted to execute, was the Effect of previous Deliberation, or whether it now first came into his Head, I cannot determine. But being arrived in this lonely Place, where it was very improbable he should meet with any Interruption; he suddenly slipped his Garter from his Leg, and laying violent Hands on the poor Woman, endeavoured to perpetrate that dreadful and detestable Fact....Mr. Jones came to her Relief, at that very Instant when her Strength failed, and she was totally overpowered, and delivered her from the Ruffian's Hands, with no other Loss than that of her Cloaths, which were torn from her Back, and of the Diamond Ring, which during the Contention either dropped from her Finger, or was wrenched from it by Northerton. (IX:vii:52lf.)

The question of premeditation is never directly answered, yet the intention to steal the ring becomes obvious. The syntactic structure of this passage approximates the device of suspension in a complex sentence. The motive shift is not weakened at all by the ostensibly neutral narrative tone, and in fact this pattern occurs so frequently that the reader tends to become suspicious, to anticipate the suspended conclusion or confirmation of his suspicion, whenever he encounters the familiar ambiguous formulations.

The pose of objectivity is often deliberately artificial—that is, the reader's attention is drawn to it as a pose. When Northerton escapes, the narrator assumes a vague air which corresponds to (or mimics) the level of understanding proper to the characters present at the scene:

But whether Northerton was carried away in Thunder or Fire, or in whatever other Manner he was gone; it was now certain, that his Body was no longer in Custody. (VII:xiv:390)

The reader is informed, in the next chapter, of the circumstances leading to the escape. Northerton's plight excites the "compassion" of the landlady:

Now this young Gentleman, tho' somewhat crooked in his Morals, was perfectly strait in his Person, which was extremely strong and well made. His Face too was accounted handsome by the Generality of Women, for it was broad and ruddy, with tolerably good Teeth. Such Charms did not fail making an Impression on my Landlady, who had no little Relish for this kind of Beauty. She had, indeed, a real Compassion for the young Man; and hearing from the Surgeon that Affairs were like to go ill with the Volunteer, she suspected they might hereafter wear no benign Aspect with the Ensign. Having obtained, therefore, leave to make him a Visit, and finding him in a very melancholy Mood, which she considerably heightened, by telling him there were scarce any Hopes of the Volunteer's Life, she proceeded to throw forth some Hints, which the other readily and eagerly taking up, they soon came to a right Understanding; and it was at length agreed, that the Ensign should, at a certain Signal, ascend the Chimney....But lest our Readers, of a different Complexion, should take this Occasion of too hastily condemning all Compassion as a Folly, and pernicious to Society, we think proper to mention another Particular, which might possibly have some little Share in this Action. The Ensign happened to be at this Time possessed of the Sum of fifty Pounds, which did indeed belong to the whole Company....This money, however, he thought proper to deposite in my Landlady's Hands, possibly by way of Bail or Security that he would hereafter appear and answer to the Charge against him; but whatever were the Conditions, certain it is, that she had the Money, and the Ensign his Liberty. (VII:xv:39lf.)

The Landlady's initial impulse to aid the Ensign is clearly a matter of sexual attraction; the placement of the euphemism "Compassion" immediately after the description of the Ensign's physical charms makes this broadly evident.²⁸ Thus, their conference culminates in a "right Understanding", and only "at length" afterwards is a plan of escape drawn up. The narrator then reassures any reader whose "Complexion" might cause a censorious reaction to this incident, adding that the Landlady's inducement to aid the Ensign was not merely carnal. In

²⁸ Cf. Mrs. Slipslop's malapropistic false gloss of compassion as "compulsion"; she is really describing response to physical or sexual attraction; JA, II:v:125.

making such an assurance, the narrator facetiously assumes the attitude that such a sexual encounter must be more shocking than accepting a bribe of money stolen from a company of soldiers to allow a murderer to escape. The anticipated reaction to the revelation that it was a matter of financial rather than sexual reward may be one of relief—yet the loss of the company's funds and the liberty of a violent criminal is surely a more serious matter than the "victimless crime" of unlicensed sexual activity. If the reader has reacted in this manner, his priorities are obviously mistaken, and the suspended resolution of this lengthy passage in a bald statement of facts (she has the money, he his liberty) reduces all the coy speculation to a level of comic myopia. The narrator first encourages, then corrects misreading (a process which will be discussed at length below).²⁹

As we have seen, certain key words figure in many of the narrator's ambiguous or ostensibly neutral formulations: these key words are either false glosses, or words which ordinarily suggest doubleness:

Such a Person as this was certain to find a Welcome at Mr. Allworthy's Table, to whom Misfortunes were ever a Recommendation when they were derived from the Folly or Villany of others, and not of the unfortunate Person himself. Besides this negative Merit, the Doctor had one positive Recommendation. This was a

²⁹ The landlady, a little while later, talks to Tom, and the attentive reader will discern certain hints of unwitting self-revelation facetiously inserted by Fielding: "I hope, however, you will learn more Wit for the future, and return to your Friends; I warrant they are all miserable for your Loss; and if they was but to know what had happened. La, my seeming! I would not for the World they should." (VII:ii:408; emphasis added).

Her expletive, though intended as a part of a rallying conversation, may be interpreted as an utterance of resounding comic irony, referring both to the missing Northerton and the present Tom, and to the landlady herself in the peculiarly appropriate term, "seeming".

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 Touch-stone, which can distinguish the true from the false. (I:x:61)

This last asseveration is strikingly disingenuous. An examination of what is actually said in this passage reveals a pattern of contrast between Allworthy's active charity, and the "Recommendation" (not a positive Merit, as the structure of the sentence promises, but does not deliver) of "a great Appearance of Religion". Fielding's touch-stone is clearly evident—the active practice of charity—and the very use of the term "Appearance", without any reference to practice, makes the inferential distinction between true and false very easy for the reader.

A large part of the humour of Tom Jones springs from the reader's recognition of a disparity between the narrator's statement and the reality described. After a brief discussion of Good Nature, the narrator affects a bemused tone:

Our Heroe, whether he derived it from Thwackum or Square, I will not determine, was very strongly under the guidance of this Principle: for though he did not always act rightly, yet he never did otherwise without feeling and suffering for it.
(IV:vi:173)

By this point in the novel, the reader will already recognize that Tom's tutors are unlikely sources for this Principle, and that there is little evidence of the workings of conscience in either of them. The narrator's account is comically inadequate, and the reader, laughing, shifts the meaning outside the narrator's literal statement.

The comic shift is masterfully combined with suspension and with incongruously elegant language to achieve more complex comic

effects, again dependent upon the reader's resolution of an "objective" tone assumed by the narrator. The discovery of Square in Molly Seagrim's closet is thus prepared for:

The inclosed Place exactly fronted the Foot of the Bed, to which, indeed, the Rung hung so near, that it served, in a Manner, to supply the Want of Curtains. Now, whether Molly in the Agonies of her Rage, pushed this Rug with her Feet; or, Jones might touch it; or whether the Pin or Nail gave way of its own Accord, I am not certain; but as Molly pronounced those last Words, which are recorded above, the wicked Rug got loose from its Fastning, and discovered every thing hid behind it; where among other femal Utensils appeared—(with Shame I write it, and with Sorrow will it be read)—the Philosopher Square, in a Posture (for the Place would not near admit his standing upright) as ridiculous as can possibly be conceived. (V:v;229)

The series of hypothetical postulations, interrupted by parenthetical narrative commentary, contributes to a solemn, stylized sentence structure which delays and heightens the sense of impending revelation. The conclusion is not exactly anticlimactic, but it is certainly not as dignified as the vocabulary with which it is expressed. The narrator affects a tone of gravity with which the circumstances conflict; the suspended conclusion renders the style (and the narrator's "Shame") comically overblown. The so-called "Pathetic Fallacy" operates in both directions—the rug is "wicked", and Square is discovered "among other Female Utensils". The effect is highly facetious; the ostensible value of the narrator's language is undercut by the farcical context. Much of the novel's verbal irony depends on the visualization of the scene—the "philosopher" Square's physical (and moral, and political) place would not allow him to stand "upright"—and the conditions of dramatic and verbal irony are again conjoined.

This chapter, up to this point, has been concerned with tracing

ways in which the reader's imagination and inferential capacity is called into play. Fielding's narrator frequently addresses the reader directly, with the title "Sagacious Reader", or he encourages him to read with "Sagacity". Sagacity is a function of Reason which is capable of finding connections between ideas, and is coupled with Inference, which orders these connections. Locke provides this explanation:

What need is there of Reason? Very much; both for the enlargement of our Knowledge, and regulating our Assent: For it hath to do, both in Knowledge and Opinion, and is necessary, and assisting to all our other intellectual Faculties, and indeed contains two of them, viz. Sagacity and Illation. By the one, it finds out, and by the other, it so orders the intermediate Ideas, as to discover what connexion there is in each link of the Chain, whereby the Extremes are held together; and thereby, as it were, to draw into view the Truth sought for, which is what we call Illation or Inference, and consists in nothing but the Perception of the connexion there is between the Ideas, in each step of the deduction, whereby the Mind comes to see, either the certain Agreement or Disagreement of any two Ideas, as in Demonstration, in which it arrives at Knowledge; or their probable connexion, on which it gives or with-holds its Assent, as in Opinion.³⁰

The reader is invited and challenged to reconstruct complex patterns of meaning, ironically misdirected, teased, and almost bullied into using his sagacity to master inference. These complex patterns for which the reader must assume a certain degree of responsibility, include plot-making, characterization, ethical observation, interpretation, and simple language games, but all of them depend upon the reader's employment of his own imagination to complete the fictional communication. To an extent, this dependence is common to all literature; what is

³⁰ An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, IV.XVII.2. Cf. Wilkins, Essay Towards a Real Character, who places sagacity in opposition to Dullness, in the general category of "Affections of Intellectual Virtue", and specifically Invention and Judgment. P. 202.

uncommon in Tom Jones is the profusion of varieties of reconstruction, and the deliberate manner in which the matter is openly discussed with the reader.

4) The Irony of Second Reading

In books, as well as in pictures, where the excellence lies in the expression and colouring only, the first glance of the eye acquaints us with all the perfections of the piece: but the nicest and most delicate touches of nature are not so soon perceived. In the works of Cervantes or Hogarth, he is, I believe, a wretched judge, who discovers no new beauties on a second, or even a third perusal.³¹

When the plot of Tom Jones is possessed by the reader as a whole, when the reader is able to look back upon the novel with all the evidence before him, when he reads the novel for a second time—then the plot, characterization, and even the very texture of the prose become more complex and rich with ironies not immediately apparent. This feature of Fielding's work has long been recognized:

The peculiar beauty of the plot consists in this; that though the author's secret is impenetrable, the discovery is artfully prepared by a number of circumstances not attended to at the time, and by obscure hints thrown out, which, when the reader looks back upon them, are found to agree exactly with the concealed event.³²

³¹ Henry Fielding, "The Preface to the Familiar Letters Between the Principle Characters in David Simple, and Some Others", Henley, XVI, 20.

³² Anna Laetitia Barbauld, "The British Novelists" [1810], in Henry Fielding: A Critical Anthology, ed. C.J. Rawson (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 210. Cf. Austin Dobson, Henry Fielding: A Memoir (New York, 1900), p. 173: "We look back and discover a hundred little premonitions which escaped us at first, but which, read by the light of our latest knowledge, assume fresh significance." Eleanor Hutchens labels this effect "practical irony", which works "both backward and forward along the causal chain." Irony in Tom Jones, p. 30. Ian Donaldson only suggests that hiding clues contributes to the reader's enjoyment of the plot "because it seems legitimate that a novelist should tuck away some of his important clues (such as those concerning Lawyer Dowling) in the less obvious corners of his work..." The World Upside-Down, p. 123. But see also John Preston, who concludes (explicitly) that the reader perceives these ironies at once, with the

It has more recently been succinctly stated by Dorothy Van Ghent, who observed, "In rereading...we are first actually reading."³³ We have seen that dramatic irony operates in the novel with the provision of the reader with a degree of knowledge which allows him to view events in a different light than the characters within the action. This provides the reader with a simultaneous view of two conflicting elements, appearance and reality—but the irony of second reading withholds referential context far beyond the normal temporal bounds of dramatic irony. Nonetheless, the principle is fundamentally the same; the difference is only that a temporal gap is interposed between the two components of ironic communication, a gap which is only closed with the ultimate introduction of a key element—the secret of Tom's birth. Suspension is again the structural principle, this time on a much wider scale.

The reader discovers the truth of this matter only when it is revealed to Tom himself. Thus, he shares a limited knowledge, at a level comparable to that of the novel's characters. Upon second

first reading; The Created Self, pp. 111f.

Recent criticism has something more to say about irony of second reading. See especially Karlheinz Stierle's description of "reflexive" reading, by which meaning is disclosed "only against the horizon of a second reading": "Only after a second reading...is it possible to reverse our perspective on the text: while we first saw it as a text moving toward the gradual revelation of its system, we now see it in a retrospective view within the framework of the system." The Reading of Fictional Texts, tr. Inge Crosman and Thekla Zachrau, in The Reader in the Text, pp. 103, 95.

Stierle's concept of reflexivity should be taken into account as a corrective to Fish's earlier overemphasis on reading left to right, "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics", in Reader-Response Criticism, pp. 73ff.

³³ The English Novel: Form and Function (New York, 1953), p. 73.

reading, however, the reader is able to perceive much that was hidden before. Let into the secret, he moves from the position of a character, excluded by dramatic irony from the truth concerning his circumstances, to a superior position, almost as though the ironized becomes the ironist.

A formidable structure of double meaning opens up to the reader in possession of the second-reading key. The double vision thus effected spotlights the brilliant contrivance of the plot, and exposes the pervasive masked duplicity of character.

Mr. Allworthy had been absent a full Quarter of a Year in London, on some very particular Business, tho' I know not what it was; but judge of its Importance, by its having detained him so long from Home, whence he had not been absent a Month at a Time during the Space of Many Years. (I:iii:38)

By this means Mr. Allworthy is removed from the scene just long enough for certain events to take place, viz. the birth of Bridget's child. The reason for his absence is muffled by the narrator with characteristic ambiguity, and precisely how fortuitous it really is emerges only with the second reading.

The initial descriptions of Bridget Allworthy are quintessential examples of complex irony. She is lauded for prudence, which (as we have seen) she has but has not: she imprudently has an affair and gets with child, but she prudently manages to cover the whole thing up. Bridget's masquerade is successful, but the second-reading perspective allows the reader to see how precarious it must have been. Mr. Allworthy offers the "foundling" to his sister as a "gift"; she waits, not committing herself until she discovers how much of the truth he understands:

Great Surprises...are apt to be silent, and so was Miss Bridget, till her Brother began and told her the whole Story, which as the Reader knows it already, we shall not repeat. (I:iv:44)

Mr. Allworthy repeats the story the reader knows—his own story, not his sister's. The narrator then describes the public character of Miss Bridget, and speculates about her response to the infant. In the light of second reading, these "objective" speculations are transformed by the motive shift:

Miss Bridget had always exprest so great a regard for what the Ladies are pleased to call Virtue, and had herself maintained such a Severity of Character, that it was expected, especially by Wilkins, that she would have vented much Bitterness on this Occasion, and would have voted for sending the Child, as a kind of noxious Animal, immediately out of the House; but on the contrary, she rather took the good-natur'd side of the question, intimated some Compassion for the helpless little Creature, and commended her Brother's Charity in what he had done.

Perhaps the Reader may account for this Behaviour from her Condescension to Mr. Allworthy, when we have informed him, that the good Man had ended his Narrative with owning a Resolution to take care of the Child, and to breed him up as his own; for, to acknowledge the Truth, she was always ready to oblige her Brother, and very seldom, if ever, contradicted his Sentiments... (I:iv:44f.)

Her brother is obliged more than he (or the reader) yet knows, for the infant is closely related to him. Having safely established her cover, Bridget can rail at the imaginary culprit:

However, what she withheld from the Infant, she bestowed with the utmost Profuseness on the poor unknown Mother, whom she called an impudent Slut, a wanton Hussy, an audacious Harlot, a wicked Jade, a vile Strumpet, with every other Appellation with which the Tongue of Virtue never fails to lash those who bring a Disgrace on the Sex. (I:iv:45)

It is difficult to ascertain whether this effusion is a part of her masquerade, or whether it may be ironically self-directed. Be this as it may, her life continues. She gives orders for the care of the infant,

and the narrator slyly comments:

Her Orders were indeed so liberal, that had it been a Child of her own, she could not have exceeded them...

The oblique hint is tempered by a brief deflation:

...but lest the virtuous Reader may condemn her for shewing too great Regard to a base-born Infant, to which all Charity is condemned by Law as irreligious,³⁴ we think proper to observe, that she concluded the whole with saying, "Since it was her Brother's Whim to adopt the little Brat, she supposed little Master must be treated with great Tenderness; for her part, she could not help thinking it was an Encouragement to Vice; but she knew too much of the Obstinacy of Mankind to oppose any of their ridiculous Humours." (I:v:46; emphasis added.)

On first reading, this passage seems simple enough in its literal meaning, but the second reading provides a brilliant depiction of Bridget's ingenious camouflage, and allows the reader to see through her public rationalization (presented straight-facedly by the narrator) to her genuine affection for her child. A few pages later, the narrator notes casually, as in passing, that Jenny Jones had recently served as Bridget's nurse:

Jenny had lately been often at Mr. Allworthy's House. She had officiated as Nurse to Miss Bridget, in a violent Fit of Illness, and had sat up many Nights with that Lady; besides which, she had been seen there the very Day before Mr. Allworthy's Return, by Mrs. Wilkins herself, tho' that sagacious Person had not at first conceived any Suspicion of her on that Account... (I:vi:49)

Mrs. Wilkins' sagacity (like that of Partridge later on) is not to be emulated by the reader, and, indeed, a second reading shows that she was as far off the mark as the reader is initially set up to be.

³⁴It should be noted, in passing, that this satirical swipe at the distance between temporal law and the divine imperative to charity would not be out of place in Fielding's "Modern Glossary".

The ironies continue; when Mrs. Deborah Wilkins announces she has ascertained who little Tom's father must be, "Miss Bridget discomposed her Features with a Smile (a Thing very unusual to her.)" (I:viii:56) Bridget's defense of Jenny, with the second reading, appears to be ironically a secret apology for her own hidden crime, as well as a grateful but secret acknowledgement of Jenny's aid:

She then proceeded to commend the Honour and Spirit with which Jenny had acted. She said, she could not help agreeing with her Brother, that there was some Merit in the Sincerity of her Confession, and in her Integrity to her Lover. That she had always thought her a very good Girl, and doubted not but she had been seduced by some Rascal, who had been infinitely more to blame than herself, and very probably had prevailed with her by a Promise of Marriage, or some other treacherous Proceeding. (I:viii:56f.)

The reader never learns if this is exactly Bridget's own case. Sheldon Sacks points out that Bridget's "lickerish" nature is established at several points in the novel, especially in her approval of Square because he is "a comely Man" (III:vi:138). Sacks terms these "mild clues" which serve to prevent the reader "from feeling tricked when we discover Tom's parentage."³⁵

Bridget's sympathetic explanation of Jenny's case seems to support the impression of her own betrayal—although, in her case, it was the treachery of fate, not of the loved one. Jenny ironically refers to the death of the infant's father in her interview with Allworthy:

As to these Points, Jenny satisfied him by the most solemn Assurances, that the Man was entirely out of his Reach, and was neither subject to his Power, nor in any probability or becoming an Object of his Goodness. (I:vii:54f.)

³⁵ Fiction and the Shape of Belief, p. 168; cf. pp. 139ff.

Bridget defends Jenny for keeping her secret; her public reasons for doing so obviously differ from the submerged ones. The same concern is later reflected when she restores Partridge's annuity (II:6:103); this transaction is again shrouded in as much ambiguous speculation as the narrator can muster.

The irony of second reading makes possible several comic passages with Sophoclean undertones. Mrs. Blifil shows signs of favouritism toward her unacknowledged son, which are interpreted by the general public in a typically lewd fashion:

However, when Tom grew up, and gave Tokens of that Gallantry of Temper which greatly recommends Men to Women, this Disinclination which she had discovered to him when a Child, by Degrees abated, and at last she so evidently demonstrated her Affection to him to be much stronger than what she bore her own Son, that is was impossible to mistake her any longer. She was so desirous of often seeing him; and discovered such Satisfaction and Delight in his Company, that before he was eighteen Years old, he was become a Rival to both Square and Thwackum; and what is worse, the whole Country began to talk as loudly of her Inclination to Tom, as they had before done of that which she had shewn to Square... (III:vi:139f.)

A short time later, the narrator again suggests a relationship of special intimacy between Tom and his adoptive aunt (and mother):

...as to Mrs. Blifil, though we have been obliged to mention some Suspicions of her Affection for Tom, we have not hitherto given the least Latitude for imagining that he had any for her; and, indeed, I am sorry to say it, but the Youth of both Sexes are too apt to be deficient in their Gratitude, for that Regard with which Persons more advanced in Years are sometimes so kind to honour them. (VI:vi:174)

Although these gambits are part of the narrator's extended plot to conceal the secret of Tom's birth, they also serve to match the later threat of incest, when Partridge tells him he has been to bed with his mother. (XVIII:ii:915) Critics who praise the perfection and balance

of Fielding's plot seem to have overlooked this pairing—the attribution of love to an implied sexual relationship which the secret at the end of the book would show to be incestuous (if it had existed), and the real sexual contact which is believed to be incestuous, but which the secret at the book's end shows to be relatively harmless.

With the death of Bridget, the secret takes on more ominous overtones as it is appropriated by Blifil. The lawyer Dowling arrives at Paradise Hall, in a tremendous hurry, and leaves Blifil with the message from his mother's deathbed. (V:viii:245) Throughout the rest of the novel, Dowling continues to appear and reappear. When he learns that Tom has been turned out of doors, and that public opinion still considers him a foundling (or a bastard son) his reaction is quite striking:

Dowling sat all this while silent, biting his Fingers, making Faces, grinning, and looking wonderfully arch; at last he opened his Lips, and protested that the Gentleman looked like another Sort of Man. He then called for his Bill with the utmost Haste... (VIII:viii:434)

With this ironically double comment, Dowling rushes off in his characteristic hurry. He knows (as does the reader in second reading) that Jones is "another Sort of Man", and he proceeds to scout out the situation, to determine whether it can be turned to his advantage. When next he encounters Jones, he questions him with consummate lawyerly skill to ascertain the degree of Jones's ignorance concerning the secret of his birth. Drawing Jones out, Dowling responds to the story of Blifil's treachery:

"Ay! Ay!" cries Dowling, "I protest then, it is a Pity such a Person should inherit the great Estate of your Uncle Allworthy."
 "Alas, Sir," cries Jones, "you do me an Honour to which I have no Title. It is true, indeed, his Goodness once allowed me the

Liberty of calling him by a much nearer Name; but as this was only a voluntary Act of Goodness, I can complain of no Injustice when he thinks proper to deprive me of this Honour; since the Loss cannot be more unmerited than the Gift originally was. I assure you, Sir, I am no Relation of Mr. Allworthy...."

"I protest, Sir," cried Dowling, "you talk very much like a Man of Honour; but instead of giving me any Trouble, I protest it would give me great Pleasure to know how you came to be thought a Relation of Mr. Allworthy's, if you are not, ...for I protest it seems very surprizing that you should pass for a Relation of a Gentleman, without being so." (XII:x:657)

Tom tells Dowling his story, as he understands it. When next the lawyer appears, he has taken full advantage of the situation, and perhaps has even blackmailed the scheming Blifil:

Mr. Allworthy and Mrs. Miller had been above an Hour together, when their Conversation was put an end to by the Arrival of Blifil, and another Person, which other Person was no less than Mr. Dowling, who was now become a great Favourite with Mr. Blifil, and whom Mr. Allworthy, at the desire of his Nephew, had made his Steward, and had likewise recommended him to Mr. Western, from whom the Attorney received a Promise of being promoted to the same Office upon the first Vacancy... (XVII:vii:900)

Provided with the ironic perspective of second reading, the reader can see that this new development in the lawyer's activities is more than coincidental. Indeed, the moment at which Dowling decides to act is indicated by the narrator, although necessarily in very obscure terms:

Mr. Dowling was indeed greatly affected with this Relation; for he had not divested himself of Humanity by being an Attorney. Indeed, nothing is more unjust than to carry our Prejudices against a Profession into private Life, and to borrow our Idea of a Man from our Opinion of his Calling. Habit, it is true, lessens the Horror of those Actions which the Profession makes necessary, and consequently habitual....An Attorney may feel all the Miseries and Distresses of his Fellow Creatures, provided he happens not to be concerned against them. (XII:x:658)

Dowling's "habits" lead him to play both ends against the middle; when Blifil's plots are all exploded, Dowling is able to cover his tracks by pretending he had believed Blifil's assertions that Bridget's letter had

been delivered, and that Mr. Allworthy, for reasons of his own, had chosen not to acknowledge Tom as his nephew. (XVIII:8:948f.)

In second reading, the reader comes to understand that Blifil is the agent of the continuation of the secret, having turned it to his own benefit. His first action after he has entered into this train of deception is to insult Tom:

Blifil scornfully rejected his Hand; and, with much Indignation, answered, "It was little to be wondered at, if tragical Spectacles made no Impressions on the Blind; but, for his Part, he had the Misfortune to know who his Parents were, and consequently must be affected with their Loss." (V:x:254)

A bold stroke, certainly. Blifil knows Tom's parentage, exults in his secret, and turns it into an occasion for a double insult, a private, ironic, vicious little thrust.³⁶ This contributes not a little to the reader's understanding of the nasty, scheming wickedness of the man.

Fielding, again, warns his reader not to discount any details, enjoining particular care in awaiting the resolution of incomplete structures of plot:

We warn thee not too hastily to condemn any of the Incidents in this our History, as impertinent and foreign to our main Design, because thou dost not immediately conceive in what Manner such Incident may conduce to that Design. This Work may, indeed, be considered as a great Creation of our own; and for a little Reptile of a Critic to presume to find Fault with any of its Parts, without knowing the Manner in which the Whole is connected, and before he comes to the final Catastrophe, is a most presumptuous Absurdity. (X:i:523)

Even here, in a familiar passage which ironically touches on the irony of second reading, the full import of the message is withheld until the ultimate revelation of the secret's key, the final "Catastrophe".

³⁶ This incident is "borrowed" by Dumas in The Man in the Iron Mask. This may be called the Rumpelstiltskin Syndrome; the villain's admiration of his own virtuosity in villainy, almost as an aesthetic experience, recurs

On occasion, Fielding seems to take particular delight in complimenting his reader with a tacit tribute to his sagacity—but here, too, he often submerges a further irony which appears only with the second reading:

Who this Mrs. Waters was, the Reader pretty well knows; what she was he must be perfectly satisfied. (XVII:ix:909)

Despite all the clues provided, the reader knows Mrs. Waters very little. Just how unsatisfactory this knowledge is emerges in a second reading, chastening the reader's tendency to uncritical complacency. Fielding is constantly warning the reader to be careful, and one caveat against carelessness emerges (appropriately enough) only with second reading:

...the greatest Events are produced by a nice Train of little Circumstances; and more than one Example of this may be discovered, by the accurate Eye, in this our History. (VIII:ii:909)

The question remains: how does the reader's eye become accurate?

The cumulative effect of these ironies of second reading joins with the other varieties of ironic effect to make the reader suspicious of outward appearances. The reader must be ready to revise his interpretations and judgments in the light of new knowledge, dispensed or indicated by the narrator to suit the author's purposes. The reader must come to recognize, as well, that his own reading may be mistaken, and learn from his mistakes.

The manner in which information is granted or withheld by Fielding's narrator frequently tends to precipitate the reader's judgment in a certain direction, only to be superseded by a new context, without the bene-

in literature over and over again, from Iago's barely restrained "crowing" to the mystery novel's villain who must obsessively explain his stratagems to the captured and ostensibly doomed hero-detective.

fit of which the reader has already made some kind of error in judgment.³⁷

This strategy is designed to force the reader to examine his criteria for judgment, and to effect certain modifications or modulations in judging. This will be the next object of enquiry.

³⁷ For an example of Fielding's use of the irony of second reading for entangling and correcting, see below, VI:3.

5) The Manipulation of the Reader's Judgment: Correction and Kindling

The novelist protects himself against disbelief by inducing us to read in certain ways and from certain points of view. He defines the kind of reading he wants. In effect, he defines his reader: "The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another of his reader; as he makes his reader, so he makes himself, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement."³⁸

To read essentially is to entertain with the writer's text a relationship at once responsive and rival. It is a supremely active, collaborative yet also agonistic affinity whose logical, if not actual, fulfillment is an "answering text".³⁹

The reader has to be stimulated into certain activities, which may be guided by rhetorical signposts, but which lead to a process that is not merely rhetorical....The reader must be made to feel for himself the new meaning of the novel. To do this he must actively participate in bringing out the meaning, and this participation is an essential precondition for communication between the author and the reader.⁴⁰

It is essential to [Fielding's chosen] technique that the reader should not enjoy the luxury of a viewpoint guaranteed in advance to be one from which the truth about the characters can be discovered.⁴¹

The degree to which the imaginative reconstruction of reading is predetermined by an author varies widely from novel to novel. Fielding ele-

³⁸ John Preston, The Created Self, p. 2. Preston here quotes Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 138. Although I have read widely in recent criticism of reader response (the work of Booth, Preston, Fish, and Iser has been particularly useful), I owe the initial impetus for this study to conversations with the late Marston LaFrance, and to my own close readings of texts (with the guidance of professors and colleagues too numerous to mention), rather than to the recent tide of theory.

³⁹ George Steiner, "Text and Context", in On Difficulty and Other Essays (Oxford, 1978), p. 5.

⁴⁰ Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader, p. 30.

⁴¹ Bernard Harrison, Fielding's Tom Jones, p. 48.

vates the consciousness of this process into one of the primary focal points of the novel, causing his narrative persona to dedicate considerable energy to maintaining a close relationship with the reader. This relationship ranges from ironic banter, to direct didacticism, to instruction about the way in which the book should be read. The narrator addresses the sagacious reader, calling upon him to develop and exercise critical judgment; the criteria for such judgment are outlined in the abundant commentary, and shadowed forth obliquely in the predesign of the reconstructive process of reading.

In describing Tom's sanguine temperament, the narrator turns toward the reader, as it were, with this appeal:

Reader, if thou hast any good Wishes towards me, I will fully repay them, by wishing thee to be possessed of this sanguine Disposition of the Mind: Since, having read much, and considered long on that Subject of Happiness which hath employed so many great Pens, I am almost inclined to fix it in the Possession of this Temper, which puts us, in a Manner, out of the Reach of Fortune, and makes us happy without her Assistance. (XIII:vi:708)

Fielding's characterization of the narrative persona has established him in the reader's mind (for the most part) as a model of just this disposition. His optimism and amiability themselves affect the reader's judgment by their very attractiveness, rendering his avuncular, witty, and frequently impassioned commentaries and admonitions even more acceptable.

The narrator, furthermore, demonstrates his concern for the reader's well-being in his careful, overt direction. He repeatedly expresses the desire that his reader should see events and characters in a proper light, instructs him to take this information into consideration, reminds him not to forget that detail, and so forth. He provides his reader

with points of reference which enable him to see matters in context, points including clues, items of relevant information, and attitudes of mind.

The authoritative tone, however, is not universally maintained. As if to encourage the reader to subject everything to critical scrutiny, the narrator on many occasions draws back from his position of absolute control, diverting the reader's attention with conflicts or inconsistencies in the narrative presentation. He frequently apologizes for the so-called inadequacy of his poetic powers, or for his lack of knowledge. He constantly undercuts his own seriousness—grave and sententious passages are almost inevitably tagged with qualifications and self-parody. The narrator's image is always either being built up and enriched, or being radically deflated. As we have seen, he alternately claims the privilege of wisdom, exerting autocratic control of his work, and at the next moment he professes to be virtually helpless. He lays claim to profound insight and genius, and then dismisses his work as though he considered it inconsequential. Discussing the manner in which important matters are treated in literature, in a chapter entitled "Of The SERIOUS in writing; and for what Purpose it is introduced", he suggests that the Serious is entirely adventitious and ornamental:

To say the Truth, these soporific Parts are so many Scenes of Serious artfully interwoven, in order to contrast and set off the rest; and this is the true Meaning of a late facetious Writer; who told the Public, that whenever he was dull, they might be assured there was a Design in it.

In this Light, or rather in this Darkness, I would have the Reader to consider these initial Essays. And after this Warning, if he shall be of Opinion, that he can find enough of Serious in other Parts of this History, he may pass over these, in which we profess to be laboriously dull, and begin the following Books, at the second Chapter. (V:i:215)

This cavalier dismissal of the sententious content of the initial chapters is clearly not meant to be taken literally (pace Mr. Maugham). It is noteworthy that the narrator does not make the suggestion until his fifth book.⁴² By this time, the reader ordinarily will have entered into a relation with the narrator which should assist in dismissing this injunction as yet another instance of mock self-deprecation. In rejecting deflation as a serious movement, the reader's tacit acceptance of the growing relation with the narrator is reinforced. A similar movement is involved in the invitation to laugh at the narrator's seriousness, as in this chapter heading: "Containing such grave Matter, that the Reader cannot laugh once through the whole Chapter, unless peradventure he should laugh at the Author." (I:vii:51)

The narrator postulates a hypothetical response; a hypothetical reader is invented, one who is capable of laughing at the narrator's exercise in wisdom and morality (and wit). It is obvious that such a response is inadequate, and the reader should, almost automatically, reverse it. When the narrator affects an alignment with a commonly accepted social attitude—in this case, that levity is an appropriate response to moral seriousness—the reader must resist the suggestion that he too ought to assent to the attitude represented. The sagacious reader will

⁴²The comic, aggressive misdirection from the ethically-committed comic author to his reader is, of course, a venerable tradition, perhaps best represented (outside Fielding's work) by the Notice which Mark Twain posts at the borders of Huckleberry Finn: "Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot." The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885; New York, 1959), p. 10.

recognize when the narrator has assumed his ironic stance, and will learn to reverse such insinuations, turning toward the serious heart of the comic tale.

John Preston, observing this process at work, has described it in terms of an expansion of the book into a new dimension of literary experience, in which the author offers the reader a personal "encounter", which is both comic and friendly, and which at the same time challenges and questions the reader's responses:

Fielding's humour represents an escape from the book. He translates the lonely art of reading into a friendly encounter; his art is concentrated on creating a sociable atmosphere. Yet there is in Tom Jones a lot of interest in the questions and ambiguities that crop up specifically in the process of reading. The reader is in effect being offered a variety of ways in which he can be a bad reader, on the assumption that this will bring him eventually to see what is needed for reading well.⁴³

What is needed for reading well, as far as Fielding is concerned, is what is needed for living well.

Fielding recognized the necessity of meeting his readers on their own ground, and the first stage of his campaign is the fostering of the reader's sense of familiarity with the narrator. After the reader learns to trust (or at least to accept) the narrator, he is led unwittingly into misreadings and poor judgments, and then shown the error of his ways. Fielding's method is Socratic, in that he starts with stock responses or ethical commonplaces in his reader, and applies the reductio, which is simply "an instrument designed to bring out inconsistencies."⁴⁴ It will be remembered that Socrates, pretending to be ignorant, confronted his philosophical opponents with deferential questions, begging to be en-

⁴³ The Created Self, p. 4.

⁴⁴ Gerasimos Santos, Socrates (London, 1979), p. 43.

lightened. With an almost miraculously sharp eye for faulty logic, Socrates was able to undermine almost any position (short of absolute certainty) on its own terms. Connop Thirwall has described this Socratic irony or "dialectic":

The writer effects his purpose by placing the opinion of his adversary in the foreground, and saluting it with every demonstration of respect, while he is busied in withdrawing one by one all the supports on which it rests: and he never ceases to approach it with an air of deference until he has completely undermined it, when he leaves it to sink under the weight of its own absurdity. ⁴⁵

Socratic irony, by this definition, is a technique of debate or dialogue; we shall argue here that it is also the negative movement or elenchus of a more profound dialectic.

The essential role of the elenchus is to make the respondent aware of the link between certain of his premises and their contradictory. The elenchus is of course negative, reductive; in itself it proposes nothing to take the place of the false constructions it demolishes. Because of this, the attitude of pretended ignorance which Socrates assumed has been much distrusted. But the elenchus ought not to be considered in isolation, for it is only a part of the whole Socratic discourse. It effects a purgation of false knowledge (opinion), resulting in an increased activity of introspection, a sharpened critical perspective, and a certain humility requisite to the discovery of real knowledge. The first step is "a knowledge of knowledge and ignorance"⁴⁶; what follows is something of

⁴⁵"On the Irony of Sophocles", Remains, Literary and Theological (London, 1878), III, 2. Also valuable in the study of irony is Andrew Wright, "Irony and Fiction", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XII (1953): 111 (Wright's essay directed me to Thirwall); Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Irony; D.C. Muecke, The Compass of Irony (London, 1969); and especially Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Irony.

⁴⁶Charmides, 172b; Collected Dialogues, p. 112.

an ontological catharsis. Plato's "Stranger" explains the procedure adopted by paternal dialogists:

They cross-examine a man's words, when he thinks that he is saying something and is really saying nothing, and easily convict him of inconsistencies in his opinions; these they then collect by the dialectic process, and placing them side by side, show that they contradict one another....He, seeing this, is angry with himself, and grows gentle toward others, and thus is entirely delivered from great prejudices and harsh notions, in a way which is most amusing to the hearer, and produces the most lasting good effect on the person who is the subject of the operation. For as the physician considers that the body will receive no benefit from taking food until the internal obstacles have been removed, so the purifier of the soul is conscious that his patient will receive no benefit from the application of knowledge until he is refuted, and from refutation learns modesty; he must be purged of his prejudices first and made to think that he knows only what he knows, and no more. ⁴⁷

It has sometimes been concluded erroneously that it was Socrates' intention to demonstrate that man's pursuit of truth is futile. But Socrates was certainly no Pyrrhonist; rather, he wished to redirect the attention of his adversaries, to manipulate them into a situation in which a forcible recognition of the limitations of opinion would be attained. Richard Robinson explains the advantage of the knowledge of knowledge and ignorance:

Of two ignorant persons, ...the one who knows that he is ignorant is better off than the one who supposes that he knows; and that is because the one has, and the other has not, a drive within him that may in time lead him to real knowledge. The elenchus changes ignorant men from the state of falsely supposing that they know to the state of recognizing that they do not know; and this is an important step along the road to knowledge, because the recognition that we do

⁴⁷ Sophist, 230b-c; Collected Dialogues, p. 473. Elenchus plays an important part in other methods. See, for instance, Bacon's notes on elenches, Advancement of Learning (Philosophical Works, pp. 117ff.), and De Augmentis Scientiarum, V.IV (Ibid., pp. 515ff.) Bacon's Essays may well be elenctic exercises, although his end is manifestly different from those of Plato, Socrates, or Aristotle.

not know at once arouses the desire to know, and thus supplies the motive that was lacking before. Philosophy begins in wonder, and the assertion made here is that elenchus supplies the wonder.⁴⁸

Socrates, then, did not aim at a shift from incorrect to correct dogmatic belief. Rather, he concentrated on stimulating the desire for knowledge, and clearing away the debris of fallacy.

Fundamental to his larger method was a unique approach to knowledge: the fundamental Socratic and Platonic assumption that truth is immanent, potentially realizable, latent in every man. This is the condition analogically or poetically expressed by the notion that learning and discovering truth are in fact nothing but recollection of the knowledge always possessed by the soul.⁴⁹ The soul's knowledge is a reflection or extension into man's experience of the universal or absolute reality (truth). Irwin Edman summarizes the implications of such a conviction:

To know is to know Reality, the eternal invariant nature of things. To have knowledge of the Real as contrasted with having opinions about the apparent, to know the real in nature, in society, in one's own soul, is for Plato the foundation of the Good Life. To know the Real in the universe is to know the valid in the state and in one's own being, as a matter of course. To know the truth is inevitably to choose the good as Socrates...contended. Truth is itself a manifestation of the supreme and encompassing Idea of the Good. A virtuous action is a true, valid, just action, the functioning of a soul according to its unswerving following of a clear vision of eternal order.⁵⁰

Knowledge of this order cannot be passed from mind to mind simply by the use of language. It is not an intellectual commodity or possession, but a state of being. Socrates himself described his relationship with the Idea of the Good by saying he was possessed of a daimonion, an inward voice

⁴⁸"Elenchus", in The Philosophy of Socrates, ed. G. Vlastos, p. 79

⁴⁹Meno, 81d (Collected Dialogues, p. 364); cf. Phaedo, 73-77 (pp. 55-61.)

⁵⁰Introduction, The Works of Plato (New York, 1928), p. xxxix.

which he considered a manifestation of an absolute, divine entity, and which indicated to him the truth concerning the best way for men to live their lives. Yet the daimonion was not merely an articulate form of conscience. Kierkegaard explains it in Platonic terms, as an internal perception of the Idea, a subjective experience of the divine:

The word signifies something abstract, something divine, which by its very abstractness is elevated above every determination, unutterable and without predicates, for it admits of no vocalization....It is a voice which makes itself heard, yet not in such a way that one would want to insist upon this, as if it manifested itself through words, for it operates wholly instinctively. ⁵¹

The daimonic experience is one of unity with the Absolute; having experienced the transcendent reality of this realm, the individual's perceptions of the quotidian world are placed in perspective, according to whether or not the dispositions and behaviour of the finite world measure up to the demands of the infinite. The individual who has this experience and this outlook, Kierkegaard explains, is like Socrates truly an ironist, for he comprehends two disparate levels of existence: the daimonic essential, and the phenomenal. Examination of the conditions of day-to-day human existence in the light of daimonic knowledge, therefore, reveals extensive patterns of contradiction, for the daimonic experience is an experience of an ethical absolute, and the quotidian world is ethically irregular:

Irony arises from the constant placing of the particularities of the finite together with the infinite ethical requirement, thus permitting the contradiction to come into being.

Kierkegaard goes on to explain the pervasiveness of the ironic condition:

Irony is an existential determination, and nothing is more ridi-

⁵¹ The Concept of Irony, p. 186.

culous than to suppose that it consists in the use of a certain phraseology, or when an author congratulates himself upon succeeding in expressing himself ironically. Whoever has essential irony has it all day long, not bound to any specific form, because it is the infinite within him. ⁵²

The daimonic experience becomes a constantly-applied touchstone.

Life, Kierkegaard explains, is from this revelatory moment "understood backwards", because it is a moment at which "a novel light breaks forth upon life without in any way requiring one to have understood every particular, yet for whose successive understanding he now has the key."⁵³ The intellectual processes of logic serve time and time again to confirm the initial insight. Qualitative judgment becomes simultaneous with perception, for the ironist possesses an absolute point of reference against which everything he sees is measured. Significantly, Socrates never claimed that his daimonion instructed him in specifically positive ways:

I am subject to a divine or supernatural experience, which Meletus saw fit to travesty in his indictment. It began in my early childhood—a sort of voice which comes to me, and when it comes it always dissuades me from what I am proposing to do, and never urges me on. ...In the past a prophetic voice to which I have become accustomed has always been my constant companion, opposing me even in quite trivial things if I was going to take the wrong course. ⁵⁴

The positive view is confirmed immediately and needs no urging, while divagations from the positive bring immediate opposition.

⁵² Concluding Unscientific Postscripts, tr. D.F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1941), p. 450. [emphasis added]. Cf. C.S. Lewis, who (in an essay on Jane Austen's irony) observes: "Unless there is something about which the author is never ironical...there can be no true irony in the work." As quoted by Ian Donaldson, The World Upside-Down, p. 196 [emphasis added].

⁵³ Søren Kierkegaard, "From the Papers of One Still Living", as quoted by Lee M. Capel, Introduction, The Concept of Irony, p. 28. See also Marston LaFrance, A Reading of Stephen Crane (Oxford, 1971), an important study of the ironist as fiction-writer. LaFrance (p. 131) describes the daimonic experience and its aftermath as "a 'one-trump' pattern of psychologi-

This, then, constitutes the double vision of the essential or Socratic ironist. From the detachment of daimonic subjectivity, he is able to see the arbitrary nature of much of society's ethical formulations. That is to say, his alignment with the ethical absolute allows him (or forces him) to perceive the "misrelation between 'essence and phenomenon', the misrelation between internal and external actuality."⁵⁵ With his double vision, the ironist sees vanity and confusion; this can lead to one of several attitudes, ranging from the ethical philosophy of Socrates or Kierkegaard, to the humanist dialogues of Erasmus and More, to the ethical comedy of Fielding or Mark Twain.

The elenchus was designed to initiate the movement toward a consciousness of the presence of truth within each respondent. The answer to the question which keeps springing up in Plato's dialogues, "Can virtue be taught?" must be, "Not exactly..." Ultimately, the truth of virtue must be discovered independently. Socrates, therefore, developed a complex method of indirect discourse which can be called Maieutic Irony.

The term Maieusis is derived from the Greek word signifying "midwife", and was adopted by Socrates to indicate the nature of his dialectic.⁵⁶

logical progression to awareness."

⁵⁴ Apology, 31d, 40a; Collected Dialogues, pp. 17, 24.

⁵⁵ Gregor Malantschuk, Kierkegaard's Thought, ed. and tr. H.V. Hong and E.V. Hong (Princeton, 1971), p. 202.

⁵⁶ See Theaetetus 149a-151d, and 157c-d; Collected Dialogues, pp. 853-7, 862: "You forget, my friend, that I know nothing of such matters and cannot claim to be producing any offspring of my own. I am only trying to deliver yours, and to that end uttering charms over you and tempting your appetite with a variety of delicacies from the table of wisdom, until by my aid your belief shall be brought to light."

The OED provides a succinct definition of the term:

Pertaining to (intellectual) midwifery, i.e. to the Socratic process of assisting a person to bring out into clear consciousness concepts previously only latent in his mind.

The object of the maieutic literary artist, then, is to activate the reader or respondent to "make the same movement of reflection, whereby he ventures to engage his own subjectivity."⁵⁷ That is, the maieutic artist applies the dialectic to the apparent condition of his respondent, to cause him to bring the implicit (the daimonic potential) into explicit consciousness. Again, this realization cannot be transmitted from mind to mind simply through the medium of language,

for that which has to do with the existing subject's relationship with the absolute is something hidden, inward, private, essentially secret. . . . Ideality is not loose change which can be passed from one person to another; it is something that I know by myself. . . . "To believe an ideality on the word of another is like laughing at a joke because some one has said it was funny, not because one has understood it." ⁵⁸

Once again, Lee M. Capel states:

The what may not be asserted from without but only enacted from within; for with finite man the word must come after the deed and that is its truth. ⁵⁹

Fiction can be ironic in its description of the discrepancy between quotidian behaviour and the requirements of an ethical absolute, and it can also serve as a vehicle for an essential ironist's maieutic discourse with the reader. Both these conditions are to be found in Fielding's Tom Jones.

As a method of transitive knowledge, Fielding's use of maieusis is

⁵⁷ Lee M. Capel, Introduction, The Concept of Irony, p. 32.

⁵⁸ Marie Collins Swabey, Comic Laughter, pp. 53f.; Swabey here quotes Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript.

⁵⁹ Loc. cit.

by no means unprecedented. The major premise—the latency of truth, and its accessibility to reason—was fundamental in rational and liberal Anglican theology. Certain categories of knowledge, called by philosophers proleptic⁶⁰, especially the knowledge of the existence of God and the distinction between right and wrong, as well as the desirability of virtue, were widely held to be innate, "connatural" to man's very existence and nature. This notion was manifested in several forms, including the doctrine of Natural Religion (which supported the role of reason in religion by pointing to the outstanding level of moral truth attained by pagan philosophers, especially Socrates, with only the kindly light of Nature to guide them)⁶¹, as well as the notion of a natural human bias to Gospel truth.⁶² The argument that innate predispositions are part of man's birth-

⁶⁰ Prolepsis is "an innate, preconceived idea that comes to consciousness without deliberate rational effort considered as (a) potentially present in all rational beings but expressed only by some, or as (b) universally expressed by all rational beings. Sometimes a prolepsis is regarded as derived not from an innate source but from sense experiences common to all humans." P.A. Angeles, Dictionary of Philosophy, p. 228.

⁶¹ "I call that Natural Religion, which men might know, and should be obliged unto, by the meer Principles of Reason, without the help of Revelation." John Wilkins, Of The Principles and Duties of Natural Religion (London, 1675). See also Samuel Clarke's balanced account of the complementary obligations of Natural Religion and Revelation in his Boyle Lectures of 1705.

⁶² This is a variety of the notion that man's mind is by its very nature inclined to welcome truth, a concept found throughout humanist thought, and particularly in liberal Anglicanism. See, for instance, Benjamin Whichcote (Select Sermons, I, 36): "Now, the Matter of the Gospel is also a vital Principle, as it is a Byas upon our Spirits, an habitual Temper and Disposition constantly affecting us, and inclining us God-ward, and to ways of Goodness, Righteousness and Truth. For it is inwardly received, so as to dye and colour the Soul; so as to settle a Temper and Constitution: And so it is restorative to our Natures."

right seems to have flourished beside Locke's strictures on innate ideas for some time. Occasionally divines tempered their wording somewhat, perhaps to accommodate Locke's psychology, and drew upon the reservation that Locke himself implies—that certain instinctive tendencies were actually innate, though fully-fledged concepts could not be.⁶² This is, to a certain extent, Locke's own argument in his Reasonableness of Christianity; he still argues that the ease with which the mind assents to Revelation indicates both the congeniality of the truth to reason, as well as the validity of the truth thus appropriated. It is this very argument which is most frequently marshalled against the atheistical contention (suggested by Hobbism) that the Idea of God is fictitious.

Curiously enough, it is in just such an argument that the idea of Maieusis receives one of its clearest acknowledgements in the work of

⁶² Locke admits that certain principals or tendencies are "imprinted on the Minds of Man", I.iii.3; p. 67. C.R. Morris comments that Locke is here implying that "the mind is gifted, as part of its essential nature, with capacities to do something or make something of any impressions which it receives." Locke: Berkeley: Hume (London, 1931), p. 26. Morris sees this as an implicit foreshadowing of Kant's categories.

Clarke, however, argued that the truths which are thus perceived are in the things themselves, and not innate. Still, this also says much about the natural proclivity of reason for truth. See the Boyle Lectures for 1705 (pp. 72ff.), in which Clarke discusses the Platonic notion of learning as recollection, and dismisses it (together with the doctrine of innate ideas) as incorrect inference. His conclusion follows: "That the differences, relations, and proportions of things both natural and moral, in which all unprejudiced Minds thus naturally agree, are certain, unalterable, and real in the Things themselves; and do not at all depend on the variable Opinions, Fancies or Imaginations of Men prejudiced by Education, Laws, Customs or evil Practises: And also that the Mind of Man naturally and unavoidably gives its Assent, as to natural and geometrical Truths, so also to the moral differences of things, and to the fitness and reasonableness of the Obligation of the everlasting Law of Righteousness, whenever fairly and plainly propos'd."

the English divines. Ralph Cudworth scornfully repudiates the accusation that the Idea of God is "Fictitious and Arbitrarious", or that it has been "Put into the Minds of the Generality of mankind, by Law-makers and Politicians", and backs his argument with this remarkable assertion:

But this argues their great Ignorance in Philosophy, to think that any Notion or Idea, is put into mens Minds from without, meerly by Telling, or by Words; we being Passive to nothing else from words, but their Sounds and Phantasms thereof; they only occasioning the Soul to excite such Notions, as it had before within it self (whether Innate or Adventitious) which those words by the Compact and Agreement of men were made to be Signs of; or else to reflect also further, upon those Ideas of their own, Consider them more Distinctly, and Compare them with one another. And though all learning be not Remembrance of what the Soul once before actually understood, in a Pre-existent State, as Plato somewhere would have it, ...Yet is all Humane Teaching, but Maieutical, or Obstetricious; and not the filling of the Soul as a Vessel, meerly by Pouring into it from Without, but the Kindling of it from Within; or helping it so to excite and awaken, compare and compound its own Notions, as whereby to arrive at the Knowledge, of that which it was before ignorant of....Wherefore the meer Telling of men, There is a God, could not infuse any Idea of him into their Minds...were they not able to Excite Notions or Ideas from within themselves... 64

The process of Humane Teaching may be obstructed by any number of Idols, yet there is in the humanist tradition a palpable conviction that (given

⁶⁴ The True Intellectual System of the Universe, pp. 693f. (Cudworth's Platonic authority, omitted from this quotation, is Boetius.)

The maieutic argument is not the exclusive property of the Cambridge Platonists. At the beginning of the century, Lancelot Andrewes (d. 1626) describes the development of conspiracy in his sermon, "Of the Gun-Powder Treason": "There is not onely fructus ventris, there is partus mentis: the minde conceives, as well as the wombe; the word [conceiving] is like proper, to both. Men have their wombe, but it lieth higher in them; as high as their hearts; and that which is there conceived, and bred, is a birth." W.F. Mitchell, English Pulpit Oratory, p. 156.

More explicit yet is Nathaniel Culverwell's Discourse of the Light of Nature [1652]: "The Law of Nature is 'hatched' by Reason from those 'first and oval principles of her own laying, scattered in the soul, and filling it with a vigorous pregnancy, a multiplying fruitfulness. So that it brings forth a numerous and sparkling posterity of secondary notions.'" As quoted by Tulloch, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy, II, 423.

a clear perspective and God's grace) the truth is irresistibly and naturally attractive. The obstructions which prevent man from bringing "con-natural" truths into active understanding and practice include worldly self-interest, false opinion, and moral and intellectual laziness. If these impediments were to be removed, and the rational and moral vision of man's soul improved thereby, the rarity and reticence of truth in this world could not deter man from her pursuit.

Whichcote also describes maieusis in a sermon which sets forth his convictions on the matter of individual assent or consent to truth ("One thing we have, and but one thing, which we may call our own; I mean the Consent of our Mindes; and that must be ours, or else it is not our Consent..."): .

Truth is a seminal Principle with which the Mind of Man being impregnated, ought to bring forth; and in this Case there should be neither Barrenness nor Abortions....Seed is accounted lost, when being sown in the Ground it never comes up; so are the Notions of Things in Minds, in respect of their Acts and Virtues. Truth received into the Mind by Knowledge, is to the Soul as Leaven put into the Meal: It is as natural that Will should follow, as that Understanding should go first. We first receive from God by mental Illumination; then Judgment passes into Victory, Mat. xii.20. ⁶⁵

As we have seen, Fielding acknowledges this premise concerning illumination with his adoption of Plato's image of the desirability of truth (wisdom, virtue) in her unveiled state. To assist his reader to recognize Virtue in Example (Dedication, TJ, p. 7), and to kindle his desire for truth and virtue, Fielding engages in a fictional form of Socratic dialogue, extended into a dialectic designed to bring the reader's latent Good Nature out into explicit consciousness

The first step in the dialectic, once again, is corrective—the

⁶⁵ Select Sermons, I, 84, 86ff.

elenchus. The groundwork has been effected by the numerous devices which turn the question to the reader: devices which distance the reader from narrative material, and focus his attention on the process of reading, with all the concomitant ethical discriminations and judgments.

The primary elenctic technique in Fielding's fiction is the deliberate cultivation by the narrator of misapprehensions on the part of the reader. The narrator, who has been established as a "reliable" commentator, leads his reader into false positions, stock responses common to the same social conditioning which produces the false glosses examined above. These false positions, however, are only temporary dispositions, for the reader is then provided with a context which shows the response clearly to be in error.

Students of irony have called this strategy "context withholding", and describe the reader's condition as one of "victimization":

The literary ironist may treat his reader more as a victim than as a confederate, for the purpose of fostering in that reader a certain necessary sense of humility. That is, the artist acts as an eiron in the traditional Socratic sense. The victimization of the reader (the idea of victimization, of being placed at a disadvantage because of a deficiency of knowledge, is a common term in otherwise different definitions of irony) is finally intended as a way of bringing the reader closer to the truth about himself. ⁶⁶

Although this definition provides both a view of the potential for manipulating meaningful context by an author, and the catharsis of humility which may result, the term "victimization" has an unfortunate connotation or resonance of one-sidedness and permanence. The reader, like the auditor of verbal irony or a comic double-entendre, is only passively a victim if

⁶⁶ John B. McKee, Literary Irony and the Literary Audience: Studies in the Victimization of the Reader in Augustan Fiction (Amsterdam, 1974), pp. 1-2.

he fails to comprehend the intentional communication within the literal statement.⁶⁷ The implications of McKee's terminology are unfortunate in that it appears that the reader is being satirized by the victimizing author. Because the satirist speaks from a position of social concern, with an attritional and exclusive strategy, the offender (satire's target) is excluded by laughter from the social body. There is never an alternative positive movement in satire—only the options of alienation or conformity.

Fielding's attritional, elenctic strategy does set up a relationship between the narrator and the reader in which the reader is often at a "disadvantage". But the strategy is a means, not an end: it initiates a movement beyond the initial negativity into a larger system of fictional maieutic irony—in a dystopia, a society permeated with affectation, materialism, self-interest, and hypocrisy, which has appropriate evaluative language for its own ends, satire can have only a limited effect. Fielding, therefore, wishing his reader to understand what is the right way

⁶⁷ The reader is required to see through, and reject, the literal meaning; the withholding of context only prolongs the moment before this movement is made. The reader, who is told that Allworthy's belief in life after death is whimsical, is only victimized (or fooled) if he fails to read the term in context (I:ii:35). See Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Irony, pp. 179 ff.

This irony is related to the "Art of Teasing" which Duncan outlines, and which challenges the reader to break out of passivity: "Far from being invited to share its secret, we are challenged to see that it exists. Its meaning is to be found in our responses, and its pervasiveness in the fact that we are, or should be, engaged all the time. If we fail to perceive it, it is we who are deluded; we become its victims. Ben Jonson and the Lucianic Tradition, p. 2 (emphasis added).

for man to live, from within rather than by settling for adherence to externally imposed laws, essayed to engage his reader in an inward-turning movement:

And now, Reader, as we are in Haste to attend our Heroine, we will leave to thy Sagacity to apply all this to the Boeotian Writers, and to those Authors who are their Opposites. This thou wilt be abundantly able to perform without our Aid. Bestir thyself therefore on this Occasion; for tho' we will always lend thee proper Assistance in difficult Places, as we do not, like some others, expect thee to use the Arts of Divination to discover our Meaning; yet we shall not indulge thy Laziness where nothing but thy own Attention is required, for thou art highly mistaken if thou dost imagine that we intended, when we began this great work, to leave thy Sagacity nothing to do, or that without sometimes exercising this Talent, thou wilt be able to travel through our Pages with any Pleasure or Profit to thyself. (XI:ix:614; emphasis added)

Although the narrator often lends the reader a good deal of avuncular assistance, the essential ethical communication in Tom Jones depends upon the reader's own exercise in Sagacity.

How does the elenchus assist the reader, while apparently attacking him? It demonstrates the inherent invalidity of certain attitudes and assumptions. Let us consider a particular case; in Book XI, Fielding stages a rather crude practical joke at the expense of his idealized heroine, Sophia:

In this Posture they travelled many Hours, till they came into a wide and well-beaten Road, which, as they turned to the Right, soon brought them to a very fair promising Inn; where they all alighted: But so fatigued was Sophia, that as she had sat her Horse during the last five or six Miles with great Difficulty, so was she now incapable of dismounting from him without Assistance. This the Landlord, who had hold of her Horse, presently perceiving, offered to lift her in his Arms from her Saddle; Fate seems to have resolved to put Sophia to the Blush that Day, and the second malicious Attempt succeeded better than the first; for my Landlord had no sooner received the young Lady in his Arms, than his Feet, which the Gout had lately very severely handled, gave way, and down he tumbled; but at the same Time, with no less Dexterity than Gallantry, contrived to throw himself under his charming Burthen, so that he alone received any Bruise from the Fall; for the great Injury which happened to Sophia, was a

violent shock given to her Modesty, by an immoderate Grin which, at her rising from the Ground, she observed in the Countenances of most of the Bye-Standers. This made her suspect what really happened, and what we shall not here relate, for the Indulgence of those Readers who are capable of laughing at the Offence given to a Young Lady's Delicacy. Accidents of this Kind we have never regarded in a comical Light; nor will we scruple to say, that he must have a very inadequate Idea of the Modesty of a beautiful young Woman, who would wish to sacrifice it to so paltry a Satisfaction as can arise from Laughter. (XI:ii:574)

Fielding's expertise in shifting modes of narration stands him in good stead in this passage. Reporting a minor incident which arouses laughter in bystanders, he encourages superficial acceptance, and then suddenly turns on the reader the full degree of his disapprobation. As the almost involuntary mirth occasioned by a pratfall ceases to amuse when the modesty and dignity of its victim is considered, so is the Hobbesian theory of laughter corrected.

A more careful look at the passage reveals a subtle yet offensive note of implicit sexual violation, and any trace of consent, approval, or collaboration on the part of the reader is firmly censured. Fielding's mastery of tone—the narrator's shocked reproach—completely obscures the fact that he engineered the entire business. The odium rests with the tendency, common in society but, hopefully, not shared by the reader, to laugh at the discomfiture of another human being, or at the violation of a young woman's sexual dignity.

Fielding's strategy in this passage is rather intimate, but other elenctic exercises are more formally distanced. He frequently invents a hypothetical reader, whose interpretations of events and ideas is immediately shown to be wrong. In most cases, the reader carefully disassociates himself from the hypothetical character's misreading. A chapter

which contains a weighty moral discussion is prefaced with this heading: "Containing such very deep and grave Matters, that some Readers, perhaps, may not relish it." (IV:iv:161) Upon perceiving the obvious shallowness of such a response, Fielding's reader tends to move away (perhaps unconsciously, perhaps aware of the movement); not wanting to be a party to such a superficial reading, the reader is in a manner of speaking pre-disposed toward a serious consideration of the ensuing, artificially-dismissed sententious material.

Most of Fielding's elenctic effects, however, are directed against the self-aggrandising, materialistic, dystopian society, and those of its stock moral assumptions and definitions in which his reader might participate. The elenchus is comprehensive, and its effect on the reader is cumulative, rather than momentary and individually isolatable. The ultimate intent of the elenchus is to bring out in the reader the natural human proclivity toward good nature, by exposing its contradictions in daily life. A description and analysis of this process will be undertaken in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

MAIEUSIS IN TOM JONES

1) Good Nature and "Considerate Reflection Inwards"

What by this Name, then, shall be understood?
 What? but the glorious Lust of doing Good?
 The Heart that finds it Happiness to please,
 Can feel another's Pain, and taste his Ease.
 The Cheek that with another's Joy can glow,
 Turn pale, and sicken with another's Woe,
 Free from Contempt and Envy, he who deems
 Justly of Life's two opposite Extremes.
 Who to make all and each Man truly blest,
 Doth all he can, and wishes all the rest?
 Tho' few have Pow'r their Wishes to fulfull,
 Yet all Men may do Good at least in Will....
 Yet to each Individual Heav'n affords¹
 The Pow'r to bless in Wishes, and in Words.

Fielding's view of human nature, as we have seen, was diametrically opposed to the bear-pit mentality envisaged by Hobbes and Mandeville. One of the primary characteristics with which man has been endowed, according to the tradition in which Fielding places himself, is the inclination toward mutual regard and benevolence. Indeed, this inclination is often regarded as God's image or likeness in Man:

Beasts are the subjects of tyrannick sway,
 Where still the stronger on the weaker prey.
 Man onely of a softer mold is made;
 Not for his fellowes ruine, but their aide:
 The noble image of the Deity....
 But, when arriv'd at last to humane race,
 The god-head took a deep consid'ring space;
 And to distinguish man from all the rest

¹ Henry Fielding, "Of Good Nature", Miscellanies, I, 31f.

Unlock'd the sacred treasures of his breast:
 And mercy mix'd with reason did impart;
 One to his head, the other to his heart:
 Reason to rule, but mercy to forgive:
 The first is law, the last prerogative.²

It can be seen, then, that the primary injunction to charity (see above, II, 5) is understood widely as the moral requirement and perfection of humanity. Charity, Benevolence, Compassion, Good-Nature—all these related (if not synonymous) virtues provide the requisite solution to much of the troubles of this world. Joseph Addison's observations are typical of the age:

Man is subject to innumerable Pains and Sorrows by the very Condition of Humanity, and yet, as Nature had not sown Evils enough in Life, we are continually adding Grief to Grief, and aggravating the common Calamity by our cruel Treatment of one another. Every Man's natural Weight of Affliction is still made more heavy by the Envy, Malice, Treachery, or Injustice of his Neighbor. At the same time that the Storm beats upon the whole Species, we are falling foul upon one another.

Half the Misery of Human Life might be extinguished, would Men alleviate the general Curse they lie under, by mutual Offices of Compassion, Benevolence, and Humanity. There is nothing therefore which we ought more to encourage in our selves and others, than that disposition of the Mind which in our Language goes under the Title of Good Nature.³

In its ideal, natural state, the "disposition of the Mind" is active, a "glorious Lust" which takes precedence over merely selfish considerations. The happiness which results from its exercise is far superior to the

² John Dryden, The Hind and the Panther [1687], I.245-50, 255-62; The Works of John Dryden, III, 130. Although the passage alludes to monarchic power to exercise clemency, it also suggests that the admixture of mercy and reason is the legacy of all men.

³ The Spectator, No. 169 (September 13, 1711), I, 510. The Spectator often featured discussions of this subject; see Addison on the opportunities for active benevolence provided by "Places of Trust", No. 469 (August 12, 1712), III, 449-51; see also Henry Grove's essays on social benevolence, Nos. 588 (September 1, 1714), IV, 342-5, and 601 (October 1, 1714), IV, 376-80.

lesser forms resulting from the gratification of selfish interest. Thus Pope (among many others) places the happiness attendant upon virtuous behaviour at the top of the scale of possible human joys:

Know then this truth (enough for Man to Know)
Virtue alone is Happiness below.⁴

Fielding's major influences can be traced back through the benevolent tradition of poetry and divinity to the classical ethicists, especially Cicero (whose concept of humanitas resembles Fielding's Good-Nature), and to the Christian principle of charity as the first law (see Matthew 22.35-40), which was taken up with great fervor in the advocacy of good works in the sermons of Whichcote, Tillotson, Barrow, and the Latitudinarian divines. Whichcote (to cite only one of many possible examples) declares:

The Scripture lays much of the Stress of Religion upon the Principle of GOOD NATURE, and the Charitable Disposition. I will give Account why Scripture doth so.

1st, It is of principle Use in Subservience to God's Government in the World. If this Principle of good Nature and good Will were general, there would be no difficulty in Government....

2ndly, It is the Expression of our Resentment of God's Compassion and Goodness. They that maintain the principle of good Nature, are the Representatives of God in the World. These are under the fullest Communications of God: And these are, in their Measure and Degree, what God is, in his Height, Excellency and Fulness.

3rdly, Unless we be Exercised in the Practice of it here, we shall be nowise qualified to become Citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem hereafter....

An uncharitable Christianity, unmerciful, void of Good-nature, is no more Religion, than a dark Sun is a Sun, or a cold Fire is Fire.—He only can dwell in God who dwells in LOVE, I John iv.16. If we would at all resemble God, partake of his Nature; or be, in any degree such as he is; we must root out of our Natures all Malignity, Envy, Malice, Rancour, Spite, Displeasure. To be out

⁴ Alexander Pope, Essay on Man, IV.309-10; Twickenham Edition of the Works, III, i (ed. Maynard Mack), 157.

of Love and Good-will, is to be in the Devil's Form and Spirit.⁵

Again, the emphasis is on the individual's disposition: he must actively desire the well-being of others, and all truly charitable acts must spring from such a "glorious Lust"; the calculated accumulation of "credit" for the performance of officially recognized charitable acts is not sufficient at all.⁶

Fielding himself tended to generalize rather broadly about Good Nature, and it is rather hard, sometimes, to pin the concept down, as H.K. Miller observes:

"Good Nature" is (to borrow a term from philology) a holophrastic term for Fielding, the compound of an attitude. He defined it variously in various places—sometimes it seems to be a passion, at other times a faculty of moral judgment, or even a moral abstraction, like "virtue"—but it remained for him the core of a complex of ideas having to do with moral man.⁷

Fielding was absolutely committed in this matter, and tried many angles of approach to his readers, hoping to catalyze their subjectivity to make a similar movement to the same understanding. The concept of Good Nature is difficult to isolate and articulate precisely because it is one of those matters which can be fully understood only by subjective experience,

⁵ Select Sermons, pp. 143f. See also H.K. Miller, Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies, pp. 57, 66ff., et passim; and M.C. Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, especially Chapter V. Fielding acknowledges this part of charity in the Champion (Henley, XV, 258): "Good-nature is a delight in the happiness of mankind, and a concern at their misery, with a desire, as much as possible, to procure the former, and avert the latter; and this, with a constant regard to desert."

⁶ For a parallel discussion of the requirements of charity, see above, II.5.

⁷ Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies, pp. 54f.

assent, and conviction; this also explains why Good-Nature moves back and forth across the boundaries between passions, mental or moral faculties, dispositions, and abstract virtues.

Nonetheless, much can be predicated about Good-Nature in a general manner. Fielding maintained that a sense of right and wrong is infused into man's essential nature, even before the influence of education and religion. Mr. Allworthy explains this point when he argues, in Tom Jones, with his brother-in-law, Captain Blifil. Allworthy uses language reminiscent of the Latitudinarian divines and their predecessors, the Cambridge Platonists, insisting that "the first Principles of Natural Justice" are connatural and divine in origin, "the original Notions of Right and Wrong, which He himself had implanted in our Minds; by which we were to judge not only in all Matters which were not revealed, but even of the Truth of Revelation itself." (II:ii:80) Implicit in this attitude is the Anglican insistence that the individual must assent to the terms of his faith, and that this assent is possible only through the ingenuous use of reason. Implicitly, then, all men are naturally capable of coming to knowledge of the Good. But this attitude differs radically from sentimental or romantic evaluations of man's nature as essentially good, in that Good Nature exists not as an omnipresent but as a potential force. H.K. Miller explains: "For Fielding, man was not animal bonus, but only bonus capax; and perfectibility was not the automatic result of a benevolent historical process." ⁸

Fielding, as a maieutic artist, operates on this potential in his readers in two modes. The first is emotional: the many little tales of

⁸ Ibid., p. 422 [animal bonum...boni capax].

pathos in the novel are designed to stimulate an emotional response of sympathy in the reader. This response, however, is not merely the sentimentalist's frisson; it is a form of that sympathy which the Anglican divines considered a necessary part of the duty of charity, and which The Whole Duty of Man classifies as "Charity in the Affections."⁹ Exercising the emotions in sympathy with the misfortunes of others, or in relief at the rectification of their plight, is helpful in the development and encouragement of Good Nature as a disposition and passion.

Fielding also endeavours to gain his reader's intellectual assent to the principles of Good Nature. Marie Collins Swabey has observed that the comic author who is painfully aware of the distance between an ethical ideal and quotidian practice communicates his convictions in his comic works by appealing "to obvious perceptions of the obvious in sanity."¹⁰ Fielding everywhere suggests that man's capacity for virtue can be realized by the application of simple common sense. Moral laws, he maintains, are "the only Laws which have corresponded throughout to Truth and Common Sense, those Laws I mean which came from the Voice of God Himself."¹¹ Fielding's constant emphasis on the development of judgment, circumspection, and ingenuous application of reason demonstrates his certainty that under the inspection of the critical eye the dross of fallacious reasoning and affectation must fall away. The potential for a harmonious, benevolent life, therefore, will become obvious (and compellingly attractive) to anyone who submits himself to the dialectic which reduces these obstruc-

⁹ P. 138; see above, III.3.

¹⁰ Comic Laughter, p. 30. Sanity, for Swabey, is a framework of calm rationality within which common sense can work. A similar process is at work in Socratic discourse; George Nakhnikian, in his essay "Elenctic Definitions" (The Philosophy of Socrates, ed. G. Vlastos, p. 131), notes

tions.

Unfortunately, this is a process from which a large part of humanity seems to have excluded itself. The blinders of self-interest, mere opinion, and the baser passions can be assumed at quite an early age. Fielding laments frequently that so many men are unable to correct the course of their own lives, despite the manifold helps offered by Religion. People in general are remarkable in their inability to recognize their own, true best interest:

Notwithstanding the universal Desire of Happiness which Nature hath implanted in the Mind of every Man, such are the Mistakes both in Opinion and Practice, and so far are the Actions of the Generality of Mankind from having any visible Tendency towards their real Good, that one is sometimes tempted to predicate that Man is an Animal which industriously seeks his own Misery. ¹²

This observation emerges as one of Fielding's favourite recurring ironic themes. In his Journey from this World to the Next, he translates it into a kind of Lucianic allegory. His narrator, proceeding from earth up to the gates of heaven, recounts his observation:

And now we discovered two large roads leading different ways, and of very different appearance; the one all craggy with rocks, full as it seemed of boggy grounds, and everywhere beset with briars, so that it was impossible to pass through it without the utmost danger and difficulty; the other, the most delightful

that Socrates was careful to select "rational animality, and not some other property logically independent of this that may be common and peculiar to man, as being the essential ingredient in a morally relevant definition of man."

¹¹ The Covent-Garden Journal, No. 14 (February 18, 1752), I, 219f.

¹² Henry Fielding, as quoted by H.K. Miller, Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies, p. 50 fn.

imaginable, leading through the most verdant meadows, painted and perfumed with all kinds of beautiful flowers; in short, the most wanton imagination could imagine nothing more lovely. Notwithstanding which, we were surprised to see great numbers crowding into the former, and only one or two solitary spirits chusing the latter. On enquiry, we were acquainted that the bad road was the way to greatness, and the other to goodness. ¹³

This, of course, is the distinction upon which Jonathan Wild is built. In his Miscellanies, Fielding elaborates:

Nothing seems to me to be more preposterous than that while the Way to true Honour lies so open and plain, Men should seek false by such perverse and rugged Paths: that while it is so easy and safe, and truly honourable, to be good, Men should wade through Difficulty and Danger, and real Infamy, to be Great, or, to use a synonymous Word, Villains. ¹⁴

Fielding constantly decries the complacency of simply accepting the more or less convenient and comfortable standards of a society made up predominantly of selfish individuals. He insists on the importance of self-examination in his journal essays, and he enforces it subtly in his novels, all as a means of establishing and refining the conscience as a touchstone of morality. The correlation between knowledge and virtue, implicit in this aspect of Fielding's belief, is once again typically Platonic.

Fielding's positive exempla are notable for the simplicity and straightforwardness of their lives, particularly in contrast with the convoluted, devious, tangled lives of the selfish, vicious, negative characters. Fielding also portrays his Good-Natured characters in harmony with the natural world; it is the relative simplicity of the virtuous life,

¹³ Journey, pp. 24f. The topos of the elevated view (the vantage point of truth) seems to have had its start with Lucretius, and its satirical origin with Lucian, and appears in a wide variety of Renaissance writings. Bacon adapts it in his essay, "Of Truth" (Philosophical Works, p. 736): "No pleasure is comparable to the standing on the vantage ground of truth (a hill not to be commanded, and where the air is always clear and serene), and to see the errors and wanderings and mists and

rather than any inherent advantages in a bucolic state, which underlies Fielding's use of the "retirement theme". The emphasis in retirement is not on the advantages of isolation (as Fielding's satire on the Man of the Hill demonstrates), but on quiet rectitude contrasted with the venal corruption of the city. Man is, after all, a social animal; just as altruism and benevolence are natural to man, so man is most natural when he exercises them. Fielding's reading of the the classical ethicists provided him with an authoritative account of the link between Good Nature and basic humanity, notably in the concept of humanitas:

Indeed...the ancients seemed to have looked upon what we call Good-Nature as a quality almost inseparable from Nature itself.¹⁵

Virtue must be an outgoing force; it must be committed and concerned with the world, or else it is meaningless:

By Virtue is meant...a certain relative Quality, which is always busying itself without doors, and seems as much interested in pursuing the Good of others as its own. (XV:i:783)

In a like manner, all human contact should be governed by a concern for the well-being of others. Conversation, the interchange of ideas, is described in terms of a dialectic: it is "that reciprocal Interchange of Ideas, by which Truth is examined, Things are, in a manner, turned around (conversari: to turn around together), and sifted, and all our Knowledge communicated to each other."¹⁶ All social intercourse is based on such interchanges, and ideal conversation is consistent with the principle of charity: "The Art of pleasing or doing Good to one another is therefore the Art of Conversation."¹⁷

tempests in the vale below; so always that this prospect be with pity, and not with swelling of pride."

¹⁴ Preface, Miscellanies, I, 10.

¹⁵ The Champion, as quoted by H.K. Miller, p. 67.

Because this is the natural proclivity of man, reasonable and moral action, consistent with Good Nature, is accompanied with a strong sensation of happiness and well-being, the active satisfaction of a good conscience. The pleasure attendant upon the consciousness of a good act is a sign that man is performing well in his assigned function, and Fielding's works are full of such signs:

Allworthy betook himself to those pleasing Slumbers which a Heart that hungers after Goodness is apt to enjoy when thoroughly satisfied. (I:iii:41)

"And, believe me, there is more Pleasure, even in this World, in an innocent and virtuous Life than in one debauched and vicious." (I:vii:53)

"[Charity] is an indispensable Duty, enjoined both by the Christian Law and by the Law of Nature itself, so was it withal so pleasant, that if any Duty could be said to be its own Reward, or to pay us while we are discharging it, it was this." (II:v:95)

I desire some of the Philosophers to grant, that there is in some (I believe in all) 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 a Disposition Love, we have no name for it. (VI:i:270)

When this delight is used homiletically, as an incentive to the pursuit of virtue, as Mr. Allworthy does in the second of these passages, it is some-

¹⁶ "An Essay on the Art of Conversation", Miscellanies, I, 120.

¹⁷ Ibid., I, 123. Cf. John Wilkins (Essay Toward a Real Character, p. 208), who defines "Conversation" under the heading of "Manners" ("The Customary and habitual Actions of Men considered as voluntary, and as they are capable of Good or Evil, Reward or Punishment...") in these terms: "Such customary Actions as are mutual betwixt man and man [may be] styled CONVERSATION, Carriage, Demeanour, Comportment, homilectal Communication, lead, life, living, sociable, behave. The Vertues belonging to these do comprehend all those Habits which concern the regulating both of our Wills and Affections, and our Conversations."

times called Laudable Epicureanism, and many critics regard it with a marked disfavour.¹⁸ There is not sufficient space to enter into this controversy here; it must suffice to say that Fielding was concerned that his readers should not mistake his purpose, and carefully distinguished his belief in the reward of a good conscience from the sentimental idea that virtue is rewarded in a more tangible coin:

There are a set of religious, or rather moral Writers, who teach that Virtue is the certain road to Happiness, and Vice to Misery, in this World. A very wholesome and comfortable Doctrine, and to which we have but one Objection, that it is not true. (XV:i:783)

When Fielding talks about rewards, he may be using terms which his audience does not immediately understand. Once again, he is concerned with drawing the reader's attention to certain common social assumptions of value; the reader is led, more or less willingly, to re-examine what he considers to be valuable, and to compare this with the theory and the

¹⁸ H.R. McAdoo explains, in The Spirit of Anglicanism, that Laudable Epicureanism was the inevitable result of the centrality of the use of reason in Latitudinarian divinity: "By their emphasis on reasonability they contrived to convey the impression that religion was chiefly a matter of acquiring and practising justice, honesty, sincerity, and charitableness. These things were recognisably reasonable and it was to man's immediate and ultimate interest to acquire them, and it was the fruit of common experience that this was for man's happiness as well as for his interest." (P. 161)

However, McAdoo notes that the notion was understood increasingly as a promise of reward, and when his history reaches Tillotson's sermons, McAdoo is uncomfortable with the implied tone of utilitarian or mercantile transaction. Religion, Tillotson confidently asserts, is to man's "plain and true interest, and without it there would be more disorder in society than if human laws were the only restraint. It makes for peace and tranquillity, health and industry, and enlarges the mind and understanding." (McAdoo, p. 174)

This tendency leads to deism; the end of its popularity begins with the shift away from rationalism which accompanied the dissemination of Butler's and Law's writings; evangelism, too, had a considerable impact. Under these historical influences, no doubt, McAdoo is almost embarrassed about the Latitudinarians: "The period did not betray any sensitivity on the subject of reward, or what was termed 'interest'." (P. 172)

experience of Good Nature. When Fielding questions and cross-questions his reader, he assumes that common sense and an ingenuous disposition to accept reasonable arguments will assist in demonstrating how much simpler the way of Good Nature is, and how pleasant. At the same time, a pattern of elenchus exposes the self-delusion necessary to maintain an ill-natured way of life as ridiculously complex and affected.

2. The Double Vision and the "Vein of Contrast"

And here we shall of Necessity be led to open a new Vein of Knowledge, which, if it hath been discovered, hath not, to our Remembrance, been wrought on by any antient or modern Writer. This Vein is no other than Contrast, which runs through all the Works of Creation, and may probably have a large Share in constituting the Idea of all Beauty, as well natural as artificial: For what demonstrates the Beauty and Excellence of any Thing, but its Reverse? (VI:i:212)

In Fact, poor Jones was one of the best-natured Fellows alive, and had all that Weakness which is called Compassion, and which distinguishes this imperfect Character from that noble Firmness of Mind, which rolls a Man, as it were, within himself, and, like a polished Bowl, enables him to run through the World without being once stopped by the Calamities which happen to others. (XIV:vi:760f.)

The world which Fielding displays panoramically in *Tom Jones* is a dystopia, a view of a society overwhelmingly dominated by self-seeking masquerading as useful virtue. The society he depicts is highly fragmented, necessarily, for each individual is pitted against every other in an independent struggle for material prosperity and social security. Instead of a just commonwealth under the rule of law, in which prosperity benefits the deserving, this society is a marketplace in which human lives are both goods and currency. The measure of success is the degree of wealth, power, and status attained—the Art of Thriving again, "the honest method of selling ourselves, which hath flourished so notably for a long time among us. A business which I have ventured to call honest, notwithstanding the objections raised by weak and scrupulous people against it."¹⁹ The weak and scrupulous—scruples are clearly a defect in character—are the

¹⁹ The True Patriot, No. 4 (November 26, 1745), Henley, XVI, 20. The argument continues: "...for if it be granted, as surely it will be, that we are freemen, we have certainly a right to ourselves; and whatever we have a right to, we have also a right to sell." (XVI, 21)

legitimate prey of the practitioners of the Art of Thriving, who disguise their motives and activities with a masquerade which includes an independent but parallel evaluative vocabulary ("strength of character", prudence, wisdom, etc.).²⁰

This masquerade is the object of Fielding's relentless attack. At the heart of his comedy lies the drive to unmask pretensions to virtue assumed either to disguise or to rationalize fundamentally selfish actions. It is this masquerade which he classifies under the designation "Affectation", and singles out in the Preface to Joseph Andrews as the primary source of the "true Ridiculous".

It is usually important for Fielding that his reader should be fully aware of what is going on in the novel; one of the signals he provides for the reader is this recurring motif of the masquerade. It is explicitly set forth in a chapter entitled "A Comparison between the World and the Stage", in which the narrator comments:

Some have considered the larger Part of Mankind in the Light of Actors, as personating Characters no more their own, and which, in Fact, they have no better Title, than the Player hath to be in Earnest thought the King or Emperor whom he represents. Thus the Hypocrite may be said to be a Player; and indeed the Greeks called them both by one and the same Name. (VII:i:324)

This viewpoint is underlined ironically by Partridge's inability to comprehend it. Partridge, as we have seen, is in a constant state of confusion in which he muddles language's form and content. His confusion of the levels of reality when he witnesses the production of Hamlet (XVI:v:852ff.) is a delightful piece of high comedy, yet it is not without added significance for the reader, who must beware of repeating Partridge's mistake. All

²⁰ See above (II.2) for discussion of the masquerade; for discussion of masked vocabulary (false glosses), see above, II.4, II.5, III.2, III.3, V.2.

masquerades are ultimately liable to exposure.

Fielding's efforts to expose and ridicule the complex, absurd machinations of hypocrisy, affectation, and self-aggrandising materialism are designed to indicate implicitly to the reader the natural ease, simplicity, and pleasure of ethically-balanced, good-natured behaviour. Fielding's elenctic tactics are directed against any tendency on his reader's part to accept unquestioningly the premises of a society geared to facilitate the Art of Thriving. One of his primary tactics is a modification of the traditional, ironic, blame-by-praise and praise-by-blame approach of raillery. We have already seen the active principle of raillery enlisted in running patterns of verbal irony: the priorities of a corrupt society are exposed obliquely by the inversion of words denoting true wisdom and worldly and self-interested practicality. Fielding's narrator, often without any explicit warning, assumes the voice of society, ironically congratulating characters for essentially vicious practices. Individual instances of verbal irony depend upon the simultaneous perception of both element (ostensible and submerged meaning, phenomenon and essence). In these extended patterns, the reader is required to see in the narrator's temporary disingenuity both what is said and what is meant.

Time after time, the narrator, with an air of innocence, asks his public what possible objection could be raised to one sort of action or another, which he assures his readers must be perfectly acceptable. When, for instance, the landlady of an inn turns sour because she has found she cannot respect Tom, the narrator relates:

He did indeed account somewhat unfairly for this sudden Change; for besides some hard and unjust Surmises concerning female Fickleness and Mutability, he began to suspect that he owed this Want of

Civility to his Want of Horses, a Sort of Animals which, as they dirty no Sheets, are thought, in Inns, to pay better for their Beds than their Riders, and are therefore considered as the more desirable Company; but Mrs. Whitefield, to do her Justice, had a much more Liberal Way of thinking. She was perfectly well-bred, and could be very civil to a Gentleman, tho' he walked on Foot: In Reality, she looked on our Heroe as a sorry Scoundrel, and therefore treated him as such, for which not even Jones himself, had he known as much as the Reader, could have blamed her; nay, on the contrary, he must have approved her Conduct, and have esteemed her the more for the Disrespect shewn towards himself. (VIII:ix:434f.)

Is the reader really expected to agree with the landlady's attitude? In denying that she was guilty of judging her customers by their appurtenances, the narrator pretends to be exonerating her. There are, however, several barely submerged clues provided which indicate that his presentation is not entirely straightforward. Drawing the reader's attention to the landlady's freedom from one fault, Fielding's narrator unobtrusively encourages his reader, by a process of association, to accept her action as free of vice, and to accept this almost on faith. But such a response would not be correct; the landlady's judgment of Tom is illuminated not by her acclaimed "liberality", but by the practical tenets of the Art of Thriving. A reader reasonably familiar with Fielding's work might recognize one of his favourite signals: we are told that the landlady "was perfectly well-bred". Fielding consistently uses the terminology of good breeding as a sort of verbal-ironic crux to demonstrate that the accepted social standard has strayed from the value originally represented by the term. Once signifying honour, nobility, and an elevated standard of ethical behaviour, the term has been reduced to mere considerations of birth, appearance, and social station with its attendant decorum. Fielding redefines Good Breeding in his "Essay on Conversation":

The Word I mean is Good Breeding; a Word, I apprehend, not at first confined to Externals, much less to any particular Dress or Attitude of the Body: nor were the Qualifications expressed by it to be furnished by a Milliner, a Taylor, or a Perriwig-Maker; no, nor even by a Dancing-Master himself. According to the Idea I myself conceive from this Word, I should not have scrupled to call Socrates a well-bred Man, though I believe he was very little instructed by any of the Persons I have above enumerated. In short, by Good Breeding (notwithstanding the corrupt Use of the Word in a very different Sense) I mean the Art of pleasing, or contributing as much as possible to the Ease and Happiness of those with whom you converse. ²¹

Fielding draws an explicit connection between the disposition of Good Nature and active virtue (practical morality) in this description of the Art of Pleasing. Fielding, again, hammers his point home:

Good Breeding then, or the Art of pleasing in Conversation, is expressed in two different Ways, viz. in our Actions and our Words, and our Conduct in both may be reduced to that concise, comprehensive Rule in Scripture; Do unto all Men as you would they should do unto you. Indeed, concise as this Rule is, and plain as it appears, what are all Treatises on Ethics, but Comments on it? ²²

Fielding provides an example of true Good Breeding in Sophia, who "had constantly that Desire of pleasing, which may be called the happiest of all Desires in this, that it scarce ever fails of attaining its Ends, when not disgraced by Affectation." (XIII:v:705) On the other hand, the reader would be well-advised to be suspicious of any character who is described admiringly in terms of the worldly variety of Good Breeding (i.e. the false gloss). The actions of such a character, considered in the light

²¹ Miscellanies, I, 123. It is surely worth noting the maiuetic terminology Fielding here employs: the "Idea I myself conceive from this Word" is a phrase which renders the ensuing illustration, the example of Socrates, most apposite.

²² Ibid., I, 124. The notion of the complete divinity of the Sermon on the Mount, and of the Golden Rule which it contains, is a commonplace of Anglican teaching. Fielding's terminology makes it clear that Good Breeding is synonymous with charity, and must include charity in action and words, and in the affections (see above, III.5). In a sense, Tom Jones, too, is an extended, fictional Comment on the Rule.

of the rule cited above, will reveal a sorry lack of the genuine article.

The landlady, "perfectly well-bred", is actually a scrupulous devotee of the worldly form of Good Breeding. She is prepared to accept the whims of Gentlemen, even if they go so far as to travel on foot. Her dismay when she hears of Tom's indigence and bastardy is understandable in terms of her trade, but the reader must beware of automatic acceptance of such behaviour, even though the narrator accounts for it "reasonably". In the light of the standard of true Good Breeding, she is revealed as shallow, ungenerous, conceited, and anything but "liberal".

The reader who encounters this kind of false gloss or inversion of evaluative terms, is challenged to see through the dissimulated agreement of the narrator with the inverted standard. Recognition of this strategy, and correction of the false glosses, is made possible by the alienating effects of deliberate artificiality of form. These produce a sufficient detachment from the work in the reader to allow him to view the narrator as though he were an actor, mouthing words the significance of which may differ from the immediately apparent, literal meaning. Behind this movement, a positive standard of Good Nature is shadowed forth by the exposure of the meanness and fraudulence of its opposite as it functions in society.

The exercise of benevolence in a vicious world is not a simple matter, of course. Those characters who do not understand benevolence are shown to object to it in terms of the marketplace—so often, they argue, it turns out to be a poor investment. Captain Blifil, for instance, objects to Allworthy, "We are liable to be imposed upon, and to confer our choicest Favours often on the Undeserving, as you must own was your Case in your Bounty to that worthless Fellow Partridge." (II:5:94) The Captain, although

he is himself pretty worthless, manages to come out with what seems to be a plausible warning about virtue's need for circumspection. In the second reading, his speech is ironically undercut by the reader's knowledge that the apparently undeserving Partridge is actually innocent and deserving; this serves to focus the ironically self-pronounced censure against Captain Blifil. These ironies only serve to support the more direct statement; Allworthy's reply to the Captain's cavil is an important indication of Fielding's understanding of the nature of real benevolence:

"As to the Apprehension of bestowing Bounty on such as may hereafter prove unworthy Objects, because many have proved such; surely it can never deter a good Man from Generosity: I do not think a few or many Examples of Ingratitude can justify a Man's hardening his Heart against the Distresses of his Fellow-Creatures; nor do I believe it can ever have such Effect on a truly benevolent Mind. Nothing less than a Persuasion of universal Depravity can lock up the Charity of a good Man; and this Persuasion must lead him, I think, either into Atheism, or Enthusiasm; but surely it is unfair to argue such universal Depravity from a few vicious Individuals." (II:v:96f.)

Benevolence is both a natural property of the human condition, and a duty which must be carried out by an act of will. In the good man, it is practically instinctive; that is, benevolence is an active manifestation of an inward condition first, and a producer of results in its needy objects second. Benevolence transforms the agent; over-concern with the worthiness of its objects or recipients introduces an unwarranted note of judgment and reward. Mr. Allworthy is truly surrounded with the undeserving—Mrs. Deborah Wilkins, the Blifils, Thwackum, Square—and yet when Fielding causes him to withdraw his active benevolence from "undeserving", it usually turns out (as in the case of Partridge, and of Tom himself), that the "undeserving" are victims of maligning. This kind of complication or entanglement pre-

sents a puzzle for the reader; should Allworthy be more reserved, cautious, circumspect?

It does become evident, as the novel progresses, that the merely instinctive application of benevolent impulses is not enough—not because it may go to support the unworthy, but because it may be withdrawn unfairly from the truly deserving and needy. Fielding's presentation of Mr. Allworthy, then, is rather devious. At the outset of the novel, he is presented as a great man in his benevolence:

It was now the Middle of May, and the Morning was remarkably serene, when Mr. Allworthy walked forth on the Terrace, where Dawn opened every Minute that lovely Prospect we have before described to his Eye. And now having sent forth Streams of Light, which ascended the blue Firmament before him as Harbingers preceding his Pomp, in the full Blaze of his Majesty, up rose the Sun; than which one Object alone in this lower Creation could be more glorious, and that Mr. Allworthy himself presented: a human Being replete with Benevolence, meditating in what manner he might render himself most acceptable to his Creator, by doing most good to his Creatures. (I:iv:43)

This passage, a preeminent example of Fielding's sublime style, is undercut quickly by the following aside:

Reader, take care, I have unadvisedly led thee to the Top of as high a Hill as Mr. Allworthy's, and how to get thee down without breaking thy Neck, I do not well know. However, let us e'en venture to slide down together... (I:iv:43f [see also the chapter title: "The Reader's Neck brought into Danger by a Description..." &c.])

This is yet another of Fielding's characteristically complex, even devious, entangling passages. On one level, it initiates the comic circle of self-raillery: by undercutting his own seriousness by mocking the sublime tone of the passage, he ironically deprecates something of value, with the intention of reversal. This is not in itself so devious, since it is a movement frequently employed by Fielding, and is reasonably easy to recognize.

But it does invite a more complete acceptance of Allworthy's value than is altogether safe. On a more subtle and complex level, the passage is a well-masked warning to the reader not to take Mr. Allworthy as a complete, finished, positive exemplum. Should he fail to heed (or to discover) the warning, the reader may be trapped by certain inconsistencies in Mr. Allworthy's benevolence.

Sometimes it is instinctive and abstract; this tends to prevent him from seeing things as they are, and to render him more susceptible to hypocritical profession. His applications of benevolence in day-to-day life are not always well thought out, and sometimes they are positively mechanical:

When therefore he plainly saw Master Blifil was absolutely detested (for that he was) by his own Mother, he began, on that Account only, to look with an Eye of Compassion upon him; and what the Effects of Compassion are in good and benevolent Minds, I need not here explain to most of my Readers.

Henceforward, he saw every Appearance of Virtue in the Youth thro' the magnifying End, and viewed all his Faults with the Glass inverted, so that they became scarce perceptible. And this perhaps the amiable Temper of Pity may make commendable; but the next Step the Weakness of human Nature alone must excuse: For he no sooner perceived that Preference which Mrs. Blifil gave to Tom, than that poor Youth, (however innocent) began to sink in his Affections as he rose in hers. (III:vii:141)

The narrator seems to suggest that the effects of Compassion are common knowledge, and the reader is encouraged to assume that Compassion produces good results. But in the next paragraph, mechanical Compassion untempered with Prudence—for, although Fielding castigates falsely-glossed Prudence, he by no means undervalues the real thing—produces ludicrously inappropriate results. Mr. Allworthy's response to his sister's neglect of her son is not an alternative, but an inverted reflection, and it is more reprehensible because it brings about considerable injustice. The narrator

offers an "excuse", the "amiable Temper of Pity", but pity for injustice can never make a different injustice "commendable". That the "excuse" should probably not be accepted at face value is indicated by the narrative signal, "perhaps", which Fielding so frequently uses to introduce a proposition or explanation invested with only the slightest degree of probability or truth. The next step, the mechanical diminution of his love for Tom, is explained by human weakness, but not extenuated. In fact, the weakness of Allworthy's unreasoning compassion is exposed by the completion of the two-part mechanical operation.

Allworthy continues for most of the novel impressed by Blifil's hypocritical affectation of piety and virtue. Thus, when Blifil spitefully releases Sophia's pet bird, she is able to spot what lies behind his action, while Allworthy has no idea: "As to that malicious Purpose which Sophia suspected, it never once entered into the Head of Mr. Allworthy." (IV:iv:l62f.) So it goes. As Blifil's machinations progress, Allworthy is totally credulous, incapable of perceiving the manifold falsehoods commingled with truth and half-truth. Perhaps it is not entirely fair to reproach him with a lack of penetration which is so much easier for the reader to achieve, with the help of the author, yet it is clear that Fielding intends his reader to note Allworthy's lack of circumspection. Indeed, the narrator, in what appears to be a more than usually candid and trustworthy moment, "explains" Allworthy's diminishing affection for Tom by referring to the boy's new "Wantonness, Wildness, and Want of Caution"—he takes the opportunity to deliver a brief but significant "homiletic" message to his reader:

In recording some Instances of these, we shall, if rightly understood, afford a very useful Lesson to those well-disposed Youths, who shall hereafter be our Readers; For they may here find that Goodness of Heart, and Openness of Temper, tho' 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 to even the best of Men. They are indeed as it were a Guard to Virtue, without which she can never be safe. (III:vii:141)

This is all very well, but Fielding does not stop here. Instead, he extends his argument in a devious manner, clouding the issue so expertly that the reader must exercise considerable sagacity to separate the false prudence and circumspection from the real. The narrator, without perceptibly shifting his tone, shifts immediately into a series of arguments which advocate the dissimulation of virtue as a necessary part of prudence:

It is not enough that your Designs, nay that your Actions are intrinsically good, you must take Care they shall appear so. If your Inside be never so beautiful, you must preserve a fair Outside also. This must be constantly looked to, or Malice and Envy will take Care to blacken it so, that the Sagacity and Goodness of an Allworthy will not be able to see through it, and to discern the Beauties within. Let this, my young Readers, be your constant Maxim, That no Man can be good enough to enable him to neglect the Rules of Prudence; nor will Virtue herself look beautiful, unless she be bedecked with the outward ornaments of Decency and Decorum. And this Precept, my worthy Disciples, if you read with due Attention, you will, I hope, find sufficiently enforced by Examples in the following Pages, (III:vii:141; emphasis added)

What is the reader to make of this amazing passage? The narrator advocates that species of prudence which is most concerned with the appearance of virtue, and "warns" his readers that without especial care about appearances, they may run the risk of slander. Curiously enough, he defines the extent to which blackening of reputation succeeds by saying that "the Sagacity and Goodness of an Allworthy will not be able to see through it, and to discern the Beauties within." Allworthy's goodness is unquestionable, yet his sagacity (if we understand it in the terms defined above) has never really been established; indeed, Allworthy's powers of discrimination and penetration are called into question in the pages immediately preceding this passage by

the description of his self-blinded admiration for Blifil and the decrease in his affection for Tom. The narrator's recommendation, then, is so equivocal that there is plenty of room for the establishment of hypocritical practise, especially in the Maxim he recommends. The irony of the passage takes on a more resounding weight with the savagely deformed version of Fielding's Platonic apothegm concerning the irresistible attraction of unadorned, naked virtue, which is far from requiring outward ornaments.²³ The reader is given explicit instructions to look for examples of the Maxim offered in the remaining pages of the novel (which, in its terminology, implicitly refers back to the earlier use of the Platonic image in the Dedication); these examples will prove beneficial to young Readers. Of course, the examples provided are designed to show the reader the fallacy of the Maxim in the hypocritical prudence adopted by Blifil, Black George, Mrs. Fitzpatrick, Lady Bellaston, and so forth.

The line between hypocritical prudence and necessary circumspection is very fine, and Fielding's distortion of the Platonic image points out the moment of distinction: it lies at the instant when appearance becomes as (or more) important than reality. Nevertheless, although Fielding is very satirical about those characters on the wrong side of the line, he is very concerned about the neglect of the really necessary cautions.

Henry Knight Miller explains:

To set simplicity on its guard and make it a match for cunning was, of course, a primary theme of the Miscellanies and of Fielding's work in general. His desire was to inculcate "some degree of suspicion and caution in our dealings with mankind", so that the good-natured man might be on equal terms with the designing villains

²³ This is the completion of the allusive pattern which Fielding initiates in his Dedication, and which this enquiry discusses above, I.6.

who, in Fielding's favourite image, were like great pikes seeking to fatten themselves on unsuspecting gudgeons,²⁴

Fielding's strategy in presenting this problem to his reader involves an on-going process of misleading and correcting; by breaking the reader's habits of over-easy, insufficiently cautious judgment, Fielding refines his reader's sagacity, and nurtures the ability to distinguish between the affected, counterfeit appearance of virtue and its original.

Thus, when Allworthy banishes Jones, the reader is placed in a very tricky position. The narrator offers this commentary on the action:

The Reader must be very weak, if when he considers the Light in which Jones then appeared to Mr. Allworthy, he should blame the Rigour of his Sentence. (VI:xi:311)

Once again the reader's attention is drawn to the wrong area of concern. The harshness of Allworthy's judgment and sentencing might seem to be justified in terms of his view of the situation, but it is just this view which is called into question. This obfuscation is compounded by the ensuing passage, in which the neighbourhood condemns Allworthy, again for all the wrong reasons:

And yet all the Neighbourhood, either from this Weakness, or from some worse Motive, condemned this Justice and Severity as the highest Cruelty. Nay, the very Persons who had before censured the good Man for the Kindness and Tenderness shewn to a Bastard (his own, according to the general Opinion) now cried out as loudly against turning his own Child out of Doors....One thing must not be omitted, that in their Censures on this Occasion, none ever mentioned the Sum contained in the Paper which Allworthy gave Jones, which was no less than Five hundred Pounds; but all agreed that he was sent away Pennyless, and some said, Naked from the House of his inhuman Father. (VI:xi:311)

Fielding is up to his old trick, clearing Mr. Allworthy of one rather silly accusation, and forestalling charges of another kind by noting his munifi-

²⁴ Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies, p. 227,

cence, but leaving an unstated but implicit charge standing—Allworthy's myopic, credulous attitude, which has allowed Tom's errors to be inflated in his eyes to such a degree.

On the other hand, the reader must beware of judging Mr. Allworthy too harshly. Should he do so, Fielding has provided him with rather unpleasant company. Captain Blifil thinks his generosity (toward anyone but him) mad, if not downright criminal. Mrs. Western simply believes he is a fraud.

"Fear not," cries Mrs. Western, "the Match is too advantageous to be refused." "I don't know that," answered the Squire, "Allworthy is a queer B—ch, and Money hath no Effect o'un." "Brother," said the Lady, "your Politics astonish me. Are you really to be imposed on by Professions? Do you think Mr. Allworthy hath more Contempt for Money than other Men, because he professes more? Such Credulity would better become one of us weak Women, than that wise Sex which Heaven hath formed for Politicians." (VI:ii:277)

Mrs. Western's own way of making her way in the world is the Art of Politics²⁵, which colours her perceptions in accordance with her own limitations. Fielding has incorporated into her character a popular form of argumentum ad hominem commonly directed against Hobbes and his followers. Fielding describes the method of the materialist philosophers in their investigation of human nature as "searching, rummaging, and examining into... the nastiest of all Places, A BAD MIND." (VI:i:269) Again, Tom tells the Man of the Hill, "In Truth, none seem to have any Title to assert Human Nature to be necessarily and universally evil, but those whose own Minds afford them one Instance of this natural Depravity; which is not, I am convinced, your Case." (VII:xv:486) The argument recurs frequently, and receives perhaps its most cogent expression in an article in The Champion:

²⁵ An adjunct of the Art of Thriving; see above, II.2 (p. 95).

Every one who searches his own Rotten Heart, and finds not a grain of Goodness in it, very easily persuades himself, that there is none in any other. This he proclaims aloud, and all those under the same Predicament as readily subscribe to his Opinion. ²⁶

As is usually the case, then, in her judgment of Mr. Allworthy Mrs.

Western convicts herself (as the reader may perceive) by her own words.

But her attitude toward Mr. Allworthy is not anomalous. Many other members of the Thriving society view him in a similar fashion. Like the characters who surround Parson Adams in the closing chapters of Joseph Andrews, they simply cannot comprehend actions or attitudes not based on self-interest.²⁷ Allworthy's unusual response to his wife's death is a case in point:

He had likewise had the Misfortune of burying this beloved Wife herself, about five years before the Time in which this History chuses to set out. This loss, however great, he bore like a Man of Sense and Constancy; tho' it must be confest, 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 should never part with her more. Sentiments for which his Sense was arraigned by one Part of his Neighbours, his Religion by a

²⁶ The Champion (January 22, 1739-40), Henley, XV, 162. See also the Preface to the Miscellanies, I, 9; and Amelia VIII:viii, Henley, VII, 104. Henry Knight Miller, in his notes to the Miscellanies mentions earlier analogues in Plato, Montaigne, and the Spectator—see Henry Grove's essay on social benevolence, No. 588 (September, 1714), IV, 342ff. Grove praises Epicurus for his emphasis on beneficence, commenting, "In this school was Mr. Hobbes instructed in the same Manner, if he did not rather draw his knowledge from an Observation of his own Temper..." The argument also appears everywhere in the polemical writings of the Anglican divines against Hobbes, as, for instance, in Cudworth's location of the source of the Idols of the Atheists' Den in "their Bad Nature, Low-Sunck Minds, and Gross Immorality." The True Intellectual System, p. 886. Cf. Clarke's Boyle Lectures of 1705 (p. 136): "All Violence therefore and War, are plainly the Effects, not of natural Desires, but of unnatural and extreme Corruption. And this Mr Hobbs himself unwarily proves against himself, by those very Arguments, whereby he in-deavoured to prove that War and Contention is more Natural to Men, than to Bees or Ants." See also Battestin, The Moral Basis, pp. 55, 169.

²⁷ See above, III,3.

second, and his Sincerity by a third. (I:ii;35)

Fielding's affective pattern here should by now be rather familiar. He affords to Allworthy's attitude the tribute of the terms Sense and Constancy, but then, with an almost imperceptible shift of narrative attitude, the notion of Whimsy is introduced. The narrator manages to include in his account of Allworthy's whimsies both his rather sentimental but honest mourning, and his use of the traditional comforts of the Christian consolation. The essence of Allworthy's "whimsy" is, after all, the belief in a life after death; the reproach of his neighbours on all three fronts is yet another example of one of Fielding's favourite tricks—the pious censure of true belief and virtue by hypocritical, affected, and sometimes vicious characters. What does Fielding intend the reader's response to Allworthy to be? Ideally, the reader should disassociate himself from the view of the mob, the superficial censure of the sanctimonious or worldly neighbours, and such a negative movement tends reflexively toward a positive reaction.

This form of irony depends on a double vision, an author-created dichotomy between the dystopian society's point of view, and the ethically-founded view both implied, and also occasionally expressed didactically by the author. Fielding's novels are populated by a sort of hypothetical mob, whose wrong-headed ideas and heartless activities are intended to repel the reader. This mob, of course, is composed of people from every class, "Persons without Virtue, or Sense, in all Stations, and many of the highest Rank are often meant by it." (I:ix:59) Apparently, the mob within the novel is created as a foil for the aristocracy of good nature (good breeding); it may well have its original in certain elements in the society of Fielding's

day, but its function is one of practical antithesis, not simple satirical portraiture.

Ian Watt, however, has a curious interpretation of this phenomenon. He suggests that the Augustan taste for irony springs from a felt division between an elite "chosen few", "the men of wit and judgment and learning", and a mob consisting of "all those who threatened to subvert the established order, whether in politics or in literature or in manners."²⁸ The literal surface of meaning, Watt maintains, was directed to the latter, and the "elliptically and subtly" expressed "real" meaning was reserved for the esoterically competent, literate audience. Watt posits the existence of an actual large body of readers who, in their ignorance, perceive only the husk, while the seed of ironic meaning is the property of the illuminati:

For example, there were the people in the largest category, the literary mob, who could be persuaded that Gulliver was a real person, and they were provided with the most elementary kind of narrative interest in the simplest kind of prose—if you played the game well enough, you might even take in an Irish bishop. While those for whom Swift really wrote were allowed to savour simultaneously, not only the ironical interpretation of the fable—the book's real meaning—but also the literary skill with which the less percipient were being hoodwinked. The ironic posture, in fact, was both a formal expression of the qualitative division in the reading public, and a flattering reinforcement of the sense of superiority which animated one part of it..²⁹

There are both useful and troublesome aspects of Watt's analysis. There were readers who read Gulliver's Travels for the adventure yarn—the continued success of the first book as children's literature confirms this—but Watt does not take into account the fact the the hypothetical possibility of

²⁸ "The Ironic Tradition in Augustan Prose from Swift to Johnson", in Stuart and Georgian Movements, ed. Earl Miner (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1972), p. 163.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 164. Watt's notion of the technique of irony seems rather two-dimensional, in that he does not recognize the tradition of dissimulation which does not necessarily premise a vulgar, excluded reader, but proffers a variety of possible readings, some acceptable, others not.

certain misreading is a part of the fictional creation of the literary artist. It can hardly be argued that the impact of Gulliver's Travels is really derived from the enlightened reader's perception of the misreading of an ignorant multitude. Such a view of irony is mechanistic, almost Hobbesian, for it depends upon the exclusion of an actual dupe or gull from the ironic community of superior knowledge, which closely parallels Hobbes's notion of "sudden glory" at the perception of personal security and superiority in the face of another individual's discomfiture.

Fielding's adaptation of the ironic posture, at any rate, is deliberately transparent; he does not suggest, in his ironic "digs", that there actually could be creatures in his audience capable of misunderstanding his true meaning. The transparency of his double vision is intended to serve both as instruction for the uninitiated, and strenuous exercise for the already initiated.

That is, the novel is transparent—but it is by no means an easy transparency. As we have seen, a great deal of the fine detail of the plot does not come clear until the reader possesses it as a whole and reencounters it, and a vast array of social and ethical complexities are brought forward and left in the reader's hands, without explicit unravelling. Often Fielding includes examples from opposite ends of the spectrum, as when he places the cynical isolationism of the Man of the Hill in apposition to the myopic benevolence of Allworthy. The sagacious reader can learn a good deal from the Man of the Hill; one of the more obscure lessons concerns the way to understand the real nature of other characters. When the hermit questions Tom about his lack of horses and the nature of his journey, Tom seeks to reassure him: "'Appearances,' cried Jones, 'are often deceitful; Men some-

times look like what they are not.'" (VIII:x:449) Although Tom is referring to his own particular circumstances, the exclamation is ironically applicable to his host. Disillusioned with the world, he has withdrawn from it to preserve his own peace of mind. He explains:

"For however it may seem a Paradox, or even a Contradiction, certain it is that great Philanthropy chiefly inclines us to avoid and detest Mankind; not on Account so much of their private and selfish Vices, but for those of a relative Kind; such as Envy, Malice, Treachery, Cruelty, with every other Species of Malevolence. These are the Vices which true Philanthropy abhors, and which rather than see and converse with, she avoids Society itself." (VIII:x:450f.)

The Man of the Hill has considered the evidence of his misspent youth, and has come up with the wrong conclusion. The thinking human being must at some time come to terms with the problem of human malevolence, but the Man of the Hill has not done so—he is blocked, still locked into the problem. To justify his retreat from society, and to lend authority to his striking false gloss of "Philanthropy", he has conflated his own bitter experience with misappropriated snatches of classical philosophy:

"The Books which now employed my Time solely, were those, as well ancient as modern, which treat of true Philosophy, a Word, which is by many thought to be the Subject only of Farce and Ridicule. I now read over the Works of Aristotle and Plato, with the rest of those inestimable Treasures which Ancient Greece had bequeathed to the World.

These Authors, though they instructed me in no Science by which Men may promise to themselves to acquire the least Riches, or worldly Power, taught me, however, the Art of despising the highest Acquisitions of both. They elevate the Mind, and steel and harden it against the capricious Invasions of Fortune. They not only instruct in the Knowledge of Wisdom, but confirm Men in her Habits, and demonstrate plainly, that this must be our Guide, if we propose ever to arrive at the greatest worldly Happiness; or to defend ourselves with any tolerable Security against the Misery which every where surrounds and invests us." (VIII:xiii:470)

There is much that is fundamentally sound in the Man of the Hill's rejection of worldly values, but his philosophy mistakes "the greatest worldly Happi-

ness", which Fielding places in active benevolence. Moreover, his philosophy fails to take into account the precept that there exist sins of omission as well as sins of commission. The recluse abdicates his responsibility to others, and his motivation for retreat, Fielding suspects, is entirely selfish. This he makes abundantly clear in his lines on retreat from human society in the poem, "Of True Greatness":

O Thou, that dar'st thus proudly scorn thy Kind,
 Search, with impartial Scrutiny, thy Mind;
 Disdaining outward Flatterers to win,
 Dost thou not feed a Flatterer within?
 While other Passions Temperance may guide,
 Feast not with too delicious Meals thy Pride.
 On Vice triumphant while thy Censures fall,
 Be sure, no Envy mixes with thy Gaul.
 Ask thy self oft, to Pow'r and Grandeur born,
 Had Pow'r and Grandeur then incurr'd thy Scorn:
 If no Ill-nature in thy Breast prevails,
 Enjoying all the Crimes at which it rails.
 A peevish sour Perverseness of the Will,
 Oft we miscall Antipathy to Ill. ³⁰

Not satisfied with simply decrying the hermit's disgust with society, Fielding implies that retreat from society is often secretly motivated by the failure to prosper in it, a condition shared by the fox in Aesop's fable, who slandered the grapes he could not manage to reach.

Be this as it may, Fielding brings the miscellaneous program of censure of the Man of the Hill to its logical extreme with a demonstration of the moral bankruptcy of his isolationism. Hearing terrified screams nearby, Tom Jones rushes, unarmed, to the aid of a distressed woman, while the "good Man of the Hill" simply "sat himself down on the Brow, where, tho' he had a Gun in his Hand...with great Patience and Unconcern...attended the Issue." (IX:ii:497)

³⁰ Miscellanies, I, 21. The Aristotelian definition of man as a social animal (Nichomachean Ethics, I.7.1097b) is a commonplace in Anglican writings on the laws governing man.

Yes, appearances are deceitful. The Man of the Hill appears harmless, but in a negative sense his withdrawal from society is harmful. The reader must beware of certain kinds of evidence offered for approval—solid virtues can be mixed in a character with dangerous or destructive flaws, which themselves may be disguised as virtues. The double vision is especially tricky if interpreted too simply, in terms of clearly separated patterns of black and white. Nonetheless, Fielding requires of the reader a degree of forgiveness which is unusually liberal.³¹ When Tom Jones overpowers a would-be highwayman on the road to London, and learns of the desperate state of his affairs, he lets him go, an exhibition of mercy far beyond the measures dictated by society's laws.³² Fielding appears to leave the matter to the reader's judgment, but his presentation of the episode is quite devious. The narrator intervenes:

Our Readers will probably be divided in their Opinions concerning this Action; some may applaud it perhaps as an Act of extraordinary Humanity, while those of a more saturnine Temper will consider it as a Want of Regard to that Justice which every Man owes his Country. Partridge certainly saw it in that Light; for he testified much Dissatisfaction on the Occasion... (XII:xiv:680f.)

At first, it seems that the reader is being offered two options: which reader do you want to be? The choice is loaded, in that the humane and saturnine dispositions are here opposed, and the opinion of Partridge is aligned with the latter alternative. But, despite every reader's desire not to swell the ranks of the Partridges of the world, the choice is not easy. Because the

³¹ Fielding's thoughts on this matter are themselves quite complex. While he could cry out against "the impious severity of our laws" in the matter of debt (The Champion [February 16, 1739-40], Henley, XV, 206), he was quite tough-minded concerning misplaced tender-heartedness ("false compassion") toward the perpetrators of serious theft and violent crime (An Inquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, Henley, XIII, 109ff.

³² It is, of course, significant that Providence has provided Tom with precisely the right kind of highwayman—another instance of the 18th century literary convention of the "good highwayman".

highwayman's "Expressions of Thankfulness and Gratitude" and his tears are not the usual emotional vocabulary of the gentlemen of the road (a trade uncommonly vicious and violent in reality), and Partridge's suspicions must for once seem reasonable. But Tom's compassion for a man "by unavoidable Distress, driven, as it were, to such illegal Courses" is worthy; providentially it later appears that Tom's trust in this man's veracity is well-founded. The reader's potential indignation is turned away from the crime on the highway to the social injustices which forced the poor man to take up such desperate measures.

Fielding makes use of the treachery of Black George to test his reader's capacity for forgiveness. Much of what Tom suffers in his early years stems from his friendship for, protection of, and advocacy for the game-keeper, and yet Black George seizes the first opportunity to rob his benefactor, and this at a moment when he has been cast out into the world without a friend. The narrator draws attention to the wide variety of possible responses to this crime available to the reader by extending the analogy of the stage. Up to this point, this analogy has been used to indicate a similarity between the acting out of parts and the affected masquerade of the world.

Now it is radically extended to include the audience:

But as Nature often exhibits some of her best Performances to a very full House; so will the Behaviour of her Spectators no less admit the above Comparison than that of her Actors. In this vast Theatre of Time are seated the Friend and the Critic; here are Claps and Shouts, Hisses and Groans; in short, every Thing which was ever seen or heard at the Theatre Royal.

Let us examine this in one Example: For Instance, in the Behaviour of the great Audience on that Scene which Nature was pleased to exhibit in the 12th Chapter of the preceding Book, where she introduced Black George running away with the 500 l. from his Friend and Benefactor. (VII:i:325)

The narration continues, listing a wide range of alternative responses, from

abhorrence and loud, verbal abuse, to the complacent recognition of the ordinary. The onus of judgment is on the reader, but he is cautioned not to judge over-hastily or over-harshly. Here, once again, the description of activity is alienated and distanced by deliberately artificial narrative treatment. The reader is not encouraged to expend emotional resentment against Black George, but is encouraged to loath instead the kind of villainy he embodies, to regret the potential in human nature to act in such a way:

Now we, who are admitted behind the Scenes of this great Theatre of Nature...can censure the Action, without conceiving any absolute Detestation of the Person, whom perhaps Nature may not have designed to act an ill Part in all her Dramas....A single bad Act no more constitutes a Villain in Life, than a single bad Part on the Stage. The Passions, like the Managers of a Playhouse, often force Men upon Parts, without consulting their Judgement, and sometimes without any Regard for their Talents. (VII:i:327ff.)

The narrator, however, is not entirely frank in this analogy, since the coercion of the Passions is only a natural fact, and not an extenuation of submission to temptation—it is precisely when Judgment is not consulted that the Passions are untempered. Nor is the case of Black George really a matter of the compulsion of circumstances, for his theft does not seem to be a momentary slip, but, rather, a characteristic act. Still, Tom later pleads with his uncle Allworthy to spare Black George, and shows no reluctance to admit extenuating circumstances for the crime:

"The Temptation of such a Sum was too great for him to withstand; for smaller Matters have come safe to me through his Hand....Consider, Sir, what a Temptation to a Man who hath tasted such bitter Distress, it must be to have a Sum in his Possession, which must put him and his Family beyond any future Possibility of suffering the like." (XVIII:xi:969)

Mr. Allworthy, far more circumspect now³³, rebukes Tom's excessively "for-

³³ Mr. Allworthy's growth into circumspection starts with hearing Mrs. Miller's honest and compassionate advocacy for Tom, and is confirmed by

giving Temper" as an incentive to vice. Because Black George's crime is not merely a matter of the theft of property, as Tom rather innocently understands it, but involves the greater sins of treachery and ingratitude, Allworthy's insistence that mercy be tempered with justice is appropriate. However, as he himself has indicated, the serious part of the crime is not theft, and thus lies outside the reach of the law; a man can be condemned for theft, but there is no criminal statute to decree punishment for ingratitude and betrayal. This may well be the reason the narrator has attempted to forestall the reader's judgment: to indicate the difficulty in assigning a proper punishment to fit the crime.

Not one of the villains of the piece is visited with the penalties provided by law—Northerton escapes the gallows (as far as we know), neither Black George nor Blifil is transported, executed, or imprisoned, Lady Bellaston manages to keep her reputation. Yet each person is rewarded in a peculiarly appropriate manner. Fielding's villains all share the characteristic greed and mendacity which leads them to sacrifice the interests of others to their own gain. They all live to see what they have considered valuable taken from them. Lady Bellaston fails in her love affair, her blackmail, and her revenge; Black George is deprived of his nest egg and his multiple employment; Blifil's affected public character, his wealth and power, and his vicious satisfaction in cozening his brother are all taken from him. To confirm this pattern of the restoration of balanced justice, the villains fail on their own terms as well: if the Art of Thriving, by which they have lived, is aimed at a kind of happiness, the pangs of self-condemning guilt make the enjoyment of their ill-gotten gains less comfort-

the gradual unfolding of circumstances. Significantly, it is prompted by his heart, which (as is proper in a good-natured man) seems able instinctively to recognize injustice and desire to rectify it.

able, if not impossible. The providential design of the events in Fielding's novels supports this conviction on Fielding's part:

The Good or Evil we confer on others, very often I believe, recoils on ourselves. For as Men of a benign Disposition enjoy their own Acts of Benificence, equally with those to whom they are done, so there are scarce any Natures so entirely diabolical, as to be capable of doing Injuries, without paying themselves some Pangs, for the Ruin which they bring on their Fellow-Creatures. (XIV:vii:765f.)

The voice of conscience, Fielding assures his readers, is a manifestation of the natural proclivity of man toward good, an innate manifestation of natural law, which is suborned only with great difficulty:

However the Glare of Riches, and Awe of Title, may dazzle and terrify the Vulgar; nay, however Hypocrisy may deceive the more Discerning, there is still a Judge in every Man's Breast, which none can cheat nor corrupt, tho' perhaps it is the only uncorrupt Thing about him. And yet, inflexible and honest as this Judge is, (however polluted the Bench be on which he sits) no Man can, in my Opinion, enjoy any Applause which is not thus adjudged to be his Due. ³⁴

Blifil's sour, crabbed character, then, is not the result of determinism of personality, but stems from a series of conscious choices made in spite of conscience.

Mr. Allworthy's advocacy of the harsh penalties of the law in the case of Black George has troubled several critics. William Empson, for instance, suggests that the conflicting demands of justice and mercy create an irreconcilable ambiguity at the novel's end:

We are accustomed in Fielding to hear characters wriggle out of the absolute command of Jesus to forgive, comically bad ones, as a rule, and now the ideal landlord is saddled with it. The time must clearly come, if a man carries through a consistent program about double irony, when he himself does not know the answer; and here, as it should do, it comes at the end of the novel. ³⁵

³⁴ Preface, *Miscellanies*, I, 10.

³⁵ "Tom Jones", in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Tom Jones*, p. 45.

In countering Mr. Empson's evaluation, it will be noted that Allworthy is not really the static, positive exemplum indicated by the term "ideal landlord". Indeed, he is clearly subject to the same human tendency of faulty judgment which Tom himself must learn to overcome. Allworthy must relearn the art of charity. Empson concludes that there is a final note of irresolution in the matter; once more, however, the ambiguity he sees fixed in irony is not eternally locked in irresolvable doubleness, but instead the doubleness serves as the field of play in which irony moves from the surface to the implicit meaning.³⁶ Fielding designs Tom's recommendation of mercy to correct Allworthy's unwitting alignment with the tendency to favour justice over mercy, and, as well, to serve as a correction to the reader's own conception of mercy. The options are loaded, of course, for the crimes of treachery are black indeed—the circle of Hell reserved for traitors, according to Dante, is one of the lowest and most fiery. The reader is encouraged to desire that a rigorous punishment be accorded; if he does so, he will be in good company, that of the good Mr. Allworthy. But Tom's intercession reverses and corrects this movement. The reader is led to the discovery that he has made the wrong choice yet again. Discovering ourselves on the outside of an ironic community can be a chastening experience, one which parallels that of Mr. Allworthy when at last he discovers how greatly he has misjudged his good nephew.

Fielding, then, provides his reader with a picture of a self-aggrandizing, materialistic, thriving society, in which only a few individuals strive to maintain a life consistent with the demands of the Golden Rule,

³⁶ See the discussion of ambiguity in verbal irony, above (V.2).

and with the disposition of Good Nature. The reader is exposed to contradictions essentially similar to those in which Fielding's positive characters struggle. The act of reading is so manipulated by the author that---granting certain assumptions (viz., that the truth concerning ethical standards is to be found within each individual)---the reader must reject erroneous judgments, false values, and stock assumptions, in favour of more natural, Good-Natured ethical convictions. The double vision surveys both compassionate Good-Nature, and its reverse. The positive values are often recommended directly, but Fielding supplements this recommendation with an extensive program of undermining both the principles of the Thriving society, and the reader's tacit acceptance of these principles.

3. Love and Sex in the Human Marketplace

For myself I am no moralist: I consider that if you do what you want you must take what you get for it and that if you deny yourself things you will be better off for it than if you don't. But Fellows like Fielding...who pretend that if you are a drunkard, a lecher, squanderer of your goods and fumbler in placket-holes you will eventually find a benevolent uncle, concealed father or benefactor, who will shower you with bags of tens of thousands of guineas, estates, and the hands of adorable mistresses—those fellows are dangers to the body-politic and horribly bad constructors of plots. ³⁶

The exuberant carnality of Henry Fielding's hero has long been a thorn in the side for many critics. Over the years, readers have been shocked and incensed (or delighted) at the levity with which the subject of fornication is treated in Tom Jones. Critics object to the fact that the offense goes unpunished, and that the hero goes on to prosper as though he had never sinned.

What exactly was Fielding's attitude toward "illicit" sexual liaisons? Generally, it would seem, he viewed the whole business with amused tolerance—at least so far as the matter remained what today might be called "victimless" crime. In any case Fielding is usually more concerned with the plight of the victim than with the technical infraction of statute or regulation, and this applies to sexuality as much as to criminal law. Thus, his openness to sexual enjoyment between consenting adults does not constitute advocacy of unbridled license. A great many of Tom's difficulties, as Sir Walter Scott reminds us, come about as a result of his encounters with the ladies:

To the charge of bad moral influences, Fielding would probably

³⁶ Ford Madox Ford, Critical Works (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1964), p. 12.

have answered: "That the vices into which Jones suffers himself to fall, are made the direct cause of placing him in the distressful situation, which he occupies during the greater part of the narrative; while his generosity, his charity, and his amiable qualities, become the means of saving him from the consequences of his folly." ³⁷

Fielding's method of presenting his hero's troubles, however, emphasizes that the distressful situations which arise come about not from the sexual transgressions themselves, but from Tom's lack of judgment, his impulsiveness, his disregard for safety and propriety concerning the time and place of his indulgences. It is never given that he is punished for sins of the flesh. In fact, very often the "problem" of sexual morality is thrown out by Fielding as a sort of "red herring" or misdirection—the reader is temporarily distracted by the debate concerning the fine points of the problem, while other serious questions are posed almost surreptitiously, and left unanswered. This strategy is part of an elenctic campaign to combat the dehumanizing effect of the Art of Thriving on intimate, personal relationships.

As we have seen, Fielding was possessed of a double vision which discriminated between action consonant with an ethical ideal (expressed or contained generally by the term Good Nature), and action motivated by opinion, social expectation, or self-interest. The smile of the narrator signals his recognition and approbation of Tom's good heart, and his tolerant amusement at the difficulties into which he stumbles as he makes his way in society. If Fielding condones Tom's activities at all, it is in view of his Good Nature. Mrs. Miller, who seems to be one of Fielding's

³⁷ "Prefatory Memoir to Fielding", in Henry Fielding, A Critical Anthology, ed. C.J. Rawson, p. 235.

own spokesmen, pleads with Mr. Allworthy in these terms;

"I do not pretend to say that the young Man is without Faults; but they are all the Faults of Wildness and of Youth; Faults which he may, nay which I am certain he will relinquish, and if he should not, they are vastly over-ballanced by one of the most humane tender honest Hearts that ever Man was blessed with."
(XVII:ii:878)

Henry Knight Miller furnishes this formula to account for Fielding's attitude: "The sins of the senses are morally outweighed by a good heart."³⁹ This is not to imply that Fielding here proposes a relativistic morality, a system of checks and balances; rather, this, like all ethical considerations, is subject to the primacy of the law of charity.⁴⁰ Fielding has designed a complex and oblique method of indicating to his reader that time spent worrying about minor offenses might be better spent in considering other matters, especially the rigidly codified morality which cries out so loudly against infractions of the code of sexual conduct, but turns a blind eye and even encourages other more reprehensible conduct.

The dichotomy in this matter lies between the source of human law, with its primary directive to charity, and the ersatz, adventitious, utilitarian law protecting the Art of Thriving. Fielding termed it a division between the Art of Pleasing in Conversation and the Art of Thriving; he furnishes his reader with examples of marriages produced by each camp, and Allworthy, who married for love, is contrasted with such negative examples as the Quaker (VII:x) and Nightingale's father and uncle (XIV:viii). The

³⁹ Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies, p. 83. Compare this with the weight which Fielding places on Faults of Wildness and Youth in his Lucianic satire, A Journey from This World to the Next (p. 36); the narrator addresses Minos, the judge at Heaven's gate: "I confessed I had very freely indulged myself with wine and women in my youth, but had never done an injury to any man living, nor avoided an opportunity of doing good; that I pretended to very little virtue more than general philanthropy and private friendship. I was proceeding, when Minos bid me enter the gate, and not indulge myself with trumpeting forth my virtues."

⁴⁰ See above, II.4 and VI.1.

dystopian economy dictates the limits of the relationship between the sexes in terms of business transactions. In his "Modern Glossary", Fielding ironically defines the inversion of values which he also places in his novel's dystopian society:

LOVE: A Word properly applied to our Delight in particular Kinds of Food; sometimes metaphorically spoken of the favourite Objects of all our Appetites.

MARRIAGE: A Kind of Traffic carried on between the two Sexes, in which both are constantly endeavouring to cheat each other, and both are commonly Losers in the End.⁴¹

The first part of Fielding's program must be sufficiently clear: the legalistic questions of sexual behaviour which keep turning up in his novels are essentially false glosses on ethical questions. Sexuality is not a separate sphere of human activity requiring separate analysis and debate. Let us now examine an ironic movement in which concern expressed for a violation of sexual propriety masks a less obtrusive but blacker sin. The clandestine affair of Square and Molly Seagrim begins long before the reader is aware of it. With the first reading of the novel, the earliest references to the matter are completely masked, as the narrator declares that he is delaying the revelation of important information simply to suit the demands of the story (the ordo artificialis). The fortunate return of Tom Jones to the scene of the "Homerican" battle in the churchyard is "explained" with these deliberately opaque words:

This Accident was luckily owing to Mr. Square, for he, Master Blifil, and Jones, had mounted their Horses, after Church, to take the Air, and had ridden about a Quarter of a Mile, when

⁴¹ The Covent-Garden Journal, No. 4 (January 14, 1752), I, 156, Mrs. Western is Fielding's voice for the dystopian marriage; she prepares "some prefatory Discourse on the Folly of Love, and on the Wisdom of legal Prostitution for Hire" (XVI:viii:866) when Sophia rejects Lord Fellamar, and accuses her of possessing a "grovelling Temper" because she lacks Ambition in the field of marriage, (XVII:iv:888)

Square, changing his Mind, (not idly, but for a Reason which we shall unfold as soon as we have Leisure) desired the young Gentlemen to ride with him another Way than they had at first purposed. This Motion being complied with, brought them of Necessity back again to the Church-yard. (IV:viii:183)

An understanding of the narrative dynamics of the irony of second reading will alert the critical reader that something is afoot in this passage. The combination of "Accident" and the promise of delayed explanation is always a signal that something significant has occurred, though why it is significant remains to be seen. The narrator does not let the reader in on the secret of Square's involvement with Molly until the very moment Tom himself discovers it so dramatically. (V:v) But, with the benefit of this revelation, certain patterns in Square's earlier treatment become evident in retrospect, indicating a drastic change dating from the time Square must have first become involved with Molly. The (first-time) reader is given no explanation for this alteration:

But Square, who was a less violent, was a much more artful Man, and as he hated Jones more, perhaps, than Thwackum himself did, so he contrived to do him more Mischief in the Mind of Mr. Allworthy. (IV:xi:194)

Why does Square hate Jones more than Thwackum? That he is deliberately maligning Jones is obvious, although why it is in his interest to do so has not at this point become apparent.

The climax of this movement comes when Jones determines to part with Molly. When he arrives at the Seagrims' house, he is at first told that Molly was not at home; "but afterwards, the eldest Sister acquainted him with a malicious Smile, that she was above Stairs a-bed." (V:v:227) The initial prevarication and the malicious smile both go unexplained, and Tom goes up to find Molly's door locked. The narrator blandly states that Molly, "as she herself afterwards informed him, was fast asleep." To this

explanation he subjoins a wry speculation whether Molly's "Confusion" originated in the "Extremes of Grief or Joy", Tom declares his resolution to break off, and Molly bursts into histrionic tears and reproach. She acts out the role of the wronged woman until, suddenly, the curtain falls open and Square is accidentally revealed.

To emphasize the surprise of this turn of events, and to point out how greatly this development changes things, and to enrich the comedy of the moment with inappropriately serious-sounding language, the narrator exclaims:

I question not but the Surprize of the Reader will be here equal to that of Jones; as the Suspicions which must arise from the Appearance of this wise and grave Man in such a Place, may seem so inconsistent with that Character, which he hath, doubtless, maintained hitherto, in the Opinion of every one. (V:v:230)

This, of course, is doubly ironic; the reader quickly recalls that Square's wisdom and gravity are, at best, questionable, and the ground is prepared for the ironic mock-apology which follows:

But to confess the Truth, this Inconsistency is rather imaginary than real. Philosophers are composed of Flesh and Blood as well as other human Creatures; and however sublimated and refined the Theory of these may be, a little practical Frailty is as incident to them as to other Mortals. It is, indeed, in Theory only and not in Practice, as we have before hinted, that consists the Difference: For tho' such great Beings think much better and more wisely, they always act exactly like other Men. They know very well how to subdue all Appetites and Passions, and to despise both Pain and Pleasure; and this Knowledge affords much delightful Contemplation, and is easily acquired; but the Practice would be vexatious and troublesome; and, therefore, the same Wisdom which teaches them to know this, teaches them to avoid carrying it into Execution. (V:v:230)

Square's philosophy is a classic case of Affectation, as defined in the Preface to Joseph Andrews; furthermore, there is here the usual gap between knowledge and practice which is so important to Fielding's art of ethical comedy. Only after the reader has participated in the comic roasting of Square's folly does the narrator offer the promised explanation of the earlier incident, in which the philosopher turns back toward the churchyard:

Mr. Square happened to be at Church, on that Sunday, when, as the Reader may be pleased to remember, the Appearance of Molly in her Sack had caused all that Disturbance. Here he first observed her and was so pleased with her Beauty, that he prevailed with the young Gentlemen to change their intended Ride that Evening, that he might pass by the Habitation of Molly, and, by that Means, might obtain a second Chance of seeing her. This Reason, however, as he did not at that time mention to any, so neither did we think proper to communicate it then to the Reader. (V:v:230)

The revelation of Square "among other female Utensils", the high farce of the scene, and the narrator's ironic discussion of Square's character, all combine to mask what is really the most important aspect of the situation. All the narrator's public disapprobation is reserved for Square's carnal failing, but his real crime is not sexual at all. Rather, he is a hypocrite and a slanderer—he has taken every opportunity of injuring Tom by "giving a very bad Turn" (i.e., explaining Tom's actions with false glosses of carnal self-interest) to all Tom's benevolence to the Seagrim family. (IV:xi:195) How grave this crime appeared to Fielding may be seen in his frequent equation of defamation with murder:

Vice hath not, I believe, a more abject Slave; Society produces not a more odious Vermin; nor can the Devil receive a guest more worthy of him, nor possibly more welcome to him, than a Slanderer. The World, I am afraid, regards not this Monster with half the Abhorrence which he deserves...yet it is certain that the Thief looks innocent in the Comparison; nay, the Murderer himself can seldom stand in Competition with his Guilt: For Slander is a more cruel Weapon than a Sword, as the Wounds which the former gives are always incurable. (XI:i:567)

Square's denunciation of Tom to Mr. Allworthy, ironically, is applicable in its entirety to Square himself. Furthermore, Square's own speech about the value of "Good Fame" (V:v:233) provides evidence that he knows exactly what he is doing, and thus furnishes the standard for his own conviction.

The reader has been misdirected purposefully; Fielding's narration,

typically, is delivered in such a way that the reader is brought to align himself with society's stock moral standards. Upon careful consideration, the reader may well discover that he has devoted more delighted censure upon Square's embarrassed licentiousness than justified opprobrium upon his hypocrisy and slander.

It is significant that the loudest outcries against sexual improprieties come from the mouths of hypocrites and rascals. The imbalance of moral concern is sometimes brought more into the open, as in the case of the Merry-Andrew's reply to his master's accusation of "Wickedness" when he is caught making love to a kitchen-maid. The master pontificates about the moral degeneracy of the age, affecting the moral authority of a proprietor of a puppet show which teaches its audiences moral lessons. His hypocrisy is exposed, however, as the Merry-Andrew cries indignantly:

"D—n your B—d, you Rascal," says he, "I have not only supported you, (for to me you owe all the Money you get) but I have saved you from the Gallows. Did you not want to rob the Lady of her fine Riding-Habit, not longer ago than Yesterday, in the Back-lane here? Can you deny that you wished to have her alone in a Wood to strip her, to strip one of the prettiest Ladies that ever was seen in the World? and here you have fallen upon me, and have almost murdered me for doing no Harm to a Girl as willing as myself, only because she likes me better than you."
(XII:viii:649)

Blifil too is another such moralist. When he informs against Tom, who has entered the bushes with Molly for "some wicked Purpose", Blifil phrases his report with characteristically affected language of moral probity:

Blifil knew Jones very well, tho' he was at above a hundred Yards Distance, and he was as positive to the Sex of his Companion, tho' not to the individual Person. He started; blessed himself, and uttered a very solemn Ejaculation.

Thwackum express'd some Surprize at these sudden Emotions, and asked the Reason of them. To which Blifil answered, "he was cer-

tain he had seen a Fellow and a Wench retire together among the Bushes, which he doubted not was with some wicked Purpose." As to the Name of Jones, he thought proper to conceal it, and why he did so must be left to the Judgment of the sagacious Reader: For we never chuse to assign Motives to the Actions of Men, when there is any possibility of our being mistaken. (VI:x:258)

Fielding has not left the reader with any such possibility; Blifil's concealment of his knowledge of Jones' identity unavoidably suggests that his concern is not with the "wicked Purpose", but with the use to which Tom's embarrassment may be put. The carefully cultivated appearance of morality again serves to screen seriously flawed motivations.

The concern of Fielding's negative characters, in the matter of the code of sexual morality, is always with the appearance of virtue. This imbalance is well described in the ironic account of one landlady's concern that there be no "Whores in Rags" about her premises:

Not that I would intimate, that such strict Chastity as was preserved in the Temple of Vesta can possibly be maintained at a public Inn. My good Landlady did not hope for such a Blessing.... But to exclude all vulgar Concubinage, and to drive to drive all Whores in Rags from within the Walls, is within the Power of every one. This my Landlady very stiffly adhered to, and this her virtuous Guests, who did not travel in Rags, would very reasonably have expected of her.

Now it required no very blameable Degree of Suspicion, to imagine that Mr. Jones and his ragged Companion had certain Purposes in their Intention, which, tho' tolerated in some Christian Countries, connived at in others, and practiced in all; are however as expressly forbidden as Murder, or as any other horrid Vice, by that Religion which is universally believed in those Countries. (IX:iii:500)

The landlady's hypocritical concern is that the fornication which takes place in her establishment should be of a high class. Her "Ladies" are "virtuous" simply because they do not "travel in Rags". The manifest hypocrisy of this attitude is conflated with the "Christian" sanctions—inoperative and ineffectual—against fornication, theoretically a "horrid

Vice", equally abhorrent as murder, By this time, however, the sagacious reader must have learned to recognize that these outcries against victimless sexual contacts are invariably fraudulent, serving only as a mask to disguise the other compelling considerations of the Thriving society.

That there are real limits to sexual license is indicated in several places in the novel. Tom's sense of honour leads him to feel responsible for Molly's condition and way of life, and for that of Lady Bellaston, until he learns that he is not actually to blame for initiating them into a career of harlotry. He tells his friend Nightingale:

"Lookie, Mr. Nightingale," said Jones, "I am no canting Hypocrite, nor do I pretend to the Gift of Chastity, more than my Neighbours. I have been guilty with Women, I own it; but I am not conscious that I have ever injured any—nor would I to procure Pleasure to myself, be knowingly the Cause of Misery to any human Being."
(XIV:iv:755)

Here, at last, is a succinct declaration of a standard of sexual conduct consistent with Good Breeding and the Art of Pleasing in Conversation. Moreover, it is not introduced without preparation; Fielding has already offered negative examples and inverted versions. The most important part of this discourse, perhaps, is his correction of Nightingale's misunderstanding when he considers propriety more troublesome than the loss of love for Nancy—Tom tells him, "It is the Loss of you, and not of her Reputation, which afflicts her." (XIV:vii:766)

The narrator, in the episode of Square's courtship of Molly Seagrim discussed above, explains Sqaure's caution in a manner which reflects Tom's declaration to Nightingale in a distorting mirror:

Among other Particulars which constituted the Unfitness of Things in Mr. Square's Opinion, Danger and Difficulty were two. The Difficulty therefore, which he apprehended there might be in corrupting this young Wench, and the Danger which would accrue to his Character on the Discovery, were such strong Dissuasives, that it is probable,

he at first intended to have contented himself with the pleasing Ideas which the Sight of Beauty furnishes us with. (V:v:230)

This commentary is set in a certain, recognizable language; Fielding uses Square's own affected deistical cant to explain his unprincipled timidity. He is unwilling to corrupt Molly, not because of sympathetic, charitable, or moral considerations, nor yet in respect for the Eternal Fitness of Things, but because of the "Unfitness" of the possibly dangerous consequences to himself. Once he has been assured that "the Fortress of Virtue had already been subdued", he considers that the risks are sufficiently diminished to allow him to "give a larger Scope to his Desires". (V:v:231) The effect of this passage, which satirizes an attitude unfortunately more common than Tom's, is to prepare the reader for the correction which follows nine books later. In addition, Fielding subjects the reader to a program of subtle suggestion, by which he is encouraged to view Tom's lack of the "Gift of Chastity" in a fashion which is either too condemnatory or too accepting. When Tom tells Nightingale what he believes, many preceding events of the novel are explained, implicitly and retroactively. The truly sagacious reader must learn to read backwards, to weigh very carefully the assumptions which govern his interpretation, and to beware of judgments which seem clear and easy, but are only orthodox.

The question of the nature of love is handled in a manner which is not entirely dissimilar. The reader is presented with a generally satirical series of examples of what love is not, and Fielding directs him to look within for the valid alternative. The way in which the issue is approached resembles the strategy Fielding employs in Joseph Andrews, when the fundamental structural question asked of the characters (and of the

reader) is, "What is truly valuable?"⁴² The resemblance also extends to the most frequent kind of answer offered by characters living in the dystopian society Fielding portrays in Tom Jones. When love interrupts the "rational" pursuit of what the world considers valuable—wealth, power, and rank—it is considered a form of lunacy. As in Joseph Andrews, it is only when love is "imprudent" that the Stoical concept of the need to moderate passion, and of love as a "Distemper", is introduced into the arguments of Fielding's characters. The narrator frequently appears to agree with this prudential stoicism, as in his account of the way Sophia betrays the fact that she loves Jones:

For Love may again be likened to a Disease in this, that when it is denied a Vent in one Part, it will certainly break out in another. What her Lips therefore concealed, her Eyes, her Blushes, and many little involuntary Actions betrayed. (V:ii:218f.)

Again, he describes Sophia's "relapse" into love:

In the Affair of Love, which out of strict Conformity with the Stoic Philosophy, we shall here treat as Disease, this Prone-ness to Relapse is no less conspicuous. (IV:xii:198f.)

How seriously is the reader meant to take this kind of declaration? Certainly, the analogy of relapse is accurate, but Fielding by no means agrees with the entire philosophy. In fact, his beliefs are diametrically opposed, for it is everywhere apparent that the feeling here is of the utmost importance in his scale of human values. Fielding makes this clear in a number of ways, including the little gallery of love-matches and parental disapprobation in the last part of Tom Jones. Not the least telling of his strategies is the ironic device of placing the language of the Stoical attitude toward love in the mouth of a character obviously dedicated to the Art of Thriving. The language of Temperance (like the language of Grace or the language of

⁴² See above, II.2 and III.2,

Prudence in Joseph Andrews, or Captain Blifil's glib use of Scriptural and Methodist language in his attempt to get Allworthy to disinherit Tom [II:ii:78ff.]), simply serves as a camouflage for plain self-interest. (Cf. VII:vii:342f. and XVI:v:851)

When Sophia's aunt notices her love-struck behaviour, she expresses her "stoical" attitude in a comic interchange with her brother, Squire Western:

"Pray, Brother, have you not observed something very extraordinary in my Niece lately?" "No, not I," answered Western; "Is any thing the Matter with the Girl?" "I think there is," replies she, "and something of much Consequence too." "Why she doth not complain of any Thing," cries Western, "and she hath had the Small Pox." "Brother," returned she, "Girls are liable to other Distempers besides the Small Pox, and sometimes possibly to much worse." (VI:ii:274)

The Squire's tenderness is aroused, but when she tells him that the "Distemper" is not physical, but emotional, he flies into a rage. Moments after telling his sister that he loves Sophia "more than his own Soul", he is swearing that he will disinherit her, "turn her out of Doors, stark naked, without a Farthing", because she has fallen in love "without acquainting me!" Obviously, there is no room for matters of mere sentiment or girlish fancy in the important matter of marriage. Squire Western's attitude is made even clearer in his satisfaction at the financial arrangements involved in the proposed marriage of his daughter to Master Blifil.

Because the dystopian Art of Love involves getting the most out of the market transaction in which men and women are bound together in marriage, it is a form of the Art of Politics, which strives to convince others that they ought to sacrifice their own interests to those of the politic practitioner. The narrator comments on the marriage market while "clearing" the age of a charge of lewdness, obliquely leaving another implicit charge—

perhaps more grave—still standing:

There is not indeed a greater Error than that which universally prevails among the Vulgar, who borrowing their Opinion from some ignorant Satyrists, have affixed the Character of Lewdness to these Times. On the contrary, I am convinced there never was less of Love Intrigue carried on among Persons of Condition, than now. Our present Women have been taught by their Mothers to fix their Thoughts only on Ambition and Vanity, and to despise the Pleasures of Love as unworthy their Regard; and being afterwards, by the Care of such Mothers, married without having Husbands, they seem pretty well confirmed in the Justness of those Sentiments; whence they content themselves, for the dull Remainder of Life, with the Pursuit of more Innocent, but I am afraid more childish Amusements, the bare Mention of which would ill suit with the Dignity of this History. In my humble Opinion, the true Characteristick of the present Beau Monde, is rather Folly than Vice, and the only Epithet which it deserves is that of Frivolous: (XIV:i:743f.)

If the Beau Monde refrains from the vicious exercises of love intrigue, it is from no moral compunction, but from material ambition and vanity—hardly a sympathetic apology for the age, in spite of the ostensible tone of the passage. The age may be prevailingly free of certain vices, but it is heartless. Its frivolity consists in taking what is most serious far too lightly. Once again, the act of clearing the Beau Monde of sins of commission leaves standing the implicit accusation against sins of omission.

The preeminent symptom of this frivolity can be seen in the identification of an individual with his or her market value. In attempting to arrange a match between Sophia and Lord Fellamar, Lady Bellaston reveals her frivolous, thriving sensibility with several expressions indicating her literal identification of person and market value:

"O brave!" cries the Lady, "My Cousin hath you, I find."—"Upon my Honour," answered he, "I wish she had: for I am in Love with her to Distraction."—"Nay, my Lord," said she, "it is not wishing yourself very ill neither, for she is a very great Fortune, I assure you she is an only Child, and her Father's Estate is a good 3000 l. a Year." (XV:ii:786f.; emphasis added)

Lord Fellamar's infatuation with Sophia is dangerous, a "Distraction"

or mental imbalance, almost lunacy in its detachment from material interest—but Lady Bellaston assures him that Sophia's fortune justifies any adventitious attraction of her person.

A few lines later, Lady Bellaston employs an analogy which continues her characteristic confusion of personal identity and material possessions:

Here the Lady affected a Laugh, and cried, "My dear Lord, sure you know us better than to talk of reasoning a young Woman out of her Inclinations. These inestimable Jewels are as deaf as the Jewels they wear..." (XV:ii:788)

Lady Bellaston considers—or, at least, finds it politic to declare to the opposite sex—that women operate on a level beyond (or beneath) the reach of reason. As such, she suggests to Lord Fellamar, they are easy prey for practitioners of the Art of Politics—a suggestion which indicates her own prowess in political-social manipulation. The extent of Lady Bellaston's devotion to this Art is further indicated by two aspects of her portrait by Fielding: first, she completely submerges the humanity of others in her consideration of their function in terms of her own interest, viz., their usefulness to her ends:

The Reader then must know, that the Maid who at present attended on Sophia, was recommended by Lady Bellaston, with whom she had lived for some Time in the Capacity of a Comb-brush... (XVII: viii:904; emphasis added)

The second aspect of her characterization is the Political language Fielding consistently uses to describe her as she endeavours "to maintain one constant Imposition on others"—the Art of Politics turns the world into "a vast Masquerade, where the greatest Part appear disguised under false Vizors and Habits." ⁴³ It is worth remembering that Lady Bellaston chooses

⁴³ "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men", Miscellanies, I, 155. See above, II.2.

a masked ball as the occasion for seducing Tom.

The Art of Thriving encourages its aspiring practitioners to consider love as an opportunity which ought to be seized for whatever kind of profit it can afford. The reader is practically invited by the narrator (in one of his more disingenuous moments) to condemn Tom for stupidity because he has not had designs of this sort on Sophia.

Tom behaved to Sophia with no Particularity, unless, perhaps, by shewing her a higher Respect than he paid to any other. This Distinction her Beauty, Fortune, Sense, and amiable Carriage, seemed to demand; but as to Design upon her Person he had none; for which we shall at present suffer the Reader to condemn him of Stupidity; but perhaps we shall be able indifferently well to account for it hereafter. (IV:v:166)

But this posture continues, and in the next chapter the narrator asserts:

There are two Sorts of People, who I am afraid, have already conceived some Contempt for my Heroe, on Account of his Behaviour to Sophia. The former of these will blame his Prudence in neglecting an Opportunity to possess himself of Mr. Western's Fortune; and the latter will no less despise him for his Backwardness to so fine a Girl, who seemed ready to fly into his Arms, if he would open them to receive her.

Now, though I shall not perhaps be able absolutely to acquit him of either of these Charges; (for Want of Prudence admits of no Excuse; and what I shall produce against the latter Charge, will, I apprehend, be scarce satisfactory;) yet as Evidence may sometimes be offered in Mitigation, I shall set forth the plain Matter of Fact, and leave the Whole to the Reader's Determination. (IV:vi:171)

Tom stands accused, and the narrator rather hesitantly defends him—against what? Against the charge of lacking that aggrandizing Prudence which we have already encountered, and the charge of lacking a certain so-called "manliness", or "Spirit", or (more accurately) sexual opportunism.⁴⁴ The narrator's tone implies that the charges will probably stick, and he affects a belief that imprudence is one of the worst of sins, and that those readers

⁴⁴ Fielding defines "Temperance" as "Want of Spirit" and "Gallantry" as "Fornication and Adultery" in the Modern Glossary; see above, III.2.

who despise Jones for "Backwardness" will not be satisfied with any mitigating evidence. But the groundwork for the reader's rejection of this false gloss of prudence has already been laid, and it is obvious that the evidence offered in the second matter will be satisfactory if the reader agrees with Fielding that it is no crime. When the narrator states that the "Whole" will be left "to the Reader's Determination", this whole includes not only the validity of the charges against Tom, but also the validity of considering these actions criminal at all. By indicating what kind of prudential and sexually opportunistic thoughts did not occur to Tom—taking advantage of an innocent girl for his own benefit—the reader is obliquely informed concerning the distance between some rather common social expectations, and the way one ought to behave.

Mrs. Western, the "philosopher", also treats love explicitly as a matter of politics, and her version of love takes a form markedly similar to the mannered contortions and machinations of political life at court. For Blifil, love is merely a means of laying his hands on a dowry, with a little pleasure thrown in as a bonus. Nightingale is unable to reconcile his love for Nancy with the demands of the Thriving world, and is on the point of giving it up when Tom Jones steps in to help him.

Fielding furnishes his reader with these (and other) examples of what love is not, and what marriage ought not to be. There is some degree of positive reinforcement available in Fielding's description of Tom's and Sophia's feelings, but the greater part is left to the reader. Fundamental to this strategy is the assumption that every human being, at some level of emotion or consciousness, knows what real love is, or at least has the almost instinctive capability to recognize insufficient definitions of

love when clearly exposed.

The process is underlined by Fielding's use of the ironic technique of exclusion of a hypothetical reader whose opinions are obviously or demonstrably absurd:

[Sophia] now first felt a Sensation to which she had been before a Stranger, and which, when she had Leisure to reflect on it, began to acquaint her with some Secrets, which the Reader, if he doth not already guess them, will know in due Time,...Her Sensations, however, the Reader's Heart (if he or she have any) will better represent than I can... (IV:v:168f.)

As to the present Situation of her Mind...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. (IV:xiv:208)

This pointed exclusion of that hypothetical, subhuman group of readers without hearts strengthens the reader's confidence in his own ability to determine what is going on inside the lovers' minds and hearts, and at the same time Fielding's concept of love is implicitly experienced by the reader in the sympathetic pleasure taken in the lovers' happiness.

This is *maieusis* in action. The reader is encouraged to compare the behaviour of characters acting on false premises concerning love, with his own feelings or convictions—to look within to discover the ultimate authority in the matter of human love.

4. Some Concluding Observations: Maieusis

Whose Assistance shall I invoke to direct my Pen?

First Genius; thou Gift of Heaven; without whose Aid, in vain we struggle against the Stream of Nature. Thou, who dost sow the generous Seeds which Art nourishes, and brings to Perfection. Do thou kindly take me by the Hand, and lead me through all the Mazes, the winding Labyrinths of Nature. Initiate me into all those Mysteries which profane Eyes never beheld. Teach me, which to thee is no difficult Task, to know Mankind better than they know themselves. Remove that Mist which dims the Intellects of Mortals, and causes them to adore Men for their Art, or to detest them for their Cunning in deceiving others, when they are, in reality, the Objects only of Ridicule, for deceiving themselves. Strip off the thin Disguise of Wisdom from Self-Conceit, of Plenty from Avarice, and of Glory from Ambition. Come thou, that hast inspired thy Aristophanes, thy Lucian, thy Cervantes, thy Rabelais, thy Moliere, thy Shakespeare, thy Swift, thy Marivaux, fill my Pages with Humour; till Mankind learn the Good-Nature to laugh only at the Follies of others, and the Humility to grieve at their own. (XIII:I:685f.)

With this invocation to Genius, Fielding's narrator gives his readers a manifesto of his creator's aesthetic. He has assumed the role of the maieutic artist. By isolating and attacking Affectation wherever it exists, he essays to remove the mists of false knowledge from his reader's eyes. By applying the elenchus to his reader's responses, he has attempted to stimulate in him a catharsis of humility, which will prepare him for the requisite inward turning toward the source of ethical understanding. Just as his Muse, his religious and ethical inspiration, has led him through the labyrinth of human nature, so too does he lead his reader through the mazes of the novel. Fielding has learned to know mankind better than they know themselves, and his maieutic discourse endeavours indirectly to communicate, to readers whose intellects are more dimmed by their social environment than they can realize, valuable truths about how man ought to live.

Ultimately, then, Fielding's narrator has acted as a sort of dialectical negative, furnishing with his elenctic campaign directed at the reader a movement antithetical to the affected particularities of a corrupt, dystopian society. The synthesis Fielding accomplishes is in the reader's own heart. At its simplest level, the ironic discourse of Fielding's novels takes the form of dialogue, a pattern of proposed definition of terms or values together with a questioning response. When this question extends well beyond the book itself into the reader's own life, it can be termed a dialectic, especially if the effect on the reader is to stimulate the birth of an ethical insight similar to the author's own.

For Fielding, laughter serves to ridicule and discharge the folly of unethical, vicious, self-serving, self-deluding behaviour. Fielding's narrative persona has placed the many varieties of Affectation on the stages, as it were, anatomizing them, and demonstrating that they are things to reject with laughter. But the great problem for Fielding, as for any maieutic artist, is to focus the reader's attention on the positive experience of the ethical absolute (or religious conviction). Søren Kierkegaard observes:

The ethicist is...ironical enough to perceive that what interests him absolutely does not interest the others absolutely; this discrepancy he apprehends, and sets the comical between himself and them, in order to be able to hold fast to the ethical in himself with still greater inwardness. Now the comedy begins. The judgment of man upon such an individual will always be: for him there is nothing that is important, differing in this from men in general, for whom so many things are important, aye, nearly everything, but nothing absolutely important. And why not? Because for him the ethical is absolutely important.⁴⁵

This, then, is the truth of the double vision, the real dynamic and origin of the joco-serium, the admixture of jest and earnest. All the authors whom

⁴⁵ Concluding Unscientific Postscript, p. 451 (emphasis added).

Fielding has named in his invocation have been accused of mocking everything of value, and considering nothing to be important—but compelling arguments in each case can be made, demonstrating the existence of an earnest behind the jest, which the reader must come to understand indirectly or parabolically. Fielding's iconoclastic, sharply critical irony, and his severely reductive satire, have inspired many attacks for their apparent lack of moral coherence and failure to respect society's moral standards. But Fielding's daimonic conviction is absolute, and renders mere relative, externally-acquired or arbitrarily-imposed ethical strictures meaningless. His comic writing, in its most mature form, encourages the reader to make the same inward turning, to recognize the natural potential for good within, to eliminate from his own life the self-deluding, false morality of the Art of Thriving, and to lead a life consistent in every way with the universal principles of Good Nature.

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