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Dissertation for the degree of Bachelor of Philosophy.

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'FIELDING'S WOMEN'

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PREFACE.

I wish to acknowledge those who have given me assistance in the preparation of this Dissertation.

The guidance of my supervisor, Mr. John Fowler, has been invaluable. Mr. David Parker kindly gave me advice on format. Miss Jeanette King arranged for me to have access to material held by The Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington. Mr. A.G. Bagnall and his staff allowed me to use rare editions of Fielding's works.

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## CHAPTER 1.

### INTRODUCTION.

Last year, when I was studying Tom Jones, I found that if traditional approaches were used, Fielding did not seem to have achieved the aims outlined in the Dedication. Either his acknowledged masterpiece was flawed at its moral centre, or the book had been misinterpreted. I tried various methods of analysis, and found that neither Tom, nor Allworthy, nor the usual combination of Allworthy and Sophia in an allegorical sense, nor the meaning of the plot, was satisfactory, but if Sophia was central, then his intentions had been successfully achieved. This discovery led to the present study, the aim of which is to determine to what extent Woman is central to Fielding's art, as a whole.

Fielding's work can be divided into three main streams, the journalistic, or polemic, in which he speaks in his own person, the farces or burlesques, which are usually directed against specific objects, and the social comedy, which includes the novels. I shall confine myself mainly to the third category, which is obviously the most fruitful field of investigation. Various questions arise. For example, what effect does Fielding's characterization of women have on structural or thematic unity? Is there any significant continuity in the method of characterization between the drama and the novels? Is it possible to trace any type of evolutionary process in Fielding's characterization of women? If woman is



central in Fielding's art, then is there a closer relationship between Richardson's Pamela, and Clarissa, and Fielding's Sophia and Amelia, than has generally been supposed? This last question would lead far beyond this Dissertation, but I think that Richardson must be included in my preliminary discussion, if I am to achieve a reasonably-balanced perspective.

The approach to Fielding through Cervantes, Scarron, Lesage and Marivaux, and to Richardson through his activities as a letter-writer for young ladies, does not explain why both men became novelists at approximately the same time, or why both centred their moral values in female characters. The assumption that there is a clear-cut division between Fielding the dramatist and Fielding the novelist, that the former was only an "apprenticeship" for the latter, is as much an over-simplification, as the suggestion that Richardson served his "apprenticeship" in correspondence. The antecedents of their art are to be found more in drama than in earlier prose-fiction, and the prototypes of their women, on the stage. Clarissa, for example, was foreshadowed by Rowe's The Fair Penitent, and by Charles Johnson's Caelia.

Women, in Elizabethan drama, were, on the whole, approached in a serious mood of romance. There were obstacles to be overcome, one of which was the inconstancy of the hero, but this was looked upon as a temporary aberration from which he might be expected to recover. There had always been an element of sex-antagonism as well as sex-attraction in drama, and by 1628, in Shirley's The Witty Fair One,



this had become a game in which it was expected that the woman should protect herself. The "platonie mode", introduced by Queen Henrietta Maria in an attempt to elevate courtly love-making, paradoxically encouraged the development of the love-duel, for it led to a conversational game, played in accordance with a complicated system of rules, which tended to pit male against female. Women found it flattering at first, and continued to use it as a weapon even after 1660, when they had become as amused by the mode as the men. Before the Civil Wars, a tradition of love-game plays, written in many cases by the Cavaliers, paved the way for the development of the type, after the Restoration. The reaction against Puritanism, with a concomitant distrust of "enthusiasm", contributed to the mood of the drama.

The court of Charles 11 was divided into a conservative element, represented by Sir William Killigrew and his generation, and a group of wealthy and titled young men, who took delight in jeering at the values they represented. The latter, because they enjoyed royal favour, set the fashion in drama, originated the philosophy which permeated it, and wrote many of the plays themselves. Rochester was the most formidable of the group. Drama had a genuine correspondence with the court society on which it was based, and was in this sense, realistic. The mercenary view of marriage, and the punitive treatment of children already existed in embryo, long before the rise of the middle classes influenced the stage.

Restoration dramatists saw man as a rover, who was not intended by nature to be restricted. The



task of the hero was to prove to the heroine that she had little chance of subjecting him as a "servant", or of snaring him as a husband. He tried to persuade her that she was missing all that was worthwhile in life, by remaining virtuous. Her impulse to keep her freedom seemed to be almost as strong as the hero's, and she fought him on equal terms.

'In our Age the face of Love is very much alter'd. Our Gallants have wisely considered Love has been made so common, trite, and out of fashion, that, though there is something belonging to the thing that is very useful and much affected, yet the damn'd Name is hateful; and both Sexes have agreed, though their designs be never so sensual, to disown the scandal of Love, and call it Gallantry, Mirth, and Raillery.'

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The attitude seemed to be that marriages failed in the majority of cases, and that if love did exist it would be stifled in the marriage-bed.

From 1675 - 1687, comedy became more cynical, and the hero changed from a gallant to a cuckold-maker. Woman no longer fought on equal terms. Risqué scenes began to appear in profusion immediately after 1670, and in five or six plays between 1671 and 1674, copulation takes place off stage. Wycherley's The Country Wife, confirmed the trend. Horner made the greatest impression, and was an effective instrument for separating the women who pretended virtue, from those who were virtuous. His assumed impotence allowed the ladies to commit adultery

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by John Harrington Smith, in The Gay Couple In Restoration Comedy, Harvard, 1948, p.42.



without fear of losing their "reputations". The love-game had disappeared by 1678 and the play of sex-intrigue dominated the stage. For example, Leamerd's The Rambling Justice, showed a husband who had discovered his shame, being compelled to apologize to Sir Generall for having been "horned".

Wycherley and Dryden had used satire to expose the viciousness of the social scene, but the fashion they set degenerated into husband-baiting and the glorification of successful adultery. The change in the character of the Rake, who is explicitly stated in more than one play, to have an active case of the "pox", may be related to the change in the life of his original model, Rochester, who died at the age of thirty-three, of syphilis.

The love trial had become vicious. Manly's revenge, at the end of the Plain-Dealer was the public exposure of Olivia's lust to a gathering of the fashionable world assembled for the purpose, and it included jewels offered to her as the price of a prostitute's hire. In another play the heroine enticed her lover to climb up to her room, and arranged an "engine" of ropes in which he hung all night.

Iniquity in general has not lost much ground. There's Cheating and Hypocrisie still in the City; Riot and Murder in the Suburbs; Grinning, Lying, Fawning, Flattery, and False-Promising at Court; Assignations at Covent-Garden Church; Cuckolds, Whores, Pimps, Panders, Bawds, and their Diseases, all over the Town.

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The prevailing taste did not wholly extinguish "sympathetic" comedy, in which the audience could admire chastity and constancy. The romantic play anaesthetized the audience's sense of reality by non-contemporary time and place, but there were dramatists who used a local scene, and showed, for example, a virtuous woman withstanding the Rake's assault, and shaming him into reformation. In the process she aroused admiration for herself and her sex. The unity of tone was further compromised by a growing tendency to use a double plot in the same play, the one cynical, the other "sympathetic". Shadwell opposed the prevailing taste in his Preface to The Sullen Lovers, as early as 1668, and attacked another favourite assumption of Restoration Drama in Bury Fair, by showing Bellamy addicted to a country life. In the 1680's dramatists began to show heroines who were free from affectation, and in 1689 D'Urfey brought a hero who was an anti-rake, and a heroine who was an anti-coquette, onto the stage.

Restoration Drama was threatened by two forces, the emotional, and the ethical. There was growing opposition to the form of the drama by a section of the audience known as "the ladies", but their objection was not wholly on moral grounds. They had not reacted to the original rebellion against the "Platonic mode", probably because the heroine met the hero on equal terms, but the advent of the cuckolding play had given the gallant ascendancy, and had exposed the frailties of their sex, in a manner which was not calculated to win their



approval. The dramatists were faced with a dilemma, for it was impossible to meet the demands of both the gallants in the pit and the ladies in the boxes. Only Congreve, looking back to Etherage, succeeded in pleasing both, in The Old Bachelor, 1693. The ladies began to win the battle of taste when they took a prominent part in the damning of D'Urfey's Don Quixote Part Third.

The ladies were reinforced by forces operating outside the theatre. Professor Krutch has shown that the Societies for the Reformation of Manners began to influence the stage in the nineties. By 1693, the examination of a play by the Master of the Revels was no longer a mere formality, although he seems to have confined himself to verbal corrections. The attacks of the moralists grew in intensity, but the most influential was Jeremy Collier. He looked upon all dramatists as the favourite children of Satan, and his ultimate desire was the abolition of the theatre.<sup>1</sup> He insisted not only upon justice being meted out to the rogues, but upon decorum. The profanity of common conversation should be abolished from the stage, and no clergyman should be portrayed, except in a flattering manner. Comedy was no longer to expose the vices of mankind, but to pretend that they did not exist. He enlisted the support of "the ladies" and called upon them to boycott immodest plays, or to be suspected of immodesty themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Bernbaum, The Drama of Sensibility, 1958, p.79.



'Can this stuff be the Inclination of Ladies? Is a Reading upon Vice so Entertaining, and do they love to see The Stews dissected before them? One would think the Dishonour of their own Sex, the Discovery of so much Lewdness, and the treating of Human Nature so very Coarsely, would have little Satisfaction in't.'

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The appearance of the so-called "Sentimental Comedy" at the turn of the century was a theatrical revolution, marking the end of unity of tone within each genre, and of the deep-seated conviction that human nature was not to be trusted. The revolution reflected a change in society, for because the theatres could no longer depend on the protection of a court faction, it was essential that they should win popular support. The doctrine that a love of one's fellows was natural to mankind, had been stressed in the Restoration period by Latitudinarian divines, who opposed the views of Hobbes. "Benevolence" made its appearance in comedy, the "pathetic" was no longer excluded, nor were virtuous characters confined any longer to romantic drama.

Restoration stereotypes survived in the period between 1693 and 1710, but the expectations of the audience were felt to be inhibiting by the dramatists. The process of change was slow, but it is possible to generalize. Almost without exception, love affairs were entangled with economic considerations, often with the terms of marriage settlements, and calculations of income played an important part in courtship. The social rank of

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Collier, Short View, p.284, quoted by John Harrington Smith in The Gay Couple in Restoration Comedy, 1948, p.180.



important characters was most frequently that of the lower levels of the nobility and the upper levels of the squirearchy, while the merchant was usually a butt, outwitted by the gallant. After 1710 playwrights began to take the side of the merchants openly and unequivocally. Shifting social relationships were aggravated by the frenzied gambling which culminated in the South Sea Disaster. Quick wealth and poverty resulted in the overthrowing of traditional class and economic distinctions in English life, while disillusionment in speculation made many turn back to life in the country.

The new era was heralded by Gay's Beggar's Opera. In the period between 1728 and 1737 comedies departed radically from the older pattern of the love chase, and often included social commentary rather than love intrigue as their central theme. The tone of the plays changed from the earlier political and social complacency to an aggressive criticism. The most influential figure was undoubtedly Gay, but the leadership "was devolving upon a humorist of genius, Henry Fielding".<sup>1</sup> In the same period there was a rapid development of the tendency to emphasize the emotional. Stock characters inherited from Restoration Drama almost disappeared, and the tension between satire and sentimentalism, in the opinion of purists, finally destroyed comedy. This aesthetic objection has been expressed by Pope in The Dunciad, but as the whole of our modern society is based on the changed attitude, we are unlikely to mourn the death of the "gay couple".

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Bernbaum, The Drama of Sensibility, 1958, p. 142.



England did not have a revolution like France, so there has not been the same interest in tracing social commentary in literature, but a similar pattern of thought existed in both countries. Gay and Fielding were not merely re-working Renaissance theory which stated that persons of every rank are entitled to respect, providing they fulfil the obligations of that rank, they were asserting the merit of humble persons, and showing by analogy that the same virtues and vices existed in both high life and low. The old narrow preoccupation with one class had been displaced by a broad spectrum of society, but there was no suggestion of egalitarianism. They did not wish to abolish differences in rank, but to promote the cause of virtue within each rank.

Fielding was a transitional figure in literature. His

comedies, farces, burlesques, and ballad operas, in their forms and in their themes, provide an epitome of the dramatic activity from 1728 to 1737. With a facility rarely surpassed in England, he produced twenty-odd plays in the nine-year span, some of them brief and inconsiderable farces, obviously turned out in the short pauses of an active career, but others memorable dramatic expressions of the age. He was intensely in touch with his times: the contemporaneity of his plays is at once their merit and their limitation, the source of their vigor and their value as records of London life in the age of Walpole, Pope, and Hogarth, but the source also of the barrier to intelligibility that now limits the number of their readers to special students of the age. Fielding followed contemporary theatrical fashions and at the same time modified them: 1

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<sup>1</sup> John Loftis, Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding, 1966, p.114.



He repeatedly satirized mercenary attitudes towards marriage, did not attack the merchants, and his central theme was the comparative virtue of the country as opposed to the viciousness of London society. The Modern Husband was his first unpromising venture into the new era, stylization had given way to natural dialogue, and he was more interested in the analysis of character, motive and environment, than in the love chase. The audience, conditioned by inappropriate expectations, and converted by Collier and the reformers to the policy of glossing over unpleasant reality, rejected it, as they were later to reject The Universal Gallant, and to a certain extent Amelia, for the same reasons.

Fielding sailed between the Scylla of the rejection of psychological realism by the audience, and the Charybdis of the rejection of political realism by Walpole's government, until his career as a dramatist was wrecked on the Licensing Act of 1737. He and other playwrights were forced into careers such as journalism, and this in turn created the readers who welcomed his novels and those of Richardson. Fielding's novels reflect the "satiric" and "sympathetic" strains, while Richardson's examination of the human heart is related to "sentimental" drama. Both are moralists, both expose social evil, and neither is dispassionate. Both must have believed that the reinstatement of woman as a virtuous person, rather than as an object of lust, or a thing to be manipulated by avaricious parents, was the most pressing need in literature. Both re-worked the love-duel, using an exemplary woman as protagonist and both defined their concept of virtue through the



heroine. Pamela, Clarissa, Fanny, Sophia and Amelia are anti-coquettes, honest in their emotions, free from affectation, but are not idealized platonic figures. They are all associated with the values of the country, and opposed to the vices of the city. Tom and Mr. B are both Rakes, with enough natural goodness to make their reformation possible.

Richardson's love-duel in the first two volumes of Pamela shows a Rake who has all the odds in his favour, defeated by a helpless, but virtuous girl. Because she was a servant, he was also re-interpreting the theme that virtue and vice are not necessarily confined to any one class, already used by Gay and Fielding in the drama. Fanny and Sophia were also the helpless victims of intended rape. Both were using the virtue and innocence of their heroines to strip the false glamour from the attempts of the males. Richardson's Lovelace was too attractive to be wholly effective, but Fielding's noble lord is a model of his kind. He is a cardboard character, with the "pox" who is incapable of seducing the reader. Instead of the Rake with syphilis, who is eventually welcome in the heroine's bed, we have the story of Mrs Bennet, who was raped by a Rake, then discovered by her husband through the infection which had been transmitted. Mr. Bennet's grief led to his death, and the tragic destruction of all she held dear. Richardson attacked the belief that a reformed Rake would make the best husband, by allowing Clarissa to die. Both created heroines who were the victims of mercenary parents, but Clarissa arouses more sympathy than



Sophia. Both dramatized love in marriage thus attacking the cuckolding drama, but Amelia is more convincing than the Pamela of the third and fourth volumes. Clarissa found herself in a situation which must have seemed unlikely to occur, but Amelia faced the problems of any attractive woman in London society, and the plans of seduction were probably those in current use.

Richardson and Fielding covered the whole range of attitudes which they, and other moralists, had found offensive on the stage. They did not create the new image of Woman, but they gave her life and popularity. Each represented a different aspect of the theory of benevolence, but together they epitomize the finest thought of their age. Preference for one, or the other, will always be based on the criteria used, but it should be remembered that their methods were designed for genres which are normally considered separately. Richardson is governed mainly by the tragic Muse, and Fielding by the comic, although there is no unity of tone in either. There is comedy in Richardson, whether it is intentional or not, and there is tragedy in Fielding.

Secondly, Fielding's women were influenced by the tradition he had inherited. His art looks back to the Renaissance ideal of the poet as the supreme instructor of youth and age, the interpreter and arbiter of nature, the master in manners. His sense of decorum would have made it offensive to probe the human heart like Richardson, or to give material reward and punishment in the manner of Richardson and Defoe. The tradition included not only the legacy



of Greek and Roman literature, but the medieval complex of chivalry, idealized romantic love, superstition, and the influence of the Church. The Church attempted to absorb the pagan literature by Christianizing it, but the secular emphasis was strengthened by the rise of the city states in Italy, and the powerful patronage of the merchants. The problem was, should a work of art be judged purely on aesthetic grounds, or were its moral purposes of greater importance? There was also latent conflict in the differing aims of Greek and Christian heroes. The aim of the former was to live a sane, reasonable, heroic life in this world, with the approval of the gods, and at times their co-operation. The aim of the latter was to live a humble, self-abnegating, chivalrous life in this world or "vale of tears", while he fixed his hopes on God, his liege lord and his lady. Generally, modern works of art had a more explicitly didactic purpose than their predecessors in the ancient world.

The work of Le Bossu illustrates the effect of the attempt to reconcile the two ideals. His authority was classical, for he deduced his epic theory from Aristotle's formulae for tragedy and extracted the details from the Iliad, the Odyssey and the Aeneid, but he reconciled it with Christianity by transforming the epics into elaborate parables. Fielding was influenced by him in plot structure, in "machinery", although he developed his own theory, and in the importance of the fable. He uses the parable, to a certain extent, in the biblical names in Joseph Andrews, in the allegory of Tom Jones, and in the



general concept of the good-hearted pilgrim in search of wisdom. Amelia is both morally and structurally-related to the Aeneid.

The rise of Science added to the implicit conflict, culminating in the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns, towards the end of the Seventeenth-century. The compromise eventually reached in France was not acceptable in England, where it was believed that literature could be improved by scientific investigation. This theory suggested that each individual should re-judge the rules, or at least evaluate the authority. Thus Fielding was not content to accept the conventions of comedy as he found them, but adapted it as a medium through which he could expose the follies and vices of society. He started from simple "humour" or stock theatrical types, and evolved increasingly complex psychological studies. When he became a novelist, his theory of the comic prose epic was partly a scientific investigation of the form, and partly a method of freeing himself further from the restrictions of the comic drama.

Thirdly, Fielding's women, like Richardson's, define the author's concept of Christian virtue. Perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on the influence of latitudinarian divines on Fielding, but his belief in natural goodness does seem similar to theirs. This

constant emphasis upon the human potential for perfection, if only the corrosive pressures of corrupted custom, education, and example, could be removed, afforded a convenient rationale for Fielding's social satire.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin C. Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art; A Study of Joseph Andrews, 1967, p.17.



Contemporary views were rational, mystery-dispelling, and tolerant. For example, Addison said that men should not be judged according to their beliefs or professions, but according to the demonstrated goodness of their lives. He said that it was generally owned that "there may be salvation for a virtuous infidel (particularly in the case of invincible ignorance), but none for a vicious believer".<sup>1</sup> Isaac Barrow depicted the good man as hero, in his sermon "Of Being Imitators of Christ", and the sum of his goodness was chastity with respect to himself and charity with respect to society. Whilst this climate of opinion seems to be derived from the Latitudinarians, it is as well to remember that the Cambridge Platonists of the seventeenth-century, had also exalted the natural moral sense of man. To act aright, they taught, "we need but look within and read the natural law written upon the heart".<sup>2</sup> Although Fielding was a man of his age, I think that his emphasis on natural goodness, his insistence on good works, and on the tempering of justice by wisdom and mercy, was more the product of his own experience as a man and as a magistrate, than of any theory.

Fourthly, although the contents of Fielding's library have no direct influence on his women, they are of interest, as an indication of his taste. He had practically no novels in his possession. His collection of drama, both ancient and modern, was

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<sup>1</sup> Addison, in The Spectator, number 459.

<sup>2</sup> Basil Willey, The Eighteenth-Century Background, 1962, p.61.



remarkably complete, which supports the assumption that he was a serious and well-informed student of the stage. His non-dramatic literature was equally complete, and his collection of Renaissance literature included French as well as English works. He owned an impressive collection of histories, both ancient and modern, perhaps an indication of why, in his novels, he always refers to himself as an historian. The modern histories included a large number about the Civil Wars in England in the seventeenth-century, and from the presence of works representing both points of view, it would appear that he was impartial. His collection of literature concerned with metaphysical speculation indicates the same catholic taste and breadth of view. The large number of books on travel indicate interest in this field. Of the classical authors, Lucian appeared to be his favourite, and with Cervantes and Swift, formed "the great triumvirate".<sup>1</sup> A full list of his books is contained in a pamphlet held by the British Museum.<sup>2</sup>

Fifthly, it is common knowledge that Sophia and Amelia owe much to Charlotte Cradock. Unfortunately, little is known of the real women in Fielding's life. Soon after leaving Eton he met Miss Sarah Andrew, "a slip of a girl only fifteen years old". Her parents and brothers were dead, so she was heir to the family wealth. Fielding settled in Lyme Regis as her third suitor.

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Wilbur L. Cross, The History of Henry Fielding, Vol. 1, p. 46.

2

A copy is printed in an Appendix to Ethel M. Thornbury's Henry Fielding's Theory of the Comic Prose Epic, reissued in 1966.



After he reached Lyme Regis, the situation grew more and more desperate owing to the closer guard kept over Miss Andrew. At last nothing remained but an abduction - a not uncommon way of getting a wife in the eighteenth century, - which was carefully planned by Fielding and his man, probably with the consent of Miss Andrew. So on a Sunday while Miss Andrew was on her way to church towards the eastern edge of the town, Fielding and his man Lewis attempted to carry her off by force. Mr. Tucker rescued her only after a good beating in which he was bruised and perhaps maimed. <sup>1</sup>

Fielding was bound over to keep the peace. The experience was useful in plot and may have influenced character. Amelia's escape, which seems so melodramatic to the modern reader, may have been inspired by the incident.

Edmund Fielding's financial difficulties soon gave his son a taste of poverty, and threw him among all sorts and conditions of men. His experiences might have made him cynical, had he not met Charlotte and Catherine Cradock, the reigning beauties of Salisbury. He vacillated between the two girls at first, but soon fell desperately in love with Charlotte, writing all manner of verses to her, extolling her beauty, her tender heart and her understanding. He loved her until her death, and was haunted by her memory. He drew her portrait in Tom Jones, as she was in her youth, and in Amelia commemorated her maturity. He said that she was "one from

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<sup>1</sup> Wilbur L. Cross, The History of Henry Fielding, 1963, p.51. I am indebted to W.L. Cross for all information about the real women in Fielding's life. Dr. Dudden's deductions from the novels seemed to me to be too speculative.



whom I draw all the solid comfort of my life". Mrs. Fielding never recovered from the grief and illness which followed the death of their first daughter.

To see her daily languishing and wearing away before his eyes, was too much for a man of his strong sensations; the fortitude of mind, with which he met all the other calamities of life, deserted him on this most trying occasion.<sup>1</sup>

In 1744, he took her to Bath for the last time. There it is said that she caught a fever, and died in her husband's arms. The period of his most intense grief lasted for nearly a year.

Fielding married his housekeeper, Mary Daniel, in 1747, and a son was born three months later. She was twenty-six years old and lived until she was eighty-one. Her portrait, painted by Francis Cote after Fielding's death, still exists. A "very fine drawing," it is said, "of a very ugly woman".<sup>2</sup> Lady Louisa Stuart remembered Lady Mary's views.

His biographers seem to have been shy of disclosing that after the death of this charming woman he married her maid. And yet the act was not so discreditable to his character as it may sound. The maid had few personal charms, but was an excellent creature, devotedly attached to her mistress, and almost broken-hearted for her loss. In the first agonies of his own grief, which approached a frenzy, he found no relief but from weeping with her; nor solace, when a degree calmer, but in talking to her of the angel they mutually regretted. This made her his habitual confidential associate, and in process of

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<sup>1</sup> According to Murphy, Fielding's first biographer, quoted by W.L. Cross, Vol. 11, p.11.

<sup>2</sup> W.L. Cross, Vol. 11, p.60.



time he began to think he could not give his children a tenderer mother, or secure for himself a more faithful housekeeper and nurse. At least this was what he told his friends; and it is certain that her conduct as his wife confirmed it, and fully justified his good opinion. <sup>1</sup>

Miss Andrew and Charlotte influenced Fielding's heroines directly, but Mary Daniel did not, as far as is known. I think that she probably influenced his attitudes, for example, his belief that goodness can be found in all walks of life, and that virtue is not necessarily equated with chastity. The marriage was as socially-inept as that of Mr. B and Pamela, and had it taken place only because of the pregnancy, and entirely without affection, it is unlikely that it would have proved durable. Although it took place seven years after the publication of Pamela, it may suggest a more complex attitude towards Richardson's theme, than has generally been allowed, a greater tolerance of the unequal marriage, but a more searching analysis of motive.

Finally, in order to clarify the aims and intentions of the author, before embarking on the main study of Woman in the plays and in the novels, I shall attempt to differentiate between Fielding's "realism" and Richardson's "realism". "Realism" is one of those vague generalizations which are misleading rather than descriptive. If something is real, we know it is there, by the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by W.L. Cross. He qualifies it by saying "there was, however, only one child". See Vol 11, p. 62.



evidence of our senses, or we accept its existence on the authority of those who have proved their theories to our satisfaction. There is another type of realism which is abstract. We know that we feel certain emotions, for example, and assume that the emotions of others are somewhat similar. Or we may move onto a more metaphysical plane. We do not know that something is real, but because we believe that it is, it has validity in our own minds. there are two types of reality in this sense. The emotions of an individual as dramatized by an author, will be accepted by us if we can relate them to our own experience or imagined experience. Thus they will be real to some, artificial to others. This I would suggest is psychological realism. The second is a general, social realism, which is wider in scope, and dramatizes the life of a community, a country, or even the world. The historian, when he uses his sources with care and judgment, achieves this type of realism. The recorder of contemporary events will, from the moment the event has ceased to happen, move away from reality, and will almost inevitably distort by interpretation. The acceptance of this type of realism will also depend upon the point of view of the reader. Because more is known about recent events than those in the more distant past, the contemporary historian has a difficult task of selection. What I am suggesting is that Richardson is dealing with the first type of realism, Fielding with the second, in its more difficult form, for he has to extract universal truths from a vast complex of contemporary people and events. He only seems less real than Richardson, because society has



changed more than human nature, and because we are post-Freudian enough to find the inner world of the mind congenial.

Richardson's method is not more "realistic" than Fielding's. The epistolary form is inherently clumsy. Neither Pamela nor Clarissa could have recorded events and even conversations in such minute detail, without the aid of Shorthand. The stress of their confinement, the constant threat of rape or discovery, makes the thought of their carefully-constructed letters improbable. Pamela, the servant-girl, has a style which is indistinguishable from that of her "superiors". It is true that Mrs. B educated her, but it is hardly likely that she could have been such a highly-successful teacher. Richardson's art requires a suspension of disbelief, an acceptance of the conventions which he used, and the reader who is prepared to grant him this, will be richly-rewarded. The impression of realism is greater in Clarissa than in Pamela, because he has overcome the problem of the single point of view, and because some of the features of his morality which offended Fielding, have been removed by the absence of material reward for "virtue". Richardson seems more realistic than Fielding, because we can respond to the situations of the heroine, we can share her emotions as they occur, and we see events through her eyes. In Fielding, we are never allowed to become emotionally-involved, and feel little concern even when Sophia is about to be raped by Lord Fellamar. Richardson is so effective in Pamela that it is only by an effort of will that we can detach ourselves in order to trace the



development of Mr. B, a necessary prerequisite if we are to find his marriage to Pamela acceptable. From Richardson's point of view, his method became dangerous in Clarissa, when Levelace was found to be a sympathetic hero. Clarissa is a heroine whose "tragic flaw or error" in leaving home, led to intense suffering, until she found at last that she must give her life to preserve her integrity. Yet the tragic hero is as artificial a creation as his comic counterpart, and the difference lies in the amount we are allowed to know.

Fielding's "realism" is achieved through the deliberate use of the artificial. He was impressed neither by appearance, nor by words, and he believed that the emotions were also likely to be deceptive. His aim is to keep the judgment of the reader unimpaired, and in order to achieve this, he uses a distancing effect. The emotions of the characters are always expressed overtly, for example, they throw themselves on the ground, or tear their hair. When greater depth is required, he uses symbolism, for example Sophia's muff. The minor characters are classified into lawyers, parsons, ladies' maids, or innkeepers, for example, then subdivided into components of their class, or a linear method may be used, each new innkeeper's wife, for example, adding to the description of the class. Leading characters are more complex, but only in the sense that they have a greater number of "humours" than the minor characters. There are few "rounded" characters in Forster's sense of the word. <sup>1</sup> This is no doubt deliberate, for the more

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<sup>1</sup> E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, 1963, pp. 81 - 5.



human the creation, the more likely he is to do violence to the author's intention, as has already been suggested in the case of Lovelace. Generally speaking, the vitality of the characters is derived from their creator, they imitate life rather than live it. Yet taken as a whole, the result is a remarkably detailed and faithful portrait of contemporary manners. What Fielding has done is to abstract "realism" from an inchoate mass of material, and to analyze it in an orderly, comprehensible form. The reader is never allowed to forget that the action is controlled by the author, and that although he is in a privileged position and knows more than the characters, he will only know what is necessary, at that particular time. The men and women of the stage and of the novels act out his ideas and speak his words, but if we recognize the expression of abstract and universal truths, if we accept the analogy between the world and the stage, then the illusion has a greater validity than the limited vision of our own lives.

The motivation behind Fielding's art is as serious and as moral as Richardson's. Because their work stems from careful observation of life, "realism" is a common factor, a meeting place between two different approaches. The heroine is usually relatively static, while the men interact with her or around her. Fielding presents the evidence, weighs it and makes allowances for extenuating circumstances, with a tolerance which must have been unusual in his age. He accepted human frailty, and the many difficulties which lie in the path of those who pursue true virtue, but at no time does he deny the ideal. Richardson is less tol-



erant and more openly didactic. Fielding's method of defining abstract qualities is more varied. He magnifies negative examples in the farces, burlesques and political satires until they become absurd, and in the social comedy uses a few positive, and a variety of negative examples, who deviate on either side of the mean.

Thus "realism" is not confined to the social comedy. For example, "greatness" is defined negatively in Jonathan Wild. The Heart-frees are present, it is true, but are too passive to act as an effective alternative. Shamela is also negative, in the sense that it is purely a corrective for what Fielding considered to be the misuse of the word "virtue" by Richardson. The "positive" qualities, which are characteristic of the social comedy, are fully present in Joseph Andrews, although it has the same starting point.

Because even the most brilliant of the "negative" works was limited in scope, a fact which was recognized by Fielding in the Introduction to Joseph Andrews, and because Woman becomes dominant only in the social comedy which includes the great novels, I suggest that an understanding of her role is important in any interpretation of his art.



CHAPTER 11.WOMAN IN THE DRAMA.

A: Fielding's drama before The Modern Husband.

Some follies /scarce perceptible appear  
 In that ju/t Gla/s, which /hews you as you are.  
 But Farce /till claims a magnifying Right,  
 To rai/e the Object to the Sight,  
 And /hew her In/ect fools in /tronger Light.<sup>1</sup>

The animated puppets of the early plays can scarcely be described as characters, except perhaps for Bellaria in The Temple Beau, but it is worth considering the role of Woman, both as the object of Fielding's most vicious attacks, and as the focal point for moral values which were to be defined and re-defined in later works. He often dramatized the position of Woman as a victim of the marriage market, or castigated her as a source of corruption, or pitilessly exposed her motivation, for example, by drawing analogies between the behaviour of servants and that of "their betters".

Fielding's second play, Love in Several Masques is conventional and imitative, but it is closely-related to abuses in society. Helena is merchandise

To be /old! to be put up at Auction!  
 to be di/po/ed of, as a piece of Goods,  
 by way of Bargain and Sale!



Lady Trap.

Neice, Neice, you are dealt with, as a piece of rich Goods; you are to be disposed of at a high Price; Sir Positive understands the World, and will make good Conditions for you...

According to Lady Trap, it is impudent to wish to marry the man she loves,

I wou'd be a/fhamed, was I a young Woman, to be even thought to have an indecent Pa/fion for a particular young Fellow.<sup>1</sup>

Helena does not wish to take a fool into the family.

Sir Positive.

Do you mean Sir Api/h, Minx? Do you call a Baronet a Fool, and one of /o ancient a Hou/e? Hu/fy the Simples and the Traps are the two anciente/t Hou/es in England..<sup>2</sup>

Sir Apish is obviously a descendant of Jonson's La Foole. The maid Catchit is an early example of the greed and disloyalty of the personal servant, and it is her intrigue which arouses Mr. Malvil's absurd jealousy. The symbolism of clothes which disguise Merital as a parson, and Helena as a young man, and the evils of the masque, are closely-related to the central conflict between the corruption of the city, and the comparatively virtuous country, which is explored through the character of Lady Matchless.

Lady Matchless, because she is rich, beautiful and a widow, is pursued by the beaux. Wisemore is her alter ego, the self which she betrayed when she left the country for the pleasures of the town. Books have been his companions,

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<sup>1</sup> Act 11, scene v, p.22, Love in Several Masques, London, printed for John Watts, 1728.

<sup>2</sup> Act 11, scene vi, p.23, op. cit.



a Society preferable to that of this Age. Who wou'd converſe with Fools and Fops, whilſt they might enjoy a Cicero or an Epiſtetus, a Plato or an Ariſtotle?

He had already rejected London,

I have ſeen Hypocriſy paſs for Religion,  
Madneſs for Senſe, Noiſe and Scurrility  
for Wit, and Riches for the whole Train  
of Virtues. <sup>1</sup>

but he did not loſe faith in Lady Matchleſs, becauſe of his opinion of her good ſenſe and good nature. The firſt would prevent her from favouring a fop, the ſecond might lead her to favour him. Her inclination to foppery, he tells Merital, is merely a diverſion. The denouement refers back to the theme of diſguiſe, when Wiſemore appears in ſergeant's gown, his hat over his ears. The fictitious heir, Mr. John Matchleſs, has inherited all, the widow apparently ſtripped of her fortune watches her ſuitors melt away. Her cure is completed by Malvil who ſays that he has killed Wiſemore in a duel, which, of courſe, immediately makes her reveal her true feelings. Although the play is dominated by the theory of "humours", there is a ſuggeſtion of conflict in the character of Lady Matchleſs, of the ability to learn by experience. There is a hint too, that Fielding is impatient with the reſtrictions of comedy, and is moving towards a closer relationship with obſerved manners.

Bellaria is a heroine who personifies the abstract values of The Temple Beau. She is more

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<sup>1</sup> Act 1, ſcene ii, Love in Several Maſques, London, printed for John Watts, 1728, pp. 7 - 8.



complex, more carefully-defined than Lady Matchless. Fielding uses Lady Lucy and Lady Gravelly as extremes against which she can be measured. Farce still "claims a magnifying Right", but Bellaria's goodness has a validity which is almost at odds with the medium in which she has her being. Like Helena, she is the victim of the marriage market.

I was forc'd from my Uncle's Hou/e, in the middle of the Night, and in two Days brought hither; where I have been kept the clo/e/t Prisoner: 1

Almost immediately, her intelligence and natural virtue begin to emerge. For example she rejects Young Pedant's syllogism, by leaving him to his meditations. He argues that

Whatever the Law of Nature enjoins is indi/-pen/ably ju/t: But the Law of Nature enjoins Obedience to a Parent: Ergo, Obedience to a Parent is indi/-pen/ably ju/t. 2

then offers to support his findings by translating profane writers. He is, as one would expect, merely being pedantic, but she is demonstrating her ability to distinguish between sophistry and truth. When Veromil almost duplicates the action of the previous play by becoming jealous, her speech has a dignity and "wit" which the style and tone of the play scarcely support.

Still maintain the unju/t Superiority; allow no Virtue, no Merit to us; make us as you do your Slaves. Incon/tancy, which damns a Woman, is no Crime in a Man. The practis'd Libertine who /educes poor un/kilful thoughtle/s Virgins, is applauded, while they mu/t /uffer endle/s Infamy and Shame. 3

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<sup>1</sup> Act 11, scene xi, The Temple Beau, London, printed for J. Watts, 1730, p.24.

<sup>2</sup> Act 111, scene vi, op. cit., p.39.

<sup>3</sup> Act 111, scene xii, op. cit., p.45.



For a moment she is part of the theme of Richardson's Clarissa, the novel which was still a decade in the future. In the fifth act, she mocks the whole convention of courtship, parodying it in her dialogue with Wilding, but the ugliness which lurks beneath the smooth verbal surface is fully-exposed in his soliloquy in the next scene.

She is a fine Creature; but Pox on her Beauty, I /hall /urfeit on't in Six days enjoyment. The twenty thou/and Pound! there's the /olid Charm, that may la/t, with very good Management, almo/t as many years. 1

In the final scenes Veromil's inheritance is restored to him, transforming him into an eligible suitor. The rapid change of parental attitude is almost worthy of Squire Western, but this should not be allowed to obscure the fact that Bellaria did not waver in her love, or in her determination to marry him, before this occurred. She was as willing to forgive as Amelia, and her love was unselfish as she worked for a general reconciliation between both friends and lovers. Veromil summed up the ethos of her role when he said,

we have that Happine/s in view, which crown the Succe/s of Virtue, Con/tancy and Love. 2

Rogers suggests that Fielding was attempting to bring this type of drama to life by the use of different terminology, and that it was a part of the age's search for symbols by which to indicate deviation from the golden mean. 3 Perhaps it is

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<sup>1</sup> Act V, scene vii, The Temple Beau, London, printed for J. Watts, 1730, pp.65 - 6.

<sup>2</sup> Act V, scene xxii, op. cit., p.80.

<sup>3</sup> Winfield H. Rogers, 'Fielding's Early Aesthetic and Technique', Twentieth Century Views, 1962, pp.30-1.



true that Bellaria is such a symbol, but she is also an embryonic prototype for Sophia and Amelia.

Hilaret, of The Coffe-House Politician, is yet another female afflicted by parental authority. She has escaped from her father's house accompanied by her maid, has been separated by a street scuffle, and is about to be mistaken for a prostitute by Ramble. Neither the style nor the situation is new, but there is a variation in the objects of satire. Ramble is an inversion of Don Quixote,

a Knight-Errant rambling about the World in que/t of Adventures. To plunder Widows and ravi/h Virgins; to le//en the Number of Bullies, and increa/e that of Cuckolds, are the Obligations of my Profe//ion.

1

After an abortive attempt at rape, they are both taken before Justice Squeezum whose concept of justice is that

It is better for the Publick that ten Innocent People /hould /uffer, than that one Guilty /hould e/cape; and it becomes every good Per/on to /acrifice their con/cience to the Benefit of the Publick.<sup>2</sup>

While Hilaret was preserving her chastity by a series of politic manoeuvres which include the appearance of complaisance, and participation in a plot to reverse the positions of Judge and victims, her parent is so absorbed in his political humour that the fate of his daughter is immaterial. The most significant action is the failure of the con-

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<sup>1</sup> Act 1, scene ix, The Coffee-House Politician, London, printed for J. Watts, 1730, p.10.

<sup>2</sup> Act 11, scene v, op. cit., p.21.



spiracy against Justice Squeezum, and the intervention of Justice Worthy. The comic excesses have a sombre undertone, for the plight of the ordinary citizen when victimized by a corrupt legal officer, is pitiable. His certain fate will be hanging, unless that rare phenomenon, the good magistrate, intervenes. The legal situation is paralleled by the helplessness of Hilaret in the father-daughter relationship. The play is marred by crude characterization and a diffuse form of attack, which, through its double vision, focussed at the same time on both politics and law, is successful in neither. Even Justice Worthy's action is suspect, because neither Mrs. Squeezum nor Sotmore are satisfactory witnesses. We have already seen the former, in the second act, attempting to seduce Ramble, while the latter's name has been proved appropriate. The introduction of Isabella, Worthy's sister, and the lady in Captain Constant's case, is too great a strain on the credulity of the reader. In the third act, Constant said,

I res/cued a Woman in the Street, for  
which /he was /o kind to /wear a Rape  
again/t me; <sup>1</sup>

whereas in the fifth act she says,

I thank you, Sir, for your generous  
re/cue last Night, which my Fright  
at that time prevented my acknowledging. <sup>2</sup>

Earlier, Ramble referred to her calculatingly, as a  
widow with "Four/core Thousand Pounds in her Pocket" <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Act 111, scene vi, The Coffee-House Politician, London, printed for J. Watts, 1730, p.34.

<sup>2</sup> Act V, scene x, op. cit., p.74.

<sup>3</sup> Act 111, scene vi, op. cit., p.35.



yet in the last scene he is

/o overjoyed at this unexpected Meeting,  
that I do not ask for the Safety of our  
Trea/ure. Since the Sea has refunded  
I/abella, let it take the Jewels.<sup>1</sup>

Ramble is Politic's long-lost son, and we are supposed to rejoice in the union. Had Fielding forgotten the analogy with the brutes in the first act, and the attack on Hilaret, which, it is now revealed, was incestuous?

The follies of women, the preservation of an appearance of virtue, and the absence of the reality, are the theme of A New Way to Keep a Wife at Home. The play is derivative, repetitive and in poor taste, with even the choice of names inapposite. Mrs. Softly and Mrs. Wisdom are both married to old husbands, therefore, it is implied, their infidelities are natural.<sup>2</sup> One of the rakes, Commons, is taking one "swing in the charming plains of iniquity" before taking orders. The absence of a norm in the play, or of any positive values, leaves the reader with a choice. Either Risque is a debased Sancho, and the two perverted "knights" pursue their Dulcinea as she really was, not as she existed in Don Quixote's imagination, which implies that the opposite is true, or the play was merely intended to cater for the lowest tastes of the audience. I think that the latter is more likely to be correct, and this may be supported by the fact that it was apparently written rapidly, to defray expenses.

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<sup>1</sup> Act V, scene xi, The Coffee-House Politician, London, printed for J. Watts, 1730, p.75.

<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Maria Cecchi's The Horned Owl, 1549, is similar, and is Plautine in tone.



The Grub Street Opera was carefully revised in three significant versions. Sir Owen Apshinken and his wife and almost certainly the King and Queen, Master Owen, the Prince of Wales, and Robin the butler, Walpole. There is some evidence to suggest that the play was never acted, because it was "prevented by a certain influence which has been very prevailing of late years".<sup>1</sup> While the political satire was of topical interest, it should not be allowed to obscure either the analogy between the life of servants and "their betters", or the hypocrisy of "strict virtue". These themes are best approached through the role of two virtuous women, Sweetissa and Molly.

Sweetissa.

If ever you had known what it was, to love, Margery, you would not have wonder'd how I could prefer a man to his ma/ter.<sup>2</sup>

Her virtue is not chastity, for she had had such lovers in London, but could never find "one of them that would /tand it out", and her preference for Robin is based purely on his superior sexual prowess.

If women were to con/ider the roguery of their lovers, we /hould have even fewer matches among people of quality than we have.<sup>3</sup>

The danger of detection is slight, for a man who can get an estate is too intelligent to be hanged, that fate menaces only the "poor cheat". Having dissected her motives, Fielding burlesques a Petrarchan

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<sup>1</sup> H.K. Banerji, Henry Fielding Playwright, Journalist and Master of the Art of Fiction, 1962, p.32.

<sup>2</sup> Act 1, scene v, The Grub-Street Opera, London, printed and sold by J. Roberts, 1731, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Act 1, scene v, op. cit., p. 8.



love scene, at the same time mocking misuse of language and castigating the professional man.

Sweet. How charming is thy voice!  
 /weeter than bagpipes to my  
 ear: I could li/ten ever -

Rob. (on the subject of love),  
 Mine is as deep as the know-  
 ledge of phy/icians.

Sweet. Mine as the projects of  
 /tate/men.

Rob. Mine as the virtue of whores.

Sweet. Mine as the hone/ty of lawyers.

Rob. Mine as the piety of prie/ts.

Sweet. Mine as - I know not what.

Rob. Mine as - as - as I'gad I  
 don't know what. 1

While the butler and the maid move through the vicis-  
 situdes of misunderstandings caused by Owen's two  
 letters, in a parody of court intrigue, Owen con-  
 tinues an indiscriminate pursuit of women, the maids  
 as they appear, and more seriously with Molly.

Molly is adamant, when Owen tries to  
 persuade her that marriage is a dirty road to follow, and  
 nature is the only true instructor. The one road  
 may be dirty, but the other is dirtier still,  
 none travel through it without /ullying  
 their reputations beyond the po//ibility  
 of cleaning. 2

The nature of Molly's virtue is clear, only ladies  
 of quality can afford to be without it, it is her  
 stock-in-trade and she will sell it for a high price.  
 Perhaps Fielding thought of her, when he wrote  
Shamela.

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<sup>1</sup> Act 1, scene vi, The Grub-Street Opera, London,  
 printed and sold by J. Roberts, 1731, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Act 11, scene ii, op. cit., p. 23.



Chloe is the central symbol of The Lottery. The repetition of the Lady Matchless - Wisemore situation should not be allowed to obscure her function. On the surface she is a country simpleton, ready to be gulled. At another level, she is Everyman and Everywoman, the "ten thousand fools", who if they had ten thousand pounds, would "horse away the labour of a twelvemonth in a day." She is a symbol of the shepherdess, as her name suggests, of the goodness of the country which is the destined prey of the "Lord Laces" of the city. As a representative of the public, she is the means by which we are introduced to the machinations of the Stock brothers. Through her Fielding shows us "an Alley-broker for a rogue", and the type of nobility which can deceive the ignorant, through the putting on of pawned clothes. The point which is dramatized is that it is only because of her faults that she can be exploited. Her wish to become wealthy is fed by her superstition.

Oh, Jenny! be under no Apprehension. It is not only from what the Fortune-teller told me, but I /aw it in a Coffee-Di/h, and I have dreamt of it every Night the/e three Weeks.<sup>1</sup>

The wish becomes reality and she lives as though the ten thousand pounds was already in her possession. Her foolishness is so great, that the dupe becomes the duper, and Jack finds himself "married to a lottery ticket". Her fortune and her lord both prove blanks, so she is back where she started, with Lovemore.

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<sup>1</sup> Scene 11, The Lottery, London, printed for J. Watts, 1732, p.10.



B: The Modern Husband.

Fielding announced a new era of "serious comedy" in The Modern Husband.

In early Youth our Author fir<sup>s</sup>t begun,  
To Combat with the Follies of the Town;  
Her want of Art his unskill'd Muse bewail'd,  
And where his Fancy pleas'd, his Judgment fail'd.

His aim had been to cater for the tastes of the town,  
and in order to do so, he had fought against the  
"Cau<sup>s</sup>e of Sen<sup>s</sup>e", until

At length, repenting Frolick Flights of Youth,  
Once more he flies to Nature, and to Truth:  
In Virtue's ju<sup>s</sup>t Defence, a<sup>p</sup>pires to Fame,  
And courts Applau<sup>s</sup>e without the Applauder's Shame!

He would no longer debase comedy to farce, but would  
show modern vice without fear or favour and in doing  
so would

Re<sup>t</sup>ore the /inking Honour of the Stage!  
The Stage which was not for low Farce de<sup>s</sup>ign'd,  
But to divert, in<sup>s</sup>truct, and mend Mankind.<sup>1</sup>

The action of the play is a succession of scenes which contrast Mrs. Modern with Mrs. Bellamant. The former has the appearance of virtue, and the latter is virtuous. The plot is carefully-constructed, to give a contrapuntal effect of harmony and discord as we move from one home to the other. Each home becomes a symbol of the human tension which reaches its climax at the end of the fourth act. The situation of the women is similar, each faces financial ruin, each has the prospect of a move to the country, and each is, or has been, the object of Lord Richly's desire. Through their relationship with Lord Richly, Fielding satirized the system of patronage, which rewarded the undeserving and ignored true merit,

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<sup>1</sup> Prologue to The Modern Husband, London, 1732, p. 1.



particularly in the soldier who had risked his life and health in the service of his country. The play has a thematic relationship with Amelia in this, and in the exposure of the evils of gambling.

The first five scenes contain a rapid exposition of Mrs. Modern's character and situation. Her dress is unpaid for. She is engaged for quadrille every night "till Thursday three weeks". Her husband is a willing cuckold who has sold her virtue for their mutual financial benefit. The decay of Lord Richly's passion has caused a crisis, making it imperative to find a substitute, or she will be faced with the prospect of retiring to the country, with the man she hates and despises. Mr. Modern suggests a discovery and damages, but nothing will induce her to sacrifice her "reputation". Gaywit had been lost, but there was still Ballamant. The fact that he was happily-married was no impediment.

Mrs Bellamant had had a surfeit of the town, and as long as she could be with the husband she loved, would always be content. She disliked gambling, had been called a prude for not being at the last masquerade, and dull for not entering into the diversions of the town. Because she personified absolute virtue, Fielding explored degrees of virtue through the other members of the household, her husband, Emilia and Captain Bellamant. Emilia's union with Gaywit is a union of natural goodness and the wisdom which had been learned from the excesses of the town. Because Gaywit had had an affair with Mrs. Modern, he was able to expose her, thus neutralizing the forces of evil rather than achieving total reconciliation. An analogy can be found bet-



ween this marriage and that of Sophia and Tom, but it is so embryonic that it is more a suggestion of the future than an anticipation of it. The union of Captain Bellamant and Lady Charlotte is almost wholly comic, but each has a symbolic as well as an actual role to play. Captain Bellamant had left the university, against the wishes of his father, in order to live the life of a "gentleman". Race-horses, "cards, dice, whores and embroidery" were a necessary part of his education. His graduation was through an acquaintance at court, and the bows he received at the opera. He was made, as his father said, by his tailor. He was also made by the town, in the sense that an outer covering of triviality and corruption had almost obliterated the virtuous, good-natured man, who had come there from the country. His marriage with Lady Charlotte was a marriage to the self he had become, yet they are clearly differentiated from the viciousness of the Moderns and Lord Richly. Lady Charlotte is also a symbol of the "Linking Honour of the Stage."

The irony, which underlies the characterization of Captain Ballamant, lies in the fact that his father, although he still had the appearance of virtue, was more deeply flawed than the son. He had betrayed the best of wives, and the relationship they had built up together, to the worst of wives, Mrs. Modern. The only merit he could claim was that because he had hidden his infatuation, he had spared her pain. Thus against the perfect virtue of Mrs. Bellamant, we can estimate the extent of sin.



Where there is natural goodness, there is the possibility of reform, but where there is natural vice, there is none, a theme which was to be dramatized through Blifil and Tom.

The one hundred pound note is symbolically related to the concept of virtue and vice, as it moves between the two houses. The absolute trust of his wife made it easy for Ballamant to take the money from her and give it to Mrs. Modern, while the prospect of imminent ruin made his sin the greater. This situation was one which would be fully-developed in Amelia. Mrs. Modern gambled away the note to Lord Richly, so it served a double purpose in his plot to seduce Mrs. Bellamant. The need for money made Mrs. Modern a willing bawd, and Lord Richly's payment of it to Mrs. Ballamant for a deliberately engineered gambling debt, placed her in a dangerous situation. For the second time Ballamant persuaded his wife to give him one hundred pounds for his mistress. When he recognized Lord Richly's note, she refused to explain, for fear that he would incur the dangers of a challenge. Thus the seeds of jealousy were sown which made it easy for Mrs. Modern to nurture their growth. The movement of the note is closely-related to the equation between the purchasing power of money and "virtue" as a commodity. Even Mrs. Modern saw the fallacy of this, when she said that the body could be sold but that the heart was always freely given. The act of eating is also equated with Lord Richly's type of love. Gaywit says he is a "lordly wolf" who thinks all are his tenants. He destroys the reputations of women, but "many mistresses, like many



dishes, are often sent away untasted". Fielding was to return to this in the Tom Jones, Mrs Waters, incident at Upton.

Mrs. Modern decided that an elopement with Bellamant would be preferable to a life in the country with her husband, or the loss of her "reputation". The separation of Bellamant from his wife was no easy matter in spite of his infatuation. She saw his jealousy as her most promising tool, and determined that he should witness his wife's infidelity. Her plot collided with that of her husband, who was still bent on "gilding his cuckold's horns" by discovering her in the arms of Lord Richly. The result was disconcerting for both husband and wife, but temporarily, she was able to act the part of a virtuous woman, wrongfully-accused. Mrs. Bellamant's action in throwing away Lord Richly's bribe was a rejection of all that he stood for. Mr. Bellamant could do nothing but throw himself upon her mercy. She was, at first, so shocked and disillusioned that she felt her faith in man had been destroyed.

As you are your own Accu/er, be your  
own Judge; you can inflict no puni/h-  
ment on your/elf equal to what I feel. <sup>1</sup>

Then, in a scene charged with an emotion which is only implied in the novels, she forgave him wholly, with a generous outpouring of her love. Because it is clear that she fully understands what it is that she has to forgive, she is in some ways more convincing than Amelia.

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<sup>1</sup> Act 1V, scene x, The Modern Husband, London, printed for J. Watts, 1732, p.60.



The last act is an unravelling of the threads of the action. Because of the lowering of dramatic tension, it is almost an anticlimax, redeemed by the delightful proposal scene between Captain Bellamant and Lady Charlotte. Lady Charlotte is also the symbol of the type of audience which had helped to debase the stage. She thought Gaywit ridiculous because he had been moved by a tragedy, and would as soon "laugh at a comedy or fall asleep at the opera", <sup>1</sup> she had never seen the first act of a play, nor known the title.

Lately, the lady's maid, has only a minor part, but she is a useful means of extending the characterization of Mrs. Modern. Her clothes and her wit are derived from her mistress, and she does not know whether her talent of praise or of slander is of most service to her. Her love affair with John, has the same mercenary connotations as the affairs of her "betters". John is only an eligible suitor because he has accepted one hundred pounds to swear that his master is a cuckold. He has a sense of "honour" which will not permit him to tell her of the plot, for fear of "double perjury".

The play ends with virtue triumphant. The Ballamants will henceforth have Emilia and Gaywit as their rivals in a loving marriage. Two questions remain to be considered. How well did Fielding succeed in his intentions, and how did the contemporary reaction to the play affect his art? The two are related, for The Modern Husband had to be performed if it was to "divert, instruct and mend

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<sup>1</sup> Act 111, scene v, The Modern Husband, London, printed for J. Watts, 1732, p.36.



mankind". The Moderns were particularly objectionable to contemporary audiences, because they offended "good taste". While they are well-suited to Fielding's moral intention, their characterization is not subtle enough to be artistically satisfying. For example, Mrs. Modern's speech is too crudely mercenary to impart the feeling of seductive beauty, which is so necessary if the temptation of Gaywit and Bellamant is to be understood. Because of this, it is difficult to believe in the intrinsic virtue of either. The actress who played the part may have overcome the problem, but if she did it would be in spite of the text, rather than because of it. Mrs. Modern orders her footman not to call on Mrs. Worthy,

I intend to leave off her Acquaintance,  
for I never see any People of Fashion  
at her House; which, indeed, I do not  
wonder at, for the Wretch is hardly ever  
to be found without her Husband... <sup>1</sup>

The introduction of a character who has no part to play in the action is gratuitous, particularly as the concept is already embodied in Mrs. Bellamant. Another name misleadingly used is "Tricksy", for it suggests a fault in the maker of Mrs. Modern's dress, rather than in the purchaser, who did not pay the bill. Gaywit's defence of Mrs. Modern, at the end of the play, merely clouds the moral issues. Even if her husband had originally been a greater sinner, she had proved herself an apt pupil. She seduced Bellamant, although she knew he was happily-

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<sup>1</sup> Act 1, scene iii, The Modern Husband, London, printed for J. Watts, 1732, p.3.



married, and she was a willing bawd for Lord Richly. Her motives are similar to those of her husband, and surely little distinction can be made between selling a wife, and selling the wife of another man. There is also a failure to differentiate sufficiently between characters, through speech, a tendency which persisted, but was never as obtrusive when Fielding was dealing with a broad spectrum of society, and suiting the language to the class or occupation of the character. The plot is successful, and is satisfactorily related to its component parts.

The Modern Husband was acted fourteen times, a surprisingly large number of performances in view of the fact that it was rated a total failure. The "ladies" and the moralists had conditioned the audience so effectively, that Fielding was diverted into an experimental phase, which did little credit to his art.



C: From The Modern Husband to The Universal Gallant.

The experimental era lasted for approximately three years, from 1731, to 1734. The Molière translations or adaptations are, of course, excepted, because their importance is extrinsic to Fielding's art, even if their influence on it is great. Their presence in the period is like a gleam of light, and the prologue to The Miser could be a valid criticism of his own work at the time.

Thus, without characters, from nature got,  
Without a moral, and without a plot,  
A dull collection of insipid jokes,  
Some stole from conversation, some from books  
Provided lords and ladies gave 'em vent,  
We call high comedy, and seem content.  
But to regale with other sort of fare,  
To-night our author treats you with Molière.  
Molière, who nature's inmost secrets knew;..  
In whose strong scenes all characters are shown,  
Not by low jests, but actions of their own..<sup>1</sup>

The Covent Garden Tragedy is a burlesque of contemporary tragedy, like Tom Thumb, but altogether inferior, The Old Debauchees is a satire on the Roman Catholic Church, in which licentious parents and absurd disguises do nothing to redeem the farce, and Don Quixote in England is a "patchwork quilt" made up of political scenes superimposed upon an early comedy begun at Leyden in 1728. The integration is never wholly successful and the knight and his squire can only be a disappointment to any reader who has enjoyed Cervantes. As Fielding said, it

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from Thomas Roscoe's The Works of Henry Fielding, 1853, and not corrected against a first edition.



would indeed have been little le/s than  
 Quixoti/m it/elf to hope any other Fruits  
 from attempting Characters wherein the  
 inimitable Cervantes /o far excelled.  
 The impo//ibility of going beyond, and  
 the extreme Difficulty of keeping pace  
 with him, were /ufficient to infu/e  
 De/pair into a very adventurous Author.<sup>1</sup>

There are redeeming features however. Dorothea  
 shows signs of originality, although her situation  
 is not a new one. She is yet another victim of  
 parental injustice, who has been spirited enough to  
 run away and is waiting for her lover, Fairlove.

While We, confin'd to Parents Rules,  
 Unfortunate, are told,  
 None follow Love's /weet Laws, but Fools;  
 The Wi/e are Slaves to Gold.<sup>2</sup>

she sings, while Don Quixote listens and determines  
 to help this "damsel in distress". The suitor her  
 father has chosen is Squire Badger, a coarse, loud-  
 mouthed fox-hunting man who has a slight, but notice-  
 able resemblance to Squire Western. There is an  
 amusing scene in which the Squire insults Dulcinea  
 by calling Dorothea the most beautiful woman in the  
 world. The knight delegates the task of revenge  
 to Sancho, for he would not demean himself by fight-  
 a mere "squire". When Badger attacks Dorothea  
 with the apparent intention of immediate rape, and  
 a general battle ensues in which her champions are  
 defeated, the pinioned knight speaks to her father,  
 Sir Thomas Loveland.

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to Don Quixote in England, London,  
 printed for J. Watts, 1734.

<sup>2</sup> Act 1, scene vii, op. cit., p.16.



Do you marry your Daughter for her /ake,  
 or your own? If for Her's, /ure 'tis  
 /omething whim/fical, to make her mi/er-  
 able in order to make her happy. Money  
 is a Thing well worth con/idering in  
 the/e Affairs; but Parents always reg-  
 ard it too much, and Lovers too little.  
 No Match can be happy, which Love and  
 Fortune do not con/pire to make /o -<sub>1</sub>

Don Quixote concludes the play with a discourse on  
 madness.

Who would doubt the noi/y boi/t'rous  
 Squire, who was here ju/t now, to be  
 mad? Mu/t not this noble Knight here  
 have been mad, to think of marrying his  
 Daughter to /uch a Wretch? You, Doctor,  
 are mad too, tho' not /o mad as your Patients.  
 The Lawyer here is mad, or he wou'd not have  
 gone into a Scuffle, when it is the Bu/in-  
 ess of Men of his Profe//ion to /et other  
 Men by the Ears, and keep clear them/elves.<sub>2</sub>

The point is made clearer by referring back to the  
 beginning of the second act, when the knight defined  
 virtue as opposed to hypocrisy, the deity they wor-  
 ship. To say that a man is good natured because  
 he expresses pity is not enough, for his pity is  
 but "triumphant arrogance and insult" arising from  
 pride, not compassion. True pity is expressed in  
 action, through the relief of affliction. Thus  
 when Don Quixote tried to rescue Dorothea, his vir-  
 tue, because it was a rare quality, was construed as a  
 maximum degree of insanity. Unfortunately for the  
 success of the characterization, the moralizing  
 passages are too obviously spoken by the author, us-  
 ing the knight as his mouthpiece.

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<sup>1</sup> Act 111, scene xiv, Don Quixote in England,  
 London, printed for J. Watts, 1734, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Act 111, scene xvi, op. cit., p.63.



An Old Man Taught Wisdom; or The Virgin Unmasked was performed at the Theatre Royal in 1734, the same year as The Universal Gallant. An old Miser, who wishes to keep his possessions in the family, gathers his relations together so that his daughter Lucy can make her choice. He believes that he has kept her from the world so successfully, that she will obey without question. She is so naïve that she agrees with each in turn, giving promises of marriage to the Apothecary, the Dancing Master, the Singing Master, and only omitting the Advocate because of his late arrival. Her heart is with Thomas, the footman, although she would wed any man with a coach and six. While her suitors are wrangling, she is marrying Thomas, who has the advantage of being the last to meet her. The characterization of Lucy is unusually subtle, and Thomas' final speech is of interest, because of Joseph Andrews.

As for my having worn a livery, let not that grieve you; as I have liv'd in a great family, I have /een that no one is re/pected for what he is, but for what he has: the world pays no regard at pre/ent to any thing but money; and if my own indu/try /hould add to your fortune, /o as to entitle any of my po/terity to grandeur, it will be no rea/son again/t making my /on or grand/son a lord, that his father or grandfather was a footman. <sup>1</sup>

The Universal Gallant marks a return to the serious social comedy of The Modern Husband.

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<sup>1</sup> Act V, scene iv, An Old Man Taught Wisdom, in Miscellanies, printed for the author: and sold by A. Millar, 1743, p.7.



Its unpopularity probably forced Fielding into political satire, a form of drama which was by nature ephemeral. The play is closely-related to the novels, for it is an analysis, in an effectively dramatized form, of the abstract quality jealousy. He was to use a similar method in Joseph Andrews to define charity and chastity, and in Tom Jones to define virtue, good-nature and wisdom. His frustration and bitterness are evident,

The cruel U/age this poor Play hath met  
with, may ju/tly /urprize the Author,  
who in his whole Life never did any In-  
jury to any one Per/son living. 1

The prologue is similar in tone.

Bold is th' Attempt in this nice-judging Age,  
To try at Fame, by plea/ing on the Stage.  
So eager to Condemn us you are grown,  
Writing, /eems War declar'd again/t the Town.  
Which ever way the Poet /eeks Applau/e,  
The Critick's ready /till to Damn his Cau/e.  
If for new Chara/cters he hunts abroad,  
And boldly deviates from the beaten Road,  
In Mon/ters then Unnatural he deals;  
If they are known and common, then he /teals.  
If Wit he aims at, you the Traps can /how;  
If Serious, he is Dull; if Hum'rous, Low...  
'Tis not the Poet's Wit affords the Je/t,  
But who can Cat-call, Hi/s, or Whi/tle be/t.  
Can then another's Angui/h give you Joy?  
Or is it /uch a Triumph to de/troy? 2

Fielding analyzes jealousy through three women, Lady Raffler, Mrs. Raffler and Clarinda. Lady Raffler is virtuous, but her husband is pathologically jealous, so that she is always unfaithful

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1 This example is typical of both the Dedication to His Grace Charles Duke of Marlborough, and the Advertisement which preceded the play.

2 Prologue to The Universal Gallant, London, printed for J. Watts, 1735.



in his mind. Mrs. Raffler is unfaithful, but her husband's trust makes her virtuous in his mind. Clarinda is young, and as yet, uncommitted. Because she has the power to learn from the extremes, she represents the possibility of the mean.

Each woman is the object of jealousy. Sir Simon's "humour" is so extreme that every man is the potential debaucher of his wife. Gaylove is a tall, strapping, well-looking, ill-looking rascal whom he would as soon admit into his family as a wolf into a sheepfold. Captain Spark is a dangerous rival, in spite of the fact that he has never met Lady Raffler in his life. The effect of his jealousy is to make his wife react violently,

it is notorious that a Woman of my Virtue  
and Discretion, and Prudence, /hou'd be  
eternally tormented with the Su/picions of  
a jealous-pated Husband. 1

She will do nothing to quieten the fears of her husband, for she depends on her own innocence. Although she was evidently shocked by Clarinda's love, and thought it seemly to feel nothing stronger than esteem and friendship, she is roused to hatred by his jealousy. She says to Mondish,

But I have the Comfort to think he is  
/ufficiently puni/h'd in the Torments  
of his own Mind. Oh, I /hould be the  
mo/t mi/erable Creature alive, if I cou'd  
but even /u/pect he had an ea/y Moment. 2.

Mrs. Raffler is the object of Mondish's jealousy, for he suspects that Gaylove has supplanted

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<sup>1</sup> Act 11, scene i, The Universal Gallant, London, printed for J. Watts, 1735, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Act V, scene i, op. cit., p.72.



him in her affections. He is the most melodramatic in his demand for revenge, for

You/hall find that the Jealoufy of  
twenty Husbands is not equal to that  
of one abus'd Gallant....  
This is trifling with my Pa//ion, the  
cruelle/t In/ult you can put upon it -  
But I will find out my Rival, and will  
be Reveng'd.

Mrs Raffler.

Reveng'd! Ha! ha!

(Enter Col. Raffler.)

Mondish

Death and Torments!

Colonel Raffler.

Heyday! What, are they acting a Tragedy? <sup>1</sup>

Clarinda is the object of Mrs. Raffler's jealousy. The older woman pretends to criticize Gaylove in order to discover the truth. Fielding conveys her artlessness, her youth and her innocence, in breathless phrases which arouse the sympathy of the reader for the positive values of his play.

Clarinda.

I love dearly to /ee him /mile, and you  
know he's always /miling - and his Eyes  
laugh /o comically, and have /o much  
Sweetne/s in them. Then he is the mo/t  
entertaining Creature upon Earth, and I  
have heard /ome very good-natur'd Actions  
of his too. The World, I dare /wear,  
does not think one whit better of him  
than he de/erves. <sup>2</sup>

The plots of the three revengers converge and clash, until the jealousy of each has been exposed in all its absurdity. The punishment is in accordance with the severity of the malady, thus

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<sup>1</sup> Act 11, scene i, The Universal Gallant, London, printed for J. Watts, 1735, pp. 25 - 6.

<sup>2</sup> Act 11, scene i, op. cit., p.22.



Sir Simon is the most ludicrous. The scene with the couch, in a darkened room, is a farce which culminates in the entry of Captain Spark. Sir Simon, dressed in women's clothes, is impersonating his wife. To his surprise, the Captain's conversation is polite and distant enough to be suitable for a meeting between strangers. He is so disconcerted that the Captain calls for help, thinking that "she" is about to collapse, and the rest of the plotters, hidden in various closets, appear as witnesses of his discomforture.

Through Lady Raffler, Fielding showed that jealousy was an evil disease which could infect even an innocent woman, and transform her into a monster. Through Mrs. Raffler, he showed that even a guilty woman would be virtuous as long as her husband believed her to be so. Through Clarinda and her symbolic absence during the unravelling of the web of intrigue, he showed that true virtue could only remain absolute, if it was untouched by jealousy in all its forms. Significantly, her marriage to Gaylove was to take place in the new dawn. She mitigates the cynicism which seems to say that it is better to be in a fool's paradise with the Colonel, than in a hell of jealousy with Sir Simon, but some of her effectiveness is lost, when she returns from "the opera" with Gaylove, for Fielding's views on that form of entertainment were too well known.



D: The Last Plays, excluding the purely political satire.

Miss Lucy in Town, only partly Fielding's work, was produced in 1742, a year after Shamela and in the same year as Joseph Andrews. The sequel to An Old Man Taught Wisdom shows Lucy as foolish after marriage as she had been before it. The coach and six had changed to a chair of her own, with footmen to command, an apt commentary on Thomas' previous occupation. The scope of her material ambitions had widened to include any other bribe which a beau was prepared to offer. Because she had moved from the country to the town, the temptations she faced were more vicious. Instead of her father Goodwill, she was now in the hands of a professional bawd, instead of three relatively harmless relations, she faced three types of rake, Lord Bawble the aristocrat, Cantileno and Ballad, debased forms of the singing and dancing masters, and Zorobable, who probably represented all that Fielding most disliked about the nouveau riche social climber from the merchant classes. Midnight sold Lucy twice, first to Lord Bawble as a virgin, then to Zoroble as a simple country girl, but the musical pair could not compete as she was "bespoke". Because Lord Bawble was the first to return with the money, and because he had a title, he proved irresistible, and carried Miss Lucy off to buy new clothes.

The symbolism of clothes is extended to Thomas, for his absence was occasioned by his own purchases, which were to transform him from a footman to a gentleman. Fielding's analogy between



the virtue of the lower classes and the vices of their "betters" was made clear on his return. Midnight thought he was a servant, because he talked so much about his honour. When he refused to forgive his wife, Zoroble was at hand to offer him a competitive price for her, but was boxed on the ear for his pains. Lord Bawble met with a similar reception, although by a coincidence, Thomas had once been his servant. His lordship was kind enough to offer him Lucy, after he had had her, but the footman was not content to be cuckold to a lord. He had refused bribes and now he resisted threats.

Fortune, which made me poor, made me a  
 Servant; but Nature, which made me an  
 Engli/hman, pre/erv'd me from being a  
 Slave. I have as good a Right to the  
 Little I claim as the proude/t Peer hath  
 to his great Po//e//ions; and whil/t I  
 am able, I will defend it. <sup>1</sup>

He proceeded to do so, at the point of a sword, and Lord Bawble was driven ignominiously from the scene. Lucy had not yet learned her lesson, for she was still fashionable enough to hate her husband, and to deny not only her marriage, but the fact that she had ever seen Thomas before. Her father exclaimed,

Mercy on me! what a /ink of Iniquity is  
 this Town? She hath been here but five  
 Hours, and learnt A//urance already to  
 deny her Hu/band.

Fortunately Lucy had not yet had time to be unfaithful, because she had been too busy choosing clothes. Thomas' stern command,

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<sup>1</sup> Both quotations on this page are from Miss Lucy in town, London, printed for A. Millar, 1742, p.41.



Come, Madam, you mu/t /trip your/elf of your Puppet-Shew Dre/s, as I will of mine; they will make you ridiculous in the Country, where there is /till /ome-thing of Old England remaining. Come, no Words, no delay; by Heavens! if you but affect to loiter, I will /end Orders with you to lock you up, and allow you only the bare Nece//aries of Life. You /hall know I'm your Hu/band, and will be obey'd. 1

forced her to face reality at last. She begged his forgiveness and promised that she would never attempt to be more than a plain gentlewoman again.

The Wedding Day was performed at Drury Lane, on February 17th, 1743, after Joseph Andrews and the Miscellanies. It was, I think, deservedly condemned by the public, for it is not only trivial in theme, but carelessly constructed. Its morality is at best questionable. Millamour is supposed to have reformed by the end of the play, but there is nothing in his characterization which would suggest this possibility. The device used to dissolve the marriage of Clarinda, the girl he loves, and Stedfast, is the discovery that she is his daughter. Although the marriage had not yet been consummated, the near incest is objectionable. If it is compared with the presumed incest in Tom Jones the difference in quality becomes obvious. Internal evidence suggests that this is a much earlier play than supposed, and even if Fielding was under financial pressure, it is difficult to understand why Mr. Garrick consented to play the part of Millamour.

The loss of The Good-natured Man was un-



fortunate, both for Fielding and for posterity, and we can only be grateful to Mr. Garrick for the efforts he made to see that it was presented to the public. This "little orphan posthumous work" needed no sentiment to recommend it, and we do not know what effect the success of the play might have had on his subsequent career.

The Good-Natured Man or The Fathers is a definition of the title by the use of contrast. A minor female character, Mrs. Boncour, acts as a symbol of the change which takes place during the play. At the beginning she is in full command, thanks to her husband's indulgence, and his gratitude for the large fortune which she brought to the marriage. Her insatiable demands turn his very compliance into a fresh cause for complaint. But by the end of the fifth act, she sends a servant "to acquaint your honour, that upper is on table". As Sir George says,

your wife, you /ee, civilly /ends in,  
in/tead of ru/hing her/elf into company  
with her /cream of, 'why mu/t not I be  
let into the /ecret?' 1

Two of the fathers, Mr. Boncour and Mr. Valence, are totally-opposed in their methods of child-rearing. The former is indulgent to a fault and the latter believes in strict discipline.<sup>2</sup> Each has a son and a daughter. Young Boncour laughs at a gift of one hundred pounds and asks for more, Young Valence is grateful for a pittance. The former dis-

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<sup>1</sup> Act V, scene v, The Fathers: or, The Good-Natured Man, London, printed for T.Cadell, 1778, p.110.

<sup>2</sup> The plot is based on Terence's Adelphoe.



sipates his parents' fortune in luxurious living, the latter has learned to be servile in his obedience because of his fear of disinheritance. Their sisters are their feminine counterparts. Young Boncour is in love with Miss Valence, Young Valence, with Miss Boncour.

The marriage-settlement is used by Fielding as a yardstick against which we can measure the characters of the two fathers. Although the match would be a poor one for the Boncours, in worldly terms, Mr. Boncour's only concern is with the happiness of his children. Mr. Valence has everything to gain by the match, but he appears indifferent in order to extract the maximum possible amount from his "friend". The terms he offers by letter are,

First, You /hall ve/t your whole e/tate immediately in the po//e//sion of your /on, out of which, be/ides your wife's fortune, you /hall be allotted two hundred pounds per annum during life.

Secondly, You /hall pay down fifteen thousand pounds as your daughter's portion, for which /he shall have a proportionable /ettlement, as our lawyers /hall agree.

Thirdly, That as a very large part of my e/tate will, at my death, de/cend to my /on, I /hall remain in po//e//sion of the whole during my life, except - 1

Mr. Boncour will not read on, for either the man is mad or "doth he conclude me to be /o?". His good-nature is such, that against his better judgment, he gives in to the combined pleas of wife, children

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<sup>1</sup> Act 111, scene i, The Fathers: or, The Good-Natured Man, London, 1778, pp.47 - 8.



and brother. The brother's perfidy, although it appears surprizing, was in fact part of a plan to cure Mr. Boncour of his excessive indulgence, by exposing the perfidy of the Valances and his own children. When Sir George spread the news of the "bankrupcy", each family reacted in accordance with the education received, yet each son surprized his father and each daughter surprized her lover.

Young Boncour was prepared to sacrifice his own interest in order to rescue his father. To prove that this was no idle talk, he had the articles drawn up, and the lawyer in readiness. As a result Miss Valance decided to reject him. She would see fifty fathers ruined rather than part with a fortune. He expressed his disillusionment in a soliloquy,

This is the real creature, and the object  
of my love was the phantom. Vani/h then,  
my love, with that, for how can a building  
stand, when the foundation is gone? <sup>1</sup>

Ironically, her name was Sophia, possibly a reference to the pseudo-wisdom of the world.

Young Valance was as unprepared as his sister to marry a "beggar", but could see no reason why he should not sacrifice the virtue and good name of the girl he professed to love. Miss Boncour rejected his sophistry with indignation initially, but afterwards appeared to relent. She agreed to meet him secretly, at her home. During this interview he revealed himself not only as a ruthless seducer, but as a despicable son.

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<sup>1</sup>

Act V, scene i, The Fathers, London, 1778, p.92.



I will out wit my father, I will plunder  
him of every thing he has, to keep you  
in affluence equal to your de/ire. <sup>1</sup>

She had arranged that all should listen, so he was exposed and cast out, his greatest fear being realized by immediate disinheritance. Boncour's reaction was to welcome the daughter to his arms, who had proved herself as much the object of his admiration, as she had always been of his love.

Sophia was also punished for she found that Young Kennel was not the substitute lover she had supposed him to be. His interest in her had been a means of discovering the whereabouts of the girl he loved, who afterwards proved to be Miss Boncour. Young Kennel was also the product of education. The third father, Sir Gregory, had all the vices of Squire Western without his sense of value. He would not accept the country for his son, but was determined to make him a gentleman by sending him abroad. After two years in Europe, he was ready to marry a lady of quality, beauty and fortune. During the tour he had learned that he did not like Venice, because it stands in the middle of the sea, he knew nothing about the Italians, because he never could converse with any but those of his own country, and stayed a week in Rome, but happening to meet with two or three "English dogs" at his inn, remained there with them. Although he was in France for three weeks, he never spoke to a Frenchman, and was unable to understand Miss Valance's simple French. He realized by the end of the fifth act, that he was not rational,

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<sup>1</sup> Act V, scene v, The Fathers, London, 1778, p.103.



because he had not been given a rational education. He loved Miss Boncour, and her father promised that if he should make himself worthy of her, he would be given a chance to win her hand.

The play remains faithful to its realism, for there are no wedding bells, but only the hope that a future, in which each character will know himself or herself, will bring happiness. The action has been an educative process for every person, and for the audience. Mr. Boncour's goodness has been triumphantly vindicated, yet without the crisis-situation, it might have led to disaster. Finally the complexity of plot and characterization is firmly controlled by a deceptively simple theme, just as Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones are controlled by the romance convention of the "quest."



CHAPTER 111WOMAN IN THE NOVEL.A: Joseph Andrews.

Joseph Andrews is not a parody of Pamela in spite of the fact that the central situation in that novel has been inverted, nor is it a joke which almost accidentally led to a great English novel, but it does offer an alternative to Richardson both in theory and in practice. The fact that Richardson published first, and that his definition of Christian virtue acted as a catalyst on Fielding, was probably incidental. The admirer of Don Quixote, the despiser of contemporary romances, and the writer of the Preface to Joseph Andrews had obviously given long and careful thought to the medium. As a playwright, Fielding had always attacked hypocrisy and the misuse of language, the Licensing Act had blocked his career, and journalism was only a limited outlet for creative imagination. Any other writer or event could have provided the stimulus, and the debt to Richardson has probably been over-emphasized. Paradoxically, the importance of Pamela herself, as a personification of Richardson's concept of virtue, has, I think, been underestimated. It seems to me that the identification of Shamela with the Pamela who appears in Joseph Andrews has led to misinterpretation.



Shamela was written to expose the inherent weakness of a judgment based on words alone, and it does not necessarily imply a total rejection of Richardson's Pamela. Because readers believed that Shamela was such a rejection, their minds were conditioned before they read Joseph Andrews. The fact that Fielding admired Clarissa,<sup>1</sup> makes it unlikely that he would have been blind to the merits of the earlier novel, and a close study of the text of Joseph Andrews provides more conclusive evidence. Joseph's intelligence and character make it almost impossible that he would have written as he did, in the first book, to a sister who was really a "Shamela", and when Pamela appears in the fourth book, she is obviously intended to resemble the original as closely as possible. I think that she is placed both spiritually and physically amongst Fielding's characters, so that they can, by their actions, test her validity. Her doctrine of faith alone is tried against theirs, and is found wanting. Yet she is not cast out of the comic world with Lady Booby, nor is the fact that she may be as virtuous as she claims to be, questioned. It is the quality of her virtue which is carefully-defined and measured against the superior virtue of Fanny, but she is still worthy to be Fanny's sister. The implication is not that she has no natural goodness, but that her natural goodness has been corrupted by her ambition to enter "high life". The symbolism of the movement away from Lady Booby's country seat to the home

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<sup>1</sup> See Fielding's letter to Richardson in Ioan Williams' The Criticism of Henry Fielding, London, 1970, p.188.



of Pamela and Mr. Booby, implies moral improvement. She behaved with "Great Decency" on the occasion of the discovery, welcomed all to her home, lent Fanny clothes for the wedding and did nothing to oppose her husband's generosity. Perhaps if this had only been extended to Fanny and Joseph, her motives might have been those of family pride, but the Parson Adams who had rebuked her and her husband for laughing in Church, was included.

Pamela's role is a complex one, operating on more than one level. First, she is Joseph's counterpart, faced by similar circumstances and similar temptations, in a time-scale which coincides with his. Secondly, she represents the abstract quality of "virtue" as it was presented by Richardson, and as such she is re-examined by Fielding. Thirdly she is transplanted into the world of Joseph Andrews and seen in a new, more objective perspective. The charges that the novel lacks structural unity, that the Leonora and Wilson digressions are not closely-related to the whole, and that many of the discussions are extraneous to the plot, can be refuted, if the role of Pamela is borne in mind.

Joseph is besieged by Lady Booby at the same time as Pamela is being besieged by her nephew, but because his chastity is guarded by male strength, he cannot be ravished except by his own will. The relationship between the two is established through the letters. In the first he says that his mistress



talked exactly as a Lady does to her Sweet-heart in a Stage-Play, which I have /een in Covent-Garden, while she wanted him to be no better than he /ould be.<sup>1</sup>

showing that he was fully aware of her intentions. In the second he attributed his resistance to the influence of Parson Adams and Pamela.

But I am glad /he turned me out of the Chamber as /he did: for I had once almo/t forgotten every word Par/on Adams had ever /aid to me.<sup>2</sup>

Because Adams' sincerity is never questioned, it is unlikely that the reference to Pamela is ironical. If he can appreciate the Parson, who is regarded by Sir Thomas and his Lady "as a kind of Dome/tic only,"<sup>3</sup> he can appreciate the sister with whom he has lived for several years. During the course of the action his judgment is shown to be superior to that of any other character in the book, including Parson Adams, so I suggest that there is no question of Pamela's initial innocence, but because it was by deeds, not by words that they were to be judged, the difference is that Joseph left, but Pamela stayed. He was not truly her brother in a literal or in a figurative sense, and the qualities he displayed were those which, as Fielding said in Tom Jones, were more likely to be found in a gentleman.

Joseph's superior birth is hinted at more than once. His Lady often said that he "was the hand/ome/t and genteele/t Footman in the Kingdom"

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<sup>1</sup> Book 1, ch.vi, Joseph Andrews, London, printed for A. Millar, 1742, p.25

<sup>2</sup> Book 1, ch.ix, p.54, see also soliloquy in ch.xii, "in extremis" when he refers to his "mo/t virtuous Si/ter, who/e Example could alone enable me..", op.cit., p.77.

<sup>3</sup> Book 1, op. cit., p.13.



and Betty told her mistress that she believed he was a greater man than they took him for because of the whiteness of his skin and the softness of his hands.<sup>1</sup> When he wore the Squire's clothes, which were rather too large, they fitted him exactly,

he became it /o well, and looked /o genteel, that no Per/son would have doubted its being as well adapted to his Quality as his Shape; nor have /u/pected, as one might when my Lord -, or Sir -, or Mr. - appear in Lace or Embroidery, that the Taylor's Man wore tho/ie Clothes home on his Back, which he /hould have carried under his Arm.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time Fielding does not denigrate Pamela's birth, either because he accepts Richardson's explanation that the Andrews had fallen on hard times, or because he believed in the power of natural goodness to elevate the human condition. Probably the former is correct, as it is consistent with the later novels.

Fanny is Pamela's sister, but symbolically more beautiful, and the whiteness of her skin is also emphasized. Her complexion was fair, a little injured by the sun, but overspread with such a bloom

that the fine/est Ladies would have exchanged all their White for it: add to the/e, a Countenance in which tho' she was extremely ba/hful, a Sen/ibility appeared almo/t incredible; and a Sweetne/s, whenever /he /miled, beyond either Imitation or De/cRIPTION. To conclude all, she had a natural Gentility, /uperior to the Acqui/sition of Art, and which /urprized all who beheld her.<sup>3</sup>

Wilson thought she was a lady of fashion eloping, and the hunting Squire who "roasted" Parson Adams, said that her birth was obvious in spite of her disguise.

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<sup>1</sup> Book 1, ch. xiv, Joseph Andrews, 1742, p.92.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.v, op. cit., p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> Book 11, ch. xii, pp.250 - 1.



Joseph's "journey to the West" from London to the country, is a journey away from the environment which had begun to corrupt him, and he also moves from Lady Booby with her town education, towards Fanny who was a foundling, sold to Sir Thomas, and who had had no education. While he moved away from high life, Pamela moved towards it, and the dangers he had escaped by doing so are dramatized in the story of his father, Mr. Wilson. Thus Fielding extends the image of London, which is glanced at in Joseph's experience, without compromising the purity which is essential if he is to be worthy of Fanny. The country is not idealized, even in the idyllic retirement of the Wilsons, which Joseph and Fanny were ultimately to share. The Squire thought that Wilson was a madman, and the Parson that he was a Presbyterian, because he would not hunt with the one, or drink with the other. His eldest son had been stolen by gypsies. While he gave freely of his hospitality, the young son of the Lord of the Manor shot his daughter's little dog, swearing at the same time that he would prosecute the master of him for keeping a spaniel. <sup>1</sup> Yet Adams still declared that this was the manner in which people lived in the Golden Age.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 1, Book 111, ch.iii, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742, p.78.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the best summary of the "Golden Age" can be found in Ovid's Metamorphoses, Book 1. Fielding had both the original and the Dryden translation in his library.



Joseph's rejection of high life and Pamela's acceptance of it are further examined in the history of Leonora. High life is not wrong in itself, but in the failure to distinguish between appearance and reality. Just as Squire Booby had the appearance of a gentleman, but was not large enough to fit his own dress, Joseph had the reality, so could wear it to perfection. The quality of Mr. B's love for Pamela was marred by his attempts to debauch her, but Joseph's passion for Fanny did so truly deserve the noble name of love,<sup>1</sup> that he turned his eyes away from her exposed breast, when he saw that she blushed at his gaze. Leonora appeared to love Horatio, but within a fortnight of the wedding, the appearance of Bellarmine dressed in the French fashion, and of his coach and six, was enough to make her forget Horatio's existence. What the modesty of Horatio "had employed a full Year in raising, Impudence demolished in 24 Hours."<sup>2</sup> Her aunt, who had been well-bribed, advised her to be prudent, for the world would condemn her if she sacrificed her interest to any motive whatever.

Be/ides, if we examine the two Men, can you prefer a/neaking Fellow, who hath been bred at a Univer/ity, to a fine Gentleman ju/t come from his Travels?<sup>3</sup>

Her father, who looked on children as an unhappy consequence of his youthful pleasures, agreed to the match, but resolved to part with nothing, so Bellar-

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 11, Book IV, ch. vii, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Vol 1, Book 11, ch. iv, op. cit., p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> Vol 1, Book 11, ch. iv, op. cit., p. 174.



mine would not marry her. Horatio was still unmarried after the passing of the years, and

never heard the name of Leonora without a Sigh, or hath ever uttered one Syllable to charge her with ill Conduct towards him.<sup>1</sup>

Without Horatio, there might have been an imbalance in Fielding's criticism of high life, for no other man who has been educated as a gentleman is idealized in this way. Joseph's father was a reformed rake, Joseph had moved from kennels, to stables, to foot-boy, to footman, while Parson Adams, although learned and a gentleman, was poverty-stricken and dependent. Had Joseph succumbed to the charms of Lady Booby, his reward would have been the same as Leonora's. The faults which led her to abandon Horatio were vanity and pride, faults which she shared with Pamela. Lady Booby and Pamela gazed into mirrors at the mention of Fanny's beauty. When Mr. Booby and Pamela try to persuade Joseph not to marry beneath him, he protests that Fanny is Pamela's equal at least.

She was my Equal, answered Pamela, but I am no longer Pamela Andrews, I am now this Gentleman's Wife, and as /uch am above her - I hope I /hall never behave with an unbecoming Pride; but at the /ame time I /hall always endeavour to know my/elf and que/ition not the Affi/tance of Grace to that purpo/e.<sup>2</sup>

The story is thus also a warning to Pamela.

Fielding's argument seems to be that if Pamela is as virtuous as she claims to be in her letters, then she is not only worthy to marry the Squire, but may be his superior. Evidence based

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<sup>1</sup> Book 11, ch.vi, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742,p.209.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.vii, op. cit., p.223.



on the word of a witness unsupported by observed action, is unreliable, for example Tom Suckbribe the Constable "did not" allow the thief to escape, because he said so.<sup>1</sup> The question is examined in one context after another, through the actions which belie the words of those who profess to believe in Christian charity, and through the analogy which is drawn between high life and low.

Lady Booby's affectation is matched by Mrs. Slipslop's affectation, who,

being her/elf the Daughter of a Curate, pre/erved /ome Re/pect for Adams; he profe//ed great Regard for his Learning, and would frequently di/pute with him on Points of Theology; but always in/i/ted on a Deference to be paid to her Under - /tanding, as she had been frequently at London, and knew more of the World than a Country Par/son could pretend to.<sup>2</sup>

In the first Book, scenes of love and rage alternate between mistress and the "Waiting-Gentlewoman", with Joseph as the common object of their passion. When rage was dominant, dismissal was imminent, when passion was dominant, he was threatened by seduction. Joseph was stripped and turned away as a result of Lady Booby's rage, but no sooner had he gone than passion prompted pursuit, disguised as a return to her country seat. This acts as a structural link, uniting the second and third books, with the first and fourth. The analogy between mistress and maid is extended into a comparison between their "love" for him, and the love felt by the inferior servants, each one of

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<sup>1</sup> Book 1, ch.xv, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742, p.102.

<sup>2</sup> Book 1, ch.iii, op. cit., p.13.



whom would have lent him clothes to cover the nakedness caused by their superiors.<sup>1</sup>

The test of charity is applied in a variety of situations, generally in a biblical, often allegorical framework. The loss of the coat is like the loss of Joseph's coat of many colours. He was robbed, stripped and left naked in a ditch, and "sold into Egypt" by the company on the coach. The Postillion is the Good Samaritan, when he strips off his only garment, a coat,

at the same time wearing a great Oath (for which he was rebuked by the Passengers) 'That he would rather ride in his Shirt all his Life, than suffer a Fellow-Creature to lie in so miserable a Condition'.....a Lad who hath been since transported for robbing a Hen-roost.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly at the Inn, it was the maid who put extra faggots on the fire and lent Joseph a coat belonging to one of the Hostlers. Throughout the illness, Betty's charity is contrasted with the lack of charity in her superiors. Her abortive attempt to seduce Joseph, results in the same frustration and rage already seen in Lady Booby and Slipslop, and thus the analogy is extended down the scale. Slipslop consoled herself with the bottle, Betty with Mr. Tow-wouse.

The arrival of Slipslop links the first book with the second, and the humble pilgrimage on foot and occasionally on horseback, with the stately progress of Lady Booby and her forerunners. The

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<sup>1</sup> Book 1, ch.ix, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742, p.56

<sup>2</sup> Book 1, ch.xi, op. cit., p.71.



coach is a symbol of pride and false dignity, the tattered clothes of Adams, of charity and true dignity, and the failure of the coachman to overtake him is a test of moral superiority. The gentleman on the hill talked of bravery and heroic virtue, but Parson Adams demonstrated those qualities in action, going to Fanny's rescue with his crabstick, while the gentleman, armed with a gun, was too afraid to help. The fact that he did not save her by passive faith like Pamela's drew a rebuke from Slipslop, who told him that he should rather have prayed that Fanny might be strengthened.<sup>1</sup>

Slipslop would not return Fanny's curtsies, but withdrew into another room, muttering as she went, she wondered "who the Creature was". Fielding outlined the chain of pride extending upwards in the social scale,

and perhaps, if the Gods, according to the Opinion of /ome, made Men only to laugh at them, there is no part of our Behaviour which an/wers the End of our Creation better than this.<sup>2</sup>

The interview with Parson Trulliber is another instance of pride and false charity. Mrs. Trulliber waited behind her husband's chair, as was her custom. She was an admirer of his greatness and importance, and "almo/t carried her Adoration to an opinion of his Infallibility."<sup>3</sup> She called him not Lord, but Master. This is, I think, a reference to Pamela's worship of the Squire's position, for to call him

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<sup>1</sup> Book 11, ch. xiii, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742, p.261.

<sup>2</sup> Book 11, ch. xiii, op. cit., p.259.

<sup>3</sup> Book 11, ch. xiv, op. cit., p.271.



"Master" is idolatrous.

Pamela's claim to be a perfect Christian is realized in Joseph. Although his humility makes him defer to Parson Adams, and although in allegorical terms, Charity and Chastity are complementary, Joseph is less naïve than the Parson. When the gentleman promised Adams a living, horses for their journey, and hospitality, Joseph said,

all I know is, it is a Maxim among the  
Gentlemen of our Cloth, that tho e  
Ma t e r s who promi e the most perform  
the lea t; <sup>1</sup>

When Joseph thought he was in extremis, he resigned himself with true Christian fortitude, only regretting that he had not been allowed to see Fanny once more. When Adams thought that his son had been drowned, he showed none of the acceptance of God's will he had been preaching to Joseph immediately before. Joseph was never proud or vain, but Adams wanted to read his sermon on vanity to Wilson, although that gentleman was now cured.<sup>2</sup> He boasted about his ability as a teacher, and thought that a schoolmaster was the greatest character in the world, but his failings as a teacher were demonstrated when Dick read to her Ladyship.

'And now, Child, What is the Engli h of Lego?' To which the Boy, after long puzzling, an wered, he could not tell. 'How', cries Adams in a Pa ion, - 'What hath the Water wa hed away your Learning? Why, what is Latin for the Engli h Verb read' <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Book 11, ch. xvi, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742, p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book 111, ch.iii, op. cit., p.52.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch. ix, op. cit., p.246.



During the story he interrupts the child with pedantic corrections until Lady Booby, right for once, orders him to be silent. He thought he could teach justice and morality to every child, and diagnosed the cause of Wilson's downfall as a public school education. Joseph pointed out that Sir Thomas Booby

was bred at a public School, and he was  
the fine/t Gentleman in all the Neigh-  
bourhood <sup>1</sup>

but Adams was too proud to listen, even when Joseph cited the example of several country gentlemen who were educated

within five Miles of their own Hou/es,  
and are as wicked as if they had known the  
World from their Infancy.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph recognized the presence of innate goodness or evil, but Adams did not, evidently because Adams gleaned his knowledge from the pages of a book, but Joseph observed human nature. His academic understanding made it impossible for the Parson to appreciate the quality of Joseph's love for Fanny, and while Joseph wept for the girl who would be raped within two hours, Adams counselled patience and submission. He had offered not one word of comfort to Joseph, and even his learning had its limitations. Joseph quoted,

Yes, I will bear my Sorrows like a Man,  
But I must also feel them as a Man.  
I cannot but remember such things were,  
And were most dear to me... <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book 111, ch.iv, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742, p.83.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book 111, ch.iv, op. cit., p.84.

<sup>3</sup> Macbeth Act IV, sc.iii, 258 - 62, quoted in Vol.11, Book 111, ch.x, op. cit., p.152.



and Adams said that there was nothing but Heathenism to be learned from plays. The same lack of sympathy is shown when the secret of Fanny's birth is revealed. The Parson

fell on his knees and ejaculated many Thanks givings that this Di/covery had been made before the dreadful Sin of Ince/t was committed.....he continued all the way to exhort them, who were now breaking their Hearts, to offer up Thank/givings, and be joyful for /o miraculous an E/cape. <sup>1</sup>

Perhaps he could not understand, because he had never experienced the emotion himself. Mrs. Adams was prepared to sacrifice whatever principles she possessed in the interests of worldly advancement for her children, and only little Dick offered his all to Fanny.

Pamela's claim to be a Christian leader and an exemplar of charity, was realized in Abraham Adams. His first name indicates his role of leader, his surname refers back to the innocence before the Fall, and forward to the second Adam who was crucified for the sins of the world. Like Abraham, he was the father of his people, and recognized no earthly authority. Although he slept through Joseph's discourse on charity, it is a worthy analysis of his character.<sup>2</sup> No one can turn good action into ridicule, the Parson may roll down a hill, or flee from a pack of hounds, but those who crucify him are men like the Squire and his human curs. He defined charity as "a generous Disposition to relieve

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, chapters xii and xiii, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742, p.270 and p.277.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book 111, ch.v, op. cit., p.89.



the Distressed", and although he was the dupe of Peter Pounce's "goodness", he did leap out onto the road.<sup>1</sup>

The arrival at Booby Hall, at the beginning of the fourth book, has a structural and a symbolic function. The threads of the plot are drawn together, and the quality of the two journeys to the West differentiated. Lady Booby's welcome was inspired by self-interest, for during her long absence, all rents had been drafted to London, but the Parson's welcome was inspired by affection. All his parishioners

flocked about him like dutiful children round an indulgent Parent, and vied with each other in Demonstrations of Duty and Love.

Joseph and Fanny too, had a hearty welcome, from all who /aw them. In /hort, no three Per/ons could be more kindly received, as indeed none ever more de/erved to be univer/ally beloved.<sup>2</sup>

Fanny has often been dismissed as a cardboard character, but I think this is because her role as Pamela's sister has not been taken into account. Pamela was excessively literate, and used her literacy to extol her own virtue, while professing humility. Fanny was illiterate, but her whole life reflected her virtue and humility. Pamela wrote of her beauty, with great modesty, but Fanny was more beautiful than any woman in the fictional world of Joseph Andrews, including Pamela. The instant she heard

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book 111, ch. xii, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742, p.164.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.i, op. cit., pp.170 - 1.



that Joseph was ill, she

abandoned the Cow /he was milking, and taking with her a little Bundle of Clothes under her Arm, and all the Money /he was worth in her own Pur/e, without consulting any one, immediately /et forward, in pur/uit of One, whom, notwithstanding her /hyme/s to the Par/on, /he loved with inexpressible Violence, though with the pure/t and mo/t delicate Pa/ion.<sup>1</sup>

Even if her action was foolish, her courage was admirable, and possibly greater than Sophia's, for she had no maid to protect her. Although she attracted every man who saw her, she was never tempted to look higher than a footman. When Joseph came early in the morning to visit her, after his stay at Booby Hall, she did not know the meaning of vanity or affectation, but leaped from her bed, dressed herself in a few minutes, and went down to him. She had waited for him until midnight, but spoke no word of reproach.<sup>2</sup>

Her wedding was memorable for her extraordinary and unaffected modesty, and for the true Christian piety of Adams. She was a bride who needed no ornament. If the reader can

conceive Youth, Health, Bloom, Beauty, Neatne/s, and Innocence in her Bridal-Bed; conceive all the/e in their utmost Perfection, and you may place the charming Fanny's Picture before your eyes.<sup>3</sup>

Fanny was as chaste as Pamela, but her virginity is not equated with her virtue, nor is the preservation of virginity associated with material reward. The

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<sup>1</sup> Book 11, ch.x, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742, p.237.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.vi, op. cit., p.206.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.xvi, op. cit., pp.307 - 8.



fact that she does rise in the world is "Providential".

Pamela is thus the unseen presence, the definition of virtue against which Fielding's wider definition can be measured. She is shown to be limited, but there is a substantial measure of agreement with Richardson. The implication is that he used the wrong method, and evidence which was too subjective to prove his case.

It is a trite but true Observation, that Examples work more forcibly on the Mind than Precepts: And if this be ju/t in what is odious and blameable, it is more /trongly so in what is amiable and prai/e-worthy.....A good Man therefore is a /tanding Le//on to all his Acquaintance, and of far greater u/e in that narrow Circle than a good Book. 1

Fielding was doing two things in Joseph Andrews, he was correcting the formlessness of Pamela, The Apology<sub>2</sub>, and even Don Quixote, and he was using exemplars to define his own concept of virtue and compare it with Richardson's. There is thus no trace of imitation in the work, no burlesque, except in the mock-heroic battles, and the minimum of parody. The name "Pamela" is used because it expresses an abstract idea, and as such it has a thematic importance in Joseph Andrews.

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1 Book 1, ch.i, Joseph Andrews, London, 1742, pp.1 - 2.

2 Colly Cibber, An Apology for his Life, London.



B: Tom Jones.

Woman is as central in Joseph Andrews as she is in Tom Jones, but less obviously, because of two major differences. The first is thematic. Pamela functions more as an abstract idea than as a character, and Fanny, although she is a moral focal point, plays a comparatively passive role in the male-dominated action. Sophia, on the other hand, is a complex personification of virtue and wisdom, and plays a major role in the action. The second is structural. Joseph Andrews is carefully-constructed in the tradition of the drama, its four books corresponding to the four acts of a play, its chapters to rapidly-changing and contrasted scenes, with its ultimate model probably the Odyssey, but the plot is never obtrusive, or constricting to characterization. For example, the unseen Pamela of the first books is balanced by her actual presence in the fourth book, the temptation of Joseph by Lady Booby in the city, by the same temptation in the country, and the two central books allow Fanny to demonstrate virtue in action, as a preparation for the comparison with Pamela, who is already famous for her virtue, in the fourth. Parson Adams develops fully, as he moves through the countryside with almost the same freedom as Don Quixote. On the other hand, the plot of Tom Jones not only has what may well be a constricting effect on characterization, but its meaning, if taken alone, almost cancels out Fielding's aims.



Fielding's intentions, as expressed in his Dedication, were to display the beauty of virtue in order to attract mankind, to convince men that their true interest lies in the pursuit of virtue, and to laugh men out of their favourite vices and follies. Because it was easier to make good men wise, than to make bad men good, he

endeavoured /trongly to inculcate, that  
Virtue and Innocence can /carce ever be  
injured but by Indi/cretion; and that it  
is this alone which often betrays them  
into the Snares that Deceit and Villainy  
/pread for them. 1

The perfection of the plot, and the numerous prefaces, have at least four effects on the meaning. First, Fielding's method of characterization was to allocate humours to each person to make them seem human. Although they were created to enact the plot, when he gave them life, he ran the risk that his artificial structure would sometimes conflict with their personalities. As soon as this occurred, it was inevitable that meaning would be distorted. Secondly, his personal intrusion as commentator, even within the text, implies a recognition that neither plot nor characters are capable of carrying the meaning unaided. Thirdly, if we are to learn by observing events and characters we must believe in the world he has created, but his obtrusive presence has a distancing effect. Fourthly, when the reader ceases to admire the virtuosity of the author as compère, and to pity the

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<sup>1</sup> Dedication, *The History of Tom Jones*, London, printed for A. Millar, 1749, pp.xiii-xiv.



limited understanding of the participants, he becomes aware that his own mind is being manipulated in much the same way, which may make him less receptive.

Allworthy and Sophia seem to be the ideal, Blifil is its opposite. Theoretically events were arranged so that Tom could learn prudence and religion, and when he became like the Squire, he would be worthy of Sophia. Yet, if we judge by deeds alone, the end-product of his quest lacked wisdom. He banished Jenny, Partridge and Tom on false evidence, and if goodness and innocence can only be injured by indiscretion, why was he deceived by Dr. Blifil, Captain Blifil, Bridget, Thwackum, Square and above all, by young Blifil? To confuse the definition still further, the Squire showed less humanity than Tom to the Seagrim family, even before the latter's "education", and at the end of the book, less Christian forgiveness.

The Christian concept of virtue is also distorted in its negative definition. Blifil had been born with a naturally evil heart. He was a hypocrite, acquisitive, and he absorbed the teachings of Thwackum and Square. According to Fielding, deceit is characterized by unusual self-control, a lack of strong passions, and a general distrust of others. Events such as the time-lapse before using the information about Black George, the proposed marriage with Sophia and the well-laid plans for Tom's destruction in London were used to illustrate these qualities. The thesis seems to be



that if a child has an inheritance of this kind, neither a benevolent example, the discovery that "crime does not pay", nor the forgiveness of his most injured victim, have the power to reform him. The tears he shed were those of self-pity, he confessed only because he found the evidence too strong for him, and the last we hear of him is that he had turned Methodist in the "hopes of marrying a very rich Widow of that sect".<sup>1</sup> Even if we agree that it is not easy to "make bad men good", to say that it is impossible is to deny the power of religion. The reader is less likely to be impressed by a moralist who is unable to convert even his own characters, than he would be by another Mrs. Jewkes.<sup>2</sup>

The meaning of virtue was extended by the comparison between Tom and Blifil in the episodes of Sophia's bird, Squire Allworthy's illness and the display of the Bible Tom had sold to help Black George. In each case Blifil had the appearance of virtue, Tom the reality. The Squire judged according to motive, but even this could be turned against Tom when the affair with Molly was discovered. In retrospect each action could be ascribed to lust rather than charity. Thus hypocrisy was better able to cause events than goodness of heart. Fielding said,

but to bring our Favourites out of their pre<sup>sent</sup> Angui<sup>sh</sup> and Di<sup>stres</sup>s, and to land them at la<sup>st</sup> on the Shore of Happine<sup>s</sup>, /eems.....a Ta<sup>k</sup> indeed /o hard that we do

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<sup>1</sup> Book VI, ch.xviii, Tom Jones, London, 1749,p.300.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.111, letters xv and xvi, Richardson's Pamela or, Virtue Rewarded, London, 1743, pp.67 - 87.



not undertake to execute it.....as to  
 poor Jones .....we almo t de pair of  
 bringing him to any good; 1

and he seems to mean that Tom would not have been  
 rescued in the real world.

Fielding's sexual ethics were more broadly-  
 based than Richardson's and he did not equate virtue  
 with chastity. Tom's motives, his sense of honour,  
 and the fact that he was never the seducer, were  
 taken as extenuating circumstances. Sophia was  
 far more perturbed by his use of her name in a public  
 place, than by his action in sleeping with another  
 woman. One apology was sufficient to excuse all  
 his transgressions and he felt no real guilt, except  
 when he thought he had committed incest. The  
 most difficult event for the reader to accept is  
 the affair with Lady Bellaston, for it seems out  
 of character for him to be a gigolo. In spite of  
 the humourous treatment of events, the generous offer  
 of the proceeds to the highwayman, and the excuse  
 that Sophia was unattainable at the time, the fact  
 is that his motives were sordidly economic, which  
 is again out of character. The same difficulty  
 is encountered when we try to fit him into the gen-  
 eral mould of Christian pilgrim, painfully learning  
 that by pursuing virtue, he will further his own  
 interests. If we admire him as he is, and pos-  
 sibly more than we admire Allworthy or even Sophia,  
 the incompatibility between plot and personality,  
 strains the moral. If we merely observe him as a  
 member of the species "naturally-good man", then the

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Book VI, ch.xvii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, pp.88-9.



lesson is sabotaged by the mechanistic device.

Bridget, Molly and Jenny do not change in themselves, but as events provide further information, the reader is forced to make a series of re-evaluations. In the process, the causal connections between events become apparent, and take on a new significance. For example, the first major event was the discovery of the foundling in Squire Allworthy's bed. The reader is introduced to Bridget as a virtuous, prudent woman, plain, in the "old-maid" age-group, and presumably worthy of her brother's affection. We note the Squire's absence in London, and Bridget's surprizing reaction to Tom, explained by,

Snce (sic) it was her Brother's Whim to adopt the little Brat, /he /uppo/ed little Ma/ter mu't be treated with great Tenderne/s; for her part, /he could not help thinking it was an Encouragement to Vice;<sup>1</sup>

Deborah censured the mother's impudence in "laying it to your worship". The misinterpretation of Bridget's feelings by those who wished to earn her favour, such as Thwackum and Square, led to the maltreatment of Tom, and because the Squire observed that she loved him and detested Blifil, his own affections altered in inverse relationship to hers, so that his mind was prepared to accept Tom's disgrace. Deborah's comment presaged the belief that Tom was the Squire's natural son, giving him a status which was exploited by Partridge during the journey to London.

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<sup>1</sup>

Vol.1, Book 1, ch.v, Tom Jones, London, 1749,p.24.



The next modification of our view of Bridget occurs during the chapters on the Blifil brothers. While her interest in Dr. Blifil seemed religious, her actions must have been on the same moral plane as Molly's. She transferred her affections from the doctor to the captain, married him within a month, without informing her brother, then produced a perfectly-formed baby eight months later. Later we discover that she had already had a child by Summer,

the Son of a Clergyman of great Learning  
and Virtue, <sup>1</sup>

who had been brought up in their own home. Allworthy had the highest opinion of him, and would have had no objection to marriage, but she expressed indignation at the suggestion. He may not have been her first lover, but it seems surprizing that not even his breach of hospitality was condemned by the Squire. Bridget must have been an accomplished hypocrite. If these were the parents Tom needed to elevate him to the rank of gentleman, they were dubious examples of the beauty of virtue.

Jenny was, like Deborah a servant, but she does not seem to be a true member of the species, possibly because of her learning. At first her behaviour seems admirable, particularly when contrasted with Deborah's, she refused to betray the "wicked father", was affected by Allworthy's sermon on chastity, and seemed determined to profit by his

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. VI, Book XVIII, ch. vii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p. 217.



merciful treatment. We learn that she had nursed Bridget during a "violent fit of illness" and had been in the house the day before Tom's discovery. Her intellect and fine clothes made her a natural victim of the "mob" and her education linked with Partridge, so that both could be banished into positions from which they would re-enter the plot. When we meet her as Mrs. Waters, her reaction to the sermon loses sincerity and we find that she had been well-paid not to betray Bridget. Yet we continue to find her a sympathetic character, particularly when she makes a generous re-payment of the debt she owed Tom for saving her life, by her actions at the end of the book.

Molly appeared first as a young and innocent girl, betrayed by her passion for Tom. The event was caused by the affair of Black George. This is linked with Tom's lack of response to Sophia's charms, the determination to remain loyal even after the discovery of his real feelings, the Churchyard battle which attracted Square, and the disastrous temptation during the Squire's illness. Fielding uses hints to prepare us for the discovery of Square, accounts for the elder sister's action, reveals the questionable conduct of the mother and at last shows that "Will had, in reality, the sole Possession of Molly's Affection, while Jones and Square were almost equally Sacrifices to her Interest, and to her Pride", but he does not explain what happened to the baby, why the Squire

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 11, Book V, ch. vi, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p. 157.



would have sent her to Bridewell, without showing any of the mercy he extended to Jenny, and why Tom gave more generously to Molly, at the end of the book, than to any other member of the family.

Events, as enacted by these characters, qualify the definition of virtue to such an extent, that it is almost meaningless. Does Fielding mean that if a man banishes a child into the world, as a vagabond, it does not matter if he marries Sophia, or is hanged, provided the motive for the action was good? While it is little less than blasphemy to question Sophia's chastity, what would have happened if she had been reconciled with Tom at Upton? What was the object of her pursuit if she believed that a father had a negative right in marriage and if she therefore would never marry without his consent? Her code of ethics and Tom's demanded that she should avoid him during her journey to London.

Does the plot laugh men out of their favourite vices and follies? Any serious consideration of Fielding's social criticism would be more likely to result in despair than in laughter. The digression of the man on the hill was a negative analogy to Tom's life, which also extended the criticism of London to vicious depths not experienced by Tom, but while the solution of withdrawal from mankind is rejected both verbally, and in action, was this an older, defeated version of Tom?

Town life was more depraved than country life, but this was the result more of sophistication than of virtue. Every vice could be duplicated, except perhaps that of duelling which was rejected by Squire Western. The masquerade did not hide



identity, but in the village, masks were more difficult to penetrate. Lord Fellamar was no worse than Squire Western, for the latter was a drunken profligate, who loved his daughter a little less than he loved his dogs, and treated her in much the same way. He changed his feeling for Tom with the same ease as Honour changed mistresses.

The plot, the events and the causal link between them do not seem to achieve Fielding's moral intention. By the end of the book his aim has been reduced to a penetrating exposure of eighteenth-century society. The positive values affirmed seem to offer practical advice rather than a coherent moral philosophy. Marriages should be based upon love, providing the limits of class and the negative rights of a father have been observed. Gentlemen are more likely to possess good qualities than servants. Men are as likely to be led into error by excessive religion as they are by philosophy. Actions, even if they involve highway robbery, should be judged by motive. Chastity is far less important than good nature. The world is so evil that only those with innate virtue can be saved, and even they must rely upon the intervention of Providence.

I began this Dissertation by saying that either Tom Jones, Fielding's acknowledged masterpiece, was flawed at its moral centre, or the book had been misinterpreted. The purely allegorical interpretation is equally unsatisfactory, mainly because "Allworthy" is inadequate as the end-product of the quest. I suggest that there is more irony in the portrayal of the Squire than critics have allowed, and that he is not the moral norm of the book. I do not believe that Fielding's aims were compromised by his performance, or that he



would have allowed his carefully-controlled plot to do violence to his moral intentions, and I think that the misinterpretation has arisen through a failure to appreciate the role of Sophia. She is the object of Tom's quest, and symbolically he moves away from Allworthy towards her. The "west" is also a part of her name, traditionally associated with the Golden Age.<sup>1</sup> The virtues of the Squire are subsumed in her, and transcended by her character. There is no suggestion of irony in her portrayal, and the words of the Dedication can be applied to her, and to no other character.<sup>2</sup> She is the personification of the beauty of virtue, and again and again she attracts "the admiration of mankind". Because she was not indiscreet, her virtue and innocence acted as a shield against the combined persecutions of her father, her aunt, Lady Bellaston, and Lord Fallamar.

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<sup>1</sup> See footnote on p.66 of this Dissertation. J.B. Leishman, in The Art of Marvell's Poetry, London, 1968, summarizes as follows; on p.297.

Among the ancient Greeks it was an article of belief that perfect justice and holiness were to be found only among certain barbarous peoples at the extreme edge of the earth (i.e. in the West). For, although here and there appeared philosophers who believed in progress and looked back upon barbarism, the general and popular belief did not see mankind as continually progressing, but rather as having fallen further and further away from an original state of virtue and happiness. This belief, merely implied in that often repeated Homeric phrase "such as men are now"...finds its clearest expression in Hesiod who, in the Works and Days (ll. 109 - 201) describes five races of men: those of the Golden Age, who lived like the gods, without labour or sorrow.....

<sup>2</sup> See page 79 of this Dissertation.



Fielding is intensely serious, although stylistically humorous, when he uses the language of the "sublime" to introduce his heroine. The flowers do her honour, the feathered choristers celebrate her appearance,

adorned with all the Charms in which Nature can array her; bedecked with Beauty, Youth, Sprightline/s, Innocence, Mode/ty, and Tenderne/s, breathing Sweetne/s from her ro/y Lips, and darting Brightne/s from her Sparkling Eyes..

Her complexion had rather more of the lily than of the rose,

but when Exerci/e, or Mode/ty, encrea/ed her natural Colour, no Vermilion could equal it.

Her mind was in every way the equal of her person. When she smiled, the sweetness of her temper

diffu/ed that Glory over her Countenance, which no Regularity of Features can give.<sup>1</sup>

Sophia, unlike Allworthy, was never deceived by hypocrisy. When it "was the universal opinion of all Mr. Allworthy's family that "Tom was born to be hanged, she had a "plain preference" for him. "The vices of this young man were, moreover, heightened, by the disadvantageous light in which they appeared, when opposed to the virtues of Master Blifil, his companion: a youth of so different a cast from little Jones, that not only the family, but all the neighbourhood resounded his praises." Blifil was loved by everyone who knew him, whilst Tom was universally disliked. Yet

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.ii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, pp.8 - 12.



Sophia, when very young, discerned that Tom, though an idle, thoughtless, rattling rascal, was nobody'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 only of one single person, himself.

The little bird is a complex symbol, differentiating the characters of Tom and Blifil, linking Tom and Sophia in a relationship which foreshadows their love, flying from the hand of Blifil as Sophia was to later, and being devoured as she would have been by his lust, had he succeeded in trapping her into marriage. Sophia's main business was to feed and tend it, she called it little Tommy, fed it out of her hand, let it perch on her finger, and allowed it to lie contented in her bosom.<sup>1</sup> Tom too would be spiritually nurtured and tended by her. When Blifil gave the bird its "liberty" she was under no illusions about his motives, but Allworthy believed "he acted rather from a generous than unworthy Motive".<sup>2</sup> Sophia honoured Tom Jones, and scorned Master Blifil, almost as soon as she knew the meaning of those two words. She had been absent with her aunt for three years when the episode of the partridge occurred. She said

I hate the Name of Ma/ter Blifil, as I do whatever is ba/e and treacherous; and I wonder Mr Allworthy would /uffer that old barbarous Schoolma/ter to puni/h a poor Boy /o cruelly for what was only the Effect of his Good-nature.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.iii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.iv, op. cit., p.21.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.v, op. cit., p.28.



The description of Allworthy's household makes it clear that whatever happiness Tom had, must have been in the company of Black George and his family, or with the Westerns. The loneliness and persecution which he suffered as a result of the rivalry over Bridget, the hypocrisy of Blifil, the peculiar failure of his mother to protect him, and the blindness of Allworthy, would be tragic, if it were not disguised by the comic medium. Allworthy was aware of the vicious behaviour of his employees, but his intervention on Tom's behalf was sporadic rather than effective, and his affection for Tom diminished as his love for Blifil grew. Sophia, on the other hand, lost her heart "irretrievably" before she "suspected it was in danger".<sup>1</sup>

Sophia's charity is shown in her behaviour to the Seagrim family. She pleaded with her father to employ Black George, sent Molly a sack, which was a superior type of garment, and offered her a position as maid. Her wisdom is shown as she weighs the evidence of Tom's involvement with Molly. She noted the change of colour when he heard of the girl's predicament, and his abrupt departure. Her father's statement had to be corroborated by Honour, before she reached a conclusion. She then made determined efforts to overcome her passion with reason, and when she found her love too deep for argument, decided to go to her aunt to avoid him. Her fall while hunting, his gallant behaviour and the broken arm overcame her resolutions and left her more deeply in love than ever. At the same time he became conscious

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<sup>1</sup>

Vol. 11, Book IV, ch. v, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p. 30



of his true feelings, which she soon discovered through Mrs. Honour's description of his behaviour with her muff.<sup>1</sup> Although we are not allowed to enter into Sophia's consciousness, the symbol of the muff and its movement between the lovers, the carefully-balanced statements, and the almost clinically accurate observations, build up a sense of psychological tension.

Tom, like Sophia, fought against his love, for he saw no hope of obtaining Western's consent, and was too honourable to defy him. The muff, which had acted as a catalyst to allow the "god of love" to march in in triumph, was symbolically thrown into the fire by Western.

Sophia in/tantly /tarted up, and with  
the utmo/t Eagerne/s recovered it from  
the Flames.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike Allworthy, she was not deceived by Tom's behaviour. He shunned her, showed coldness towards her, and was unusually silent, but she understood his reasons and esteemed and pitied him.<sup>3</sup> The associations evoked by the memory of the little bird forced him into an incoherent declaration of love. They both "tottered" towards the house, the Lover not once daring to /squeeze the Hand of his Mi/tre/s, tho' it was locked in his. <sup>4</sup>

She was distressed when she heard that Tom's fight with Blifil and Thwackum had been in defence of

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.xiii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.97.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book V, ch.iv, op. cit., p.137.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.11, Book V, ch.vi, op. cit., p.161.

<sup>4</sup> Vol.11, Book V, ch.vi, op. cit., p.166.



Molly, but her love was so forgiving, that almost immediately afterwards, she could not refrain from "tender looks".<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Western's belief that she understood her niece drew a confession from Sophia which was to initiate an era of persecution. She said that Tom was

So brave, and yet /o gentle; /o witty,  
yet /o inoffen/ive; /o humane, /o civil,  
/o genteel, /o hand/ome! What /ignifies  
his being base born, when compared with  
/uch Qualifications as the/e?<sup>2</sup>

Her perspicacity was remarkable, for it took Allworthy the rest of the novel, to reach the same conclusion. Even then we do not know if he would have shown a similar tolerance of base birth.

The martyrdom of Sophia, before her flight, has sometimes been compared unfavourably with Richardson's treatment of the same theme in Clarissa. Richardson's exploration of Clarissa's consciousness is so masterly, that she attains the stature of a tragic heroine, and her decision to leave home can be seen as her "fatal flaw" or "error". Because Sophia's sufferings are described objectively, and because Fielding is so obviously in control, her characterization is circumscribed. I think that this failure to explore the situation has been one of the factors which has led to a misinterpretation of Sophia's role. The reader has been predisposed to be amused by the escapades of the

<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book VI, ch.ii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.229.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book VI, ch.v, op. cit., p.257.



hero, rather than to be edified by the quiet courage and virtue of the heroine. Tom's vitality is more apparent than real, but Sophia, probably because she was inspired by a real person, is a more "rounded" character.<sup>1</sup> The distancing effect of the comic genre, and the exigencies of the plot, have tended to obscure this fact. Her flight is not a "fatal flaw" or "error", but an indication of her spirit.

The characterization of Western throws a comic veil over his cruelty and tyranny. He loved his daughter, after his horses and dogs, but if she refused to marry Blifil, he would cut her off completely, and even if he saw her "expiring with famine in the street" he would not relieve her "with a morsel of bread".<sup>2</sup> He would force her into Blifil's arms, just as her mother had been forced into his. She had been squeamish too, but it would all be over in twenty-four hours, for Blifil was a "bri/k young Man".<sup>3</sup> The scene when Sophia responded to his extravagant display of affection, by falling on her knees and begging him not to make her the most miserable creature on earth, has a pathos which is scarcely "comic".<sup>4</sup> She was not defiant, and would carry her thoughts to the grave, all she asked was the negative right

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<sup>1</sup> Used in E.M. Forster's sense, Aspects of the Novel, Pelican Books, 1963, pp.81 - 5.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book VI, ch.vii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.276.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.11, Book VI, ch.x, op. cit., p.270.

<sup>4</sup> Vol.11, Book VI, ch.vii, op. cit., p.275.



to refuse a man she detested. Western's behaviour is all the more despicable, if we return again to the episode of the little bird. He told Blifil that if a son of his had behaved in such a manner, "his backside would be well flea'd".

"Pox! you have neither of you mentioned a Word of that poor Lad who de/erves to be commended. To venture breaking his Neck to oblige my Girl, was a generous /pirited A&tion; I have Learning enough to /ee that. D - n me, here's Tom's Health, I /hall love the Boy for it the longe/t Day I have to live."<sup>1</sup>

His violence culminated in the blow which left his daughter prostrate on the ground, the tears trickling from her eyes, and the blood running from her lips.<sup>2</sup> Even then she could only think of the dreadful consequences of her disobedience, for her own ruin was her least concern. Tom said that her father was exacting a power which nature had not given him, and we can only guess at the intensity of her emotion as she faints in his arms.

Sophia's position as a young girl, imprisoned in a home which had suddenly become a hostile environment, torn between her hopeless love for Tom and her deep affection for her father, isolated both physically and mentally from those around her, and in despair because she thought she had been abandoned by the man she loved, brought her to a moment when she could "detest" all mankind". Honour soon aroused her courage by calling Tom a bastard

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.iv, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.25.

<sup>2</sup> Vol11, Book VI, ch. viii, op. cit., p.278.



and praising Blifil.

'Hold your bla<sup>f</sup>phemous Tongue', cries Sophia, how dare you mention his Name with Disre<sup>p</sup>ect before me? He u<sup>s</sup>e me ill? No, his poor bleeding Heart /uffered more when he writ the cruel Words, than mine from reading them. O! he is all heroic Virtue, and angelic Goodne<sup>s</sup>s. I am a<sup>f</sup>hamed of the Weakne<sup>s</sup>s of my own pa<sup>f</sup>ion, for blaming what I ought to admire. - O Honour! it it my Good only which he con<sup>f</sup>ults. To my Interest he /ac-rifices both him<sup>s</sup>elf and me - 1

She was too generous to be rich, but she would send all she had to help him. When her father and her aunt quarrelled, she was too honest to take advantage of it, for she lacked those arts of deception, which are so often used by politic females.<sup>2</sup>

Sophia's simplicity was a match for Blifil's cunning and she was wise enough to place no confidence in him. He was convinced of her hatred and scorn, but the prospect of rifling her charms added to his lust, and increased his delight. When she heard from Honour that she was to be married in the morning, she determined to leave that night. She would take refuge with Lady Bellaston who had called her a silly country girl for bowing to her father's authority.<sup>3</sup> She was wise too, in her estimate of Honour's loyalty, and knowing that her actions would be dictated by expediency, she offered

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<sup>1</sup> Vol 11, Book VI, ch.xiii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.318.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.111, Book VII, ch.iii, op. cit., p.24.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.111, Book VII, ch.vii, op. cit., p.51.



to reward her "to the very utmost" of her power. Fortunately events conspired to persuade Honour to keep faith with her mistress, and to bring their plans to a successful conclusion. Sophia succeeded admirably in her deceit, considering it was the first she had ever practised.<sup>1</sup>

Although Sophia found the temptation to make a heroic sacrifice of herself in order to please her father, a difficult one to withstand, she walked out into the cold, as the clock struck midnight, alone, with no coach awaiting her, and with no prospect of marrying the man she loved. She relied solely upon her own courage, and a pistol which she had taken for defence, and showed no fear even when a man loomed out of the darkness, instead of the expected Honour. On the other hand, when Clarissa left home, a coach was awaiting her, and she thought she was going to the arms of a man who would love and protect her.

Sophia's arrival at Upton introduces an important new concept in her characterization. For the first time we see the effect she has upon strangers, the way in which the beauty of virtue attracts mankind. There is no satiric analogy between her behaviour and that of her maid, but rather a total contrast. Fielding uses the symbolism of their hands to differentiate the quality of natural good-breeding, from that which is assumed. Sophia's had "every property of snow"

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 111, Book V11, ch. ix, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p. 66.



except that of melting, but Honour's were like a "piece of frozen beef".<sup>1</sup> Although Sophia had no coach and six or coronet to herald her arrival, all sang praises to her beauty and goodness, and even the post-boy said that she must be good because she had mercy upon dumb creatures.<sup>2</sup> The effect is illustrated again in the next inn, where she is mistaken for Jenny Cameron. The maid said that if ever there was an angel upon earth, she was now above stairs.<sup>3</sup>

Sophia is never idealized. She had heard news of Tom on the road, and for a time was tempted to follow him, for which the reader must, according to Fielding, have condemned her for a wanton baggage. But, he explains, her mind was in a confused state, distracted between hope and fear, her duty and love of her father, her hatred of Blifil, and her compassion and love for Jones.<sup>4</sup> She listened to the prudent advice of her maid and determined to go to Gloucester, then London. The fact that she arrived at Upton was not an instance of indiscretion, but of the operation of Providence, and it is thus raised above any individual psychological interpretation. Ironically, because Western had such a poor opinion of her virtue that it did not occur to him that she would resist this temptation, he followed Tom, and thus almost over-

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.IV, Book X, ch.iii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.25.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.IV, Book X, ch.iii, op. cit., p.28.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.IV, Book XI, ch.iii, op.cit., p.112.

<sup>4</sup> Vol.IV, Book X, ch.ix, op. cit., p.83.



took his daughter. Her behaviour, when she was given proof of Tom's infidelity with Mrs. Waters, is another example of her lovably human qualities, and of her inexhaustible powers of forgiveness. She was outraged for non-ethical and illogical reasons, and sent the muff to him, in what appears to be a fit of pique.<sup>1</sup> This had been her constant companion by day, and her bedfellow by night, so the symbolism implies a casting out of love from her heart, yet we find her in the other Inn, afraid of her father, but far from being afraid of being overtaken by Jones. This, Fielding explains, was a secret spontaneous emotion of the soul, to which the reason is often a stranger.<sup>2</sup>

The possibility of true forgiveness is realized at the accidental meeting at Lady Bellaston's house. Tom's assignation was forgotten when he saw Sophia, he threw himself on his knees asking her pardon, in fact he would scarce wish her to pardon him, but to cast away every thought of him.

Let the Remembrance of what paſt at Upton  
blot me for ever from your Mind -

She trembled at the mention of the Inn and treated him with disdain, although in her heart she was glad to hear that he would never see the lady again.

To have my Name traduced in Public; in  
Inns, among the meanest Vulgar! to  
have any little Favours, that my unguard-  
ed Heart may have too lightly betray'd  
me to grant, boasted of there! Nay,  
even to hear that you had been forced  
to fly from my Love! <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See page 82 of this Dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. IV, Book XI, ch. iii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. V, Book XII, ch. ii, op. cit., pp. 92 - 3.



She forgave him, and would gladly have suffered ruin by his side, had it not been for her duty to her father. She had already accepted the affair with Molly, so it is not inconsistent to accept Mrs Waters. She does not condone Tom's incontinence, but makes allowances for human nature and for extenuating circumstances. Her own chastity must remain inviolate, for it is part of the moral ideal which she represents, an ideal which includes a Christian forgiveness which is so all-embracing that even the affair with Lady Bellaston is accepted. The more Tom sinned, the greater the merit of Sophia, and although she is the personification of virtue, she avoids Pamela's complacency, and is never tempted to preach. At the same time she is gentle, feminine, and ready to defer to masculine superiority in "understanding".

The near rape by Lord Fellamer does not seem to support Fielding's contention that it is only indiscretion which will betray the virtuous into the "snares that deceit and villainy" spread for them. Sophia was not guilty of indiscretion, but was the victim of Lady Bellaston's jealousy. I think that the significance of the episode lies in the fact that Sophia was the innocent victim of the consequences of Tom's sin. Nothing could have exceeded the horror he would have felt, had the attempt succeeded. Fortunately the noble lord was foiled by the arrival of Squire Western. He showed his normal lack of sensibility when he did not even notice that his daughter had collapsed into a chair, pale, breathless, bursting with indig-



nation, affrighted, yet more rejoiced at his arrival. He was only restrained from violence by the superior strength of Parson Supple. "If my Death will make you happy, Sir, answered Sophia, you will /hortly be /o." She never allowed her principles to be compromised either by her love for Tom, or her fear of her father. Western promised her the finest clothes, jewels, a coach and six and half his estate if she would marry to please him, but she was immune to bribery. She would promise to marry no-one while he lived, to devote her life to his service, but further than that she would not go.

Sophia's claim to be the moral centre of Tom Jones rests partly upon her character, and partly on her wisdom. She was the only person never deceived by Blifil, her power of forgiveness and depth of charity was greater than Allworthy's, she was never misled by Tom's actions, nor did she misconstrue his motives. She exemplifies the values outlined in the Dedication, and she is the only end-product of Tom's quest, for in her there is a fusion of natural goodness, an almost angelic beauty of mind and body, and a wisdom which transcends her years.

Fielding's method, as I have shown in the plays, and in Joseph Andrews, was to define virtue through positive and negative examples, isolating degrees of virtue and vice, and not only confining himself to the extremes. Thus his definition is far broader than Richardson's. In the following pages I have separated the female characters in Tom Jones in order to see how they relate to Sophia,

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.V, Book XV, ch.v, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.228.



and what effect they have on the definition of virtue which she embodies. I shall also analyze the lesser female characters, who together form a species, and who are perhaps his greatest claim to the interest of social historians.

(i) Ladies of Quality.

(a) Miss Bridget Allworthy.

Bridget is almost unique in Fielding's art. On the one hand she is a type of female hypocrisy and affectation, and on the other she has an implied character which is inconsistent with this. She must have been attractive enough to rouse the love, or appetite, of Summers, and was naturally good enough to distinguish between Tom and Blifil, and to feel affection for the boy who was despised by all others except Allworthy, and of course, Sophia. She is too complex to be a type, yet too incomplete to be a psychological entity, too flawed as a character to be part of the generalized study of human nature, too shadowy to be convincing, and we do not know if Fielding departed from his own rules of decorum in the interests of the plot, or if he intended to leave her with an aura of the mysterious.

Fielding's portrait of Bridget is, at first, satiric, analytical and in no way ambiguous. Hogarth's print of a Winter's Morning describes her.<sup>1</sup> She treated beauty with contempt, because she did

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<sup>1</sup> Vol 1, Book 1, ch.ii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.63. See also W.L.Dorn's Competition for Empire, New York, 1965 for discussion of Hogarth's relationship to "representations on the stage", p.249.



not possess that quality, her prudence was exemplary, because in her case there was not "the least danger" and her virtue was so well-known that she amazed all those who knew her when she did not treat Tom as a noxious animal. She was intelligent enough to know that she was acting out of character and to pretend deference to the Squire. Whatever she said about the unknown mother we know, in retrospect, should have been directed against herself,<sup>1</sup> yet at no time is there any evidence of guilt. I think we have to go back to Mrs. Modern and her fear of a loss of reputation, in order to understand.<sup>2</sup> At one level, Bridget is sincere, for as long as she has the appearance of virtue, she is virtuous, at another she is a consummate hypocrite, worthy to be the mother of Blifil.

Bridget listened at the keyhole to hear the outcome of the interview with Jenny. This is also a part of the double irony, for the action was insignificant in itself, and a part of her normal routine, yet the outcome was of vital interest to her. With a smile and a sweet voice, she reproved Mrs. Deborah's curiosity about the father, and commended the honour and spirit with which Jenny had acted. We do not know if she would have intervened if the Squire had decided to send Jenny to Bridewell, but she was unscrupulous enough to expose the girl to all the risk and shame which should have been her own. She had a rudimentary code of hon-

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 1, ch.iv, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.21.

<sup>2</sup> See page 38 of this Dissertation.



our, for she did pay Jenny well, and later compensated Partridge. Jenny's account of the transaction is a sympathetic reinterpretation of Bridget's action, which is oddly at variance with the earlier chapters.<sup>1</sup>

The artful Bridget is difficult to reconcile with the simple Bridget who was duped by the Blifil brothers. She was delighted by Dr. Blifil, because he had the appearance of religion, and engaged in many religious controversies with him. She read much divinity, was grave and solemn, and seemed to deserve the name of saint equally with her namesake. Yet this is an almost Freudian analysis of the sex drive, and the confusion between her inner frustrations and her overt profession of faith. Dr. Blifil was married, so unfortunately could not take advantage of the situation, but he remembered his brother, who was thirty-five years old, well-built, with a scar on his forehead. He was a half-pay officer, who had had an academic education because his father had decreed him for holy orders, and he wanted all that elegance and beauty, which is the very reverse of clumsy strength. He no sooner saw her passion than he quickly returned it.<sup>2</sup> Bridget had learned nothing from the birth of Tom, for

Eight Months after the Celebration of the  
Nuptials

she was

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. VI, Book XV111, ch.vii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, pp.219 - 225.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1, Book 1, ch.x and ch.xi, op.cit., pp.55-62.



by rea/on of a Fright, delivered of  
a fine Boy

who was perfect, though "a Month before its full  
Time" the midwife discovered.<sup>1</sup>

We know that Bridget hated her husband  
and that her hatred was later extended to the son  
she bore him, Blifil. Tom, on the other hand,  
gave her such delight, that as he matured the whole  
country began to talk and he was thought of as a  
rival to Square and Thwackum.<sup>2</sup> The obvious con-  
clusion seems to be that the union with Summer was  
one of love, not lust. Allworthy said

I /hould have willingly con/ented to a  
Match between them; but /he expre/t the  
highe/t Di /dain of my unkind Su/picion,  
as she called it, /o that I never more  
/poke on the Subje/t.<sup>3</sup>

Why then did the marriage not take place? Tom  
even loved Blifil for many years so why did he not  
respond to her love? When the news of her death  
was brought to Allworthy, his only reaction was  
anger with Blifil, for risking the life of the sick  
man. Even Allworthy seemed to have little feeling  
for her, for he received the "News with Concern,  
with Patience, and with Resignation", dropped a  
"tender Tear then compo/ed his Countenance, and at  
la/t cried 'The Lord's Will be done in every thing.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol 1, Book 11, ch.ii, Tom Jones, London, 1749,  
pp.84 - 5.

<sup>2</sup> Vol 1, Book 111, ch.vi, op. cit., p.194.

<sup>3</sup> Vol VI, Book XV11, ch.vii, op. cit., pp.222-3.

<sup>4</sup> Vol 11, Book V, ch.viii, op. cit., p.187.



I am left with the impression that Bridget is an unsatisfactory element in a novel which is remarkable for the consistency of its characterization. She is a highly-effective device for the ironic presentation of "virtue", but she cannot at the same time carry so many different levels of meaning, without disrupting the harmony which should exist between plot and character.

(b) Di Western, Lady Bellaston and Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

Di Western and Lady Bellaston had had all the "advantages" of a town education, while Sophia was all simplicity. Harriet Fitzpatrick and Sophia had both been pupils of Di Western, but Harriet had shown greater aptitude in the ways of the world. Their respective reactions to the environment are summed up by the names "Miss Giddy" and "Miss Graveairs". Di Western is also the link between the cousins and Lady Ballaston. The three ladies together form a composite portrait of the undesirable elements in "high life", and through their negative examples help to define the quality of Sophia's virtue. Di Western and Harriet are less vicious than Lady Bellaston, who is more closely identified with the city. In Harriet we see the consequences of a rebellion against the negative rights of parents, and of an irresponsible choice of marriage-partner.

Di Western had lived about the Court, and had seen the world,



Hence /he had acquired all that Know-  
ledge which the /aid World u/ually com-  
municates; and was a perfect Mi/tre/s  
of Manners, Cu/toms, Ceremonies, and  
Fa/hions; nor did her Erudition /top  
here. She had con/iderably improved  
her Mind by Study.

She had read all the modern plays, operas, oratorios,  
poems and romances, the political pamphlets and jour-  
nals, and had studied the history of England and of  
Rome. Her masculine person, added to her manner  
and learning, possibly prevented the other sex from  
regarding her, notwithstanding her petticoats, in the  
light of a woman. Her knowledge of love was wide,  
but theoretical and

no Species of di/gui/e or Affectation  
had e/caped her Notice; but as to the  
plain /imple Workings of hone/t Nature,  
as /he had never /een any /uch, /he  
could know but little of them.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, she misinterpreted Sophia's behaviour,  
and told her brother that she was desperately in  
love with Blifil. After a series of misunderstand-  
ings, during which her political abilities blinded  
her to the truth, she at last discovered that Sophia  
loved Tom, and thundered forth

And is it po//ible you can think of  
di/gracing your Family by allying your-  
/elf to a Ba/tard? Can the Blood of  
the We/terns /ubmit to /uch Contamination!<sup>2</sup>

She was no more affected by Sophia's grief than her  
brother and her rage was as violent as his, the only

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book VI, ch.ii, Tom Jones, London,  
1749, pp.229 - 30 for the first quotation and p.231  
for the second.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book VI, ch.v, op. cit., p.258.



noticeable difference between them being her affectation. She preached prudence to Sophia, recommending the example of the polite world, where love is at present entirely laughed at, and where women

consider Matrimony, as Men do Offices of Public Trust, only as the Means of making their Fortunes, and of advancing themselves in the World.<sup>1</sup>

She was disdainful when she heard that Western had locked Sophia in her room, not because she felt any pity, but because English women are no slaves. Convinced that Sophia had a violent passion which she could never satisfy with honour, she determined to expedite the marriage in order to preserve the family name. Sophia was to consider her as Socrates,

who, according to her, did not argue with his scholars.<sup>2</sup> Thus she exposed the limitations of her learning, just as she had exposed the ugly reality which lay beneath her veneer of sophistication. Her vanity becomes evident in the quarrel between Honour and her maid. Honour had said that Sophia was younger and ten thousand times more handsome than her aunt, a truth which merited instant dismissal, and if possible, committal to Bridewell. Yet she had refused to prosecute a highwayman because he said "such handsome Beauties as you, don't want Jewels to let them off, and be damned to you".<sup>3</sup>

Lady Bellaston was in the autumn of life, wore all the gaiety of youth both in dress and in manner, and had artificial roses in her cheeks.

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book VI, ch.xiii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.314.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.111, Book VII, ch.iii, op. cit., p.14.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.111, Book VII, ch.ix, op. cit., p.63.



She received Sophia gladly, applauded her resolution, and promised her all the protection which it was in her power to give. Her age and her single state was associated with the same strong sex drive already seen in Bridget Allworthy. This was aroused by Tom's beauty, and she planned his seduction with a skill which was a tribute to her town education, rapidly reducing him to a gigolo. Like Di Western, she was too astute to understand Sophia's simplicity, and suspected her of being devious in the matter of the pocket book.<sup>1</sup> Di Western had discovered Sophia's love by accident, but Lady Bellaston deliberately tricked her into an admission.<sup>2</sup> From the moment she knew that Sophia was her rival, her promise of protection was forgotten, and her home became a more dangerous trap than any Sophia had yet encountered. Her black design, born of jealousy, makes Di Western's affectation of politics seem almost harmless. She told Lord Fellamar that Sophia was suffering from the effects of the country, the downfall of so many young women, and that she had learned a "set of romantic notions" about love. Consequently she was threatened by the lowest fellow in the world, a beggar, a bastard, a foundling, a fellow in meaner circumstances than one of his lordship's footmen. She persuaded him that by raping Sophia, abducting her, then marrying her, he would in fact be rescuing her from disaster.<sup>3</sup> Later,

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.V, Book X111, ch.xi, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.98.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.V, Book X111, ch.xii, op. cit., p.105.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.V, Book XV, ch.ii., and ch.iii, op.cit., pp.201 - 7 and 214 - 9.



after Tom had enraged her, she refined the plan, suggesting to the noble lord that by arranging for Tom to be removed by a press-gang, he would be saving him from the gallows. After Blifil, Lady Bellaston causes the lovers more suffering than any other character in the book, but because her evil is passionate, while his is dispassionate, she is a more sympathetic villain than he is. Perhaps her wickedness is less innate, and more the result of her environment.

Harriet is a more complex character than Di Western or Lady Bellaston. Her initial error is more the result of folly than of evil, and I think that most readers would share Sophia's reaction to her story, including the reservations. It is later that the need for reappraisal becomes apparent. Harriet met her husband at Bath, soon after Sophia's departure. His politic behaviour was more than a match for Di Western's, and Harriet was as delighted to rival her aunt, as she was to rival every other woman he charmed. She was partly a victim of his wiles, and partly a victim of her own folly, for she ignored Mr. Nash's warning.<sup>1</sup> She married, leaving her aunt "like the maddest woman in Bedlam," and not surprizingly had never succeeded in re-establishing contact with the Westerns. She soon discovered that she had been married because her husband was in debt, and that the ancient mansion-house in Ireland was not to her taste, particularly as she considered the ladies of

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.IV, Book XI, ch.iv, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.123.



the country beneath her. When her husband had lost or spent all the ready money in her fortune, and could mortgage his own estate no deeper, he attempted to force her to sell what remained. He did not actually beat her, but confined her to her room without pen, ink, paper, or book, and said that she would never leave the room alive. At this point her story becomes ambiguous, for she was rescued by the Irish peer, who was later to convey the cousins to London. Hints of her true character begin to emerge, and are developed more fully when her predatory instincts are aroused by the sight of Tom Jones. The thought of taking him from Sophia adds to his attractions, and in addition she sees the betrayal of her cousin as a means of reconciling her to her relations. Thus it was through a letter written by her, that Sophia was discovered by the Squire. After she had been rebuffed by her uncle, she, like Lady Bellaston, could think of little but revenge, but fortunately, because she was not as accomplished an actress, her manner and look "infused a suspicion" into Jones. In any case her plans were forestalled by Mr. Fitzpatrick's attack on Tom.

Di Western, Lady Bellaston and Harriet Fitzpatrick each try to harm Sophia, and in doing so expose their own vices and affectations. Every action of theirs has the effect of increasing her stature, and of making her moral beauty more absolute.



(ii) The good-natured Women.(a) Jenny Jones and Mrs. Miller.

Jenny and Mrs. Miller were good-natured women, prepared to help Tom when he had been forsaken by all others. They are distinguished from the ladies of quality by their disinterested motives. Each had her place on the ascending scale of virtue, which has its apogee in Sophia. Jenny was not chaste, but there were extenuating circumstances, and Mrs. Miller was not wise.

Jenny was "no very comely Girl, either in her Face or person" but she had a "very uncommon Share of Understanding. This Gift Jenny had a good deal improved by Erudition". She was as good a scholar as most of the young men of quality of the age, and had thus made her equals her inferiors.<sup>1</sup> She was ideally-suited to the part assigned to her by Bridget, and as capable of playing it as her superior. The acrimonious comments on her chastity were accepted, but the insults to her clothes were too much for her self-control. Similarly, when Allworthy preached to her, it was when he mentioned her understanding that she wept. Fielding's irony is so carefully-controlled that Bridget acts into her own role, while Jenny is never forced to act out of hers, yet both are playing a part. Jenny promised the Squire that he would one day know the father of the

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 1, ch.vi, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.28.



infant, a promise which was faithfully kept. It is only when all is known that we can appreciate the humour of Jenny's solemn assurances that the man

was entirely out of his Reach, and was neither /ubjeēt to his Power, nor in any probability of becoming an Object of his Goodne/s.<sup>1</sup>

We do not know why Jenny was prepared to take the risk that she did, for surely neither clothes nor money would have compensated her for Bridewell. Possibly her generous behaviour towards Tom at the end of the novel implies an earlier generosity towards Allworthy, or Bridget.

Jenny's lack of chastity is an essential element in the repentance of Tom, for the belief that he had committed incest caused him more anguish than the prospect of being hanged. The cause of her immorality may also have been the consequence of Bridget's sin, for she was driven from her home, isolated from all who knew her, and if we are to believe her own story, made the victim of a solemn promise of marriage. Her deterioration seemed to date from this event, she was known as Mrs. Waters, but was not in fact a wife. When Tom came to the rescue, down to the thicket whence her "violent screams" had issued, she was about to suffer the consequences of her infidelity to the Captain, and of her affair with Ensign Northerton.

Mrs. Waters soon recovered from her fright enough to see that Tom looked "more like an Angel

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 111, Book IX, ch. ii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p. 317.



than a Man".<sup>1</sup> Although she was now middle-aged, her breasts were well-formed and extremely white, and because she was half-naked and made the fullest use of her attractions, she had little difficulty in seducing him. She was in love with Jones,

according to the present univer/ally  
received Sen/e of that Phra/e, by  
which Love is applied indi/criminately  
to the de/irable Objects of all our  
Pa/ions, Appetites, and Sen/es,..<sup>2</sup>

The sergeant was under no illusions about the lady and believed that she was little better "than one of us", but she had begged off many a poor soldier from punishment. We may be cynical about the reasons which lay behind her love of the cloth, but I think that this concern should be accepted as evidence of good-nature. It is also to her credit that the Captain loves her

not a bit the wor/e and I am certain  
would run any Man through the Body  
that was to abu/e her,..<sup>3</sup>

Fielding suggests that although she was "not nice enough in her amours" to mind Sophia as a rival, she was perhaps better than those women who abstain from lovers, provided they are satisfied that no-one else possesses them. She was adept at preserving the appearance of virtue, screaming "Murder ! Robbery ! and more frequently Rape !" <sup>4</sup> when disturbed during her night with Tom. She appeared to be

<sup>1</sup> Vol.111, Book IX, ch. ii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.317.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.111, Book IX, ch.v, op. cit., pp.345-6. See p.40 of this Dissertation for the same theme.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.111, Book IX, ch.vi, op. cit., p.353.

<sup>4</sup> Vol.IV, Book X, ch. ii, op. cit., p.11.



a modest lady awakened out of her sleep by three strange men in her chamber, but when Squire Western entered, she made hasty preparations for departure. We do not know why at the time, but later it is clear that there was the danger of recognition. She went with Mr. Fitzpatrick, and characteristically, did all she could to console him for the loss of his wife, in fact she next appears as Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

Jenny's subsequent promiscuity softens the implications of Bridget's action, but nevertheless there is an analogy between the two women. Both in middle age moved rapidly from one man to another, neither was physically attractive, and both were "artful". This throws yet another satirical light on Allworthy's judgment, and on his discourse on chastity, for there was little to choose between Jenny's conduct, and that of his own sister, and neither was chaste.

Mrs. Miller was the widow of a clergyman, and although she lived in town, was all simplicity and warm-hearted charity. Because Fielding equates physical beauty with beauty of mind, it is significant that she is unlike Bridget and Jenny, for she has all the charms which can adorn a woman near fifty. "As /he was one of the mo/t innocent Creatures in the World, /o /he was one of the most chearful", she never thought, nor spoke, nor wished any ill, and had "con/tantly that De/ire of plea/ing, which may be called the happie/t of all De/ires".<sup>1</sup> She was

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.V, Book X111, ch.v, Tom Jones, London, 1749, pp.40 - 1.



the warmest of friends and had been a most affectionate wife. She was a fond and tender mother, but her very innocence betrayed her into a lack of worldly wisdom. When we first meet Nancy, she had been left alone with Nightingale, who was fighting with his footman for having cast a reflection on "the young lady". Mrs. Miller expected her daughters to obey her, and said that the best she could hope for was their marriage to respectable tradesmen, yet she was obviously encouraging the intimacy with Nightingale. Jones was astonished at her blindness, but I think that the word "simper"<sup>1</sup> implies that she was aware of the situation, but was conniving in the hope of marriage. The fact that she admits her own share of guilt, is both an example of her honesty, and a mitigating circumstance which adds to the pathos of her cry,

O my poor Nancy, the Darling of my Soul;  
the Delight of my Eyes; the Pride of my  
Heart: Too much, indeed, my Pride; for  
to th<sup>e</sup> fooli<sup>h</sup>, ambitious Hopes, ari<sup>g</sup>-  
ing from her Beauty, I owe her Ruin.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Miller was born and bred a gentlewoman. Her father was an officer of the army, who died "in considerable rank". Because his pay expired at his death, his family were left beggars. She married a clergyman and had five years of perfect happiness, but when he died she was left almost destitute, with two children to support.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.V, Book X111, ch.vi, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.48.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.V, Book XIV, ch.vi, op. cit., pp.156 - 7.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.V, Book XIV, ch.v, op. cit., the whole chapter.



Thanks to the generosity of Squire Allworthy, she had been placed in her present circumstances. Tom's charity towards her highwayman cousin, his successful appeal to Nightingale, and his constant assistance to her and her family, aroused her deepest gratitude, and she was to repay the debt with interest, in the crisis of his fortunes.

Just as Jenny reflects on the quality of Allworthy's judgment, Mrs. Miller casts a gently ironic light upon his good-nature. Because she was good herself, she responded to the goodness in Tom, and refused to be misled by his faults. The affair with Molly, which Allworthy had seen, was innocent in comparison with the affair with Lady Bellaston, which Mrs. Miller had seen under her own roof. Similarly, she instinctively recognized the evil in Blifil. He said

'Your adopted Son, Sir, that Jones, that Wretch whom you nourished in your Bosom, hath proved one of the greatest Villains upon Earth.' 'By all that's sacred 'tis false, cries Mrs. Miller. Mr. Jones is no Villain. He is one of the worthiest Creatures breathing; and if any other person had called him Villain, I would have thrown all this boiling Water in his Face'

Allworthy rebuked her for her behaviour to his nephew.

Blifil 'hath ever been the warmest Advocate for the ungrateful Wretch whose Cause you espouse. This, I think, when you hear it from my own Mouth, will make you wonder at so much Baseness and Ingratitude'.

'You are deceived, Sir, answered Mrs. Miller,



She said that Tom's faults were those of wildness and youth, and she felt certain that they would be relinquished, but even

if he /hould not, they are va/tly overballanced by one of the mo/t humane tender hone/t Hearts that ever Man was ble/ted with. <sup>1</sup>

Theoretically at least, Allworthy's responses were less sound than hers.

The characterization of Mrs. Miller is also a counterbalance to Lady Bellaston. She succeeded in retaining her integrity in spite of a corrupt environment, and she lived chastely, although she was aging and without a husband. She is closer to the ideal represented by Sophia than any other female character, but even she serves only to emphasize the superiority of the heroine.

(b) Molly Seagrim.

Molly, the second child of Black George, was Sophia's only real rival, for she had a special place in the heart of Tom Jones, which she retained even at the end of the novel.

Black George hearing the Di/covery that had been made, run away, and was never /ince heard of; and Jones be/towed the Money on his Family, but not in equal Proportions, for Molly had much the greate/t Share. <sup>2</sup>

For a time, her attractions made him immune to

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.V1, Book XV11, ch.ii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, pp.91 - 2 and 94 - 5.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.V1, Book XV111, ch.xiii, op.cit., p.302



Sophia's charms. There can be no question of an ulterior motive for his charity, for Molly made no impression until he was sixteen years old. Even then he was restrained by his principles, for it seemed wrong to debauch a young woman, however low her condition. She not only succeeded in seducing him, but played her part so well, that he attributed the conquest entirely to himself,

and considered the young Woman as one who had yielded to the violent Attacks of his passion

and imputed her yielding

to the ungovernable Force of her Love towards him.

1

When Sophia sent Molly the sack, her reaction was similar to Jenny's, and she was foolish enough to wear it to Church. She aroused the same type of envy as Jenny had done, but perhaps because she was held in less respect, the reaction was more violent. Molly, having in vain attempted a dignified retreat, fought valiantly in the mock-heroic battle of the churchyard, and was more than able to hold her own until Goody Brown entered the fray. Both contestants were naked to the waist, and the sight of Molly's bosom had the same effect on Square, as the sight of Mrs. Waters' bosom had on Tom.

Molly's pregnancy aroused the ire of her sisters and her mother, although the elder sister had already been debauched, and the mother had been brought to bed of the same sister within a week of

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book 1V, ch.vi, Tom Jones, London, 1749, pp.43 - 5.



marriage. She was taken before Allworthy, who sentenced her to the House of Correction. Fielding excuses him on the grounds that he had no regular information before him, but admits that his conduct was not strictly regular. Surely a good magistrate would not have allowed animosity against Black George to influence his judgment, but how else can we account for his action, when his main concern with Jenny had been to enable her to start afresh?

Tom's loyalty to Molly was admirable, especially as it continued after the discovery that he had mistaken appetite for love. The bedroom scene showed that Molly had a talent for dissimulation. "And is this your Love for me, to for/ake me in this Manner, now you have ruined me?"<sup>1</sup> Just as she had reached the most moving part of her rhetoric, the "wicked rug" fell to reveal the philosopher Square, for although no doubt she would have preferred Jones, his absence, combined with well-chosen presents, had proved irresistible. Here, because she was not as adroit as Lady Bellaston in a similar situation, her assurance collapsed and Tom abandoned the field to his rival. He continued to feel anxiety about the original seduction, until the elder sister cured him, by telling him about Will Barnes.<sup>2</sup>

Molly was still capable of arousing Tom's passion on the fatal occasion when he was full of wine and good spirits, when Allworthy recovered.

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book V, ch.v, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.143.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book V, ch.vi, op. cit., pp.156 - 7.



He was walking in a most delicious grove, thinking of Sophia,

could I think my Eyes capable of looking at any other with Tenderne/s, the/e Hands /hould tear them from my Head. No, my Sophia, if cruel Fortune /eparates us for ever, my Soul /hall doat on thee alone. The cha/te/t Con/tancy will I ever pre/-erve to thy Image.<sup>1</sup>

It took Molly only a quarter of an hour to complete her conquest.

### (iii) The Classification of Species.

Although the women who are classified in species do not affect the definition of virtue, or relate directly to the characterization of Sophia, they do give two examples of the realism discussed in the Introduction.<sup>2</sup> The first type is concurrent. Fielding preserves his concept of the whole, but individualizes within the species, by allocating particular characteristics to each. On the one hand there is an almost scientific accuracy of observation, and on the other he achieves both variety and consistency. The technique can be illustrated by Mrs. Deborah Wilkins and Mrs. Honour, who are representative of the "upper servant".

Mrs. Deborah and Mrs. Honour have certain characteristics which are typical of their

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book V, ch.x, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.200.

<sup>2</sup> See pp.20 - 5 of this Dissertation.



species. They are vain, avaricious sycophants. Their actions will always be governed by self-interest, and their loyalty is never proof against bribery. They compensate for the servility shown to superiors, by excessive arrogance towards those they believe to be their inferiors. Because their own status depends upon the status of their employers, they will fight, if necessary, to preserve rank or reputation. They are too garrulous to keep a secret. These "humours" never change, but Fielding makes them seem individual, by using a variety of situations. For example, the fact that Mrs. Deborah is in her fifty-second year, while Mrs. Honour is young, immediately broadens the perspective. Each characteristic will be taken in turn in order to see how it has been dramatized.

Both ladies pride themselves on their virtue and modesty. Allworthy might have been expiring of apoplexy, for all she knew, but Deborah would only respond to his bell, after a decent delay. She was shocked when she found him in his shirt, and when she saw the baby immediately determined to find the "Hu//y its Mother" and "to /ee her committed to Bridewel, and whipt at the Cart's Tail". She found it hard to touch

the /e mi/begotten Wretches, whom I don't  
look upon as my Fellow Creatures. Faugh,  
how it /tinks! It doth not /mell like a  
Chri/tian.<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Honour expressed similar sentiments, but in connection with Tom's affair with Molly.

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 1, Book 1, ch.iii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, pp.13 - 14.



And when Wenches are /o coming, young Men are not /o much to be blamed neither; for to be /ure they do no more than what is natural. Indeed it is beneath them to meddle with /uch dirty Draggie-tails, and whatever happens to them, it is good enough for them. And yet to be /ure the vile Baggages are mo/t in Fault. I wi/hes, with all my Heart, they were well to be whipped the Cart's Tail. (sic) 1

She was alarmed when Sophia decided to arm herself with a pistol,

Virtue is a dear Thing, e/pecially to us poor Servants; for it is our Livelihood, as a Body may /ay, yet I mortally hate Firearms,.. 2

Both ladies are avaricious. When Mr. Allworthy was on his "death bed" Deborah wept for two reasons, first because she never omitted this ceremonial on a proper occasion, and secondly because she resented the provisions of his Will.

Sure Ma/ter might have made /ome Difference, methinks, between me and the other Servants. I /uppo/e he hath left me Mourning; but, i' fackins! if that be all, the Devil /hall wear it for him for me....if I have taken a little Something now and then, others have taken ten times as much.....I'll buy the gaye/t Gown I can get, and dance over the old Curmudgeon's Grave in it...3

Honour's loyalty to Sophia depended entirely upon the effect of her avarice. On the one hand she knew that her mistress was more generous than the Squire, and on the other the reward for betrayal might be more immediate. Lady Bellaston had no

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1 Vol.11, Book 1V, ch. xii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.86.

2 Vol.111, Book V111, ch.vii, op. cit., p.52.

3 Vol.11, Book V, ch.viii, op. cit., pp.178-9.



difficulty in silencing Honour, or in persuading her to transfer her affections from Sophia to herself, all she had to do was to offer pecuniary and material reward.

Both ladies are sycophants. Deborah watched the Squire's reaction to Tom, and changed her attitude immediately, carrying him out of the room in her arms, and calling him a "sweet little infant". She was doubtful about Miss Bridget, until she saw her kiss the baby, then responded accordingly,

O the dear little Creature, the dear,  
/weet, pretty Creature! well, I vow,  
it is as fine a Boy as ever was /een!

Honour was equally dexterous on many occasions, for example,

'I /hould find no Manner of Difficulty in it; for in my poor Opinion, young Squire Blifil is a charming, /weet, hand/ome Man' - 'Don't mention /uch Stuff,' cries Sophia - 'Such Stuff', repeated Honour, 'why there - Well, to be /ure,.. there may be /uch Anti-pathies in Nature, and one had liever touch a Toad than the Fle/h of /ome People -<sub>2</sub>

Both ladies are arrogant towards their "inferiors". Mrs Deborah descended upon the parish like a kite, and the inhabitants ran trembling into their houses, like little birds. Mrs. Honour displayed her arrogance at Upton. When she returned, the company rose, as it had for her

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 1, ch.v, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.23.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.111, Book V11, ch.vii, op. cit., pp.48-9.



mistress, but she did not imitate her behaviour. She placed her chair in such a posture, as almost to occupy the whole fire, and ordered a chicken that instant. When she was told that there was nothing left except beef, she was too delicate to eat anything touched by the fingers of such fellows, and told the landlady to be sure to wash her hands. Her presence in a kitchen was, according to her, a novelty, and she insisted that the postboys should be sent to the stable. Partridge was allowed to remain, because he seemed to be a gentleman, but she thought his Latin was an insult.<sup>1</sup>

Both ladies defend the status of their employers, in their own interests. Deborah's reaction to the baby was partly due to fear that Squire Allworthy would be identified as the father and thus disgraced. She acted energetically, but in her heart believed him guilty.

Found in his Bed, for'ooth; A pretty  
Story! I warrant he hath many more  
Ba'tards to an/wer for, if the Truth  
was known.<sup>2</sup>

Honour's quarrel with Mrs. Western's maid, which swung the balance of her avarice in Sophia's favour, was in defence of status. The higher born, higher paid London maid said

'your Breeding /hews the Meanne's of  
your Birth as well as of your Education;  
and both very properly qualify you to be  
the mean /erving Woman of a Country Girl'  
'Don't abu/e my Lady' cries Honour, 'I  
won't take that of you; /he's as much  
better than yours as /he is younger, and  
ten thou/and Times more hand/omer.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1V, Book X, ch.iv, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.33.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book V, ch.viii, op. cit., p.179.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.111, Book V11, ch.viii, pp.57 - 60.



Both ladies are garrulous. Bridget used Jenny for her deception, and sent Deborah away, because of this quality, but in Honour's case, her lack of discretion worked in favour of Sophia and Tom. She kept each informed of the other's feelings, and told Sophia of the plan to marry her in the morning.

Fielding's second type of realism is linear. Although the treatment of the Innkeepers' wives is similar to the treatment of the "upper servant", it is more general, and each successive woman adds a little more to a composite portrait of a landlady. In the first Inn, where Tom met the Quaker, the woman had stripped the landlord of all he possessed, in the interests of a favourite daughter who had just married. There were several children, but she would have sacrificed them all, and her husband, to this one child. In the second Inn, when Northerton had knocked Tom out with a bottle, the landlady was the only person who assisted him. She cut off some of her hair, and applied it to the wound to stop the bleeding, chafed his temples with her hand, and expressed great contempt for her husband's prescription of beer, sending for brandy instead. Her good-nature is soon explained by the fact that she thought he was an officer. Her attitude towards him swung from one extreme to the other, as she received differing reports of his position in life. She seemed to be attracted to Ensign Northerton because of his "beauty", but we afterwards find that he had fifty pounds in his possession, which although it belonged to the whole company, he gave to her "possibly by



way of Bail or Security" for his escape.<sup>1</sup> Having assisted him, she then accused the sentinel to the officer. She had a wide knowledge of all those who came to the Inn, gained partly by listening, partly by enquiring as much as possible into their names, families and fortunes. She hated her husband, because he had ceased to answer the purpose for which she had married him, and constantly compared him, to his disadvantage, with her first husband. She made out a bill for a much larger sum than Tom might have expected from the entertainment he had received, in accordance with the maxims of all Innkeepers.

The fir<sup>st</sup> is, if they have any thing good in their hou<sup>se</sup> (which indeed very <sup>scarcely</sup> happens) to produce it only to Per<sup>sons</sup> who travel with great Equipages. 2dly, (sic) To charge the <sup>same</sup> for the very wor<sup>st</sup> Provi<sup>sions</sup>, as if they were the be<sup>st</sup>. And, la<sup>st</sup>ly, if any of their Gue<sup>sts</sup> call but for little, to make them pay a double Price for every thing they have; so that the Amount by the Head may be much the <sup>same</sup>.<sup>2</sup>

Fielding observes that the proprietors of Inns frequented by people of fashion acquire as much insolence as if they really belonged to that rank themselves.

The third Inn, at Gloucester, is exceptional, partly because it is named "The Bell" and recommended by Fielding, and partly because Mrs. Whitfield, the landlady, is praised as a fine and beautiful

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 111, Book V11, ch.xv, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.133.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. 111, Book V111, ch.vii, op. cit., pp.196-7.



woman, who might have graced the politest assemblies.<sup>1</sup> She was contented with her lot, prudent and wise in her temper. She distinguished Tom from the vulgar, as soon as she saw him, but was misled by the Somersetshire lawyer's malicious story.

The fourth Inn at Upton is the scene of a battle, in which the landlady displays her skill with tongue and broomstick. Having defended the honour of her house against a whore, she had to beat a hasty retreat when she discovered that her victim was the wife of Captain Waters. She asked pardon for the offences she had committed, begging that all might be imputed to ignorance of her quality,

if I had once /u/pected that your Lady-  
/hip was your Lady/hip, I would /ooner  
have burnt my Tongue out, than have /aid  
what I have /aid: And I hope your Lady-  
/hip will accept of a Gown, till you can  
get your own Cloaths.<sup>2</sup>

Susan was instructed not to believe her own eyes against such good gentlefolks, even if she had seen Jones leap out of Mrs. Waters' bed. The landlady was skilled in the art of producing a broiled chicken in a quarter of an hour, though the fire was out and the bird still alive on its perch.<sup>3</sup> She accepted Mrs. Fitzpatrick's bribe, although she would have dismissed her maid for the same offence, and when the time came to present Mrs. Waters with a bill,

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.111, Book V111, ch.viii, Tom Jones, London, 1749, p.199.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.111, Book 1X, ch.iv, op. cit., p.336.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.1V, Book X, ch.iv, op. cit., p.30.



charged twice as much for the loan of the clothes as they were worth.

The portrait of a landlady is virtually completed at Upton, for the other two Inns have little to add. The fifth landlady was prepared to betray Sophia, if it was in her interests to do so, yet was converted to a staunch Jacobite in a moment, when she thought she had attended Jenny Cameron. The sixth landlady belaboured her maid for lack of virtue, on the occasion of the puppet show. Mrs. Miller is a landlady, but the only hint of classification is her concern for the reputation of her house, a concern which is treated with gentle irony when Nancy's pregnancy is discovered. Because she is not a hypocrite, there is no criticism, and because the method characterization is different, she cannot be considered with the other landladies.

Fielding's method in the classification of species also serves the purpose of drawing an analogy between low life and high. There is no monopoly of either vice or virtue and one class may be said to reflect the other. This is, of course, important in all his characterization. For example, Deborah and Miss Bridget echo each other in their concern for virtue, and in their condemnation of vice, Jenny and Di Western are both learned, and thus "unfeminine", Molly and Lady Bellaston share the same code of morality, and Honour is far better suited to her new mistress, than to Sophia.



C: Amelia.

I started my discussion of Tom Jones with the plot, partly because I wished to draw attention to its effect on characterization, and partly because its brilliance has tended to divert attention from the moral centre of the book, Sophia. Fielding's change of technique in Amelia seems to me to be an attempt to free himself from these restrictions, rather than an inexplicable departure from his own well-tried and highly-successful achievement. It is interesting to note a return to the epic. Just as Joseph Andrews has an ultimate source in the Odyssey, Amelia is modelled, in part at least, on the Aeneid.<sup>1</sup>

The various Accidents which befel a very worthy Couple, after their uniting in the State of Matrimony, will be the subject of the following Hi/tory.

The various accidents which befel Aeneas, after the fall of Troy, until he succeeded in founding his city and installing the gods of his race in Latium, are the subject of the Aeneid. Fielding, after "much mature Deliberation" suspected that Fortune had been convicted of "many Facts in which /he had not the lea/t Concern." He thought that it was possible to account for the success of knaves, the calamities of fools, with all the miseries in

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<sup>1</sup> See pages 14 and 78 of this Dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1, Book 1, ch.i, Amelia, London, printed for A. Millar, 1751, p.2.



which "men of sense" sometimes involve themselves, by lack of prudence, and the blind following of a predominant passion, by natural means. Just as Fortune had been blamed unjustly, so was she praised unjustly,

by ascribing to her Honours which she as little deserves. To retrieve the ill Consequences of a foolish Conduct, and by struggling manfully with Distresses to subdue it, is one of the noblest Efforts of Wisdom and Virtue.<sup>1</sup>

Life, he said, may as properly be called an art as any other, and

By examining carefully the several Gradations which conduce to bring every Model to Perfection, we may learn truly to know that Science in which the Model is formed: As Histories of this Kind, therefore, may properly be called Models of Human Life,<sup>2</sup>

and by studying such a history, we may be instructed in the art of life. Thus while Virgil ascribed the success of Aeneas to the will of Jupiter, and his trials to the conflict between Venus and Juno, Fielding found the cause in William Booth's philosophy of the dominant passion. Thus Aeneas and Amelia are the victims of passion over which they have no control, and their struggles are the "noblest Efforts of Wisdom and Virtue".

Booth carries the role of Aeneas in the Dido episode. We enter in medias res, with the hero telling the story of his love for Amelia to Miss Matthews, just as Aeneas narrates his adventures to Dido. Both ladies listen attentively,

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 1, ch.i, Amelia, London, 1751,p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1, Book 1, ch.i, op. cit., p.3.



while meditating upon the seduction of the hero. The sack of Troy was caused by Helen's folly, the sack of Booth's "Eden" by his own, the travels of Aeneas tried both his patience and his courage, the travels of Booth and Amelia were as disastrous, and included the death of a parent. If the prison is Carthage, and the structure of Amelia is modelled on the Aeneid, then it is logical to narrate the story of Miss Matthews as well, and to use the first three books to do so. The tragedy of Dido follows in the fourth book of the Aeneid, and the "tragedy" of Miss Matthews is in the fourth book of Amelia. Her cell acts as the cave, and she has a similar disregard for appearances and her good name.

Amelia is divided into twelve books, like the Aeneid, but the remaining eight books follow the original more in spirit than in fact. Amelia does visit Mrs. Ellison's underworld, and is guided through it by the Sybil, Mrs. Bennet, in the sixth book. The third long narration, the story of Mrs. Bennet, is thematically and structurally justified, first because it completes the tragedy of Amelia as it would have occurred, without compromising her chastity, and secondly, because it balances the earlier narrations, particularly as Booth is once more in prison. The long prologue to her story is more difficult to defend, but its purpose is to satirize female learning. Mrs. Bennet does not say, as narrator, that her learning alienated all those with whom she came in contact, but it is implied. The father's persecution of his daughter can probably be accounted for by his dislike of the product of his foolishness, in educating her in a manner unbecoming



to her sex, the actions of the aunt and the rector are unequivocal, and in retrospect they make us wonder about the stepmother. The satire is later reinforced by Dr. Harrison's low opinion of Mrs. Bennet.

Other interruptions of the main plot seem unjustified, for they are not successfully integrated. I am not referring to such interpolated episodes as the story of Captain Trent, which are essential if we are to understand the whole, but to, for example, the visit to Vauxhall.<sup>1</sup> Possibly this type of behaviour deserved to be exposed, but not at the cost of inserting an irrelevant piece of propaganda in a novel. Similarly too much of the material has been transplanted from earlier plays. Here again, I must distinguish between the use made of The Modern Husband, which is justified because it has been successfully integrated and transcended, and those plots and characters which are included, not because they enrich the novel, but only in order to expose additional vices. Fielding, it seems to me, had succumbed to temptations which were moral, not artistic, and was using the popularity he had gained through Tom Jones, to make palatable, in another medium, what audiences had already rejected in the theatre. Consequently, it is perhaps not surprizing that so many of his admirers rejected Amelia. Yet close study of the women in the last novel has convinced me that he went far beyond the

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 111, Book IX, ch. ix, 'A Scene of modern Wit and Humour', Amelia, London, 1751, p. 298.



point he had reached in Tom Jones in his characterization, and that this was partly made possible by the less demanding plot and greater freedom. For the first time there is an interaction with the fictional environment which produces change.

Fielding's theory of the comic prose epic was designed to raise the status of the novel, and to offer an alternative to the clumsy epistolary method used by Richardson. Tom Jones was eminently successful from this point of view, but inadequate for the type of character needed in Amelia. Thus he devised a new form, and gave it universal significance, by relating it to a classical original. The technique of the flashback was appropriate in Virgil, because the events alluded to were already part of a heroic tradition, and because the narrator spoke of his own experience. Fielding's difficulties were already great, for he had no established background which would automatically arouse the sympathy of readers, but he compounded them by using a narrative not told in the first person. This, combined with the overloading of the structure with extraneous detail, accounts, I think, for the unsatisfactory nature of the experiment. The result is a fine portrait in an inferior frame, a masterpiece which may never be recognized as such, because of its technical faults, and the work of a man who was following a vision which he did not live long enough to reach.



Amelia is closer to The Modern Husband, The Universal Gallant, and even The Temple Beau than it is to Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews. Fielding has changed from the examination of a wide spectrum of society, to an intensive study of a limited group of individuals, and has used themes, plots and even characters from the plays. Mrs. Bellamant and Amelia embody a similar concept of virtue, in the case of the former degrees of virtue were explored through other members of her household, her husband, Emilia and Captain Bellamant, in the case of the latter, it is explored through the characters of Miss Matthews and Mrs. Bennet. Booth is another Gaywit, whose wisdom has to be learned from the excesses of the town and the Moderns become Captain Trent and his wife, although many of their aspects are dispersed in other characters, particularly Mrs. Ellison and Mrs. James, Colonel James, and to a lesser extent, Miss Matthews. Lord Richly and the noble lord are almost identical, and can scarcely be distinguished from Lord Bawble of Miss Lucy in Town. Although the plot seems to move inevitably towards a tragic conclusion, the problem is solved by a device already used in The Temple Beau. Bellaria, who like Amelia was the intended victim of lust, was restored to the arms of Veromil only because it was discovered that he had been defrauded of his rightful inheritance.

The plot is held together and redeemed by the masterly characterization of three women, Amelia, Miss Matthews and Mrs. Bennet. Instead



of a combination of humours, or a classification of species, Fielding portrays complex human beings, who are not always predictable or even consistent with the rules of decorum. Unfortunately he is betrayed by his desire to remain in the comic world of happy endings. Both the spirit in which he wrote and the tenor of the plot demanded a tragic denouement, and by retreating from it, he reduces pathos to bathos in the concluding pages. Booth might have aroused sympathy for the plight of the half-pay officer, and at the same time proved himself worthy of Amelia, by a heroic death like Clarissa's, but instead, having failed in everything he had attempted, he paid his debts with Amelia's money, then lived on her charity for the rest of his life.

(i) Amelia.

Amelia differs from Sophia in at least three ways. First she does not bear an allegorical name, and is not used allegorically. Secondly she is far more than the personification of an abstract quality, and thirdly she is placed in situations designed to test her integrity and to educate her. Booth and Amelia were naturally good-natured and virtuous, but I do not think that Fielding intended her to be any more perfect initially than he was.

Amelia's first, and most notorious trial, from the point of view of subsequent criticism, was the injury done to her beauty by the overturning of a chaise. Her "lovely No/e was beat all to pieces"



but "the Woman who had been so much adored for the Charms of her Person deserved a much higher Adoration to be paid to her Mind," for she endured the loss of exquisite beauty with "Patience and Resignation", in other words she submitted to the loss of "Fortune, Power, Glory; every Thing which human Nature is apt to court and rejoice in!" She supported this, and her physical suffering with dignity, "without complaining, almost without a Tear," submitting to "the most painful and dreadful Operations of Surgery."<sup>1</sup> Readers and critics seem to have ignored the mention of surgery combined with the Winckworth proposal of marriage.

Mr. Winckworth had, it seems, arrived the very Day of my Departure with a grand Equipage, and, without Delay, had made formal Proposals to Mrs. Harris, offering to settle any Part of his vast Estate, in whatever Manner he pleased, on Amelia.<sup>2</sup>

Smollet and other wits seized upon the supposed inconsistency and degraded Amelia into a "common wench who had lost her nose in the service of Venus."<sup>3</sup>

Booth first commended himself to Amelia by appealing to her vanity, defending her against the jokes and sarcasms of "several young Ladies, or rather young Devils". He ended his tirade with "For without any Note at all, he will be the handsomest Woman in England."<sup>4</sup> When she took off her mask, at his request, he said,

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 11, ch.i, Amelia, London, 1751, pp.96-7.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1, Book 11, ch.v, op. cit., p.127.

<sup>3</sup> Wilbur L. Cross, The History of Henry Fielding, p.338.

<sup>4</sup> Vol.1, Book 11, ch.i, op. cit., p.98.



Upon my Soul, Madam, you never appeared to me /o lovely as at this In/tant.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that she would take off the mask, merely to satisfy Booth's curiosity, makes her pride in her beauty a part of her charm rather than a fault, but the weakness is referred to on two other occasions. When Mrs. Bennet said "Indeed, I believe, the fir/t Wi/h of our whole Sex is to be hand/ome" both ladies fixed their Eyes on the gla/s, and both smiled..<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this would not seem pejorative, if it were not for the association with Lady Booby and Pamela, who also gazed into the mirror at the mention of Fanny's beauty.<sup>3</sup> The second is "Must you love me?" cries the Doctor. "I could cure you now in a Minute if I plea/ed".

'Indeed, I defy you, sir,' /aid Amelia.

'If I could but per/uaade you,' an/wered he, 'that I thought you not hand/ome, away would vani/h all Ideas of Goodne/s in an In/tant. Confe/s hone/tly, would they not? '

'Perhaps I might blame the Goodne/s of your Eyes,' replied Amelia;<sup>4</sup>

Booth had nothing but his Ensign's commission to depend on, and Amelia was solely dependent on her mother.

'O, Amelia, how gha/tly an Object to my Mind is the Apprehen/ion of your Di/tre/s! Can I bear to refle/t a Moment on the Certainty of your foregoing all the Conveniences of Life;'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 11, ch.i, Amelia, London,1751, p.99.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.111, Book V11, ch.iii, op. cit., p.25.

<sup>3</sup> See p.68 of this Dissertation.

<sup>4</sup> Vol.111, Book 1X, ch.v, op. cit., p.260.

<sup>5</sup> Vol.1, Book 11, ch.iii, op. cit., pp.112 - 3.



Booth had reason to fear that he had gone too far and been too successful, and for Amelia's sake, determined to cure her of her love. Nothing could have exceeded the clumsiness or the cruelty of his scheme to make her believe that he was in love with Miss Osborne, the friend who was her chief rival in beauty and fortune, and who had ridiculed her after the accident, at a time when she might well have been on her death-bed. Fielding's intention is difficult to interpret, but the scene does serve two purposes. It dramatizes the fact that a woman will hide her feelings except when her vanity is involved, and secondly, Booth's motives were generous so he is exonerated. The tone is satiric, for by applying a painful remedy, he aggravates the disease, but I do not think that it is intended to be comic. The ambiguity is a part of a new more subtle art of characterization, which is also economical, for Amelia, by showing her weakness, is at the same time proving herself incapable of deceit, and generous in love. The tension reaches its climax when she says,

'What Advice can I give you,' /aid /he,  
 'in such an Alternative? Would to  
 Heaven we had never met.' <sup>1</sup>

The irony becomes apparent in the context of the whole novel, for the life which she was subsequently forced to lead, could scarcely have been the one of her choice.

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 11, ch.iii, Amelia, London, 1751, p.114.



Booth's clear-sighted analysis of the situation was repeated to Dr. Harrison by Mrs. Harris, and, presumably because Amelia's loss of beauty had temporarily deprived her of alternative suitors, the doctor persuaded her that Booth was worthy of Amelia's hand. He believed that a parent had the right to refuse, but not to retract permission when once it had been given, and therefore consented to marry them, in spite of Mrs. Harris' preference for Winckworth. The influence of Fielding's drama, which is so often evident in Amelia, unfortunately included elements from the farces. Instead of being able to admire Amelia, as we admired Sophia, when she made her escape, there is a climbing over a garden-wall, and a distasteful quotation from Congreve.

'Who calls the wretched thing that was Alphon/o?'

Upon which a Woman leapt into my Arms, crying out -

'O it is indeed my Alphon/o, my only Alphon/o!' - O Mi/s Matthews! gue/s what I felt when I found I had my Amelia in my Arms. 1

To make matters worse, Booth had just emerged from the hamper.

That trick of concealing a lover in a hamper is an old romantic device which even the genius of Fielding could not make appear probable. 2

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 11, ch.vi, Amelia, London, 1751, pp.135 - 6.

<sup>2</sup> Wilbur L. Cross, The History of Henry Fielding, p.331.



Amelia ran with him to a vast spreading oak, under which they took shelter from the storm. I find myself thinking of Ensign Northerton and Mrs. Waters, fleeing by night, into the woods, a thought which is singularly inappropriate for a virtuous heroine. Amelia and Booth went to her old nurse, who lived in a house about three miles from Mrs. Harris. They hinted that they were married, then were forced to sit up all night to avoid anticipating the ceremony. I think that their embarrassment is shared by the reader. We are presumably intended to see Booth as another Joseph, treating Amelia with the same delicacy shown by that hero towards Fanny, but the situation is undermined by the presence Miss Matthews, as listener.

Amelia's opposition to Booth's career in the army is difficult to interpret, but I think it is a fault which is corrected by a long and painful educative process. For example, she greeted the news of a transfer abroad with

Sighs, her Tears, her Agonies, her De-  
pair! <sup>1</sup>

Booth tried to arrange an exchange, but because it had not been signed, felt in honour bound to go to Gibraltar. She begged him to leave the army, for the smallest cottage with him would be paradise,

why can't my Billy think /o? Am I /o  
much his Superior in Love? Where is  
the Di/honour, Billy? or if there be  
any, will it reach our Ears in our  
little Hutt? Are Glory, and Fame,  
and not his Amelia, the Happe/ness of  
my Hu/sband? Go then, purcha/e them at  
my Expen/e. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 11, ch.viii, Amelia, London,1751,p.159.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1, Book.111, ch.ii, op. cit., pp.177 - 8.



Later, when she heard that he had been wounded, she joined him. The care and tenderness with which she nursed him

overpowered her weak Spirits, and threw her into one of the worst Disorders that can possibly attend a Woman. A Disorder very common among the Ladies, and our Physicians have not agreed upon its Name. Some call it the Fever on the Spirits, some a nervous Fever, some the Vapours, and some the Hysterics,<sup>1</sup>

which seems to be a gently ironic commentary on her heroism. Likewise, when she read the letter from her sister, it reduced her to violent fits

and so long was it before she recovered her Senses, that I despaired of that blest Event ever happening,<sup>2</sup>

She cannot be compared with that later Amelia, who rose courageously to repeated disasters, and proved herself capable of "undergoing anything" for his sake. She packed up her trinkets and those of the children, together with the greater part of her clothes, pawned them, then handed over the money to Booth. Later, she pawned her picture, because she had not a shilling in the world.<sup>3</sup> Her offer to do manual labour can better be appreciated, if it is compared with Pamela's similar offer to her parents, for if it was a mark of praiseworthy humility in one who had been brought up to poverty, how much greater was the merit in Amelia's case, for she was of gentle birth.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 111, ch.vii, Amelia, London, 1751, pp.217 - 8.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1, Book 111, ch.vii, op. cit., p.222.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.1V, Book X1, ch.viii, op. cit., p.187.

<sup>4</sup> See letter XX1X in Vol.1 of Samuel Richardson's Pamela or, Virtue Rewarded, London, 1741.



Fielding meant precisely what he said in the "Court of Censorial Enquiry" set up in The Covent-Garden Journal.

I go farther, and avow, that of all my Offspring she is my favourite Child. I can truly say that I bestowed a more than ordinary Pains in her Education... 1

The mature and virtuous woman, the perfect wife who is a memorial to Charlotte Fielding, is not present from the beginning, as has so often been claimed, but only towards the end, when the educative process has been completed.

Amelia's illness had several repercussions. Captain James gave Booth financial assistance, when all others had refused him, Sergeant Atkinson begged him to accept twelve pounds, and the move to Montpellier started a rumour of cowardice. Those who wished Booth well, said he was dead, others believed he had been cashiered for running away from the siege. Although Amelia was not the direct cause of the discharge on half-pay, I think it is implied that she hindered his career. His company was reduced, not abolished, and presumably he might have been retained, if he had returned to Gibraltar. Ironically, most of the subsequent disasters were caused by his attempts to rejoin the army, attempts which were fully supported by Amelia.

Montpellier was the scene of the first siege on Amelia's chastity, conducted by Monsieur Bagillard. His effort was more absurd than dangerous, especially as Amelia was six months pregnant,



but his persistence, after the birth of the child, involved him in a duel with Major Bath. Because he thought his wound was fatal, he confessed to Booth, and at the same time complimented him on possessing a wife who was not only exquisitely beautiful, but impregnably virtuous. Booth understood at last, why her behaviour had appeared to be unreasonable. The pattern of behaviour was to be repeated in the future, because the duel had taught her to be silent, while the testimony to her virtue made him blind.

Dr. Harrison's letter informing Amelia and Booth of the death of Mrs Harris, makes his priorities clear. The bereavement is communicated immediately, but the loss of fortune is prepared for by a long sermon on the art of bearing misfortune. Similarly Amelia "put on the utmost Chearfulness" to comfort her husband for the loss of the inheritance, instead of mourning the death of her mother. Yet, during the meeting with her sister,

Tears now stood in poor Amelia's Eyes;  
indeed /he had paid too many already  
for the Memory of /o unnatural a Parent"

Thus her control was the result of unselfishness, and not of indifference. She bore no resentment, but

heartily joined with her in her Grief:  
for that nothing which her Mother had  
done in the latter Part of her Life,  
could efface the Remembrance of that  
Tenderne/s which /he had formerly  
/hewn her.

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 111, ch.ii, Amelia, London, 1751, p.266.



The Booths were now reduced to less than forty pounds a year, and their family of two was soon to be increased. Dr. Harrison took them to his parsonage, that "earthly Paradise", where they stayed for three months. He recommended a country life, rather than a return to the army, which pleased Amelia and relieved her of her greatest fear.

'For none', added my Angel, 'de/erve  
Happine/s, or indeed, are capable of it,  
who make any particular Station a neces-  
/ary Ingredient, <sup>1</sup>

thus, Booth told Miss Matthews, he was "degraded" from his former rank of Captain to farmer. Their lives were like a calm sea until Dr. Harrison was chosen as tutor to his patron's son, and Booth was deprived of his counsellor. The Earl is mentioned casually, but his role is important, for he is the only example of a great man who is virtuous, in Amelia.

The word "degraded" prepares the reader for the pride which destroyed the happiness of the Booths. Two of Booth's major mistakes were culpable. The first was to rent an additional farm, the second was to purchase a coach, and the third was to unite his family with that of the Curate. He could not be blamed for the fact that the Curate's wife was envious of Amelia's beauty, but the effect contributed to the disaster. Because they had made themselves seem superior, the whole neighbourhood conspired against them, particularly the

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book.111, ch.xii, Amelia, London, 1751, p.275.



Curate's wife, who had used the coach more often than Amelia. The second imprisonment was caused by the rumours which had reached Dr. Harrison in a distorted form.

Amelia interrupted the "criminal conversation" between Miss Matthews and Booth when she arrived at the prison. Because her virtue could support itself with its own intrinsic worth, she did not criticize the vices of other women. She greeted Miss Matthews with warmth, and the colder the latter became, the more she redoubled her efforts to be friendly, for in her innocence she was incapable of diagnosing the cause of the other woman's behaviour. When Booth was released, her simplicity continued to shield him from the consequences of his infidelity, for she thought his misery was due to their poverty. The greater her tenderness, and the more understanding and fortitude she showed, the more she increased the agony of his mind.

Amelia's greatest distress was caused by the plight of her children, and one of her most admirable characteristics was her devotion to their welfare. Their moral and religious education was her responsibility, and little William's observations were used effectively by Fielding.

'O my dear, your Father is ruined, and we are undone' - The Children pre/ently accompanied their Mother's Tears, and the Daughter cried - 'Why, will any body hurt poor Papa? Hath he done any harm to any body? ' 'No, my dear Child, ' said the Mother, 'he is the be/t Man in the World, and therefore they hate him.' Upon which the Boy, who was extremely /en/ible at his Years, an/wered, 'Nay, Mamma, how can that be? Have not you often told me, that if I was good, every body would love me? ' 'All good People



will,' answered /he. 'Why don't they love Papa then?' replied the Child, 'for I am /ure he is very good.' 'So they do, my dear,' /aid the Mother, 'but there are more bad People in the World, and they will hate you for your Goodne/s.' 'Why then bad People,' cries the Child, 'are loved by more than the Good' - 'No Matter for that, my Dear,' /aid /he, 'the Love of one good Per/son is more worth having than that of a thou/and wicked ones; nay, if there was no /uch Per/son in the World, /till you mu/t be a good Boy: for there is one in Heaven who will love you; and his Love is better for you than that of all Mankind.<sup>1</sup>

Later, when the child discovered that it was Dr. Harrison who had taken away his father,

'Suppo/e it was', /aid the Doctor, 'would not you forgive me?' 'Yes,' cries the Child, 'I would forgive you; becau/e a Chri/tian mu/t forgive every Body; but I /hould hate you as long as I live'..<sup>2</sup>

Although Amelia was the tenderest of mothers, she punished any suspicion of "malevolence", and consequently not the least marks of pride, envy, malice, or spite could be found in either their words or their deeds.

Amelia was also an admirable housewife, a capable cook and a woman who took as much pride in her personal appearance when she dined with her husband, as when she expected guests. Like Richardson's Pamela, she was always ready to welcome an unexpected guest with good humour. For example, when Colonel James arrived, she apologized for the

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book 1V, ch.iii, Amelia, London, 1751, pp.33 - 4.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.111, Book 1X, ch.ii, op. cit., p.222.



homeliness of her dinner, but turned it into a compliment to his friendship.

Amelia's experiences had changed her attitude towards the army. When Colonel James persuaded Booth to try to regain his commission, she was too wise to oppose him, and her only stipulation was that wherever her husband was commanded to go, she would accompany him. James gave Booth fifty pieces, and when he confessed that he had not five guineas in the house, a bank-bill for twenty pounds, promising another thirty at their next meeting.

Amelia was virtuous, innocent and not indiscreet, yet Fielding apparently qualified his Dedication to Tom Jones by showing that she could be betrayed into the snares that "Deceit and Villainy" spread for her.<sup>1</sup> She was in fact no better equipped for survival in the city than Miss Lucy, or Chloe of The Lottery. She was no match for Mrs. Ellison, or for the noble lord, who made use of her love for her children in his plan of seduction. There is no doubt, I think, that the story of Mrs. Bennet was the story of Amelia as it would have been, had Providence not provided her with an object-lesson, at the eleventh hour. Her total want of jealousy and suspicion protected Booth from discovery, even when Miss Matthews' letter arrived, and when Colonel James became distant, she thought Booth was at fault. She said,

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See page 79 of this Dissertation.



And let it be a Comfort to my dear Billy, that however other Friends may prove false and fickle to him, he hath one Friend, whom no Incon/tancy of her own, nor any Change of his Fortune, nor Time, nor Age, nor Sickne/s, nor any Accident can ever alter; but who will e/teem, will love and doat on him for ever. 1

This solemn almost liturgical statement of her creed as a wife, gives her a stature which makes the tawdriness and evil surrounding her seem close to blasphemy.

Amelia and Booth were equally gullible.

Booth did protest against the plan to take his children to meet the noble lord's nephew and niece, but for the wrong reasons. He did not wish to seem like a beggar returning to the same fountain of charity. He was grave when Amelia accepted the trinkets, and so disturbed that he was plagued by nightmares.

'Indeed, my dear,' cries Amelia, 'you see this Matter in too /erious a Light. Though I am the la/t Per/on in the World who would le//en his Lord/hip's Goodne/s, (indeed I /hall always think we are both infinitely obliged to him) yet /ure you mu/t allow the Expen/ce to be a mere Trifle to /uch a va/t Fortune. As for Return, his own Benevolence, in the Satisfaction it receives more than repays it/elf, and I am convinced he expects no other.' 2

The tickets for the masquerade at Ranelagh evoked stronger opposition. When they were alone he told her he distrusted Mrs. Ellison and his lordship, quoting James and Mrs James in support of his opinion.

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1 Vol. 11, Book 1V, ch.v, Amelia, London, 1751, p.51.

2 Vol. 11, Book V1, ch.ii, op. cit., pp. 192 - 3.



'I am convinced they injure him,' cries Amelia. 'As for Mrs. James, he was always given to be cen/orious. I remarked it in her long ago, as her greate/t Fault. And for the Colonel, I believe, he may find Faults enow of this kind in his own Bo/om, without /earching after them among his Neighbours..' <sup>1</sup>

Booth pointed out that neither had any interest in telling a lie.

'Then I my/elf can confute him,' replied Amelia: 'for be/ides his Services to you, which for the future I /hall wi/h to forget, and his Kindne/s to my little Babes, how incon/i/tent is the Character which James gives of him with his Lordship's Behaviour to his own Nephew and Niece, who/e extreme Fondne/s of their Uncle /ufficiently proclaims his Goodne/s to them.

Booth quoted "The wi/e too jealous are. Fools too /ecure" and Amelia burst into tears, affronted by the word "jealousy",

no Man breathing could have any /uch De/igns as you have apprehended, without my immediately /eeing them..<sup>2</sup>

Blackmailed by Mrs. Ellison's threat to acquaint his Lordship with his true character, and upset by Amelia's rebuke, Booth capitulated. He may have been wiser than Amelia on this occasion, but was as easily duped through his love of gambling as she had been through her love of her children, and his foolish increase in indebtedness more than matched her foolish acceptance of the gold watch.

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<sup>1</sup> For this and the following quotation see Vol.11, Book V1, ch.vi, Amelia, London, 1751, pp.231 - 2.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.11, Book V1, ch.vi, op. cit., p.234.



Amelia's lack of suspicion is not a fault but a part of her virtue. Innocence is more blind than guilt because it walks fearlessly and carelessly through life. The same quality is, in the context of her relationship with her husband, a part of her merit as a wife, for because she saw all Booth's conduct through the medium of love and confidence, it appeared to her in a much better light than it deserved. Sophia and Mrs. Miller could see through Blifil, but Amelia seems to have none of their instinctive ability. She liked Mrs. James, who like Mrs. Modern would act bawd for her husband, she liked Mrs. Ellison, the most evil female character in the book, and she liked Mrs. Bennet, the nearest in virtue to herself, with an almost equal intensity. Thus she is not an allegory for "Wisdom", but a fallible human being. Perhaps Fielding never meant the statement in his Dedication to Tom Jones to apply to a town environment. Joseph and his father had to move to the country to find "Eden", the old man of the Hill did the same in Tom Jones, while Tom became involved with Lady Bellaston almost as soon as he reached London.

The difference between Booth and Amelia is basically religious. Amelia's growth is a growth in Christian virtue, which is paradoxically more beautiful because it is achieved in an evil city environment, and more perfect because she was not even conscious of the need to forgive the improvident cause of her martyrdom, her husband. By the



time she left for the country, she was almost angelic. Booth, on the other hand, had only just realized the error of his ways, and was about to begin his education, with Dr. Harrison as his instructor.

Amelia was as prudent as a naturally trusting woman could be. When she thought that the gentleman at the Oratorio had taken an "improper liking" for her, she would not drink tea with Mrs. Ellison if he was to be present. She only visited the noble lord, because her little daughter was reluctant to go without her, and she was pleased by his attentions only because he was so very polite and distant. She recognized Colonel James' passion for what it was, and took every step in her power to preserve her honour, short of risking her husband's life in a duel. Her prudery with Atkinson, who was thought to be in extremis, seems excessive. To know

'I shall never see you more is worse than ten thousand Deaths.'  
'Indeed, Mr. Atkinson,' cries Amelia, blushing, and looking down on the Floor, 'I must not hear you talk in this manner. If you have any thing to say, tell it me, and do not be afraid of my Anger; for I think I may promise to forgive whatever it was possible you should do.'

It should be noted that she had called him "Joe" a few lines earlier. He asked if he could kiss her hand before he died.

'Well, nay,' says he, 'I don't know what I am doing - well - there - he then carelessly gave him her Hand, which he put gently to his Lips,...

Fielding explains her behaviour by

To say the Truth, without any Injury to her Chastity, that Heart, which had



stood firm as a Rock to all the Attacks of Title and Equipage, of Finery and Flattery, and which all the Treasures of the Universe could not have purchased, was yet a little softened by the plain, honest, modest, involuntary, delicate, heroic Passion of this poor and humble Swain; for whom, in spite of her self, he felt a momentary Tenderneſs and Complacance, at which Booth, if he had known it, would perhaps have been displeased.<sup>1</sup>

This episode has a secondary function, for it helps to differentiate further between husband and wife.

Atkinson's qualities as a man were at least equal to Booth's, and possibly superior. When only a child, he was delighted because a great pointer-dog bit him instead of Amelia. When he was beaten severely for the theft of a bird's nest, he did not reveal the fact that his companion was the real offender. Amelia's brother left him a suit, but instead of using it to improve his condition, as Booth used the coach, he sold it to help his mother. He loved Amelia so selflessly, that he served Booth only in order to preserve him for her, and when Booth was penniless on two occasions, offered increasingly large sums of money. His providence, on a far smaller salary is contrasted with Booth's improvidence, his abnegation with Booth's careless acceptance of the proceeds from the sale of all Amelia's possessions. He never lost his position in the army, as Booth did, nor did he need an inheritance before he could main-

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 1V, Book XI, ch. vi, Amelia, London, 1751, pp. 175 - 177.



tain his wife. Even his marriage to Mrs. Bennet was only another proof of his love for Amelia, for he was attracted because of the likeness between them.

Secondly, Amelia by loving Atkinson "as a brother" showed that she, like Parson Adams, and unlike Booth, had no false pride. Atkinson too is a new concept in Fielding's characterization. When Tom and Joseph showed nobility of character, they were discovered to be of gentle birth, but Atkinson, like Pamela, moved successfully from one class to another. Perhaps the fact that Booth joined Amelia in welcoming his ex-sergeant to his home at the end of the novel, is evidence that Dr. Harrison's education in true Christianity was having a beneficial effect.

He is lately advanced to the Rank of Captain, and last Summer both he and his Wife paid a Visit of three Months to Booth and his Wife.<sup>1</sup>

Although Amelia and Mrs. Bennet resembled each other in face and in form, they differed markedly in learning, Mrs Bennet being by far the superior. Amelia had read English plays and poetry,

besides which, I think, /he had conversed only with the Divinity of the great and learned Dr. Barrow, and with the Histories of the excellent Bishop Burnet.<sup>2</sup>

Part of Amelia's excellence as a wife and a woman was the homage she paid to superior male under -

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. IV, Book XI, ch.viii, Amelia, London, 1751, p.294.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. II, Book VI, ch.vii, op. cit., p.240.



standing, with which she never presumed to argue. Even although she thought, from his discourse, that Booth was "little better than an atheist", she only suggested that he might discuss the matter with Dr. Harrison.

Amelia's capacity for friendship is contrasted with that of Mrs James, who put on all the airs of a great lady and confused extreme civility with warmth of feeling. Her friendship with Mrs. Bennet was her salvation, only because her loyalty was proof against the insinuation of Mrs. Ellison. The result was the story which bore so close a resemblance to her own, and which exposed to the full the evils attendant upon contemporary admiration for a rake. She showed mature understanding in her judgment.

"To me, I assure you, you appear highly the Object of Compassion; and I shall always esteem you, as an innocent and an unfortunate Woman."<sup>1</sup>

Amelia was just as generous to the sister who had wronged her as Tom was to Blifil, and no sudden access of fortune could change her good-natured attitude towards those around her. Even her old nurse, by her "absolute command" was seated in a place of honour at her table.<sup>2</sup> Because her own attitudes were sound, she made the mistake of thinking that others shared them. For example she thought that Colonel James was spending time with her, instead of keeping his engagement at Ranelagh, because there was

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.111, Book V11, ch.x, Amelia, London, 1751, p.97.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1V, Book X11, ch.viii, op. cit., p.292.



/weeter Reli/h in the highe/t Offices  
of Friendship, than in any Plea/ures  
the gayest public Places can afford.<sup>1</sup>

The consequences of Amelia's ingenuousness were serious, for while she smiled on the supposed friend of her husband, she was converting that friend into his most bitter enemy. She was the lamb the Colonel hoped to tear from the arms which would fondle and caress it all the days of its life, so that he might slaughter it and feast for a few days. His plans were furthered by Booth and Dr. Harrison, for the former assured Amelia that James would be a father to his children and a husband to her, while he was abroad, while the latter rebuked her for the temporary indulgence of her own passions. It is more difficult to condone Booth's obtuseness than the doctor's, for Booth had learned nothing from the lesson of Montpellier, while the doctor did have the excuse of her earlier, often unreasonable antipathy to the army. Poor Amelia burst into tears, appealingly human in her moment of despair, for all mankind seemed to her to be villains in their hearts.<sup>2</sup>

Atkinson's dream is an interesting anticipation of modern psychological theory. He saw the Colonel standing by Amelia's bedside, with a naked sword in his hand. His subconscious wish to remove the wife who should have been Amelia is made clear by the fact that he attacked her as a

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.111, Book V111, ch.vii, Amelia, London, 1751, p.165.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.111, Book 1X, ch.v, op. cit., p.256.



substitute for the Colonel, and of course the sword has long been a phallic symbol. The dream furthers the plot, by making Booth aware of a possible threat from James, but it also serves as another example of Booth's obtuseness. He misinterpreted the cause, believing that Amelia resented what had been said against himself to the Sergeant.<sup>1</sup>

The comparison between Amelia and Booth is made more specific after the incident of the dream. Amelia refused Mrs James' gay invitation to cards, for the only pleasure they gave her was the sight of her children building with them. She was forced to go, because her husband insisted that she should, but declined to play. Booth, on the other hand, lost five guineas on the same occasion. Secondly, he was determined that she should go to the masquerade, a form of entertainment so much against her principles that she resorted to the first deceit she had ever practised, Mrs Atkinson attending in her place.<sup>2</sup> She regretted her action, because the consequence was a near loss of reputation, and moralized,

if one /teps ever /o little out of the  
Ways of Virtue and Innocence, we know  
now how we may /lide; for all the Ways  
of Vice are a /lippery De/cent,<sup>3</sup>

but the initial fault was Booth's. Thirdly, Amelia denied herself half-a-pint of white wine and refused to allow her children to have tarts, to save

<sup>1</sup> Vol.111, Book 1X, ch.vi, Amelia, London, 1751, p.275.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1V, Book X, ch.iii, op. cit., p.33.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.1V, Book X, ch.viii, op. cit., p.92.



sixpence, while Booth, through gambling and borrowing, ran up a debt to Trent of fifty pounds.<sup>1</sup>

Fielding illustrates both Amelia's selflessness and his own psychological realism, when Booth confesses that he is "undone". Amelia offered him the remaining eleven guineas, and at the same time warned him that his hopes of the Colonel were vain and fallacious. Booth angrily accused her of secrecy,

'You tell me,' said he, 'that I can have no Reliance on James, why did you not tell me so before?' She fell on her knees - 'It was, my Dear, for you, my dread of your jealous Honour, and the fatal Consequences.'

He continued to rage until she

generously forgave a Passion, of which the sagacious Reader is better acquainted with the real Cause, than was that unhappy Lady.<sup>2</sup>

When he eventually revealed the full extent of the disaster, she heard him patiently, without once interrupting him, for the shock had almost deprived her of speech. She did not upbraid him, tried to conceal her anxiety, and took all she possessed to the pawn shop. Booth was so overjoyed that he gave no thought to the distress to which his family had been reduced. Unfortunately Trent was not at home, and on the way home he was persuaded to use the money to "touch" a great man. Amelia did not presume to advise him in a matter of which he was the "better judge", so it too was lost.<sup>3</sup> The little she had left was taken by her maid, but even then she could plead for little Betty.

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1V, Book X, ch.v, Amelia, London, 1751,p.63.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1V, Book X, ch.vi, op. cit., p.73.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.1V, Book X1, ch.v, op. cit., p.161.



The recovery of Amelia's picture through Atkinson was providential, for it was thus that she regained her inheritance. Secondly, it allowed Booth to show the first sign of a readiness to learn from experience, for he asked Amelia to keep the proceeds, except for one guinea. Thirdly it was the occasion of the specially-prepared meal, which proved a fruitless sacrifice, for Booth had promised to dine with Miss Matthews. When the Colonel's letter arrived, Amelia knew that once more she had not been told the truth, and for the first and only time in her marriage, lost faith in her husband.

your Papa is - indeed he is a wicked  
Man - he cares not for any of us -<sup>1</sup>

she told her children. Booth's letter arrived immediately afterwards, informing her that he was once more in prison, and making an obscure confession of the Miss Matthews affair. After much anxious thought, Amelia decided to visit him.

The sequence is similar to the fourth act of The Modern Husband. Mrs. Bellamant was at first so shocked and disillusioned that her faith in mankind was almost destroyed, then in a memorable scene, forgave her husband wholly.<sup>2</sup> This may be compared with Amelia's "Am I so given to upbraiding then?" and her gentle refusal to sink him to perdition. She could not forgive the fault, because she had forgiven it long ago. The letter which

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 1V, Book XI, ch. ix, Amelia, London, 1751, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Act 1V, scene x, The Modern Husband, London, 1732, and p. 41 of this Dissertation.



Miss Matthews thought must have been lost, was in fact delivered.

Amelia never /hin'd forth to Booth in /o amiable and great a Light; nor did his own Unworthine/s ever appear to him /o mean and contemptible, as at this In /tant.<sup>1</sup>

Amelia had made allowances for the situation Booth had then been in, and had been satisfied from the content of the letter, and by other circumstances, that the affair was at an end.

The Booths had reached the nadir of their fortunes, and Dr. Harrison had exhausted both his patience and his resources, but he agreed to help once more only for the sake of Amelia and the children. His condition was that they should return

with him to the parsonage, for he would trust Booth no longer in town.<sup>2</sup> Amelia's opposition to the doctor, on the subject of the duel, is, I think, further evidence of growth in her character. She was no longer prepared to see her husband lose his honour in order to avoid risk to his life. Her views were evidently convincing, for Dr. Harrison visited the Colonel and stopped the duel. Perhaps it is fitting that this discussion of her character should end with his words,

She hath a Sweetne/s of Temper, a Genero/ity of Spirit, an Openne/s of Heart - in a Word, /he hath a true Chri/tian Dispo/sition. I may call her an I/raelite indeed, in whom there is no guile. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1V, Book X11, ch.ii, Amelia, London, 1751, p.213.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1V, Book X11, ch.iii, op. cit., pp.229 - 30.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.111, Book 1X, ch.viii, op. cit., p.289



(ii) Mrs. Bennet.

Just as the similarities between Amelia and Booth were natural, but the differences were the result of religion, so too the similarities between Amelia and Mrs Bennet were natural, and the differences the result of education. Thus Amelia's virtue was preserved because she learned from Mrs. Bennet's experience, and Mrs. Bennet did not grow into perfect womanhood because of the flaws in her education. Fielding's use of a parallel plot serves two purposes, first it widens the scope of his investigation into evil, and secondly it differentiates between absolute virtue and relative virtue.

Mrs. Bennet was about twenty-five years old, her beauty diminished by sickness and suffering, and her expression remarkably grave. There was "much Sweetness in her Countenance, and she was perfectly well-bred."<sup>1</sup> Amelia sensed that she had once been a very spritely woman. The likeness to Amelia is stressed first by Mrs. Ellison,<sup>2</sup> and again at the time of the masquerade when even Booth did not detect the substitution. Booth did not, at first, understand why Amelia had such a high opinion of Mrs. Bennet, but liked her better on closer acquaintance. He was astounded by her learning,

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book IV, ch.ix, Amelia, London, 1751, p.88.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Ellison said there was a "strong Resemblance between them, in the Form of her Person, and still more in her Voice". Vol.11, Book VI, ch.iii, op. cit., p. 197.



but she explained that it was all the fortune given her by her father, and all the dower left her by her husband.

Fielding establishes the superiority of Amelia's education by implication and in action. First, a debate between Mrs. Bennet and Dr. Harrison on the subject of Virgil led to mutual dislike, caused partly by the fact that he proved his learning to be superior to hers. Secondly, when she had become Mrs. Atkinson, it made her behave in a manner considered both unfeminine and unbecoming in a wife.

'I hate a ma/culine Woman, an Amazon, as much as you can do, but what is there ma/culine in Learning?'

'Nothing /o ma/culine, take my Word for it.....'

'Indeed, my dear, ' cries the Serjeant, 'you had better not di/pute with the Doctor; for upon my Word, he will be too hard for you.'

'Nay, I beg you will not interfere,' cries Mrs. Atkinson; 'I am /ure you can be no judge in the/e Matters.'

At which the doctor and Booth bur/t into a loud Laugh....<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, the verse written as a warning to Amelia, was exceptionally poor. Fourthly, the evil effects of her learning are evident in the story of her life. She antagonized her aunt, who also had pretensions to learning, and although the peevishness of the rector is not explained we are probably justified in assuming that it stemmed from the same cause, particularly as

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1V, Book X, ch.iv, Amelia, London, 1751, pp.48 - 9.



he had a "heart of gold". Fifthly, Fielding's attitude towards Mrs. Bennet is difficult to determine. He presents her at first as another, less fortunate Amelia, but her character is shown in a less and less favourable light, particularly in her relationship with Atkinson. The denigration starts with her learning, becomes connected with the chastity which she lost through no fault of her own, and seems to be associated with her action in marrying a man who is socially inferior. Amelia, it should be noted, did not marry him, although it is evident from the "deathbed" scene that she felt more than a sisterly love for him. The technique of a slow revelation of faults had been practised many times before, but in her case there is a reinstatement towards the end of the novel. She rushed in "pale, ghastly, and almo/t breathle/s", afraid that she had lost her husband.<sup>1</sup> She repented of her unauthorized use of Amelia's name at the masquerade, did what she could to repair the damage, and was accepted into the Booth's world.

Although Mrs. Bennet's formal education was seen by Fielding as not only superfluous, but positively harmful, her education in the evils of the town was used unselfishly, to serve Amelia and to preserve her from harm. First, the analogy between her life and Amelia's is close. The earlier part is little more than a variation on the theme of Mrs. Harris and Amelia's sister, including

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 1V, Book XI, ch. vi, Amelia, London, 1751, p. 169.



disinheritance and poverty through no fault of her own. She would have been sent into service, but was saved by the love of the Curate. The aunt, who heard them making her conceit the subject of their wit, cast them both out, much as Amelia and Booth were cast out by Mrs. Harris. The parallel is maintained in their rapid marriage, their short experience of happiness in the country, their expulsion from "Eden" into the vicious world of London, their experiences with great men, their poverty and the necessity of a visit to the pawn shop, and in the improvidence of their husbands. Mr. Bennet did not gamble, but they passed their time "too agreeably" for their circumstances, and in three months she was near her time, and they had exhausted their means. <sup>1</sup> Like the Booths, they loved their child, enjoyed great happiness in their marriage, and were forced by creditors to take shelter in the verge of the Court. Like them they were advised to take lodgings in Mrs. Ellison's house.

The plot worked as well for Amelia as it had worked for Mrs. Bennet, because they shared the same qualities. Mrs. Ellison used Mrs. Bennet's love for her child to draw her into the noble lord's net, just as she would use Amelia's love for her children to achieve the same end. The difference is in the culmination of the plot at the masquerade at Ranelagh. Mrs. Bennet allowed herself to be flattered by His Lordship's passion. Presumably Amelia would not have been guilty of this indiscretion,

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 111, Book V11, ch.v, Amelia, London, 1751, p.57.



but the climax would no doubt have been the same, for, by the time Mrs Bennet returned to the house, she was on her guard. The little she drank was sufficient, for like Clarissa, she had been drugged. Mrs. Ellison was so well able to disguise her role as bawd that she succeeded in persuading Mrs. Bennet of her innocence. She was thus able to appear to Amelia in an even more attractive light than she had to her first victim. Ironically, when Amelia read the letter from Mrs. Bennet to Mrs. Ellison, she was reading the end of her own story, as it might have been.

Dear Madam,

As I have no other Friend on Earth but your<sup>self</sup>, I hope you will pardon my writing to you at this Sea<sup>son</sup>; tho' I do not know that you can relieve my Di<sup>st</sup>re<sup>ss</sup>es, or if you can, have I any Pretence to expect that you <sup>should</sup>. My poor dear, O Heavens! - my - lies dead in the Hou<sup>se</sup>, and after I had procured <sup>sufficient</sup> to bury him, a <sup>set</sup> of Ruffians have entered my Hou<sup>se</sup>, eized all I have, have <sup>seized</sup> his dear, dear Corp<sup>se</sup>, and threaten to deny it Burial. For Heaven's Sake, <sup>send</sup> me, at lea<sup>st</sup>, ome Advice; little Tommy <sup>stands</sup> now by me crying for Bread, which I have not to give him. - I can <sup>say</sup> no more than that I am,

Your mo<sup>st</sup> di<sup>st</sup>re<sup>ss</sup>ed humble Servant,

M. Bennet.

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Mrs. Ellison is a more composite villain than Blifil, for she has elements of good nature. Through her good offices, Mrs. Bennet received an annuity from His Lordship, and paradoxically, without the hos-

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book V1, ch.iii, Amelia, London, 1751, p.198.



pitality she extended to Mrs. Bennet, Amelia would have had no means of discovery.

Secondly, Mrs Bennet used her experience to protect Amelia. For example she warned her that what Colonel James described as friendship, was love, that Mrs James might be acting as bawd for her husband, and that there would be no safety in the Colonel's house. Although her own tragedy had occurred after a masquerade, she was willing to go in Amelia's place, rather than expose her friend. Although her action was admirable, the consequence of disguise was, according to Fielding, invariably evil. She succumbed to the temptation to use her position as Amelia, to obtain a commission for Atkinson. It seemed that her earlier contact with the noble lord had contaminated her, for she descended to tactics which resembled his.

Because Mrs. Bennet is similar to Amelia, her failings emphasize the perfection of the heroine. In the quarrel she says that if she was a man,

rather than be married to a Woman who makes  
/uch a Fu/s with her Virtue, I would wi/h my  
Wife was without /uch a trouble/ome Companion,<sup>1</sup>

Her rage arose partly from the fact that she had taken a "nip too much that evening". This fault had been hinted at earlier, in the episode of the Sergeant's dream. Yet she continues to be a sympathetic character, for much could be excused on the grounds of her earlier sufferings, and perhaps more could be explained by present jealousy, for she knew that Atkinson loved Amelia.

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. 1V, Book X, ch. viii, Amelia, London, 1751, pp. 94 - 5.



(iii) Miss Matthews.

Miss Matthews is the third major female character in Amelia, and many critics have found her more attractive than the heroine. This is probably part of the phenomenon which has made Milton's Satan more attractive than God, and Lovelace more attractive than Clarissa. Fielding's method is similar to the one used with Mrs. Bennet, for as Amelia grows in maturity, she diminishes, but she is not, like Mrs. Bennet, reinstated at the end. Her fate is to be the spoiled mistress of Colonel James, doated on but "very disagreeable in her person, and immensely fat". This is the equivalent of a judgment, for physical and moral ugliness are nearly always synonymous in Fielding. For example Mrs. Ellison is the only female character described as ugly when first introduced.

This good Woman her/self had none of the/e attractive Charms to the Eye. Her Per/on was /hort, and immoderately fat; her Features were none of the mo/t regular; and her Complexion (if indeed /he ever had a good one) had con/iderably /uffered by Time.<sup>1</sup>

Amelia, on the other hand, grew finer with age, and continued to be "as hand/ome as ever" in the eyes of her husband.<sup>2</sup>

Miss Matthews was a beautiful young woman, accused of murder, a crime which Booth felt sure she could not have committed, for it was impossible that her nature could have changed. She played Dido to his Aeneas, with all the "bewitching softness, of

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.11, Book 1V, ch.vii, Amelia, London, 1751, p.72.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1V, Book X11, ch.ix, op. cit., p.292.



which she was a perfect mistress".<sup>1</sup> She gloried in the murder, "oh! it is music in my ears" and her only regret was that there was no blood upon her hand. Booth was horrified, but like Amelia with the story of Mrs. Bennet, waited to hear the evidence. She contrived to flatter Booth, and to remind him of all his former feelings for her, while ostensibly telling her story. The contrast between her direct, wholly feminine wiles, and the cold scheming of Mrs. Ellison, makes her seem almost innocent, although both had the same end in view, the destruction of a happy marriage.

The analogy between Amelia's courtship and Miss Matthews' courtship is amusing, for the Ensign and the Cornet both used flattery to attract their ladies. Booth praised the beauty which Amelia thought she had lost, and Hebbers praised the musical talent of Miss Matthews, which she had never possessed. Miss Matthews began to hate her sister's admirers, and to look upon the handsome person of Hebbers with pleasure. Amelia's rival was not her sister, but Miss Osborne. The parallel ceases at this point.

Hebbers persuaded Miss Matthews to accept him as her lover by "affecting a passion" for widow Carey, and her sister's wedding celebrations completed her ruin. The "Villain found Means to /teal to my Chamber, and I was undone".<sup>2</sup> She solicited marriage, until he told her that he was already married. This pleased her, for she concluded that

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 1, ch.vi, Amelia, London, 1751, p.45.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. 1, Book 1, ch.ix, op. cit., p.65.



he had acted from ardent and ungovernable love, and she forgave him all. She left her father's protection, lived with him as his mistress, and bore a child within the year. Life was tolerable while he was present, but nothing could equal her misery during his absence.

O heavens! When I have seen my Equals  
glittering in a Side-box, how have the  
Thoughts of my lost Honour torn my Soul!

She saw Hebbers with the widow at Drury-lane play-house, and soon afterwards discovered that the captain had married her. She thought at first, that this was the marriage she had been informed of, but was told by the landlady's daughter that it had taken place only a week before. Hebbers sent her a letter, advising her to reconcile herself with her family, or failing this, offering twenty pounds per annum. She went straight to him, plunged a pen-knife into his "accursed heart", and would receive the sentence of the law with pleasure.

The story plays its part in Booth's seduction, but it also serves three other purposes. The first is moral, for it acts as a warning to every woman to keep her innocence, never to confide in the honesty of a man, nor in her own strength. The second softens the implications of Booth's infidelity, for Miss Matthews has no virtue to lose. The third is part of the religious difference between Booth and Amelia, for Miss Matthews was even more extreme than Booth. She had fortified herself against the



wrong she had done her father, by artificially working up a minor incident, into a high injury. This was the frustration of her desire to go to a Ball. <sup>1</sup> More seriously, the affair with Hebbers illustrated the effect of her dominant passion upon her actions. She went further than Booth, for she looked upon virtue or religion as cloaks, under which hypocrisy may be the better enabled to cheat the world, an opinion she had held ever since reading "that charming fellow Mandevil".<sup>2</sup> Booth disagreed because there was no mention of love. Thus while Booth praised his Amelia, he fell deeper under the spell of his dominant passion for Miss Matthews, and while they discussed philosophy, they demonstrated the deficiencies of their beliefs. The irony is made more

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 1, ch.x, Amelia, London, 1751, p.76.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard de Mandeville wrote a pamphlet of some twenty-six pages, which appeared on 2nd April, 1705, with no mention of the author's name. "It was called The Grumbling Hive, or Knaves Turn'd Honest. Once upon a time there was a hive which bore a close resemblance to a well-ordered human society. It lacked neither knaves nor swindlers. It had plenty of bad doctors, bad priests, bad soldiers, bad ministers; it also had a bad Queen. Every day, frauds were committed in this hive; and justice, called upon to put down corruption, was itself corruptible. In a word, every profession, every class was full of vices; but the nation was none the less prosperous, none the less strong on that account. In fact the vices of its individual members contributed to the felicity of the state as a whole and, vice versa, the felicity of the whole made for the well-being of the individuals composing it. And having absorbed this fact, the most rascally members of the tribe strove stout-heartedly for the promotion of the common weal."

The fable continues with the ruin of the bees, as a result of agitation to achieve honesty and virtue. See Paul Hazard's The European Mind 1680 - 1715, Penguin Books, 1964, p.333.



explicit when we discover that Booth always "turned" similar discussions with Amelia, because he had no opinion of his wife as a philosopher or divine.<sup>1</sup>

Fielding, by associating Miss Matthews so closely with Booth's beliefs, makes it clear that she was originally as good-natured as he was, but was misled by a false religion. She is shown in her most amiable light when she comments on Sergeant Atkinson's offer of money. "You have made me half in Love with that charming Fellow." When she found that Booth had refused she said,

you should have accepted the Offer, and  
I am convinced you hurt him very much  
when you refused it...<sup>2</sup>

Judging by her interjections, she is honest enough to diagnose her own faults.

'Good Heaven ! ' cry'd Mi<sup>s</sup> Matthews,  
'What detestable Actions will this contemptible Passion of Envy prevail on our Sex to commit?'<sup>3</sup>

and on the subject of Miss Bath's vanity,

a Fault of the first Magnitude in a Woman,  
and often the Occasion of many others.<sup>4</sup>

She is less charming, but probably correct from the point of view of his career, when she pities him for having a "vapourish wife".<sup>5</sup> Major Bath is a fool, in her opinion, to have a passion for duelling. Booth's earlier knowledge of her character made it

<sup>1</sup> Vol. 1V, Book X, ch. ix, Amelia, London, 1751, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. 1, Book 111, ch. viii, op. cit., pp. 228 - 9.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. 1, Book 11, ch. i, op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. 1, Book 111, ch. viii, op. cit., p. 235.

<sup>5</sup> Vol. 1, Book 111, ch. vii, op. cit., p. 219.



inconceivable that she should be amused by Amelia's behaviour after the Bagillard episode. She adroitly recovered his good opinion, yet, because there is little doubt that she was amused, there is a suggestion that her character had deteriorated, presumably because of pride, envy and wrong moral choices. Thus she is as closely related to Amelia as Mrs Bennet through the theme of the incorrect education of women, and through the evils which attend even the slightest deviation from the path of virtue. She exposes her false values again when she calls the "calm sea" of the Booth's farming days "The dullest of all Ideas".<sup>1</sup> Booth had known her in the days of her innocence, when she must have been as capable as Amelia of inspiring his love,

He spake these last Words with great Tenderness: For he was a Man of consummate Good-nature, and had formerly had much Affection for this young Lady; indeed, more than the Generality of People are capable of entertaining for any Person whatsoever.<sup>2</sup>

Miss Matthews was careless of money, and would willingly have abandoned Colonel James with all he possessed, for the poverty-stricken Booth. When he talked of obligations, she said

Love never confers any. It doth every thing for its own sake. I am not therefore obliged to the Man whose Passion makes him generous: for I feel how inconsiderable the whole world would appear to me, if I could throw it after my heart.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol.1, Book 111, ch.xii, Amelia, London, 1751, p.277.

<sup>2</sup> Vol.1, Book 111, ch.xii, op. cit., p.285.

<sup>3</sup> Vol.11, Book 1V, ch.ii, op. cit., p.13.



The quality of Miss Matthews' love for Booth has only to be measured against the selfless devotion of Atkinson for Amelia, to be found wanting. While Atkinson fought to preserve the happiness of the marriage, Miss Matthews became progressively more unscrupulous in her treatment of Amelia. Her first letter was written after only three days, her second contained a threat to make Amelia as miserable as herself, and her subsequent actions showed that she would destroy even Booth to satisfy her desire for revenge. While Atkinson consoled himself with a picture of Amelia, Miss Matthews was content with nothing less than Booth himself.



CHAPTER 1V.CONCLUSION.

The thesis that woman is central to Fielding's art has been found to apply to the works defined as "social comedy".

Fielding first dramatized the social role of woman in the plays. He castigated them as a source of corruption, analyzed the causes, and centred both positive and negative values in them. Themes are related to them, and recur in different situations. For example, in Love in Several Masques, Helena is merchandise to be sold, and according to Lady Trap, it is impudence to wish to marry the man she loves. Bellaria in The Temple Beau, Hilaret in The Coffee-House Politician, Dorothea in Don Quixote in England, and even Miss Lucy, all attack the unreasonable exercise of parental authority, and affirm the need for love in marriage. The theme of the relative virtue of the country is carried by Lady Matchless in Love in Several Masques, personified in Chloe in The Lottery, is strongly in evidence in The Modern Husband, recurs in the two Miss Lucy plays, and is expanded more fully in The Good-Natured Man. In the novels, the first theme is centred on Sophia and Amelia, and the second is general in Joseph



Andrews, Tom Jones, and Amelia. I find that The Modern Husband and The Universal Gallant are the two plays most closely-related to the novels. The first foreshadows Amelia in theme, character and plot, and the second anticipates the method of defining an abstract quality used in the three novels.

I did not anticipate support for the principle that woman is central, in Joseph Andrews, but found, rather to my surprize, that it is still valid, not because of the role she plays, but because of the type of virtue which she represents. It seems that although the debt to Richardson has been over-emphasized, the importance of Pamela herself, as a personification of a concept of virtue, has been under-estimated. Fielding has defined the quality by comparing the already famous Pamela with her humble illiterate sister, Fanny, and has shown through action, that the latter is her superior.

Tom Jones was the original cause of my interest in this topic. I had approached the book in ways supported by critical opinion, but had found that Fielding had not achieved the aims outlined in the Dedication. For example, the question "what is the meaning of the plot itself, of the actual disposition of events and the causal link between them? led to the answer that "virtue" had been modified and qualified so often, that it resembled "expediency". The allegorical approach was equally unsatisfactory, for "Allworthy" and "Sophia" taken together as goodness and wisdom, were



undermined because the actions of the Squire opposed the arguments of the Dedication. I thought of the influence of Charlotte Fielding, and of the central role of Amelia in the last novel, and decided to try an approach through Sophia. She justified my faith in Fielding's ability to achieve his own intentions.

Woman is central in Amelia as overtly and as obviously as in Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa. I have found that Fielding's change in structure and in emphasis is not a change in intention, but a clarification. The change in structure allowed freedom for psychological realism, and for the development of character to occur as a result of an educative process. The change in emphasis avoided the danger of misinterpretation, which had occurred in Tom Jones, because of a too-attractive hero.

The importance of considering the central role of Fielding's women can be illustrated by the modern tendency to undervalue his art and to compare him unfavourably with Richardson. Many readers consider that he is technically brilliant but psychologically superficial. His success in creating lively male characters has, in one sense, militated against him, for they have tended to obscure the heroine, and consequently, to make his moral aims appear equivocal. The rivalry between Fielding and Richardson has also been unfortunate, for it has stressed their differences rather than their similarities. For example, because Pamela is obviously central, it has been assumed that Sophia is not, and because Amelia seems more



like Clarissa than Tom Jones, she has disappointed Fielding's admirers, and has seemed a pale imitation to Richardson's adherents. I hope that by discussing the common origin of Pamela, Clarissa, Sophia and Amelia, in the drama, and of the reasons why two great artists created them at approximately the same time, with similar moral aims in view, has placed them in their historical perspective. Because each author represented a different aspect of the theory of benevolence, there are basic differences, but I can see no reason why the merits of one should obscure those of the other. Part of the judgment has been based on what, I think, is a false stereotype of Fielding as a "man's man".

My conclusions, in summary, are as follows. First, woman is central in all Fielding's social comedy, including the novels. Secondly, the concept of virtue carried by Woman gives both structural and thematic unity. Thirdly, the continuity in theme, character and situation between the drama and the novels, is striking. Fourthly, Amelia, the last novel, is the most closely-related to the early plays. Finally, the evolution of Fielding's women from simple types and humours to complex psychological characters suggests a growing artistic power, which had by no means reached its limit, when it was terminated by premature death.



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