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FALLING OFF THE LADDER OF DEGREE:  
ARISTOCRATIC AUTHORITY AND THE CONSCIENTIOUS SELF  
IN PAMELA, THE PAMELA VOGUE, AND THE NOVELS OF HENRY FIELDING

by

Richard Gooding

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
February, 1994

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## Abstract

Although differences in their politics and moral concerns led to strikingly different emphases in their fiction, both Fielding and Richardson explore the implications for the conscientious self of a loss of aristocratic authority. The first two chapters of this thesis argue that Richardson's Pamela represents a standard by which one can evaluate contemporary representations of the conscientious self in conflict with aristocratic authority. The third chapter argues that Joseph Andrews presents a critique of aristocratic authority similar to Pamela's, but that the extreme self-consciousness of the narrator and Fielding's reliance on conventions derived from romance and dramatic comedy usually pre-empt close examination of the effects of abused aristocratic authority on the conscientious self. The fourth chapter argues that in Tom Jones Fielding presents a more sharply focused, if general, account of effects on conscientious women and men of a crisis in aristocratic authority than he does in Joseph Andrews, and that his relative success can be attributed partly to a new emphasis on the psychological destructiveness of social emulation and partly to the narrator's discussion of the difficulties of reconciling prudence and good nature. The last chapter examines social emulation in The Enquiry into the Late Increase of Robbers and Amelia to present the case that in Amelia Fielding dramatizes the effects of a loss of aristocratic authority on men and women who are convincingly presented as complex, highly individualized, and partly unknowable.

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Many thanks also to my parents for their support; to Paul and Jim for their friendship; to whatever SSHRC committee awarded me the doctoral fellowship that paid for the first half of the degree; and to kind chairs at Saint Mary's and Mount Saint Vincent who made it possible for me to pay for the second half. Above all, profound thanks to Liz for reasons too varied and personal to list.

... O when Degree is shaken  
Which is the ladder of all high designs,  
The enterprise is sick. How could communities,  
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,  
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
The primogenity and due of birth,  
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,  
But by degree, stand in authentic place?

Troilus and Cressida (I, iii, 101-108)

[Johnson] again insisted on the duty of maintaining subordination of rank. 'Sir, I would no more deprive a nobleman of his respect than of his money. I consider myself as acting a part in the great system of society, and I do to others as I would have them do to me. I would behave to a nobleman as I should expect he would behave to me, were I a nobleman and he Sam. Johnson. Sir, there is one Mrs. Macaulay in this town, a great republican. One day when I was at her house, I put on a very grave countenance, and said to her, "Madam, I am now become a convert to your way of thinking. I am convinced that all mankind are upon an equal footing; and to give you an unquestionable proof, Madam, that I am in earnest, here is a very sensible, civil, well-behaved fellow-citizen, your footman; I desire that he may be allowed to sit down and dine with us." I thus, Sir, shewed her the absurdity of the levelling doctrine. She has never liked me since.'

Life of Johnson, Vol. i, 447-448.

Crises of authority are constructed around the modulations in recognizing freedom and slavery in oneself, recognizing them in other human beings, and recognizing oneself in other human beings. Each crisis occurs through disbelieving what one previously believed. But these acts of disbelieving are not ends. They are means to new patterns of belief.

Richard Sennett, Authority, 129

Introduction: Aristocratic Authority, the Conscientious  
Self, and Novelistic Form

Up; and after doing a little business, down to Deptford with Sir W. Batten--and there left him, and I to Greenwich to the park, where I hear the King and [the] Duke [of Monmouth] are come by water this morn from Hampton Court. They asked me several Questions. The King mightily pleased with his new buildings there. I followed them to Castles ship in building and there met Sir W. Batten.... Great variety of talk--and was often led to speak to the King and Duke. By and by they go to dinner; and all to dinner and sat down to the King saving myself, which though I could not in modesty expect, yet God forgive my pride, I was sorry I was there, that Sir W. Batten should say that he could sit down where I could not--though he had twenty times more reason then I. But this was my pride and folly....

[Mr. Castle] and I by and by to dinner, mighty nobly; the King having dined, he came down, and I went in the barge with him, I sitting at the door--down to Woolwich (and there I just saw and kissed my wife, and saw some of her painting, which is very curious, and away again to the King) and back again with him in the barge, hearing him and the Duke talk and seeing and observing their manner of discourse; and God forgive me, though I adore them with all the duty possible, yet the more a man considers and observes them, the less he finds of difference between them and other men, though (blessed be God) they are both princes of great nobleness and spirits.

Pepys, Diary, 26 July 1665<sup>1</sup>

[Shame] said also that religion made a man grow strange to the great, because of a few vices (which he called by finer names) and made him own and respect the base, because of the same religious fraternity. And is not this, said he, a shame?

Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress (1678)<sup>2</sup>

In very different ways, Pepys and Bunyan raise what later become important concerns of the realist tradition in the

---

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, eds. Robert Latham and William Mathews, 11 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972) 6: 169-170.

<sup>2</sup>John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress, ed. Roger Sharrock (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) 108.

early English novel. In the first part of the excerpt from the diary, Pepys reports exhilaration and disappointment after he meets King Charles but is excluded from dinner; then in arch commentary on his exclusion he reports consoling himself by dining "mighty nobly" with Mr. Castle. Later, among the details of the day--which include plague statistics, business negotiations, a visit with the handsome Mrs. Batelier, and news of the death of a colleague--Pepys suddenly reveals his bewilderment that a commonplace belief about the innate superiority of the nobility over commoners does not square with his experience. The full impact on Pepys of what seems to modern readers a mundane observation registers itself in a series of stylistic tremors that run through the last part of the passage. Pious interjections and the hyperbolic and conventional "adore" betray the diarist's embarrassment at being unable to reconcile his understanding of natural order with the evidence of his senses. The creaky logic of claiming that King Charles and the Duke of Monmouth are little different from other men and that they exhibit "great nobleness and spirits" only underscores the incompatibility of belief and experience. And Pepys's sudden retreat into the secure impersonality of the third person suggests a subtle evasion of responsibility for the conclusions he reaches.

That Pepys should express himself so reluctantly, even in the shorthand he used for his diaries, suggests how

seductive such commonplaces must have been to those who could identify themselves with the sources of political authority in seventeenth-century England. Pepys knows that his fortunes are on the rise: in the conclusion to this entry, he reports feeling "mighty full of the honour of this day" and remarks that he has just lived "four days of as great content and honour and pleasure to me as ever I hope to live or deserve or think anybody else can live" (170-71). He also knows that one way to consolidate his social and professional gains is to be allowed to dine with King Charles. And yet he senses that his aspirations may be a vanity at odds with his spiritual development, and that the value he places on social distinctions stems from a belief system that, from his suggestively liminal position on the barge, suddenly seems a little suspect. Up close, the king and duke are no better than other men, and Pepys comes perilously close to contending that the duke, at least, may be worse: "The Duke of Monmouth is the most skittish leaping gallant that ever I saw, alway[s] in action, vaulting or leaping, or clambering" (170).

Pepys's remarks on Charles and Monmouth touch on concerns about aristocratic authority that are still being articulated by novelists writing nearly a century later. The entry from the diary presents the authority of the king and duke indirectly, in terms of prestige rooted in unspoken beliefs about hereditary honour, yet even Pepys's manner

anticipates the common novelistic tactic of evaluating aristocratic authority through the complex and sometimes contradictory responses of the men and women who are subject to it. For Pepys, aristocratic prestige, however strong, is not quite strong enough to overcome the evidence provided by "seeing and observing"; but "seeing and observing" do not entirely liberate Pepys from suspect beliefs about the moral qualities of nobility. The interest that the diary entry affords modern readers is not so much in Pepys's insights as in their effect on the diarist himself: his embarrassment, his apologetic piety, his hesitancy in accepting full responsibility for the conclusions he draws are all part of an astonishingly complex response to the ideological equivalent of an earthquake.

A similar relation between the problem of aristocratic authority and the focus of much modern readerly interest prevails in some later novels belonging to what can broadly be identified as an English tradition of novelistic realism. In Fielding's Amelia, for instance, Molly Bennet and Amelia Booth deal with subtle discrepancies between their assumptions about rank and their observations of particular aristocrats. In their cases, as in Pepys's, the problematic nature of aristocratic authority is reflected in complex and at times contradictory subjective responses rather than in simple statements of ideological allegiance. Even in Pamela, the most provocative of early eighteenth-century

novelistic examinations of aristocratic authority, the question of a master's authority is treated largely in terms of its subtle effects on the conduct of servants. Pamela steadfastly opposes patently offensive demands presented under the patrician guise of an employer's and social superior's authority, but her most interesting responses to Mr. B. are her attempts at balancing the insights gained from experience with comforting fictions about the nature and validity of social distinctions.

In the second passage quoted above, Faithful's account of his meeting with Shame reflects a nonconformist's skepticism about aristocratic authority. Bunyan does not share Pepys's awe of rank, and so his views on the aristocracy are less inherently contradictory. For Bunyan, as for other nonconformists, rank offers mainly destructive models of conduct. But if Bunyan, unlike Pepys, knows precisely what he thinks about the cultural phenomenon he describes, he feels it no less urgently. The danger that the prestige of rank poses to spiritual development is an ongoing concern in The Pilgrim's Progress:

By-Ends. ...to tell you the truth, I am become a gentleman of good quality; yet my great-grandfather was but a waterman, looking one way and rowing another: and I got most of my estate by the same occupation.

Christian. Are you a married man?

By-Ends. Yes, and my wife is a very virtuous woman. She was my Lady Faining's daughter, therefore she came of a very honourable family, and is arrived to such a pitch of breeding that she knows how to carry it to all, even to prince and peasant. 'Tis true, we

somewhat differ in religion from those of the stricter sort, yet but in two small points: first, we never strive against wind and tide; secondly, we are always most zealous when religion goes in his silver slippers; we love much to walk with him in the street if the sun shines and the people applaud it. (146)

Here, in By-Ends' account of his ancestry and marriage, Bunyan presents the irreconcilability of worldly and spiritual interests. By-Ends' submission to the demands of "looking one way and rowing another" has permitted his marriage into the aristocracy, but it has also required a slackening of his religious principles. After briefly joining up with Christian, By-Ends falls in with Mr. Money-Love, Mr. Hold-the-world, and Mr. Save-all, and is way-laid by Demas at Lucre Hill.

The episode anticipates not only Richardson's preoccupation with the conflicts between competing social and spiritual authorities, but also a fundamentally novelistic tool of inquiry, the psychologically individuated character. By-Ends' breeding and religious waffling are the givens of the description, and they make possible his rise in the world. His taking up with Christian and then trading Christian's company for Money-love's are characteristic of his policy of never striving against wind and tide. His actions are of a piece with his stated principles, not that he understands the implications of his principles any more than a later moral opportunist, Mrs. Jewkes, understands the implications of hers. But despite the straightforward display of moral commitments, By-Ends is subtly and

convincingly delineated, from his embarrassment at his ungenteel name, to his continual recourse to waterman's metaphors, to the affected and gauche obeisance--the "very low conjee" (138)--he makes to Hold-the-world, Money-love, and Save-all.

Both long passages quoted above entail a complex relationship between, on the one hand, a highly individuated self partly characterized by its attitude toward the authority of rank and, on the other, a set of literary conventions imperfectly suited to communicating this attitude. Pepys's commitment to recording the particulars of experience and the fact that the diary is a form that promotes concern with matters of casuistry and self-knowledge afford him opportunities to see through commonplaces about nobility. Given Pepys's genuine if conventional Anglicanism, his deep distrust of radical sects, and his successful bureaucratic career at the naval office, his remarks about the king and duke are surprisingly candid, and the form he uses might be considered liberating. But the diary has obvious formal limitations: the necessity of taking experience as it comes discourages sustained examination of all but the most persistent existential concerns, and the autobiographical nature of the form nearly precludes examination of a problem from more than one point of view. Not surprisingly, Bunyan's examination of aristocratic authority is also conditioned by the form he

chooses. Although The Pilgrim's Progress, unlike Pepys's diary, offers several different subjective responses to aristocratic authority, none of Bunyan's characters attains Pepys's complex ambivalence. In the end, the aim of allegory to promote specific didactic ends limits the degree of psychological complexity appropriate for each character. His usefulness for allegory exhausted, By-Ends is consigned to Lucre Hill and his accommodations of rank are left unexplored:

By-ends, and Silver-Demas, both agree;  
One calls, the other runs, that he may be  
A sharer in his lucre: so these two  
Take up in this world, and no further go. (146)

In their works, Pepys's diary entry and Bunyan's treatment of By-Ends are only minor episodes, yet they illustrate the difficulty of making general claims about the ability of any literary form to deal with any given existential problem. This difficulty becomes particularly important in discussions of the eighteenth-century novel, for even the idea of a single, identifiable novelistic genre has recently come under vigorous assault on two fronts. Since the mid-sixties, studies of literary history have identified rich and varied traditions of prose fiction before Richardson or even Defoe, and so the once fashionable exercise of identifying the first English novel has largely been abandoned, as has the belief in absolute distinctions between realist novels and their non-realist antecedents and

contemporaries.<sup>3</sup> In a parallel development, complications to the idea of novelistic genre have been proposed by a host of theorists, the most influential being Bakhtin, whose theory of heteroglossia posits the novel as a developing genre "teeming with future and former languages, with prim but moribund aristocrat-languages, with parvenu-languages and with countless pretenders to the status of language."<sup>4</sup> Both developments present new challenges for the study of a canonical writer like Fielding or Richardson, for they raise questions about the precise nature and degree of such

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<sup>3</sup>See Jack D. Durant, "Books about the Early English Novel: A Survey and a List," The First English Novelists: Essays in Understanding, ed. J. M. Armistead (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985) 269-284. Durant's handy checklist, now a little out of date, lists ninety-one books on the eighteenth-century novel. Of these, several are relevant to the background of the early eighteenth-century novel, notably Robert A. Day's Told in Letters: Epistolary Fiction before Richardson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), which identifies a tradition of epistolary fiction before Richardson; John J. Richetti's influential Popular Fiction before Richardson: Narrative Patterns, 1700-1739 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); and Lennard Davis's Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel (New York: Columbia UP, 1983), a discussion that emphasizes such non-fictional forms as newspapers and political pamphlets. More recent studies include Paul Salzman's taxonomic English Prose Fiction, 1558-1700: A Critical History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) and J. Paul Hunter's Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century Fiction (New York: Norton, 1990), an account of popular reading before Richardson.

<sup>4</sup>Qtd in Michael McKeon, Origins of the English Novel: 1600-1740 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) 14. McKeon's dialectical argument presents a similar challenge to conventional genre theory; see McKeon's response to Bakhtin (13-14). The Bakhtinian model of dialogical transformation also influences John Bender's Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

writers' indebtedness to earlier literary forms,<sup>5</sup> the extent to which this indebtedness advanced or impeded their literary project (whatever that project might be), their degree of innovation, and even the nature of their appeal to later authors.

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<sup>5</sup>The past twenty years in particular have seen a flourishing interest in the literary antecedents of Richardson and Fielding. In A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) Margaret Anne Doody discusses the influence of pastoral comedy on Pamela (36-41); Cynthia Griffin Wolff's book Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1972) discusses Richardson's indebtedness to biographies of Puritan saints and to the Puritan conception of the diary as a means of self-examination (14-57). For Richardson's use of fairy tale, see D. C. Muecke, "Beauty and Mr. B.," Studies in English Literature 7 (1967): 467-474; Barbara Belyea, "Romance and Richardson's Pamela," English Studies in Canada 10 (1984): 407-415; and Carol Houlihan Flynn, Samuel Richardson: A Man of Letters (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982) 145-195. For his use of Arcadia, see Gillian Beer, "Pamela: rethinking Arcadia," Samuel Richardson, Tercentenary Essays, eds. Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989) 23-39.

For a general discussion of Fielding's proximity to a romance tradition, see Henry Knight Miller, Tom Jones and the Romance Tradition (Victoria: University of Victoria Press, 1974). Discussions of Fielding's relationship to specific literary antecedents include Sheridan Baker's three essays, "Henry Fielding's Comic Romances," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters 45 (1960): 411-419; "Henry Fielding's Comic Epic-in-Prose Romances Again," Philological Quarterly 58 (1979): 63-81; and "Fielding's Amelia and the Materials of Romance," Philological Quarterly 41 (1962): 437-449. In The Art of Joseph Andrews (Chicago: Chicago UP) Homer Goldberg extensively discusses Fielding's use of Cervantes, Scarron, Marivaux, and Lesage. In An Exemplary History of the Novel: The Quixotic versus the Ficaresque (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1981), Walter Reed shows how Fielding tries to accommodate the model of Don Quixote with neoclassical epic theory (117-136).

The study that follows discusses the effect of literary form on Richardson's and Fielding's portrayal of the self in relation to the authority of rank. In my discussion of Pamela and Fielding's three novels, my usual procedure is to begin by presenting an account of each novel's general critique of aristocratic authority before turning to the formal features that further or impede the novelist's use of the self as a means of inquiry into the problem of abused authority. In the first chapter, I argue that in Pamela Richardson depicts a crisis of aristocratic authority and the main ethical problem that this crisis poses for conscientious women and men in a position of social inferiority: the difficulty of reconciling the demands of conscience with those of one's social position. The sophistication of Richardson's treatment of this crisis can be attributed to his use of psychologically individuated characters, but Pamela is ultimately compromised by its author's reluctance to dramatize the apparently intractable problem of authority within marriage and by recalcitrant elements of literary form--specifically, the conduct book and the romance--that militate against the presentation of the complex and highly individuated self. In Chapter Two I argue that the relative sophistication of Pamela's treatment of the conscientious self becomes clear only when one considers the works of the Pamela vogue. Almost without exception these works misconstrue Richardson's claims about

the relation of the conscientious self to aristocratic authority, and even the works one would expect to be most sympathetic to a Richardsonian view of conscience employ conventions that preclude a subtly discriminating exploration of moral experience. Although Shamela is undoubtedly the best work of the Pamela vogue, even it fails to examine the conflicts between self and authority that are at the heart of Richardson's novel. One must, therefore, turn to Fielding's three novels--Joseph Andrews (1742), Tom Jones (1749), and Amelia (1751)--to understand Fielding's developing recognition not only of the problems faced by the conscientious self in a society regulated by a suspect principle of subordination, but also of the necessity of accommodating literary form to an examination of these problems. In Chapter Three I argue that Joseph Andrews shares with Pamela many elements of a critique of aristocratic authority, but that both the self-conscious narrator and Fielding's reliance on conventions derived from romance pre-empt close examination of what happens to the conscientious men and women who are required to ignore the dictates of conscience. In Chapter Four I contend that in Tom Jones Fielding begins to undermine the usual ideological implications of romance conventions and that the narrator begins to examine the effect on the self of a widespread decay of reliable cultural authorities. And finally, in Chapter Five I argue that Amelia marks simultaneously the

logical development of Fielding's interests in the problem of abused aristocratic authority and a turning toward the modern concept of the self as complex, highly individualized, and partly unconscious.

Fielding was a prolific writer and it would be impossible to give an exhaustive account of his handling of social subordination. Since my interest in his work lies less in his general views on the aristocracy than in his growing accommodation of novelistic form to an examination of the effects of abused authority on particular men and women, I offer no sustained discussion of Jonathan Wild (1743) or of Fielding's early dramatic works, although some of Fielding's comedies--notably, The Temple Beau (1729), The Modern Husband (1731), and The Intriguing Chambermaid (1734)--amount to forthright attacks on aristocratic sexual conduct. I do, however, hope to make two contributions to scholarship on the early novel. In the first two chapters, my aim is to establish Pamela as a standard by which contemporary representations of the conscientious self in conflict with aristocratic authority, including Fielding's, can be evaluated. In the last three chapters I hope to show that behind the assuredness of plot construction and tone that has fostered claims of the Palladian or architectonic solidity of Fielding's novels there lurks a surprisingly heuristic approach to representing the relationship between aristocratic authority and the conscientious self, and that

in the movement from Joseph Andrews to Tom Jones to Amelia, Fielding's habitual recourse to certain literary practices--in particular, his use of romance conventions and of a narrator who mediates between characters and readers--is accompanied by the adaptation of these procedures to the ends of exploring the self in a world where conscientious women and men are reluctantly abandoning their allegiance to the authority of rank.

Given the canonical status of both writers--the latest CD Rom MLA catalogue lists 335 references for Fielding and 304 for Richardson since 1981--and the fragmented state of literary studies, it is difficult to be both precise and succinct, and impossible to be exhaustive, about recent interpretations of the two authors' attitudes toward aristocratic authority. Michael McKeon, for instance, sees Pamela as a competition between ideologically progressive and aristocratic versions of events in which, with some qualifications, the progressive version wins out.<sup>6</sup> Nancy Armstrong goes further, claiming that the novel entails a complete condemnation of the political system that makes the victimization of Pamela possible.<sup>7</sup> But the more importance one accords to the last half of the original novel and the sequel--that is, the more attention one pays to Pamela's and

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<sup>6</sup>McKeon 357-381.

<sup>7</sup>Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987) 115.

Mr. B.'s marriage--the less likely one is to find Richardson progressive. James Cruise and Christopher Flint have both recently argued that Pamela presents opportunistic social ascent followed by forgetfulness of all that has gone before.<sup>8</sup> If this is true, then Richardson's criticism of aristocratic authority in the first half of Pamela may have been adventitious.

In the case of Fielding, there has been more consensus. Fielding's prolific political writing and his conduct as Bow Street Magistrate offer a record of his involvement in contemporary political life, and Thomas Cleary has chronicled Fielding's support of the Broad-Bottom faction.<sup>9</sup> Despite the rare discordant voice heralding Tom Jones as a proletarian Everyman, discussion touching on the politics of Fielding's novels has echoed the cautions against democratic readings offered by Ian Watt and George Sherburn more than thirty years ago.<sup>10</sup> Brian McCrea, for instance, maintains that Fielding "affirm[s] the power and virtue of England's

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<sup>8</sup>James Cruise, "Pamela and the Commerce of Authority." Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 87 (1988): 355; Christopher Flint, "The Anxiety of Affluence: Family and Class (Dis)order in Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded," Studies in English Literature 29 (1989): 506.

<sup>9</sup>Thomas Cleary, Henry Fielding, Political Writer (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1984) 1-11.

<sup>10</sup>Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (1957; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) 307; George Sherburn, "Fielding's Social Outlook," 1956; rpt. in Wolfgang Iser, ed., Henry Fielding Und Der Englische Roman Des 18. Jahrhunderts (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972) 119-120.

ruling class."<sup>11</sup> McKeon, less categorically and more convincingly, argues that although Fielding recognizes the arbitrariness of contemporary institutions--the gentry, the clergy, the law, and so on--in Joseph Andrews he implicitly argues that they are necessary for the preservation of civil order.<sup>12</sup> And Martin Battestin, while far from proposing a democratic reading of Fielding, sanely identifies the limits of Fielding's endorsement of political authority, arguing that the gypsy episode in Tom Jones warns against "perilous fascination...with the false lights of [Jacobite] absolutism."<sup>13</sup>

Fielding's attitudes towards political authority may not be controversial, but the relationship between these attitudes and his use of literary convention is. Ever since Johnson's famous comparisons of Fielding and Richardson, most critics have maintained that Fielding's allegiance to neoclassical literary methods precludes an exploratory approach to questions of moral experience. Rather, it is assumed, he is concerned with arguing a moral position that has been clear from the beginning. As A. D. McKillop wrote more than thirty years ago, "Fielding is not trying to

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<sup>11</sup>Brian McCrea, "Rewriting Pamela: Social Change and Religious Faith in Joseph Andrews," Studies in the Novel (North Texas State) 16 (1984): 145.

<sup>12</sup>McKeon 382-409.

<sup>13</sup>Martin C. Battestin, "Tom Jones and his 'Egyptian Majesty,'" PMLA 82 (1967): 76.

present or to pluck out the heart of a mystery; he is continuously corroborating a position which he has made clear from the start."<sup>14</sup> This view has often resulted in the claim that Fielding's concern with subjective experience is slight at best. In The Great Tradition, F. R. Leavis claims that "Fielding's attitudes, and his concern with human nature are simple, and not such as to produce an effect of anything but monotony (on a mind, that is, demanding more than external action) when exhibited at the length of an 'epic in prose.'"<sup>15</sup> And in The Rise of the Novel, Watt argues that Fielding "studies each character in light of his general knowledge of human behaviour, of 'manners,' and anything purely individual is of no taxonomic value."<sup>16</sup>

Many critics who have thought Fielding slighted by these valuations have argued that he simply wanted to do something other than explore the effects of moral experience on character, and that he should therefore not be judged according to standards of psychological realism. Their rebuttals have emphasized literary technique, and there has been much talk about the Palladian artifice of Fielding's

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<sup>14</sup>A. D. McKillop, "Some Recent Views of Tom Jones," College English 21 (1959) 19.

<sup>15</sup>F. R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (1948; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 12.

<sup>16</sup>Watt 310.

novels.<sup>17</sup> Those who have felt compelled to address the mimetic claims that Fielding makes at the beginning of Joseph Andrews, for instance, have emphasized what Ian Watt calls Fielding's "responsible wisdom about human affairs" and "realism of assessment" (328). Robert Alter praises Fielding's "generalized moral assessment" and Battestin Fielding's ability to discriminate between the various meanings and social implications of prudence.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, Fielding has not universally been seen as a writer in complete control of his material. Over the past three decades John S. Coolidge, Michael Irwin, Melvyn New, and C. J. Rawson have all argued that Fielding moved away from certain orthodoxies of neoclassical thought and literary practice--for instance, straightforward reliance on providence and comic stereotypes as means of organizing the literary text--toward a concept of the novel that has marked

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<sup>17</sup>The metaphor appears to have originated with Dorothy Van Ghent's discussion of Tom Jones in The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Rinehart, 1953) 80. It has, however, proven remarkably attractive and seems to have influenced Robert Alter's conception of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones as "architectonic" novels (Henry Fielding and the Nature of the Novel [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1966] 99-139); F. W. Hilles's "Art and Artifice in Tom Jones" (Imagined Worlds, ed. Maynard Mack and Ian Gregor [London, Methuen, 1968] 91-110); and Martin C. Battestin's discussion of Tom Jones in "The Argument of Design," (The Providence of Wit: Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974] 141-163). Brian McCrea begins his article on Pamela and Joseph Andrews by listing the critics who, in one way or another, have attested to the "closed" nature of Fielding's novel (137).

<sup>18</sup>Alter 69; Battestin, The Providence of Wit, 167.

affinities with realist fiction.<sup>19</sup> In general, their discussions have centred on Amelia, but recently some critics--notably Michael McKeon and, just last year, Charles A. Knight<sup>20</sup>--have argued that even in Joseph Andrews Fielding's writing manifests different, contradictory strains, some of them sympathetic to realist aims, some of them not.

As recent critical trends suggest, Fielding's divided allegiances to competing ways of understanding moral experience need to be examined if his novels are to be understood in their relation to realist prose fiction. The discussion that follows recognizes Richardson's crucial importance in redirecting the agenda of the realist novel and argues that Fielding's career as a novelist can be understood partly in terms of his efforts to come to grips with the effects of a crisis of aristocratic authority on the conscientious self. To make my argument, I have had to rely on some terms that have not been well defined in critical usage, two of the most important being the notoriously slippery words "romance" and "realism."

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<sup>19</sup>John S. Coolidge, "Fielding and 'Conservation of Character,'" Modern Philology 57 (1960): 245-259; Michael Irwin, Henry Fielding, The Tentative Realist (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967); Melvyn New, "'The Grease of God': The Form of Eighteenth-Century Fiction," PMLA 91 (1976): 235-244; and C. J. Rawson, Henry Fielding and the Augustan Ideal Under Stress (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972) 3-98.

<sup>20</sup>Charles A. Knight, "Joseph Andrews and the Failure of Authority," Eighteenth-Century Fiction 4 (1992): 109-124.

Although I try to define both terms through use, an explanatory note is in order here.

The word "romance" has a long and complicated history and has never fully settled as a critical term. Seventeenth-century prose fiction now generally categorized as romance often presents itself as a true representation of contemporary experience, but by the end of the century the truth claims of romance were coming under attack. In one of the most important seventeenth-century theoretical formulations, the Preface to Incognita (1691), Congreve identifies romance as an aristocratic form characterized by an elevated style and implausible events:

Romances are generally composed of the constant Loves and invincible Courages of Hero's, Heroins, Kings and Queens, Mortals of the first Rank, and so forth; where lofty Language, miraculous Contingencies and impossible Performances, elevate and surprize the Reader into a giddy Delight which leaves him flat upon the Ground whenever he gives of[f], and vexes him to think how he has suffer'd himself to be pleased and transported.... Novels are of a more familiar Nature; Come near us, and represent to us Intrigues in Practice, delight us with Accidents and odd Events, but not such as are wholly unusual or unrepresented, such which not being so distant from our Belief bring also the Pleasure nearer us.<sup>21</sup>

Six decades later, Johnson, who had read and admired the Preface, preserves the distinction between aristocratic and non-aristocratic literary forms when he distinguishes

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<sup>21</sup>William Congreve, Incognita; Or, Love and Duty Reconcil'd, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1922) 5-6. Congreve considered his book a novel, and, as Brett-Smith points out, it was advertised as such in The London Gazette (v).

between far-fetched "heroic romance" and the new "comedy of romance" which "exhibit[s] life in its true state, diversified only by accidents that daily happen in the world, and influenced by passions and qualities which are really to be found in conversing with mankind."<sup>22</sup>

Despite the apparent agreement between Johnson and Congreve, eighteenth-century usage is anything but consistent about the distinctions between the contemporary writing that we now tend to call novels and the prose fiction that preceded it (what we generally refer to as romances).<sup>23</sup> Richardson uses the words "romance" and "novel" as more or less interchangeable terms of disapprobation, and in a way nearly related to Congreve's "romance." Characteristic of Richardson's attitude is his claim in a 1740 letter to Aaron Hill that he would like to "turn young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance-writing" and his hope that Pamela will provide a healthy alternative to "such Novels

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<sup>22</sup>Samuel Johnson, The Rambler, no. 4, Saturday, March 31, 1750. Rpt. The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson. Vol. 3. The Rambler, eds. W. J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven: Yale UP, 1969) 19.

<sup>23</sup>Watt 10. For the overlaps between the terms "history," "romance," and "novel" see McKeon 25-27. For a detailed account of the evolution of these terms "novel" and "romance," see Ioan Williams, Introduction, Novel and Romance, 1700-1800: A Documentary Record, ed. Ioan Williams (New York: Barnes and Noble) 1-24.

and Romances, as have a tendency to inflame and corrupt."<sup>24</sup>  
 In his fiction, too, Richardson stigmatizes romances as morally destructive. One of Mr. B.'s common accusations is that Pamela has read too many romances, and in Pamela II Pamela writes,

there were very few novels and romances that my lady would permit me to read; and those I did, gave me no great pleasure; for either they dealt so much in the marvellous and improbable, or were so unnaturally inflaming to the passions, and so full of love and intrigue, that most of them seemed calculated to fire the imagination, rather than to inform the judgment. Titles and tournaments, breaking of spears in honour of a mistress, engaging with monsters, rambling in search of adventures, making unnatural difficulties, in order to show the knight-errant's prowess in overcoming them, is all that is required to constitute the hero in such pieces.... And what is the instruction that can be gathered from such pieces, for the conduct of common life?<sup>25</sup>

Richardson's diffidence, however, did not stop admirers and critics alike from applying the word 'romance' to Pamela.<sup>26</sup>

Fielding uses the word with a much greater sense of literary precedent than does Richardson, but Fielding too is generally pejorative in his references to romance. Although he calls Joseph Andrews a "comic Romance," and concedes in

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<sup>24</sup>Samuel Richardson, Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson, Ed. John Carroll (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964) 41, 46.

<sup>25</sup>Samuel Richardson, Pamela, Volume 2, ed. Mark Kinkead-Weekes (London: Everyman, 1962) 454.

<sup>26</sup>See Shaw's characterization of Pamela as a "moral Romance" (qtd. in A. D. McKillop, Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist [1936; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960] 101 and Charles Povey's claim that Pamela is a "romance" that corrupts the morals of youth (The Virgin in Eden [London, 1741] 68).

Tom Jones that "it is the Apprehension of...Contempt, that hath made us so cautiously avoid the Term Romance, a Name with which we might otherwise have been well enough contented,"<sup>27</sup> he usually applies the word disparagingly to a body of French works that include "Clelia, Cleopatra, Astrae, Cassandra, the Grand Cyrus, and innumerable others, which contain...very little instruction or entertainment" and more generally to prose fiction that violates Aristotelian canons of probability.<sup>28</sup> In Jonathan Wild, for instance, Fielding purports to record "the truths of history, not the extravagances of romance."<sup>29</sup> Like his contemporaries, then, Fielding attests to the contemporary intuition that the conventions and aristocratic subjects of romance are ill-suited for representing contemporary experience.

Modern criticism is not invariably helpful in clarifying the term, partly because of confusion about whether romance signifies a set of literary conventions or a theory of mimesis. Paul Salzman identifies several modes of romance, including popular, chivalric, and political

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<sup>27</sup>Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, ed. Martin C. Battestin (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP) 4; Henry Fielding, The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling, eds. Martin C. Battestin and Fredson Bowers, 2 Vols (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1975) I, 489.

<sup>28</sup>Fielding, Joseph Andrews, 4; see also III, i.

<sup>29</sup>Henry Fielding, Jonathan Wild, ed. David Nokes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982) 176.

romance.<sup>30</sup> When an archetypalist critic like Northrop Frye uses the term, the distinct modes of romance tend to be absorbed into a theory of mimesis that is relatively independent of literary history. In his Anatomy of Criticism, Frye writes, "the Romance does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological stereotypes. It is in the romance that we find Jung's libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively."<sup>31</sup> Gillian Beer recognizes the need to salvage romance as a critical term by limiting its range of reference, but she too settles for a woolly definition:

There is no single characteristic which distinguishes the romance from other literary kinds nor will every one of the characteristics I have been describing be present in each work that we would want to call a romance. We can think rather of a cluster of properties: the themes of love and adventure, a certain withdrawal from their own societies on the part of both reader and romance hero, profuse sensuous detail, simplified characters (often with a suggestion of allegorical significance), a serene intermingling of the unexpected and the everyday, a complex and prolonged succession of incidents usually without a single climax, a happy ending, amplitude of proportions, a strongly enforced code<sup>32</sup> of conduct to which all the characters must comply.

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<sup>30</sup>Paul Salzman, English Prose Fiction, 1558-1700: A Critical History (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985).

<sup>31</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957) 304-305.

<sup>32</sup>Gillian Beer, The Romance (London: Methuen, 1970)

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Henry Knight Miller identifies the heroic romance as the most influential romance form for the eighteenth-century novel and lists two defining features--its "'epic' mode of narrative" and its tendency "to reflect a hierarchical, patriarchal and aristocratic environment and an 'oral' literary tradition of public and non-subjective discourse"<sup>33</sup>--and several dominant conventions, including providentially ordered plots, characters defined primarily by their social roles rather than as individuals, and language that is consciously rhetorical.

Clearly, if one is not careful, then romance will assume all the specificity and critical usefulness of "book" or "text." In the argument that follows, I use the word provisionally in two distinct but related senses, both of which have to do with the works Fielding identifies. I agree with McKeon that romances act as expressions of "aristocratic ideology," "the notion of honour as a unity of outward circumstance and inward essence [that] is the most fundamental justification for the hierarchical stratification of society by status."<sup>34</sup> Like Henry Knight Miller, I also identify romance with a set of formal strategies--literary-social stereotypes and highly

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<sup>33</sup>Henry Knight Miller, "Augustan Prose Fiction and the Romance Tradition," Studies in the Eighteenth Century III, eds. R. F. Brissenden and J. C. Eade (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) 248, 249.

<sup>34</sup>McKeon 131.

conventionalized descriptions of aristocrats, birth-mystery plots, and surprising providential resolutions--designed to reinforce a concept of natural order reflected in hereditary social distinctions.

The second key term is "realism," which entails a similar connection between literary convention and ideology. Damian Grant identifies realism with the urge to "submit [literature's] forms, conventions, and consecrated attitudes to the purifying ravishment of fact."<sup>35</sup> In The Rise of the Novel, Watt identifies "formal realism" as the distinguishing quality of the novel: formal realism, he writes, is the "narrative embodiment of...the premise, or primary convention, that the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience."<sup>36</sup> Watt identifies several aspects of formal realism--highly individualized characters, usually with non-allegorical names; original plots distinguished by principles of causality; vividly realized settings; and highly referential language--but is adamant that formal realism is "only a convention," and that "there is no reason why the report on human life which is represented by it should be in fact any truer than those presented through the very different conventions of other literary genres" (35).

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<sup>35</sup>Damian Grant, Realism (London: Methuen, 1970) 14. In fact, Grant is referring here only to a strain of realism he identifies as "conscientious realism."

<sup>36</sup>Watt 35.

It seems to me that Watt's last claim is correct, but that his emphasis may inadvertently foster an unwarranted casualness about the suitability of particular forms for particular ends. Many of the most impressive true reports are not indebted to realism at all, but that is a matter of the kind of reports they are. Two works as similar in their cultural critiques as The Tale of a Tub and The Dunciad would be diminished if Swift had sacrificed the crazed pompous subjectivity of "A Digression of the Modern Kind," or if Pope had organized his poem along the associationist principles used by Collins or, later, by Cowper, or had sacrificed couplet integrity for the aggressive naturalistic enjambment that Browning uses in "My Last Duchess." Swift is by no means engaged in a project of realism, but his satire on sloppy habits of mind demands moments not far removed from the scatterbrained, self-congratulatory bloat of a Bentley or a Dunton; on the other hand, Pope's need in The Dunciad to establish a rigorous analytic intelligence that stands against legions of dunces precludes any representation of the natural, tentative way that a mind comes to grips with a problem. In each case the relation of subjectivity to the writer's cultural critique makes some forms more appropriate than others. By the same token, if one confronts the claim that the book one is about to read will show "The distresses that may attend the misconduct of

both parents and children, in relation to marriage,"<sup>37</sup> then one would feel disappointed, even cheated, if the portrayal of misconduct and distress were subordinated to the demands of a shapely plot or co-opted for political allegory.

If realism, then, is one means among many of representing the world, it is also a way of selecting some concerns as particularly significant. By now it should be no surprise if I include the relation of the conscientious self to aristocratic authority as an existential concern that realism is particularly good at exploring, nor if I claim that representing complex subjective responses to aristocratic authority made formidable demands on the early novelist. In particular, the eighteenth-century novelist interested in the effects of social subordination on men and women who, like Pepys, were reluctantly questioning the legitimacy of aristocratic authority faced the great formal challenge of discovering strategies for exploring these effects not on some generalized conception of the self, but on the particular the masters, servants, wives, husbands, clerics, militiamen, and merchants concerned. What follows is a discussion of how Fielding and Richardson--and some of their less distinguished, now nearly forgotten contemporaries--met that challenge.

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<sup>37</sup>Samuel Richardson, Clarissa or, the History of a Young Lady, ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 33.

## Chapter 1: Pamela and the Crisis of Authority

Temptations are sore Things; but without them, we know not ourselves, nor what we are able to do.

(Pamela's father, Letter 13)<sup>1</sup>

Early in Pamela, Mrs. Jervis reports that she has promised her employer, Mr. B., not to repeat a conversation about Pamela. Pamela is disappointed, but she reflects, "to be sure she must oblige him, and keep all his lawful commands; and other, I dare say, she won't keep; she is too good, and loves me too well; but she must stay when I am gone, and so must get no Ill-will" (49). Mrs. Jervis's predicament is every servant's, and it becomes, in a particularly insidious form, Pamela's. The faithful servant must protect the interests of her employer; but what should she do when those interests violate her own sense of moral propriety? When is non-compliance justified, and at what point does it become necessary? For George Eliot's Mary Garth, Featherstone's injunction to burn one of his wills secretly is unacceptable; for the men who hang Billy Budd, Captain Vere's command is sufficient. Both the action and the refusal to act seem appropriate, regardless of the judgment that Eliot and Melville pass on their characters.

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Richardson, Pamela, eds. T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1971) 38. Since part of my argument in Chapter Two deals with contemporary responses to Pamela, I have used Eaves' and Kimpel's Riverside version, which is based on the first edition, rather than the authoritative and well-annotated version based on the 1801 edition and edited by Peter Sabor (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).

The artistic appropriateness of any moral choice in Middlemarch or Billy Budd, as in Pamela, depends upon the agents and immediate circumstances rather than upon what the reader surmises about authorial intentions. To say that the reader's judgments about such choices are (or should be) conditioned by an understanding of character and context is to demand that the author's didactic intentions remain subordinate to the experience that is expressed. It is, in short, to require a kind of realism: the presentation of characters who are psychologically and morally individuated and whose actions are the result of their background, immediate circumstances, and free will.

If the novelist possessed of strong didactic intentions risks subordinating the characters to some general point, so too does the critic who seeks to discern a novel's relation to broad historical movements. In the case of Pamela, a good deal of thought has been given to the role of various kinds of authority in regulating social relations, with the result that Richardson's characters are sometimes transformed from complex beings into simple agents of social or ideological change. For example, in one of the most influential recent rereadings of the early English novel, Michael McKeon claims that "Pamela's central concern is the dilemma of how those without power may be justified in

gaining it."<sup>2</sup> McKeon tends to treat novels mainly as indicators of the ideological and epistemological

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<sup>2</sup> Michael McKeon, The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) 364. The political and social implications of Richardson's first novel are a common critical concern. For one of the first sustained arguments on the social implications of Pamela see Robert A. Donovan, "The Problem of Pamela, or, Virtue Unrewarded," Studies in English Literature, 3 (1963): 377-395. Donovan rejects the then-orthodox view that the central interest of the novel lies in the question of whether Pamela is sincere in her desire to preserve her virginity, and argues that the novel is mainly concerned with Pamela's strategies to establish for herself an unambiguous social status. Roy Roussel, in "Reflections on the Letter: The Reconciliation of Distance and Presence in Pamela," ELH, A Journal of English Literary History, 41 (1974): 375-399, sees the novel as an attempt to reconcile the "forms of society [that] maintain a distance between its members" and the love that obliterates distance (378).

The tendency of most recent discussion, including McKeon's, has been to view the novel almost exclusively in terms of Pamela's (and by implication the bourgeoisie's) partial appropriation of aristocratic power or, conversely, in terms of aristocratic or patriarchal resistance to her endeavour. In The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), Terry Eagleton argues that Richardson's novels are "an agent, rather than mere account, of the English Bourgeoisie's attempt to wrest a degree of ideological hegemony from the aristocracy" (4). In Desire and Domestic Fiction (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), Nancy Armstrong goes so far as to claim that Richardson "overturn[s] the basis on which political relationships were understood as natural and right" and "forces his reader to condemn the political system that authorizes the exercise of such power" (115). And in "Pamela and the Commerce of Authority," Journal of English and Germanic Philology 87 (1988): 342-358, James Cruise claims that Pamela represents the rising bourgeoisie, scrupulously rejecting her own past and familial ties, "supplanting paternal values with the new and benevolent patriarchal values of the bourgeois state" (345). Most recently, in "The Anxiety of Affluence: Family and Class (Dis)order in Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded," Studies in English Literature 29 (1989): 489-514, Christopher Flint argues that the novel "registers the exhilaration of class assent, [but] also stresses the anxieties accompanying radical change, seeking in the end to forget what it first appears to celebrate" (489).

revolution: he chronicles, and his reading of Pamela is sometimes correspondingly negligent of the status of Richardson's characters as complex, private beings. Other critics, less committed than McKeon to a panoptic account of the early novel, have examined the role of authority without ignoring the psychological complexity of Richardson's characters. In a sensitive study of the connections between Richardson's novels and Hume's Enquiry, Carol Kay argues that Richardson's characters, even with their "deep sensitivity to public opinion and...profound respect for social rules," find it difficult, in the absence of a Hobbesian arbiter of conduct, to maintain the fiction of a harmonious social system.<sup>3</sup> Raymond Hilliard argues that although Richardson supports social subordination as "the basis of order and morality in a Providentially ordained social hierarchy," there are moments when Pamela and Mr. B. meet on an equal footing and escape "the great law of subordination" before lapsing into "the kinds of 'childish' behavior... associate[d] with both inferiors and superiors in any hierarchical order."<sup>4</sup> And Margaret Anne Doody has argued that Richardson tends to "confuse or question set hierarchies" and that Pamela and Mr. B. eventually achieve a

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<sup>3</sup>Carol Kay, "Sympathy, Sex, and Authority in Richardson and Hume," Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture 12 (1983): 78.

<sup>4</sup>Raymond F. Hilliard, "Pamela: Autonomy, Subordination, and the 'State of Childhood,'" Studies in Philology 83 (1986): 201, 210.

relationship that "demands an equality and reciprocity and loving respect that cancel out the notions of superior/inferior."<sup>5</sup>

At its best, then, and as its leading critics have always contended, Pamela is a novel of human relations, full of highly individuated characters whose actions are fairly independent of Richardson's proclaimed moral intentions. If Richardson's novel is 'about' anything at all, it is about neither the material rewards of virtuous conduct nor the getting of power; rather, as one of Richardson's most perceptive critics argues, it is about the effects of trust and suspicion on individual selves.<sup>6</sup> But Pamela may also be the first English novel to examine closely what happens to the beliefs and conduct of women and men who are required to act against the demands of conscience by some element of social or political authority--the quasi-legal power of an employer over his servants, for instance, or the prestige of rank, or even of customs and manners. Throughout Pamela, conflicts erupt between those who, like Mr. B. or Parson Peters, believe that social subordination is intrinsically and absolutely lawful and those who, like Pamela, believe

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<sup>5</sup>Margaret A. Doody, "Saying 'No,' Saying 'Yes': The Novels of Samuel Richardson," in The First English Novelists: Essays in Understanding, ed. J. M. Armistead (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985) 75. See also Doody's introduction to the Penguin edition of Pamela (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980) 7-20.

<sup>6</sup>Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson, Dramatic Novelist (New York: Cornell UP, 1973) 52.

that the well-informed conscience is the best authority for moral conduct. Where Richardson's novel is most enduring--where it still speaks to modern readers--these conflicts not only propel the plot and colour the moral choices of the members of Mr. B.'s household, they define the self in important ways. In the general movement of the novel, Mr. B.'s dictatorial streak is slowly displaced by his growing recognition of Pamela's fundamental otherness and moral authenticity, while Pamela moves from naive, half-conscious admiration of her employer's rank and person through deep suspicion to sincere trust. Neither character can be reduced to a set of moral or ideological propositions, and their story is not so much a lesson of virtue rewarded as an account of two people coming to maturity through their discovery of their own and each other's identity.

That is Pamela at its best. But Pamela strikes most modern readers as very uneven, and the interest that the novel still excites is closely tied to Richardson's only partial willingness to sacrifice didactic intentions of the kind expressed in the subtitle and prefatory material to the particulars of moral experience. Whatever the contemporary appeal of Pamela--as an attempt to define the relation between bourgeois and aristocratic cultures, as an answer to contemporary anxieties about marriage,<sup>7</sup> or as a joining of

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<sup>7</sup>See Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel, 152-196.

reputable with glamorous but disreputable literary forms<sup>8</sup>-- the novel appeals to most modern readers only where Richardson's social, moral, and literary projects dovetail with the immediate concerns of his highly individualized characters. When Richardson abandons his patient, discriminating dramatization of particular characters in particular circumstances and instead promotes a set of moral and political positions, as he does with increasing frequency in the last half of the novel and throughout its sequel, his examination of Pamela's and Mr. B.'s experience degenerates into slack sentimentality as the characters themselves become caricatures.

#### I. Representational and Didactic Imperatives

The events surrounding the writing and publication of Pamela are well known.<sup>9</sup> In the autumn of 1739 Richardson

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<sup>8</sup>For an account of the immediate literary antecedents of Pamela see Doody, A Natural Passion, 36-41; for an account of how Richardson combined the tale of seduction with the conduct book, see Armstrong 96-134.

<sup>9</sup>See T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971) 87-91. Richardson's own account, upon which Eaves' and Kimpel's is largely based, appears in two letters, the first to Aaron Hill in 1741 and the second to Richardson's Dutch translator, Johannes Stinstra, on 21 June 1753 (Samuel Richardson, Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson, ed. John Carroll [Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964] 39-42, 228-235). For the thumbnail sketch of the Pamela vogue that follows, I have also consulted Sarah W. R. Smith, ed., Samuel Richardson, A Reference Guide (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984) and William Merritt Sale, Jr., Samuel Richardson: A Bibliographical Record of His Literary Career with Historical Notes (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale UP, 1936).

was at work on Familiar Letters, a letter-writing manual undertaken at the request of Charles Rivington and the elder John Osborn, two long-time friends and business associates. While writing the manual, Richardson remembered a tale, told to him in his youth, of a servant who rebuffed the advances of her employer and eventually married him. The story so appealed to Richardson that he laid aside the Familiar Letters and, in the course of two months, wrote a series of letters that he read nightly to his wife and a young woman named Elizabeth Midwinter. With their encouragement, he revised these letters and published them in November, 1740, as an anonymous two-volume novel.

The book was a publishing sensation. Within a year, Pamela went to a fifth authorized edition and was pirated by two Irish booksellers. The fifteen months that followed the appearance of Pamela saw the publication of Richardson's continuation and at least seven other works of fiction purporting to deal with Pamela, six of which were novel-length and three of which--Fielding's Shamela, Eliza Haywood's Anti-Pamela, and John Kelly's Pamela's Conduct in High Life--were themselves reissued. There was also one play by Henry Giffard and another by James Dance, alias James Love; poems for and against Pamela; French and Dutch translations; James Parry's memoirs and a fictionalized biography of Hannah Sturges, both of which had titles apparently intended to capitalize on the popularity of

Richardson's novel; and innumerable reviews, both in England and on the continent. There were even non-literary spin-offs attesting to Pamela's mass appeal: wax-works, paintings, decorated fans, adaptations for children, and operas marked the transformation of Pamela from character to exemplar to cultural symbol. Such was the extent of the Pamela vogue in England that not only the original novel, but several of the responses--Fielding's, Giffard's, Parry's, and Kelly's--were themselves pirated by booksellers anxious to cash in on Richardson's popularity.

A bare account of the genesis of Pamela and its enthusiastic reception suggests that Richardson's novel is an oddity in English prose fiction, a popular classic written by an aesthetically ingenuous moralist. This slightly condescending view of Richardson and his work, popular until quite recently,<sup>10</sup> is only partly refuted by

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<sup>10</sup>Pamela, as has often been observed, marked Richardson's departure from hack-work and the foundation of, as Richardson repeatedly described it, "a new species of writing" (SL 41, 78). Anti-Pamelist criticism tended to perpetuate the myth of Richardson as a naive writer, although even so sympathetic a scholar as A. D. McKillop could claim that the successes of Richardson's first novel were "lucky hits, inadvertent stumblings into art" (Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist [1936; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960] 61). Writing in 1972, Kinkead-Weekes claimed, with some justice, that when he began writing his book, there were only five essays that "encouraged one to take Richardson seriously" (v). In Samuel Richardson: The Triumph of Craft (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974), Elizabeth Bergen Brophy traces this development to an evolution in Richardson's technical and aesthetic concerns. In Samuel Richardson: A Man of Letters (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982), Carol Houlihan Flynn, perhaps more persuasively,

Richardson's own account of his first novel. Richardson's immediate intentions appear in a letter he wrote to Aaron Hill late in 1740, after Pamela's initial success but before the vogueists had forced him into a defensive posture:

I thought the story, if written in an easy and natural manner, suitable to the simplicity of it, might possibly introduce a new species of writing that might possibly turn young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance-writing, and dismissing the improbable and the marvellous, with which novels generally abound, might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue. (SL 41)

The remark about "promot[ing] the cause of religion and virtue" is entirely commonplace, and it might have come from nearly any writer of the time. The interest of the passage (aside perhaps from the suspicious self-effacement of all those "mights" and "possibilities") lies in Richardson's declared intention of rejecting the "pomp and parade" of romance and the "improbable and marvellous" characteristics of novels. The distinctions between romance and the novel were to remain vague and fluid for some decades to come, but Richardson's definition of a "new species of writing" in opposition to these familiar terms suggests at least two things: the formulation of a new genre of fiction that was morally respectable without reflecting the aristocratic world of romance, and a desire to represent events solely in terms of their everyday causes and effects.

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argues that it entails a tentative emancipation from a comfortable, if false, world of moral absolutes.

In the Richardsonian model of mimesis, comparatively low subject matter and an emphasis on human rather than supernatural agency are combined with the specific goal of representing moral experience in all its particularity. In this, too, Richardson defines his work in opposition to romance. When in the Preface to Cassandre the translator writes of "the admirable Characters [la Calprenède] has given of Vertue in his sublimest notions, as also an unshaken Fidelity and Constancy in what is or ought to be term'd the Essentials of Love, attended with unblemished Honour,"<sup>11</sup> he is attesting to a conception of reality best expressed through general, even quasi-allegorical types, not to the comparatively modern belief that reality lies in the minutiae of daily life as experienced by ordinary individuals. Richardson, however, has much more in common with later novelists like Jane Austen or George Eliot when he writes in a 1741 letter to George Cheyne, "I have generally taken Human Nature as it is; for it is to no purpose to suppose it Angelic, or to endeavour to make it so" (SL 47). For Richardson, representing human nature accurately entails rejecting exemplary characters of the kind that populate Cassandre. As some of Pamela's remarks in Pamela II indicate, it also entails rejecting certain literary conventions designed to communicate exemplary states of being: "The have I been ready to quarrel with

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<sup>11</sup>Williams 30.

these writers [of romances] for another reason," Pamela tells Miss Stapylton, who has been reading too many romances, "and that is, the dangerous notion which they hardly ever fail to propagate, of first-sight love" (454).

In Richardson's fiction, representing "Human Nature as it is" extends to finding an appropriate style for each character. In this, too, Richardson seeks to define his writing in opposition to romance, for in Pamela II he has Pamela declaim generally against the "stiff and affected style of romances" (443). And in a 1753 letter to Lady Bradshaigh, with whom he had begun to correspond during the publication of Clarissa, Richardson defends Pamela's low style:

As to the low Style of Pamela, at the Beginning, it must be considered that she was very young when she wrote her first Letters; and that she was Twelve years old before her Lady took her. But little Time from Twelve to Sixteen (I forget how old she was at Setting-out in the Book) to form a Style; and writing only to her Father and Mother, common Chit-Chat, till her Master's Views upon her gave her more Consequence, and her Subjects more Importance.... (SL 250)

That Pamela's "low Style" was probably part of the original conception of Pamela rather than a happy accident seized upon by hindsight appears from the speedy inclusion in the prefatory material to the second edition of Aaron Hill's similar defense of Pamela's style. What is important here is that Richardson's emphasis on a prose style that is a function of character before it is a function of subject matter is a great leap towards the effective expression of

the private, subjective self as opposed to the rehearsal of a priori truths about honour or the "Essentials of Love."

The theory of mimesis glimpsed in Richardson's letters implies a writing that is virtually naturalistic, though it could now only be thought so in comparison with the high aristocratic forms and popular fiction of the half century preceding the publication of Pamela.<sup>12</sup> But although Richardson embraces the aim of representing human nature as it is, his private correspondence also announces the didactic intention of "promot[ing] the cause of religion and virtue" (SL 41). Were it not for the stridency of the claim (as a simple glance at the prefatory material or the 'editorial' conclusion to Pamela should confirm), it might be tempting to dismiss Richardson's proclaimed moral intention as merely an instance of the half-held critical orthodoxies that Ian Watt identifies as persisting long after the literary innovations of the early eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> But moralizing tendencies are never far off, even though Richardson reports that he has had to resort to indirection to achieve his end. In a 1741 letter to James Leake, Richardson remarks that

if it [the sequel to Pamela] be done in a Common Narrative Manner, without those Reflections and Observations, which [Pamela] intermingles in the New

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<sup>12</sup>For a discussion of the verisimilitude of Pamela compared with that of its literary antecedents, see the first three chapters of Doody's A Natural Passion.

<sup>13</sup>Watt 17.

Manner attempted in the two first Volumes, it will be consider'd only as a Collection of Morals, and Sermonising Instruction that will be with more benefit to a Reader, found in other Authors. (SL 45)

Here the precise relation of new manner to old is a little unclear. But the new manner, as Richardson implies the same year in a letter to George Cheyne, is to educate young women by incorporating moral lessons in a work that otherwise operates as a conventional novel or romance--that is, by appealing to the reader's passions:

I am endeavouring to write a Story, which shall catch young and airy Minds, and when Passions run high in them, to shew how they may be directed to laudable Meanings and Purposes, in order to decry such Novels and Romances, as have a Tendency to inflame and corrupt: And if I were to be too spiritual, I doubt I should catch none but Grandmothers for the Granddaughters would put my Girl indeed in better Company, such as that of the graver Writers, and there they would leave her; but would still pursue those Stories, that pleased their Imaginations without informing their Judgments.... There is a Time of Life, in which the Passions will predominate; and Ladies, any more than Men, will not be kept in Ignorance; and if we can properly mingle Instruction with Entertainment, so as to make the latter seemingly the View, while the former is really the End, I imagine it will be doing a great deal. (SL 46-47)

Evidently, the depiction of "Human Nature as it is" must eventually yield to an account of human relations as they ought to be. Richardson's priorities, then, would seem to threaten the realistic presentation of his characters and their experience. In The Rape of Clarissa, Terry Eagleton remarks that the dilemma of realist fiction in general is that "such fiction [must] convince us of general truths...by the plausibility of its contingent details; yet the more it

weaves these into a rich tapestry of 'lived experience' the more it endangers their exemplary status."<sup>14</sup> But for Pamela matters are worse because Richardson's own account of his "new species of writing" suggests a dissociation of the novel's portrayal of experience and what it says about experience. Richardson proposes an ornamental theory of fiction where the ornament--the presentation of quotidian experience--is what has since come to be seen as the central concern of the novelistic tradition he partly initiates.

## II. Psychological Realism and the Crisis of Authority

Pamela's first letter, which tells of Lady B.'s death and the new master's kindness, raises many of the problems of self in society that the novel explores.<sup>15</sup> Here is the first part of that letter:

I Have great Trouble, and some Comfort, to acquaint you with. The Trouble is, that my good Lady died of the Illness I mention'd to you, and left us all much griev'd for her Loss; for she was a dear good Lady, and kind to all us her Servants. Much I fear'd, that as I was taken by her Goodness to wait upon her Person, I should be quite destitute again, and forc'd to return to you and my poor Mother, who have so much to do to maintain yourselves; and, as my Lady's Goodness had put me to write and cast Accompts, and made me a little expert at my Needle, and other Qualifications above my Degree, it would have been no easy Matter to find a Place that your poor Pamela was fit for: But God,

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<sup>14</sup>Eagleton 19.

<sup>15</sup>Ian Watt shows how the first letter, despite its "convincingly casual effect," raises several of the novel's most significant themes and foreshadows some of its crucial events ("Samuel Richardson," The Novelist as Innovator [London: BBC, 1965] 4).

whose Graciousness to us we have so often experienc'd at a Pinch, put it into my good Lady's Heart, on her Death-bed, just an Hour before she expir'd, to recommend to my young Master all her Servants, one by one; and when it came to my Turn to be recommended, for I was sobbing and crying at her Pillow, she could only say, My dear Son! -- and so broke off a little, and then recovering -- Remember my poor Pamela! -- And these were some of her last Words! O how my Eyes run! -- Don't wonder to see the Paper so blotted!

Well, but God's Will must be done! -- and so comes the Comfort, that I shall not be oblig'd to return back to be a Clog upon my dear Parents! For my Master said, I will take care of you all, my Lasses; and for you, Pamela, (and took me by the Hand; yes, he took me by the Hand before them all) for my dear Mother's sake, I will be a Friend to you, and you shall take care of my Linen. God bless him! and pray with me, my dear Father and Mother, for God to bless him.... (25)

Although "great Trouble" ostensibly refers to Lady B.'s death, it immediately becomes clear that what may have concerned Pamela most was her uncertainty about finding another position. Lady B.'s attentions have left the young servant unsuited for virtually any position except the one she has occupied, and Pamela at first feared that she might now lose that position and have to return to her parents. But Pamela's fears have been allayed by Mr. B.'s apparent willingness to accede to his mother's dying wish that he look after the young servant, and Pamela now hopes to continue living in her accustomed manner.

In the first letter Richardson deftly raises the problem of Pamela's ambiguous social status and identifies salient aspects of her character. The fact that the young servant has been socially elevated by Lady B.'s indulgence-- treatment which has been, if not quite improper, at least

irregular--would immediately have established Pamela as an object of particular interest for Richardson's middle-class, female readers, concerned as they were with defining their relationship to the traditional sources of power in English society. The perhaps unprecedented treatment of a servant girl as an object of serious consideration rather than of satire or comedy might have fostered the expectation that the novel would end in marriage, but at this point (and for some time to come) Pamela's social status is genuinely ambiguous. Pamela's letter reveals moral qualities without which contemporary readers would have condemned her marriage to Mr. B., but which are tinged with dangerous emotional and intellectual tendencies. If her submission to Providence seems sincere, it is also complacent, revealing a yet untested piety. If her gestures of filial duty suggest a healthy concern with moral responsibility, they also hint at a dangerous self-approving and self-dramatizing quality: she carefully wraps the four guineas that Mr. B. gives her so they "mayn't chink" and gravely warns her parents not to open the money in front of John Arnold, the fellow-servant who delivers her letters. Her vanity steals out in her eagerness to report flattery, especially when it comes from her handsome new master, whose attentions are as gratifying as they are confusing. And Pamela's breathless, open delight at having been singled out by Mr. B. for special recognition, and her lack of composure in his presence,

betray an emotional immaturity which makes her as yet unfit for marriage, let alone the exercise of power that marriage would bring. Finally, Pamela's prose style suggests the limits of her intellectual development under Lady B.'s tutelage. The colloquial use of "Clog" in the second paragraph, the slight syntactic intrusiveness of "and other Qualifications above my Degree," and the mild bathos of "God, whose graciousness to us we have often experienced at a Pinch" are all vulgar touches attesting to the incompleteness of Pamela's education and her unreadiness for the demands of genteel life.

Setting aside for the time being the possibility that Richardson may wish to celebrate what modern readers find unpleasant aspects of Pamela's personality, one can see how the dangers facing Pamela are underscored by her parents' reply in the second letter. Mr. Andrews also begins his letter with a reference to "great Trouble and some Comfort" (27). But where Pamela sees only her own grief and the danger of unemployment, her parents, who are unsure of the conventions by which 'great families' live but whose conservative sensibilities are disturbed by Mr. B.'s "stoop[ing]" to notice their daughter, sense moral problems of which Pamela is not yet aware. Their "chief Trouble" is the "fear [Pamela] should be brought to do any thing dishonest or wicked, by being set so above" herself (27). They worry, specifically, that their daughter should become

"too grateful" for Mr. B.'s "great Favours" and "reward him with that Jewel, [her] Virtue" (27). Their letter is certainly alarmist and overprotective, but it is important to note that Mr. Andrews' immediate concern is the danger not of rape but of seduction for a young woman whose naivety, openness, and inexperience might leave her vulnerable to the allurements of social ambition. Mr. Andrews' recognition that the loss of stable social positions may bring his daughter temptations of which she is not aware is important because it reformulates the perils of an ambiguous social position from a perspective that is, for the time being at least, more mature than Pamela's.

After ignoring or misconstruing Mr. B.'s advances for as long as a year, Pamela is horrified when her master corners her in the summer-house and euphemistically offers to "make a Gentlewoman" of her (35). Pamela's repeated insistence on the unlawfulness of Mr. B.'s desire and on her duty to resist it launches Richardson's examination of the nature of the self in a society where aristocratic authority has become problematic. In the model of society to which Pamela naively holds when Lady B. dies, an unbroken line of authority descends from God through those who command to those who obey, and all submit, ideally at least, to an authority which is both moral and social, Christian and secular. In such a society, where superior rank is the

outward sign of superior judgment in matters of conduct,<sup>16</sup> there can be little need to question the commands of one's betters. If Mr. B. possesses hereditary honour, a genteel education, and authority as a magistrate and an employer, then why shouldn't he be obeyed by Pamela and the other servants? But once he unequivocally reveals that his judgment is corrupt, the political power he represents diverges from the moral authority that theoretically supports it, and Pamela becomes an independent moral agent who must determine her relation to competing social and spiritual authorities.

The dilemma in which Pamela and her fellow servants find themselves is symptomatic of a breakdown of authority affecting their entire culture and reflecting itself in

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<sup>16</sup>The idea of hereditary honour--"[t]he notion of honour as a unity of outward circumstance [rank] and inward essence [moral qualities]" is the cornerstone of what McKeon calls "aristocratic ideology" (131). McKeon argues that in the early modern period aristocratic ideology is eroding under the pressure of the progressive critique like the one that Pamela will apply, but there is historical evidence that in some ways the aristocracy had recently consolidated its power. In Players' Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), Susan Staves discusses the displacement of ecclesiastical courts by the state, arguing that by the beginning of the eighteenth century "the secular state has encroached importantly on the prerogative of the ecclesiastical courts...and declared itself responsible for the definition and enforcement of God's law and natural law" (292). Although the ecclesiastical courts would never have had any bearing on domestic disputes of the kind that occur in Pamela, the fact at the beginning of the eighteenth century that so much institutional authority was vested in the aristocracy could hardly have failed to impress a Pamela or a Mrs. Jervis.

their language. In King Lear, which deals with a similar though much more profound crisis, the signification of a cluster of words having to do with kinship and nature is destabilized. In Pamela both the cultural crisis and the just, if fictive, order that hides in a nostalgic past are reflected in the characters' use of the shared vocabulary of social and moral order.

The strength of the vocabulary of hierarchy attests to the prestige that rigid social distinctions hold for Richardson's characters. The relative position of the members of Mr. B.'s household is established by such nouns as "Position," "Place," "Degree," "Rank," and "Distance," all of which situate the characters in social spheres determined by birth, gender, and seniority, and denote the social distance which ought ideally to be maintained.<sup>17</sup> The force of these nouns is strengthened and refined by adjectives expressing the gamut of hierarchical positions: "greatest," "highest," "superior," "high," "equal," "unequal," "low," "lower," "inferior," "lowest," "base," and "basest" are all invoked, most with considerable frequency, to reflect the social distances and relations proper to a class-based society. Moral advice--Lady B.'s advice to

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<sup>17</sup>This is not to deny that this vocabulary has other important functions. Roy Roussel, for instance, argues that distance not only protects society from disorder but, for the individual, "define[s] the clear area which modesty or privacy requires" and "protect[s] the self from any outside intrusion" (377).

Pamela to "keep the Fellows at a Distance," for instance (29)--is often couched in terms of distance. In her distress, Pamela frequently invokes the normative model of static and hierarchical social relations, as in one of her poems: "Thrice happy may you ever be,/ Each one in his or her Degree" (89). Even the usual way of referring to social advancement--for instance, Pamela's parents' worry about Pamela's "being so set above" herself (27)--suggests an anxiety about social displacement, as if the self were split in two by social movement.

The possibility of a loss of consensus about the meaning of social distinctions is first raised, innocuously enough, by Pamela's father. When he reports, "I have spoken to good old Widow Mumford...who, you know has formerly lived in good Families" (27), he alerts the reader to the possibility of being good in two distinct and independent senses. Dissociation of the moral and social signification of words like 'good' soon becomes common. A striking instance occurs in Pamela's commentary on Mr. B.'s first seduction attempt:

O how poor and mean must these Actions be, and how little must they make the best of Gentlemen look, when they offer such things as are unworthy of themselves, and put it into the Power of their Inferiors to be greater than they! (30) [*italics added*]

Pamela's first confrontation with the ugly fact of Mr. B.'s intentions leaves her without the language to express adequately her dawning perception of the rift between rank

and the moral qualities that rank should signify. Here the word "best" uncomfortably retains its moral and social significations, for Pamela at first hopes that Mr. B.'s conduct is simply a momentary aberration. But the other adjectives draw attention to the fact that Mr. B. has violated Pamela's assumptions about class and conduct. Moreover, these words are used elsewhere in their complementary moral or social signification. Pamela generally describes her social position as "poor," "mean," "little," or "unworthy" of notice, and after his reform Mr. B. becomes again the "best of Gentleman" in a sense that attests primarily to Pamela's affection for him.

When strict denotation cannot carry the full burden of her meaning, Pamela sometimes conveys an emotional response through connotation. After Mr. B.'s reform, Pamela uses language of displacement possessing positive connotations, notably the verbs "condescend" and "exalt." But from the time of Mr. B.'s first seduction attempt until his marriage proposal, Pamela usually refers to the crossing of social distance by using words which denote lowering and possess uniformly pejorative connotations. Among these, "demean," "degrade," "stoop," and "fall" are the most frequently used. And at the height of her persecution in Bedfordshire, Pamela's references to her employer assume an oxymoronic quality as she applies such epithets as "base Gentleman" (64), "rude Gentleman" (71), and "base, wicked, treacherous

Gentleman" (86), all of which combine adjectives suggestive of both immorality and low rank with a noun indicative of gentility. The effect is obviously to call into question common assumptions about the word "gentleman." Over the course of the novel, the list of words which refer to moral qualities or the government of society and are destabilized because they assume radically opposing significations when used by Pamela and Mr. B. grows to include "friend,"<sup>18</sup> "family," "ruin," "honour" and "honourable," "shame," "kind," "Sawce-box," "Bold-face," "free" and "Freedom," and "Gentle-woman."

The fact that so many terms point in two directions--towards rank and towards moral qualities quite independent of rank--shows the extent to which there has been a loss of consensus about the fitness of the aristocracy to govern. This is not to say that the terms themselves pose any real difficulty: there is neither the richness of meaning nor the confusion that attaches to 'nature' or 'kind' in King Lear or 'honour' in Henry IV, Part 1. For the modern reader, as for Richardson's contemporaries and most of his characters, the crisis of signification is occasionally real but usually only apparent. True, Mrs. Jewkes never manages

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<sup>18</sup>See Margaret Doody's analysis of the three significations of "friend" (as benefactor, as paramour, and in a sense that "demands equality and reciprocity and loving respect that cancel out notions of superior/inferior") in "Saying 'No,' Saying 'Yes': The Novels of Samuel Richardson," 18.

to distinguish between the social and moral significations of words such as "honour," and there are times after the last rape attempt and before Mr. B.'s marriage proposal when it is difficult to tell whether Pamela's master speaks honourably in his usual sense of the word or in hers. Nevertheless, Richardson is clearly rethinking the problems to which Mr. B.'s conduct attests, not discovering them, for the adjectives I have discussed here (except for "mean," whose moral signification according to the OED first appeared in the 1660s) possessed distinct and stable moral and social significations by the turn of the seventeenth century. Unlike the world of Clarissa, where Lovelace's sincerity is so problematic that the language he uses is always suspect, here the characters are usually so sincere or so transparently insincere that they rarely misconstrue each other's real intentions. The uneasiness about the language of hierarchy reflects shifts in perception, particularly among the bourgeoisie, about the proper role of individual conscience in a society based on an increasingly suspect principle of subordination.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>It follows, then, that the deconstructionist's claim that language in Pamela points in all sorts of directions without committing itself to any is untenable. Patricia McKee is fairly representative of this view when she claims that "it is the capacity of language to include [Pamela's and Mr. B.'s] different meanings that makes their union possible" and that "crime can be virtue and virtue can be crime and artful meaning is multiple meaning." Patricia McKee, "Corresponding Freedoms: Language and Self in Pamela," ELH, A Journal of English Literary History 52 (1985): 623, 628.

Of course, Pamela's attempts to feel her way towards some workable relationship between conscience and social authority go far beyond merely avoiding the confusion implied by the shared vocabulary of social and moral order. Her defense of the moral necessity of resisting Mr. B. takes the form of two related arguments. At first she contends that the social order, whose moral justification she still assumes, must be preserved (35, 44). According to this argument, it is a violation of good order for an employer to make addresses to his servant, or for the servant to receive them. Mr. B., having "forgotten" his duty as a master, has forced Pamela to forget hers as a servant. The remedy, Pamela thinks, is fairly simple. Once Mr. B. "remembers" his place, she will remember hers and domestic harmony will be restored (40). But when Mr. B. exploits the orthodoxy of what McKeon calls aristocratic ideology--that high rank is the unquestionable embodiment of moral authority--and argues that Pamela's responsibility is to submit to his will while he wrestles with the particulars of moral choice (42), Pamela finds she must rethink her relationship to the authority he represents. Thus her second, more fundamental, argument articulates the radically egalitarian Christian belief that her soul possesses "Equal Importance with the Soul of a Princess, though [her] Quality is inferior to that of the meanest Slave" (141). Unfortunately, the second argument fails as spectacularly as the first: Mr. B.

remains unwilling and Mrs. Jewkes unable to attend to Pamela's logic. When Pamela recognizes the futility of trying to reestablish the harmony between moral and social orders, she finds she must risk further disobedience of Mr. B.'s authority as an employer by seeking escape from a society whose illness she can neither ignore nor endure.

Once Pamela begins to act on her realization that Mr. B. is without moral authority, new problems arise, making it increasingly difficult for her to conduct herself according to the standards she believes in. Pamela's first letters suggest that, under the tutelage of Lady B., she has acquired the propriety of Richardson's ideal servant in The Apprentice's Vade Mecum.<sup>20</sup> But under Mr. B.'s constant

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<sup>20</sup>In The Apprentice's Vade Mecum: or, Young Man's Pocket-Companion (1734), Richardson's intentions are crudely didactic, and although he just barely concedes that employers themselves might partly be to blame for the poor relations with their apprentices (v), the thrust of his argument is that moral responsibility rests with the apprentices. What is perhaps most interesting in connection with Pamela is that most of the accusations Mr. B. levels against Pamela (and some of the accusations she levels against herself) appear here where they are described in remarkably similar terms. The Young Man's Pocket Companion includes particular warnings against "Pride and Affectation in Dress" (33), "Pertness" (29), and betraying the master's secrets:

There cannot be a more infamous Breach of the Rules of sound Morality, than for a Person to betray his Master's Secrets; which, but for the Confidence placed in his Integrity, and the just Expectations his Master had of his Fidelity and bounden Duty, had never come to his Knowledge; and which therefore is so vile a Breach of Trust, so high a Degree of Treachery, that it ought to make him odious to all Men. (3)

badgering, Pamela finds it difficult to uphold conduct-book standards. Torn between allegiance to her position as an essentially submissive servant and the desire for self-assertion in defiance of Mr. B.'s demands for her complete self-effacement, Pamela lamely seeks to justify her accounts of her employer's conduct and her sharp tongue. Although she suspects that she is wrong to do so, she succumbs to the temptation to reveal to Mrs. Jervis "every Bit and Crumb" of Mr. B.'s first seduction attempt (37). And in reporting the incident to her mother, she asks whether she was right to justify the action as an extraordinary case. In fact, extraordinary cases seem to abound, for Pamela appears to withhold nothing, or nearly nothing, from her letters and journal.<sup>21</sup>

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Richardson's clear endorsement of the conventional code governing master-servant relations suggests that Fielding may well have misread Pamela when he has Parson Oliver complain that in Richardson's novel "chambermaids...are countenanced in impertinence to their superiors, and in betraying the secrets of families" (Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews and Shamela, Martin C. Battestin, ed. [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961] 338).

<sup>21</sup>I am of course assuming that Pamela's reports are for the most part reliable, although the construction she puts on them may not be. There are traditions of Pamela criticism, for the most part motivated by anti-Pamelist tendencies or psychoanalytic considerations, that Pamela suppresses the details of her own conduct or represses details about Mr. B.'s. Two cases are Joseph Wood Krutch's Pamela-as-hypocrite argument in Five Masters (New York: J. Cape and H. Smith, 1930) and Terry Castle's claim in "P/B: Pamela as Sexual Fiction" Studies in English Literature 22 (1982) that during the final rape attempt Mr. B. exposes himself to Pamela (484). The evidence for both arguments seems rather tenuous and conjectural to me, relying as it does more on the critics' sensibilities than on distortions of style

Still more telling are Pamela's often unsuccessful attempts at quelling her rebelliousness when she is interrogated by her employer. Although according to her strict conscience it is right to disobey Mr. B. only when her "first Duty" to God requires it (41), Pamela fails to distinguish between her duties to God and her duties to Mr. B. as often as she succeeds. A striking instance occurs in Letter 24, in which she refers to her master's first two attacks: "I said something mutteringly, and he vow'd he would hear it.... Why then, said I, if your Honour must know, I said, That my good Lady did not desire your Care to extend to the Summer-house and her Dressing-room" (63). Pamela's quick-witted if unproductive rebelliousness is a good instance of Richardson's ability to locate the problems of moral choice within highly individuated characters. The episode serves no overtly didactic purpose, but it does present an understandable response to domestic tyranny, especially in a young woman endowed with some intelligence, some vanity, and considerable Puritan moral sensibilities. Under the temptation to retaliate against perceived injustice, submission to consistent standards of conduct tends to erode even in the high-minded Pamela, and Mr. B. is soon justified in his two-fold accusation that Pamela's "Freedom of Speech" (74) or "pert saucy Answers" (75) and

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within the text that might provide at least indirect evidence.

her "Letter-writing of all the Secrets of [his] Family" (74) violate the code of conduct that binds servants to masters.

As preserving her moral free agency becomes more important than adhering to conduct-book morality, Pamela develops a self-protective and potentially isolating resourcefulness. Pamela's first letters reveal a naive open-heartedness, but she develops the habit of dissembling long before she leaves Bedfordshire. When Mr. B. proposes to marry her to Williams, perhaps more as a means of gaining time than anything else, Pamela reports, "now I begun to see him in all his black Colours!--But being in his Power so, I thought I would a little dissemble," and so pretends, "still... dissembl[ing]," to consider the offer (85). Later, her imprisonment in Lincolnshire forces her into a series of stratagems--the word is Pamela's--to husband her paper and pens, conceal her journal, ingratiate herself as far as possible with the servants, correspond secretly with Williams, and eventually attempt an escape. However, the considerable success of Jewkes and Mr. B. in anticipating her actions forces her into an ever more insulated reserve. By the time Mrs. Jewkes dupes her into surrendering her money, Pamela has grown to consider most actions purely in terms of prudence; she feels "foolishly outwitted" and in a fit of self-accusation exclaims, "Was ever such a Fool as I! I must be priding myself in my contrivances indeed!" (121) When Mr. B. again proposes a marriage between Pamela and

Williams, it is the once open-hearted Pamela, not the curate, whose suspicions supply the prudence necessary to make the self invulnerable to Mr. B.'s accusations.

Pamela's moral self-reliance is never more than partial, and her vestigial allegiance to aristocratic authority clashes with her spiritual egalitarianism. As her heavy reliance on the language of hierarchy and distance suggests, the prestige of hierarchical social relations, though declining, remains strong enough that she can neither quite reject nor entirely submit to old ways of organizing moral experience. Pamela's initial blindness to Mr. B.'s motives and her naive willingness, before her abduction, to accept his word each time he promises to send her home reflect not only her latent affection for her employer, but her susceptibility to a complex of traditional beliefs about rank and subordination which continue to organize her experience even after their inadequacy becomes apparent. In this she is rather like Pepys in his observations on King Charles and the Duke of Monmouth. But if Pamela's attraction to Mr. B. is partly attributable to his personal qualities, it is also, as the Anti-pamelists maintained, partly attributable to the glamour of his social status. It is not surprising, then, that although Pamela understands the necessity of resistance, she does not always believe that she can resist. Despite her evident horror of Mr. B.'s intentions, she refers to his advances as "temptations" more

than a dozen times before her spectacular recital of part of the Lord's Prayer as a defense against his flattering insinuation, in Letter 30, that he might marry her.

Whatever her immediate temptations, in the end it would be hard for even the most naively sympathetic reader to believe that her considerable capacity to forgive Mr. B. has nothing to do with his position. Pamela thus becomes the locus--highly individuated and in some respects idiosyncratic, belonging to her society but universal enough to appeal to later readers--for the cultural conflicts that permeate the novel. Vanity, genuine affection, and awe of rank contend with Puritan sensibilities and adolescent squeamishness about sex to exacerbate her ambivalence about the man who appears alternately as her suitor and her persecutor.

As immediate interests and spiritual duties diverge, making contending and even irreconcilable claims on the individual, the choices men and women make define the self in increasingly important ways. For those who are less concerned than Pamela with the state of their soul, submission to aristocratic prerogatives entails the inability or unwillingness to treat the victims of genteel whim as independent moral agents. Sir Simon Darnford states the aristocratic view with characteristic brutality: "what is all this...but that the 'Squire our Neighbour has a mind to his Mother's Waiting-maid? And if he takes care she wants for nothing, I don't see any great Injury will be done

her. He hurts no Family by this" (122). For Mrs. Jewkes, the prestige of rank is so strong that there is virtually no question of conscientious disobedience of Mr. B., at least not as long as her immediate interests aren't threatened. Her allegiance to aristocratic authority results in a curious inattention to anything beyond her immediate interests and appetites, and a corresponding inability to understand Pamela's point of view. Here is her response to Pamela's claim that "to rob a Person of her Virtue, is worse than cutting her throat":

Why now, says she, how strangely you talk! Are not the two Sexes made for one another? And is it not natural for a Gentleman to love a pretty Woman? And suppose he can obtain his Desires, is that so bad as cutting her Throat? And then the Wretch fell a laughing, and talk'd most impertinently, and shew'd me, that I had nothing to expect from her Virtue or Conscience. (104)

Mrs. Jewkes isn't always as bad as Pamela portrays her, and there are even signs that she can be quite amiable, but her allegiance to her social superiors results in a self-centredly practical outlook whereby she becomes an instrument of Mr. B.'s will and Pamela becomes mere ambulatory chattel.

Mrs. Jewkes is distinguished by the wilful blindness of her adherence to what McKeon calls aristocratic ideology, not by her pattern of moral response. Another moral opportunist, Parson Peters, is intellectually more sophisticated and morally more perceptive than the housekeeper, and so must resort to a tortured accommodation

of his calling to the prerogatives of rank. When Williams seeks his help, Peters begins by accusing the curate of "selfish Views" and ends by "utter[ing] some Reflections upon the Conduct of the Fathers of the Church, in regard to the first Personages of the Realm, as a Justification of [his] Coldness" to Williams' plan to liberate Pamela (123). But there is an even more sinister pattern of moral conduct than Peters's and Jewkes's, though it is scarcely more than hinted at in Pamela. Before her abduction, Pamela complains of the tendency of servants to imitate their masters, and of neighbouring gentlemen to imitate each other, in matters of sexual morality:

Here's Shamelessness for you!--Sure the World must be near an End! for all the Gentlemen about are as bad as he [Mr. B.] almost, as far as I can hear!--And see the Fruits of such bad Examples: There is 'Squire Martin in the Grove, has had three Lyings-in, it seems, in his House, in three Months past, one by himself: and one by his Coachman; and one by his Woodman; and yet he has turn'd none of them away. Indeed, how can he, when they but follow his own vile Example. There is he, and two or three more such as he, within ten Miles of us; who keep Company and hunt with our fine Master, truly; and I suppose he's never the better for their Examples.  
(72-73)

Imitation of one's social superiors poses few problems in a community governed by rigorous social distinctions and common standards of conduct. But here imitation of aristocratic vices means a proliferation of domestic tyrannies of the kind that affects Pamela.

Between the extremes of moral self-reliance and complete submission to aristocratic whim most of the other

servants live their lives, timidly or covertly opposing their employer, helping Pamela when they can, and hoping not to get caught. Those who too openly oppose Mr. B. find themselves vulnerable to the accusations that are directed against Pamela--insubordination and betraying the secrets of "families"--and run the risk of losing their livelihood and being denied a character. Mrs. Jervis usually quails when she is confronted by her employer's unjust demands, but she has great faith in his essential good nature and ability to reform, and up until Pamela's abduction frequently risks her position by attempting to reconcile servant and master. But Mrs. Jervis is hobbled by her inability to see beyond appearances, and her naivety costs her her position, albeit only temporarily. Similarly, Mr. Williams lacks Pamela's self-protective prudence, so he is easily lured into his disastrous admission of his affections for Pamela. None of the conscientious servants is given the opportunity to develop as much as Pamela, but there is some indication in Williams's reserve after his imprisonment that he has belatedly developed a little of the necessary prudence.

The loss of the consensus about aristocratic honour that guaranteed the prerogatives of rank throws Mr. B.'s household into what might best be described as a crisis of authority. Pamela wants to act according to common, extrinsic standards of conduct, just as Mr. B. wishes to have his actions legitimized by his rank. But they can

arrive at no agreement about what constitutes authority, for there is no clear link between the social order and the divine. Mr. B. retains all the outward indicators of authority, but as the offended author of Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa, and Pamela noted, Pamela's chastity is essentially aristocratic,<sup>22</sup> and her stalwart resistance against Mr. B.'s coercion suggests the kind of independent moral judgment which would traditionally have been more appropriate to her master's rank than to her own. Conversely, Mr. B.'s marked need to justify himself to his servants implies an almost constitutional unfitness for the traditional duties of his position.<sup>23</sup> As a result of this

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<sup>22</sup>A Lover of Virtue, Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa, and Pamela (London, 1754) 34.

<sup>23</sup>Mr. B.'s curiously democratic behaviour seems both the logical outcome of the social dynamic which orders the novel at this point and, as some of the anti-Pamelists claimed, an indicator of Richardson's lack of familiarity with aristocratic manners. As a result, Mr. B.'s dependence on the opinions of social inferiors seems believable at times and curiously clumsy and shameless at other times. In any case, Mr. B.'s growing suspicion that Pamela is in some ways the real aristocrat, and that he must either defeat or accept her, initiates a kind of plot in which the action lies in the competition between members of different social classes (usually a decadent one and an ascendant one) to gain recognition. Later examples include Clarissa, in the destructive rivalry between Lovelace and the Harlowes; William Godwin's Caleb Williams, in the rivalries between Falkland and Tyrell and later Caleb and Falkland; and George Eliot's Felix Holt, in the tragic rivalry between Harold Transome and his father, the lawyer Jermyn. To my mind, the great study of the connections between destructive rivalries and democratic social structures in the continental novel is René Girard's Deceit, Desire, and the Novel, Trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1965). James H. Maddox has applied Girard's model of desire fruitfully in "Lovelace and the World of Ressentiment in Clarissa," Texas

confusion, Richardson's novelistic universe is ordered not by recognized authority derived ultimately from God but by shifting, subjective valuations that are as much matters of affect as of a coherent ideological system--in short, by an elusive glamour that is vestigial among the gentry and only embryonic among the rising bourgeoisie, and (in matters of love, at least) by the sexual attractiveness fostered at least partly by that glamour. Where reputation is sustained not by some extrinsic if arbitrary standard, but by the capricious opinions of others, an essentially democratic social dynamic is unleashed and individuals struggle to acquire the recognition of those they admire. One may try to mask the subjective nature of this recognition, as Mr. B. does by his recourse to such venerable words as "honour" and "reputation," both of which relate to social as well as individual moral qualities, but in the world of Pamela individuals come to resemble stocks whose value rises and falls by the opinions of others.

### III Pamela's Redemption of Authority

Cordelia redeems nature in King Lear; in a less spectacular way, Pamela redeems social subordination in Richardson's novel. Redemption is necessary, for by the

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Studies in Literature and Language 13 (1983): 131-140. And Carol Kay's admirable essay, "Sympathy, Sex, and Authority in Richardson and Hume," posits a system of competition and envy remarkably like Girard's, but derived from Hume's Enquiry.

middle of the first volume Richardson has hit an impasse. Once conscience and social authority have been pitted against each other, there can be no expression of conscience, no ethical position taken that is not at once an effect and a contributing cause, however small, of the destruction of the self or the social order. Pamela's insistence on the primacy of conscience is profoundly destructive of subordination, while Mr. B.'s corresponding insistence on the absolute value of subordination would obliterate moral choice except among social equals. In the end, the novel rejects the latter position while mistrusting certain implications of the former. The unjust demands of social superiors may, Richardson believes, legitimately be resisted on the grounds that the responsibility for salvation rests with the individual. But the democratic social dynamic that is unleashed when each individual acts as an autonomous moral agent results in a destructive vying for recognition that can push even the most scrupulous moralist into untenable moral positions. For Richardson, the only practical way of avoiding the democratic disorder latent in the primacy of the individual conscience is to preserve the hierarchies that order English society. Subordination, where subordination is subject to God's law, allows those with power to rule justly and keeps the Parson Petereses of the world, who are hypocritically self-seeking, the Mrs. Jewkeses, who are morally debilitated, and the John

Arnolds, who are simply weak-willed, from doing any real harm. But the only way left to Richardson of protecting the self in its relations with the larger community is, through the marriage of Pamela and Mr. B., to realign the alienated social and religious orders of authority.

Reestablishing the link between the social and the divine begins with Pamela's victory over dangerous tendencies in her own character. The nature of her struggle in Lincolnshire is essentially religious, but it has important social ramifications.<sup>24</sup> In Bedfordshire Pamela confronts the formidable task of maintaining a servant's deference without encouraging Mr. B.'s advances; in Lincolnshire she faces the more serious challenge of cultivating a self-protecting resourcefulness without falling prey to the sin of sufficiency or presumption and without isolating herself permanently from the larger community. As her captivity drags on, Pamela devises new stratagems for protecting herself while watching her opportunities for escape dwindle away through her own imprudence and the imprudence of others. When in a last-ditch attempt at escape she falls and injures herself, her resourcefulness fails and she momentarily indulges in an adolescent fantasy of killing herself:

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<sup>24</sup>See Kinkead-Weekes, who describes "Pamela's...struggle to retain faith and trust, not only in God but also in Man" as "the major theme at the centre of the novel" (36).

And then thought I, (and Oh!, that Thought was surely of the Devil's Instigation; for it was very soothing and powerful with me) these wicked Wretches, who now have no Remorse, no Pity on me, will then be mov'd to lament their Misdoings; and when they see the dead Corpse of the unhappy Pamela dragged out to these slopy Banks, and lying breathless at their Feet, they will find that Remorse to wring their obdurate Hearts, which has no Place there!--And my Master, my Angry Master, will then forget his Resentments, and say, O this the unhappy Pamela!.... (152)

Here there is a familiar strain of self-dramatization that includes a good deal of self-address and, in the references to her "dead Corpse...lying breathless" and the "slopy Banks," some overblown and romantic diction. Just before the internal censor intervenes, Pamela even imagines herself vindicated by popular "Ballads and Elegies" (152).<sup>25</sup>

The temptation to commit suicide in decisive retaliation against Mr. B., Colman, and Mrs. Jewkes shows Pamela's need to have her moral position recognized by her persecutors, but the experience also identifies the spiritual consequences of the crisis of authority on Pamela's psychic make-up. Where the individual bears a great burden of responsibility, the temptation of sufficiency or presumption is peculiarly strong, and the recognition of human insufficiency may give rise to despair. Pamela has often prayed for humility and the strength to

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<sup>25</sup>For a dedicatedly ironic reading of this passage (or at least of its equivalent in the 1801 edition) see Hilliard 206-208. My own reading differs from Hilliard's in numerous ways, perhaps the most important of which is that I take Pamela's recognition that she is "indulgent" to "this sad way of thinking" (152) to be a genuine discovery.

submit herself to God's will, but she has always held Providence in reserve while taking pride in her own resourcefulness. Now, however, Pamela's exhausted submission to God's will marks her successful rejection of self-sufficiency: "And how do I know," she wonders, "but that God...may not have permitted these Sufferings on that very Score, to make me rely solely on his Grace and assistance, who perhaps have too much prided myself in a vain Dependence on my own foolish Contrivances?" (153) Her remarks, unlike previous pleas for Providential intervention, suggest genuine recognition of the need for humility because, for the first time, she recognizes both her own insufficiency and the full extent of her susceptibility to the sin of presumption. And in fact, a week later, Pamela finds herself sitting idly outside the gates of Mr. B.'s Lincolnshire estate and wondering why all the domestics are running in a panic towards her.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Pamela's despair is compounded by factors that do not arise directly from the cultural crisis which concerns me here. Most notable among these is the meanness of Pamela's sexual morality, a meanness that is usually linked to Richardson's own beliefs about chastity. Pamela's rather clinical understanding of chastity is reflected in the equation of such words as innocence, honesty, and virtue with an intact hymen. Typical of this morality are her remark, "[M]ay I never survive one Moment, that fatal one in which I shall forfeit my Innocence" and her father's command, "resolve to lose your Life sooner than your Virtue" (32). As these passages suggest, Pamela has uncritically appropriated her father's opinions. Sadly, it is not until Clarissa that Richardson explores the implications of trying to reconcile a purely technical conception of chastity and the idea of the conscientious self. This moral meanness is a serious flaw in the novel, but I agree with Kinkead-

Pamela's submission to God's will must mean one of two things. Either Richardson is indulging in irony at her expense, or Providence is to be taken seriously as an ordering force in the novel and, by extension, in the world beyond the novel. According not only to Pamela's usual interpretation,<sup>27</sup> but to the nominal editor's, Providence does order events. In the editorial postscript, for instance, the reader is reminded that through Providence God rewards the deserving and, more importantly, confers specific social responsibilities upon them:

let the Rich, and those who are exalted, from a low to a high Estate, learn... that they are not promoted only for a single Good; but that Providence has raised them, that they should dispense to all within their Reach, the Blessings it has heaped upon them; and that the greater the Power is to which GOD has raised them, the greater is the Good that will be expected from them. (411).

This optimistic and essentially unproblematic concept of Providence as the means of promoting the social good does much to account for the intention behind the novel's much-maligned sub-title. In Pamela, Providence acts as a tonic for the ills of society, but only if there are individuals such as Pamela to submit to God's direction: if the

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Weekes when he argues that, if one is attentive, one can find instances of Richardson's tentative emergence from this blinkered moral perspective (111).

<sup>27</sup>It should be noted that Pamela's interpretation is a kind of 'official' interpretation which Pamela tends to abandon when events seem random or arbitrary. For instance, when she is abruptly sent away from Mr. B., she sees herself as a "pure Sporting-piece for the Great! a mere Tennis-ball of Fortune" (212).

hereditary rich are no longer willing to accept the responsibilities of stewardship, then just Christians like Pamela can become instruments of God.

By renouncing pride, Pamela submits to God's will and, in the process, comes to know herself better, although she does not fully recognize her affection for Mr. B. until he sends her back to her parents. By reading her letters and journal, Mr. B. too comes to know Pamela and, paradoxically, himself. In a moment that is less a struggle over who has the right to interpret events than an opportunity for Mr. B. to discover Pamela's otherness, Mr. B. learns of Pamela's suffering and her essential sincerity. Through a renunciation of pride which is fundamentally personal but has social ramifications, Mr. B. overcomes the inadequacies of his own upbringing, rejects the arbitrary use of his political authority, submits himself to the moral law that Pamela represents, and defies the expectations of his family and class by marrying beneath himself. Marriage becomes possible only because Mr. B. recognizes Pamela's free agency, her integrity as a separate being. As he says after he reads her journal, "I'll allow you to be a little witty upon me; because it is in you, and you cannot help it" (201). Despite Mr. B.'s gesture to his own authority, the passage is perhaps the earliest evidence that Mr. B. recognizes Pamela's fundamental otherness, albeit imperfectly. This recognition leads first to Mr. B.'s

painful decision to allow Pamela to leave and directly contributes to Pamela's most significant act of free agency and (given the gypsy's letter warning her of a sham marriage) imprudence, her decision to return.

Until this point, Mr. B. has stigmatized Pamela with the language of criminality, language suggesting that his servant acts beyond moral law and that if she cannot be controlled by the community she must be expelled from it. When Pamela returns, however, it is not as a criminal, but as health-giving redemptress. Pamela's new status, which is established by the resolution of her hitherto ambiguous social status, is first presented symbolically. When Pamela arrives in Lincolnshire she finds an ailing Mr. B., who remarks, "You need not, Mrs. Jewkes, send for the Doctor from Stamford, as we talked Yesterday; for this lovely Creature is my Doctor, as her Absence was my Disease" (220). The language of health is extended when Pamela asks that, after marriage, she be allowed to visit the "sick Poor in the Neighbourhood around...and administer to their Wants and Necessities, in such small Matters, as may not be hurtful to your Estate, but comfortable to them; and entail upon you their Blessings, and their Prayers for your dear Health and Welfare" (226). The health-giving nature of the marriage between Mr. B. and his "Doctor" later appears in contradistinction to the marriages of rank (those between

Lord and Lady Davers or the Darnfords) in which as Mr. B. at one point remarks, the spouses "plague" each other (366).

The specific change that Pamela's marriage to Mr. B. allows is the establishment of a new model for imitation, a positive alternative to the libertine neighbourhood squires who, like Squire Martin, encourage sexual misconduct in their households. Mr. B. often--in fact, almost obsessively--refers to Pamela's moral superiority and his own growth under her tutelage, while Lady Darnford calls her "the sweet Exemplar of all my Sex" (339). In the second volume and the sequel, Pamela's status as an exemplar is progressively exaggerated until Polly Darnford can write this:

We are delighted with the account of your family management, and your Sunday's service. What an excellent lady you are! And how happy and good you make all who know you, as seen by the ladies joining in your evening service, as well as their domestics.<sup>28</sup>

One by one, corrupt, arrogant, and even morally healthy men and women of rank--the Darnford sisters, Lady Davers, Jackey, the unnamed countess, and Sir Jacob Swynford, to name only a few--recognize Pamela's superior moral status and her right to her rank. Mutual imitation among country gentlemen in matters of sexual license and destructive vying for recognition give way to health-giving imitation of Pamela and voluntary recognition among people whose souls,

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<sup>28</sup>Samuel Richardson, Pamela II, ed. Mark Kinkead-Weekes (London: Everyman, 1969) 174.

if not ranks, are equal. Under Pamela's influence, Lady Davers rediscovers the joys of letter-writing, Sir Jacob Swynford recognizes and repudiates his own arrogance, and the countess is struck by the impropriety of her conduct with Mr. B. Among the lower ranks Pamela's influence is equally strong. After nearly giving in to Jackey's advances, Polly Barlow is shamed into prudence, and eventually marries a clergyman. Mrs. Jewkes, before she dies, reforms and exhibits a piety bordering on sanctimony.

#### IV Sentimentality and the Evasions of Authority

The limitations of Pamela include the single narrative perspective, the clumsy and sometimes embarrassing attempts at dramatizing variations in affect from moment to moment, and the narrowness of Richardson's sexual morality. However, to a modern sensibility some of the novel's most serious failings occur where Richardson's didactic impulses clash with his representation of certain existential problems, particularly marital discord and familial tensions. At these moments, Richardson's apparent anxiety to affirm some kind of authority leads him to use literary conventions that serve purposes quite other than those of communicating complex subjectivity.

This is not to say that Pamela simply falls apart after the wedding. Despite Richardson's tendency to pass over the possibility of serious conflicts between Pamela and her

husband, there are rare oases--notably Pamela's jealousy of Sally Godfrey and Lady Davers' visit in the original novel,<sup>29</sup> and the masquerade in the sequel--where Pamela rediscovers her robust self. And one of the rare moments of intentional humour in the first novel--Pamela's sometimes wry commentary on her husband's forty-eight "kind Rules and generous Assurances" for a happy marriage (369)--constitutes a subtle and convincing exposition of the problem for a woman of conscience within marriage, a problem that Richardson later explores more fully through Mrs. Harlowe. Here are Mr. B.'s rules pertaining to marital disagreements, and Pamela's commentary:

26. That the Words COMMAND and OBEY shall be blotted out of his Vocabulary. Very Good!

27. That a Man should desire nothing of his Wife but what is significant, reasonable, just. To be sure that is right.

28. But then, that she must not shew Reluctance, Uneasiness, or Doubt, to oblige him; and that too at half a Word; and must not be bid twice to do one thing.--But may not there be some Occasions, where this may be a little dispens'd with? But he says afterwards, indeed,

29. That this must be only while he took care to make her Compliance reasonable, and consistent with her free Agency, in Points that ought to be allow'd her.--Come, this is pretty well, considering.

30. That if the Husband must be set upon a wrong Thing, she must not dispute with him, but do it, and expostulate afterwards.--Good-sirs! I don't know what to say to this!--It looks a little hard, methinks!--This would bear a smart Debate, I fancy, in a Parliament of Women.--But then he says,

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<sup>29</sup>For an interesting account of the organic relation of these two episodes to the first half of the novel, see Owen Jenkins, "Richardson's Pamela and Fielding's 'Vile Forgeries,'" Philological Quarterly 44 (1965): 200-210.

31. Supposing they are only small Points that are in Dispute.--Well, this mends it a little. For small Points, I think, should not be stood upon. (371)

There is something peculiarly enjoyable here, as Pamela emerges from the mire of gratitude and her quick intelligence lays bare the problems of categorical injunctions and explodes the authority of Mr. B.'s articles.

Unfortunately, the young Pamela reappears all too rarely, and Pamela's psychological flattening to a conduct-book exemplar who serves only to illustrate specific points about household management, wifely obedience, or the rearing of children has evinced disgust from numerous readers.<sup>30</sup>

Although I think that Terry Eagleton overstates his case when he claims that Pamela amounts to "a cynical displacement of women's sufferings into consolatory myth, a false, insulting 'resolution' of sexual combat which merely consolidates patriarchal power,"<sup>31</sup> it is true that after marriage a redeemed Mr. B. is reestablished as a clear authority to which Pamela accommodates herself to an

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<sup>30</sup>See, for instance, Armstrong 125, Hilliard 210.

<sup>31</sup>Eagleton 37. See also Armstrong, 130-31. Some variation of this conclusion, stated more or less emphatically with more or less twentieth-century indignation or embarrassment, now seems inevitable. McKeon, the coolest of modern critics, writes that after marriage, Pamela's status as a woman becomes the central problem of her relation to authority and that, for the Richardson who wrote Pamela "gender-based categories are prior even to status-based categories" (379). Raymond Hilliard sees Pamela's submission to Mr. B. as evidence of role-playing in a patriarchal society (214), but he does not discuss the strains in her conscientious self that ought to result from this role-playing.

improbable degree. Pamela continues to refer to him as master, and even says, with cloying gratitude, "He shall always be my Master; and I shall think myself more and more his Servant" (257). In what is for modern readers perhaps the most notorious indication of Richardson's views on authority within marriage, Mr. B. defends a man's right to marry his social inferior on the grounds that there is, for a man, no contradiction between his paternalistic and his political authority. A woman, on the contrary, may not marry beneath herself because it would be scandalous for her to accept the authority of a social inferior (329).

Although in Pamela II Mr. B.'s dalliance with the unnamed countess momentarily suggests that Richardson has reconsidered the ease of his rake's reform, Richardson usually manages matters so that Pamela need not confront demands that would endanger her moral integrity. Except for the episodes dealing with the countess, the most notable marital conflict is over whether Mr. B. will allow Pamela to breastfeed her child.

In the places where Pamela and Mr. B. become models of familial harmony, they tend to flatten to a psychological generality that is familiar from romance. Aside from his dalliance with the countess in Pamela II and an occasional temper tantrum, Mr. B. usually plays the part of a reformed rake and (by eighteenth-century standard,) an almost ideal husband. Moreover, his reformation seems peculiarly

unconvincing. Kinkead-Weekes has identified some problems of literary form that may account for readers' skepticism about Mr. B.'s sudden recognition of Pamela's authenticity: although Mr. B. has read Pamela's letters and has himself testified to their effect, the reader doesn't have sufficient access to Mr. B.'s mind to find his change of heart wholly believable.<sup>32</sup> But as Flynn astutely notes, Mr. B.'s lightning-quick conversion, which is portended by Pamela's pond-side reflection that "God can touch his Heart in an Instant" (152), is distinctly reminiscent of a fairy-tale or romance conversion.<sup>33</sup> Whatever Richardson's literary antecedents, Mr. B.'s reform remains unsatisfying largely because Richardson's commitment to showing Pamela's potential to redeem the gentry means that he must sacrifice the natural agency that has operated up until this point. Unwilling to allow Pamela's influence to be only partial, Richardson resorts to a simplification of Mr. B.'s character by which the rake exchanges a character that is complex, if a little shadowy, for a new character as a much simpler, nearly perfect husband.

The surrender to romance generalization that militates against Richardson's project of presenting what he calls "human nature as it is" (SL 47) affects other aspects of Pamela as well. Pamela's critique of aristocratic authority

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<sup>32</sup>Kinkead-Weekes 105.

<sup>33</sup>Flynn 163.

usually seems decisive, but there are moments, both before and after Pamela's wedding, when the novel appears to endorse the kind of innate class qualities which are familiar from romance and, as we shall see, persist in a stronger form in Fielding's novels. In general, the more highly developed the moral sense of the characters, the more likely they are to be high-born. Mrs. Jervis, we learn, is a "Gentlewoman born, though she has had Misfortunes" (30)--specifically, the debts of relations. A similar story pertains to Pamela's father, who has also fallen upon hard times through the over-exercise of the aristocratic virtue of generosity (though in other respects he functions as a stereotype of a country buffoon). The literacy not only of Pamela's father but of her mother suggests a perhaps unconscious anxiety on Richardson's part to gentrify his heroine. Significantly, none of the other servants is as high-born as Mrs. Jervis or the Andrews family, and none has such strongly developed moral sensibilities. And at one point, in apparent empirical affirmation of the physiognomy of class, Pamela identifies Miss Goodwin, Mr. B.'s illegitimate daughter, as the "genteelest-shap'd" of four children she meets (392), even though she does not yet know that any of them are high-born.

At times the presentation of Pamela herself also seems to reinforce elements of what McKeon calls aristocratic ideology. Although Pamela clearly represents bourgeois

values of industry and frugality,<sup>34</sup> she is also characterized partly in terms of the honour that the local gentry has lost. Richardson alerts his reader to Pamela's special status partly through naming. One tends to forget that the original Pamela is a princess in Sidney's Arcadia, and that her rather exotic name was naturalized in English after (and probably only because of) Richardson's novel.<sup>35</sup> Because of the strangeness of Pamela's name and the nobility of her single literary namesake, many of Richardson's first readers may well have had high expectations about Pamela's character and lineage, and these expectations are fulfilled at a figurative level. At the very least, the aristocratic suggestiveness of Pamela's name, qualified of course by the ordinary surname Andrews, would have made her marriage to Mr. B. more plausible. It may also have permitted an aristocratic interpretation of the novel that some of the Pamelists later exploit to discover Pamela's hidden genteel heritage.

From early in the novel, Pamela's natural gentility is hinted at by Mr. B., his servants, and the visitors to his estate. Lady Brooks invokes the romance convention of disguise and possible hidden birth when she is struck by

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<sup>34</sup>For an account of domestic virtues among the rising middle class, see Armstrong, 59-95.

<sup>35</sup>Eaves and Kimpel 116-117; Gillian Beer, "Pamela: Rethinking Arcadia," Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays, eds. Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989) 29.

Pamela's beauty. "I never saw such a Face and Shape in my Life," she exclaims, "why she must be better descended than you have told me!" (59) The terms in which Pamela's character is described also suggest that she is somehow socially misplaced. Mrs. Jervis, referring to Pamela's moral qualities, reports that the other servants "shew her as great Respect as if she was a Gentlewoman born" (329). Though Pamela is usually quick to attribute her good qualities to the influence of her parents and the late Lady Booby, she contributes to her own aura of aristocratic prestige when she refers to her untainted lineage and compares herself to women of rank and even royalty. At one point she exclaims, "Yet if I was the Lady of Birth...I don't know whether I would have [Mr. B.]" (54); and at another, "I am as happy as a Princess" (81). There are times, then, when Pamela begins to emerge as a sport of nature and a sport of class, the base-born lady; and her status is reinforced by the frequent insistence, especially in the continuation, on Pamela's uniqueness and the unlikelihood that other Pamelas will be found.

Given both the value Richardson places on the educated conscience and the novel's overwhelming critique of hereditary honour, it seems likely that Richardson's intention here is not to endorse the idea of innate class characteristics but to exploit certain well-established literary conventions--specifically, romance naming and the

physiognomic stereotypes of class--in order to establish Pamela's true gentility. That the use of romance conventions makes an aristocratic reading plausible is ultimately less important than the implications of resorting to conventions whose strength is classification rather than individuation. Where Richardson uses classificatory modes of representation, Pamela, like her romance predecessors, becomes ineluctably more general, more suitable to communicating abstract principles--conscience, honour or honesty, and chastity--than to showing what happens when these principles are imperfectly appropriated by imperfect individuals who are the product of past events and present desires.

This generalizing approach to character goes hand-in-hand with certain excesses of tone. In the first of Pamela's letters, for instance, there is a note of immature self-dramatization that is troubling because it seems to be as much a part of Richardson's literary project as of Pamela's character:

God, whose Graciousness to us we have so often experienc'd at a Pinch, put it into my good Lady's Heart, on her Deathbed, just an Hour before she expir'd, to recommend to my young Master all her Servants, one by one: and when it came to my Turn to be recommended, for I was sobbing and crying at her Pillow, she could only say, My dear Son!--and so broke off a little, and then recovering--Remember my poor Pamela--And these were some of her last Words! O how my Eyes run!--Don't wonder to see the Paper so blotted!

(25)

It would be possible to excuse this passage as simply Richardson's clumsy attempt at creating a sense of immediacy or as an aspect of Pamela's immaturity which Richardson fully understood, were it not for the rapid intensification of such emotional responses in Pamela and all around her immediately after her reconciliation with Mr. B. Of course Pamela would be moved to tears at the death of her employer, and even at the recollection of the event. But the last sentence, with its unwarranted description of the effect of her tears on the paper suggests self-dramatization (Has she lost her handkerchief? Do her parents really need an explanation for the smudged ink?), and the passage as a whole amounts to an invitation to indulge in a sentimental attachment to a deceased character who cannot be, for the reader, a felt presence. What is significant here is that there is nothing of dramatic interest--no conflict, no irony, no misunderstanding at all--only Pamela's willingness to surrender to sentiment and her transformation into the embodiment of the dutiful servant mourning.

The problem of sentimentality seems to be uniquely Richardson's, for the generalizing tendencies of romance do not in themselves result in sentimental tones. Moreover, authorial identification with sentimental heroes is not the unavoidable pitfall of sentimentalism. The best sentimental fiction, far from wallowing in sentiment, exploits these tensions, often for comic effect. Harley, of The Man of

Feeling, is patently ridiculous in his dealings with others, and Mackenzie knows it; the Yorick of A Sentimental Journey is self-interested and vain, as Sterne takes pains to show. In both cases the pleasure of reading is largely derived from the reader's sense of incongruity between what the character feels and what social circumstances demand. But in the passage from Pamela, the young servant's emotions seem designed to present an exemplary state of mind.

In a discussion of Tom Jones Ian Watt argues that complexity of characters is inversely proportional to the demands of plot.<sup>36</sup> A more general formulation of Watt's claim may be that the stronger a writer's commitment to any principle of order, the less individualized and complex the characters subject to that order will be. Richardson has such a high investment in promoting marital and familial harmony that passages like the following dominate the last half of Pamela and much of the sequel. Here Pamela is reunited with her father:

[M]y dear Father, not able to contain himself, nor yet to stir from the Place gush'd out into a Flood of Tears, which he, good Soul! had been struggling with, it seems; and cry'd out, O my dear Child!

I knew the Voice, and lifting up my Eyes, and seeing my Father, gave a Spring, overturn'd the Table, without regard to the Company, and threw myself at his Feet, O my Father! my Father! said I, can it be! Is it you? Yes, it is! it is! O bless your happy--Daughter! I would have said, and down I sunk....

....I went, by my Master's Command, and sat...in the happiest Place I ever was blest with, between two of the dearest Men in the World to me, and each holding

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<sup>36</sup>Watt 317.

one of my Hands;--my Father, every now-and-then, with Tears in his Eyes, blessing God, and saying, Could I ever have hoped this! (250-51)

There is something deeply embarrassing here, like reading one's first love letters. Vices of sentimentality abound. There are stylistic excesses (Andrews' emotion "gush[ing] out into a Flood of Tears"), self-dramatization (Pamela's pretence of not believing at first that the man before her is her father, and her prostrating herself before him, and then managing to sink lower), and unintentional humour (the double hand-holding and Andrews' repetitious and tiresome thanksgiving while Mr. B.'s visitors bravely continue with their card game). Richardson's stake in reconciliation--his need to show reconciliation in its pure form, rather than as the incomplete and imperfect thing it usually is--is so great that he doesn't seem to recognize the comedy of the scene, and so fails to distance himself and his reader from the ridiculous goings-on.

The parts of Pamela that can still be read with great pleasure are about how Pamela and Mr. B. escape their self-centredness to discover their selves, and the implications of their discovery. They act freely, but their strange courtship is conducted in the parlours of necessity, partly determined by cultural forces of which they are only half aware, some of which are vestigial, some of which are still ill-defined because they are so new. But as important as

these forces are in directing the course Pamela's and Mr. B.'s actions, they do not, I think, account for the continued popularity of Pamela. Richardson's portrayal of Mr. B.'s unorthodox, fascinating, offensive courtship of Pamela continues to appeal to readers because Pamela and Mr. B., in their complexity, seem curiously contemporary with modern readers, and because the problems they face--problems of self-definition, of relating the self to community standards and to other selves--still matter. Unfortunately, the marriage between Pamela and Mr. B. raises new problems, both for the lovers and for Richardson. Richardson needs to justify this marriage to the conservative elements of his readership and perhaps to conservative elements in himself, and in doing so succumbs to the temptation for pat answers to complex problems of experience. But he can take an unequivocal moral stand only through sentimental reductions which betray experience and the complexity of his characters. The Pamela of the first volume does not quite disappear, but the few moments when she does escape from the twin models of conduct book and romance heroine, and reasserts her psychological complexity, are moments that unsettle Richardson's didactic agenda.

For all the daring of the first volume, resolution is perhaps too easily effected in the second, and it is not until Clarissa that Richardson tests fully the primacy of conscience. Pamela is almost always certain, until she is

sent to her parents, that Mr. B. represents temptation; Clarissa, on the contrary, must interpret her way through a morass of contradictory data, often distrusting her ability to interpret even the evidence of her senses. Her decision to leave with Lovelace, for instance, is astonishingly complex, compounded and confused by half-acknowledged desire for her tormentor, aversion to a forced marriage with Solmes, fear for her family's safety and about her brother James's likely retaliation. The first-time reader of Clarissa, who is privy to much more information than Clarissa herself, would be hard put to say, at this point, whether Clarissa makes a mistake in leaving with Lovelace. Pamela, on the contrary, never faces an ethical dilemma of such complexity, not even when she must decide whether to return to Mr. B. More importantly, it is not until Clarissa that Richardson seriously raises the possibility of a breakdown of paternal authority. Pamela may outgrow the narrow, prudential morality of her parents, but she never has to contend with an unjust demand from her father. And since Pamela never feels abandoned by her family, she can never feel completely deserted by society. When she contemplates suicide she imagines her vindication in elegies and ballads, something Clarissa cannot imagine during her moment of deepest despair, when she believes that even Anna Howe has betrayed her. In Pamela, the prospect of not resolving the relation between the conscientious self and

the problematic authorities that make demands upon it is so terrifying that Richardson, for the time being, withdraws his gaze.

Chapter 2: Pamela II, Shamela, and the Politics of the  
Pamela Vogue<sup>1</sup>

There are Swarms of Moral Romances. One, of late Date, divided the World into such opposite Judgments, that some extolled it to the stars, whilst others treated it with Contempt. Whence arose, particularly among the Ladies, two different Parties, Pamelists and Antipamelists.... Some look upon this young Virgin as an Example for Ladies to follow; nay, there have been those, who did not scruple to commend this Romance from the Pulpit. Others, on the contrary, discover in it, the Behaviour of an hypocritical, crafty Girl, in her Courtship; who understands the art of bringing a Man to her Lure....

(Dr. Peter Shaw, 1750)<sup>2</sup>

Ever since Shaw's claim in The Reflector that Pamela had created two factions called Pamelists and anti-Pamelists, the critical orthodoxy about the Pamela vogue has been that it centred on Pamela's chastity and entailed a strict division between admirers and critics of Richardson's heroine. At first, Shaw's remarks certainly look like a fair account of the contemporary responses to Pamela. Almost every book, pamphlet, and poem of the Pamela vogue discusses sexual morality and presents itself as an attack on Pamela or as a more authentic account of her life than Richardson's. Even the titles of these works support Shaw's

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<sup>1</sup>A version of this chapter was presented as a paper in October, 1989, at the annual conference of the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Peter Shaw, The Reflector, qtd. in A. D. McKillop, Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist (1936; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960) 101-102. McKillop identifies Shaw's remarks as an unacknowledged translation of a passage from the Danish dramatist Ludvig Holberg's Moral Thoughts (1744).

claim of a deep and simple division between opposing factions: Fielding's Shamela, Haywood's Anti-Pamela, Parry's The True Anti-Pamela, and the anonymous Pamela Censured constituting one side, and Kelly's Pamela's Conduct in High Life, Giffard's Pamela, a Comedy, and three anonymous works--The Life of Pamela, Pamela in High Life: Or, Virtue Rewarded, and Memoirs of the Life of Lady H[esilrige], the Celebrated Pamela--constituting the other.<sup>3</sup>

But if the commonplace is true that Pamela represents a defining moment in the history of the English novel, then one would expect these works to delimit what might be called

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<sup>3</sup>These, along with an anonymous play consisting largely of dialogue lifted from Pamela and Charles Povey's Bunyanesque The Virgin in Eden, are the lengthiest productions of the Pamela vogue; all were published between April and December 1741, the height of the Pamela vogue in England. But despite their titles, some are not direct responses to Richardson's novel. Parry's memoirs possess a blatantly opportunistic title (internal evidence suggests that The True Anti-Pamela was written before the publication of Pamela). The anonymous biography of Lady Hesilrige presents a story roughly analogous to Richardson's, but its title too seems opportunistic. Haywood's Anti-Pamela bears only a tenuous connection to Richardson's novel, since it presents a character who is simply unlike Richardson's. Haywood's book does, however, treat questions of sexual hypocrisy and the problem of being educated above one's degree. For extensive bibliographic accounts of the Pamela vogue, see Richard Gordon Hannaford, Samuel Richardson: An Annotated Bibliography of Critical Studies (New York: Garland, 1980) and Sarah Smith, ed. Samuel Richardson, a Reference Guide (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984). The best available reconstruction of the precise publication sequence of the major works of the Pamela vogue is Eaves' and Kimpel's handy "Chronological Table of Pamela and the Pamela Vogue in England" in their Riverside edition of Richardson's novel (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971) xvii-xviii.

the "horizon of expectations"<sup>4</sup> in 1741--that is, the set of conventional moral and aesthetic standards that resisted the moral insights and technical innovations distinguishing Pamela from earlier fiction. It is surprising, then, that even the best accounts of the Pamela vogue ignore the possibility that Richardson's novel, by virtue of its audacious attempt at recording the minutiae of moral experience, met with resistance and incomprehension that cannot be explained away by reference to obvious ambiguities in Pamela's conduct. In their biographies of Richardson, A. D. McKillop and, more recently, Eaves and Kimpel tend to support both Shaw's (or, if one prefers, Hollberg's) claim that the Pamela vogue is mainly about the moral authenticity of Pamela and the corollary that the Pamelists understood and agreed with Richardson's portrayal of Pamela.<sup>5</sup> But by emphasizing the debate over Pamela's sincerity, Richardson's

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<sup>4</sup>For this term see Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," Toward an Aesthetic of Reception, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) 3-43.

<sup>5</sup>McKillop 42-106; T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography (London: Oxford UP, 1971) 129-142. Both imply that Pamelist literature were opportunistic imitation and that when Pamelists attacked Richardson they were marketing their own wares rather than expressing reservations about the implications of Richardson's novel. A similar view emerges in Bernard Kreissman's peculiarly unsympathetic, anti-pamelist Pamela-Shamela. A study of the criticisms, burlesques, parodies, and adaptations of Richardson's "Pamela" (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), which betrays a curious animus towards Richardson, whose great strength, Kreissman suggests, lies in not being quite as bad as his imitators (55, 68).

biographers disregard what contemporary readers perceived as the political implications of Pamela and what their understanding of these implications did to their opinion of Richardson's heroine.

### I. Pamela II and the Question of Innate Gentility

Shaw's preoccupation with Pamela's chastity permits him to gloss over another of Richardson's concerns. After making an apparently incidental reference to the "Inequality of [Pamela's and Mr. B.'s] Conditions," Shaw offers judgment on the novel's outcome: "Her History, indeed, would have been more exemplary, and her Conduct less exceptionable, if this Heroine, after suffering so many Persecutions, had continued in her low Condition; for, thus she would have avoided the Censure now pass'd on her."<sup>6</sup> Shaw's remarks are ambiguous (his objection could be to Pamela's imprudence in marrying her persecutor), but they immediately suggest a longing to read Pamela through the correcting spectacles of social conservatism. Shaw's valuation also reveals a curious obtuseness, reminiscent of Richardson at his moralizing worst, about the potential of the new genre to explore the effects of moral choice on individual experience, for Shaw reads Pamela as a simple moral tract in which Richardson has failed in a duty to bring Pamela's conduct into line with certain moral

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<sup>6</sup>McKillop 101, 102.

imperatives, even at the expense of having her act out of character.

Shaw is wrong, of course. The failings of Pamela are no more a matter of exceptionable conduct than its value is a function of Richardson's definition of chastity. And Richardson's best critics--among them, Margaret Anne Doody and Mark Kinkead-Weekes<sup>7</sup>--show that Pamela endures because of its account of how Pamela and Mr. B. mature out of their respective egoisms and give themselves freely in marriage. Throughout at least the first half of the novel, Richardson's characters are highly enough individuated--that is, independent enough of literary-social stereotypes and Richardson's narrow moral declarations--to allow a serious account of the possible confrontations between the conscientious self and the authority that Mr. B. represents, an authority that is not a matter of simple political or legal power, but of the intangible customary relations between masters and servants, elders and juniors, rich and poor, men and women. And, as I argued in Chapter 1, an understanding of character and context is fundamental. Pamela's lingering at Mr. B.'s Bedfordshire estate means little to readers who don't take into account her youthful

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<sup>7</sup>See Margaret Anne Doody, A Natural Passion. A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974) and "Saying 'No,' Saying 'Yes': The Novels of Samuel Richardson, The First English Novelists: Essays in Understanding, Ed. J. M. Armistead (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975) 67-108; Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson, Dramatic Novelist (New York: Cornell UP, 1973).

insecurity, her fear of legal prosecution, her anxiety to preserve the esteem of her fellow servants, and her affection (tinged, it is clear, by her assumptions about class) for Mr. B.

I suggested in the first chapter that Richardson's ability to create psychologically individuated characters imposes important qualifications on any discussion of the politics of Pamela. As Carol Kay has recently argued, Richardson's Humean interest in the power of opinion and unspoken rules (as opposed to political and legal sanctions) to regulate moral conduct precluded a specifically political, let alone revolutionary, agenda.<sup>8</sup> And yet, in its emphasis on spiritual egalitarianism and the primacy of conscience, the first half of the original novel has widely been seen as politically progressive.<sup>9</sup> The novel's

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<sup>8</sup>Carol Kay, Political Constructions. Defoe, Richardson, and Sterne in Relation to Hobbes, Hume, and Burke (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988) 139.

<sup>9</sup>In Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) 357-381, Michael McKeon argues that Pamela presents a conflict between progressive and aristocratic versions of events in which, with some qualifications, Pamela's progressive version triumphs. For another progressive reading, see Nancy Armstrong, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 96-134. With the exception of Armstrong, critics interested in the sexual politics of the novel, especially as reflected in Pamela's effusive gratitude towards her husband, emphasize the novel's conservative, even reactionary, emphasis on the husband's authority within marriage. See, for instance, Kristina Straub, "Reconstructing the Gaze: Voyeurism in Richardson's Pamela," Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture, Vol. 18. Eds. John W. Yolton and Leslie Ellen Brown (East Lansing, Mich.: Colleagues, 1988) 419-431.

progressive tendencies appear most strikingly where characters attest to the inadequacy of their assumptions about aristocratic honour to make sense of the particulars of social experience, as in Mr. B.'s growing recognition of Pamela's fundamental dignity:

I am awaken'd to see more Worthiness in you [says Mr. B.] than I ever saw in any Lady in the World. All the servants, from the highest to the lowest, doat on you, instead of envying you; and look upon you in so superior a Light, as speaks what you ought to be. (83)

And, conversely, in Pamela's rueful observation about the bad influences on her employer:

Sure the World must be near an End! for all the Gentlemen about are as bad as he almost, as far as I can hear!--And see the Fruits of such bad Examples: There is 'Squire Martin in the grove, has had three Lyings-in, it seems, in his House, in three Months past, one by himself; and one by his Coachman; and one by his Woodman; and yet he has turn'd none of them away. Indeed, how can he, when they but follow his own vile Example. There is he, and two or three more such as he, within ten miles of us; who keep Company and hunt with our fine Master, truly; and I suppose he's never the better for their Examples. (72-73)

If such utterances seem strident, in their defining contexts they are usually convincing because they attest to the pressures of the moment. When he is angry, Mr. B. speaks of Pamela much less delicately; when Pamela is not immediately threatened, she can admire Mr. B.'s qualities as a landlord and an employer. Nevertheless, it is passages like these, arising from the immediate pressures of the plot, that give Pamela its revolutionary flavour, and one might forgive Richardson's original readers who assumed that the novel was a leveller's treatise.

The strident egalitarian pleas are all but absent from Pamela II, largely because there are so few incidents that demand of the conscientious self the extreme self-reliance that Pamela displays in the original novel. As a result, Richardson's continuation often displays a conservative torpor. Eaves and Kimpel observe that Pamela II "is open to no attacks on the ground of social radicalism," and Terry Castle argues that Richardson's "covert ideological project" in the sequel is to "refute once and for all complaints against his fiction's revolutionary message."<sup>10</sup> And in a recent article, Betty Schellenberg contends that Richardson's sequel "expressly formalizes an exemplary model of social authority as an alternative to the fictional structure patterned upon opposition between the individual and the group."<sup>11</sup> To be sure, everywhere in the sequel there are signs that Richardson fears having established a new model for the socially ambitious. In reply to Sir Jacob Swynford's question, "what will become of degree or distinction, if this practice of gentlemen marrying their mothers' waiting-maids...should come into vogue?" (169), Mr.

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<sup>10</sup>Eaves and Kimpel 152. Terry Castle, Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986) 137. For the argument that Pamela II is a response to Shamela in particular, see Owen Jenkins, "Richardson's Pamela and Fielding's 'Vile Forgeries,'" Philological Quarterly 44 (1965): 200-210.

<sup>11</sup>Betty A. Schellenberg, "Enclosing the Immovable: Structuring Social Authority in Pamela," Eighteenth-Century Fiction 4 (1991) 28.

B., apparently speaking for Richardson, recites a bewildering list of qualifications for a second Pamela. Pamela herself frets about the social presumption of Polly Barlow and the scandal that would ensue should Polly either marry Jackey or be seduced by him. Pamela's last word on the subject of hypergamy is especially telling: "I don't mean that [gentlemen] should take raw, uncouth, unbred, lowly girls, as I was, from the cottage, and, destroying all distinction, make such their wives" (414). Although throughout the sequel Pamela remains a model of virtue, and as such has a redemptive function among the gentry who have fallen short of the demands of their rank, clearly no one, least of all Pamela herself, wishes a proliferation of master-servant marriages.

But even if Richardson defends the original novel against charges of political subversion, it does not follow that he simply revokes his claims about the implications of social subordination. For one thing, Pamela II does not amount to the exercise in forgetfulness about Pamela's origins that is sometimes claimed.<sup>12</sup> Amidst all the dreary

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<sup>12</sup>See, in particular, Castle, 139-144. Castle argues that, by having everybody appear to forget Pamela's background and by having Lady Davers self-consciously refer to Pamela as sister, Richardson undertakes a project of disguising Pamela's past. Both Christopher Flint, "The Anxiety of Affluence: Family and Class (Dis)order in Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded," Studies in English Literature 29 (1989) 489-514 and James Cruise, "Pamela and the Commerce of Authority," Journal of English and Germanic Philology 87 (1988) 342-358 extend the project of forgetfulness back to the moment of Pamela's marriage. All three arguments ignore

compliments and coy self-effacement by which Mr. B.'s circle preserves social harmony, there is, I think, a sustained effort on Richardson's part to reiterate the original novel's critique of hereditary honour. This effort takes form in a series of episodes in which Richardson subverts conventional social distinctions in ways that ought to have been clear to moderately perceptive contemporary readers. One such episode--Mr. B.'s dalliance with the unnamed Countess Dowager--has been explored in its carnivalesque richness by Terry Castle; another--Sir Jacob Swynford's visit, which Castle dismisses as an "ideological slip"--pointedly reaffirms Richardson's original political critique.<sup>13</sup>

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Pamela's references to her past and her parents' indebtedness to Mr. B. as well as her continued correspondence with her parents (whom Richardson might, had he wished, have killed off well before the conclusion of Pamela II). Moreover, I don't think that Castle sufficiently considers either the extent to which good manners would require Lady Davers to acknowledge Pamela as a sister and preclude polite company from repeatedly drawing attention to Pamela's origins. My point is that details which are usually marshalled to show that Pamela acts as a social upstart who seeks to escape from her past have more to do with superficial social codes than with Richardson's deep ideological anxieties.

<sup>13</sup>Castle 144. Here in particular I diverge from Castle's argument that Richardson clumsily abandons Pamela's past. After quoting the Countess of C.'s remark that Pamela possesses "born dignity--born discretion--Education cannot give it" (136), Castle contends, "A primitive hermeneutics operates: since Pamela displays certain conventional tokens of high birth, the relatives exclaim that she must be highborn. By some fluke of Providence, we are invited to believe, her gentility has simply been hidden, and now it translucently reveals itself" (142, italics added). The countess certainly propagates a "primitive hermeneutics," but the novel doesn't: Castle's suggestion that Richardson buys into the belief in innate class characteristics ignores

In a letter to Polly Darnford, Pamela reports that while she has been out visiting "four poor sick families" (156), Mr. B.'s uncle, Sir Jacob Swynford, arrives to protest her marriage. From the moment of his arrival, Sir Jacob comports himself rudely, snubbing Lady Davers and prompting her to remark, with an hauteur familiar from the first novel, "A surly brute he always was! My uncle! He's more of an ostler than a gentleman" (156). Then, in a refreshing moment of pique, Pamela offers the following description of her relation:

He is about sixty-five years of age, a coarse, strong, big-boned man, with large irregular features; he has a haughty supercilious look, a swaggering gait, and a person not at all bespeaking one's favour of in behalf of his mind; and his mind, as you shall hear by and bye, not clearing up those prepossessions in his disfavour, with which his person and features at first strike one. His voice is big and surly; his eyes little and fiery; his mouth large, with yellow and blackish teeth, what are left of them being broken off to a tolerable regular height, looked as if they were ground down to his gums, by constant use. But with all these imperfections, he has an air that sets him somewhat above the mere vulgar, and makes one think half of his disadvantages rather owing to his own haughty humour, than to nature; for he seems to be a perfect tyrant at first sight, a man used to prescribe, and not to be prescribed to; and has the advantage of a shrewd penetrating look, but which seems rather acquired than natural. (157)

The sketch is reminiscent of Pamela's descriptions of Jewkes and Colbrand. The style is a little more elevated than in

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the inadequacy of the countess's formulation to make sense of the essential vulgarity of Sir Jacob, Jackey, Mr. B.'s sporting companions, and Sir Simon Darnford. It also fails, I think, to take into account the sequel's emphasis on the efficacy of education (in particular, in Pamela's disquisition on Locke) and example in reforming manners.

the earlier descriptions: "prepossessions" and "supercilious" seem new to Pamela, as does the attempt to balance unflattering detail with euphemistic generalization. But it retains the vigor of the early sketches, and there is a familiar tendency to caricature in Pamela's description of Sir Jacob's simultaneous resemblance to a bear and a boar. The description, in short, does seem distinctly Pamela's, but it comes from a Pamela who is decidedly more self-assured (and admittedly less interesting) than the unmarried Pamela of Part I.

Despite the disclaimer that half Sir Jacob's objectionable qualities are acquired rather than innate, Pamela's description of the baronet attacks a stereotype of genteel birth. Conventional descriptions of the well-born, like those of Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews, emphasize harmony of proportion combined with distinguishing moral or temperamental qualities. But Pamela's sketch describes a decidedly ungainly man--he is "coarse, strong, big-boned" and, as Lady Davers suggests, best suited for labour--whose main temperamental trait is the unsavory imperiousness that distinguishes so many other members of the B. family (including, as Pamela later hints, Sally Goodwin and little Billy). The baronet's vulgarity is equally reflected in his voyeuristic delight in "surveying" Pamela "from head to foot" (161) and in his robust and sometimes colourful speech. Sir Jacob may well pride himself on "a family

ancienter than the Conquest" (158), but his conduct supports Lady Davers's claim that he has "nothing else to boast of" (147).

In the episodes that follow, Pamela and her friends try to teach Sir Jacob a lesson about the nature of social distinctions. Mr. B. presents Pamela to the baronet as Lady Jenny, the Countess of C.'s daughter. Sir Jacob is predictably impressed by Lady Jenny, who, he believes, "carrie[s] tokens of her high birth in her face, and whose very feature and look show...her to be nobly descended" (164). When he is not praising Lady Jenny, he speaks the language of Mr. B. from the original novel, peremptorily asserting his absolute authority over his servants, and accusing Pamela's defenders of "talk[ing] in the language of romance" and living in an "enchanted castle" under the influence of a "grand enchantress" (160). When he is finally disabused, he spends an embarrassed moment or two nursing his wounded pride before beginning the obligatory encomiums on Pamela. Sir Jacob's conversion is annoyingly swift and it is clearly intended to attest to Pamela's redemptive power over the gentry, but the episode also pointedly reveals the poverty of Sir Jacob's assumptions about genteel birth. The odd reversal, by which the high-born Sir Jacob's vulgarity is played off against the base-born Pamela's acquired gentility, economically subverts the notion of innate class characteristics and keeps the novel's

focus on moral qualities independent of class. Sir Jacob seizes the first opportunity to identify Pamela's gentility as innate, remarking, "you seem...born to these things" (167), but his beliefs are ironically subverted by his own bear-like lack of gentility.

Shortly after he arrives, Sir Jacob mocks Pamela's name in a way that unwittingly emphasizes the point about innate class characteristics: "A queer sort of name!" he exclaims. "I have heard of it somewhere!--Is it a Christian or a Pagan name?--Linsey-woolsey--half one, half t'other--like thy girl--Ha, ha, ha" (163). (To which, Mr. H., unwittingly complicitous in Richardson's project, replies, "Let me be hang'd if Sir Jacob has not a power of wit.") The "somewhere," of course, is Sir Phillip Sidney's Arcadia, a book in which the readers (if not always the characters) can tell by appearance and speech patterns the difference between the genteel and the base born, and where Pamela is the name of a princess. The invocation of Pamela's literary predecessor, especially by a baronet named Swynford who thinks he is infatuated with an aristocrat named Jenny and whose only admirer is the formidable Jackey H., emphasizes the distance between the world of romance, where Sir Jacob's assumptions about social distinctions obtain, and the mundane world of high life, where genteel birth is no guarantee of moral, physical, or temperamental distinction.

The treatment of Sir Jacob is only the most spectacular of several assaults on the ideology of innate class characteristics. At first, "Lord" Jackey's designs on Polly Barlow promise an ironic variation on Pamela's story designed to underscore the importance of preserving social distinctions. (The territory has already been prepared by Mr. B.'s disquisition on the qualities necessary for a second Pamela.) But when Jackey speaks and writes for himself, the affair gains a new dimension, reminding the reader that the distinctions separating Jackey from Pamela's maid are arbitrary. After Jackey leaves, the reader intermittently hears new reports of his imbecility, including his vulnerability to every religious charlatan he meets on the continent. Toward the end of the novel, the simple-minded Jackey, now Lord H., marries imprudently (arguably, he does much worse than marry Polly) and defiantly writes to his uncle:

My Lord Davers,

For iff you will now call me neffew, I have no reason to call you unkell; surely you forgett who it was you held up your kane to: I have as little reason to valew your displeasure, as you have me: for I am, God be thanked, a lord and a pere of the realme, as well as you; and as to youre nott owneing me, nor your brother B. not looking upon me, I care not a farding: and, bad as you think I have done, I have marry'd a woman of family. Take thatt among you! (433)

Having suffered the depredations of his wife and her friends, Lord H. eventually resorts to having his affairs managed by Mr. B. who "saved him from utter ruin, punished

his wife's accomplices, and obliged her to accept a separate maintenance" (473).

The cumulative effect of these episodes (and one might include with them the treatment of Sir Simon Darnford early in the sequel) is to reinforce an important premise of the original Pamela, the essential arbitrariness of social distinctions. Pamela II certainly does not welcome the loss of social categories, but neither does it resort to the simple identification of honour and hereditary rank that is voiced by Mr. B. in the original novel and Sir Jacob in the sequel. Pamela II reiterates the original novel's rejection of what McKeon calls "aristocratic ideology" and tentatively affirms something like McKeon's "conservative ideology" (although even this affirmation tends to make way for the progressivism of the original novel the moment Pamela is faced with an important moral question, as when she considers the prospect of giving up her son in the event of a divorce from Mr. B.).<sup>14</sup> These ideological distinctions are important, for the absence of an unproblematic social authority guaranteed by the innate gentility of the well-born means that the conditions of the original Pamela are always there to be repeated. Even if nothing much happens in Pamela II (with the crucial exception of Mr. B.'s dalliance with the Countess Dowager), the largely unrealized

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<sup>14</sup>For aristocratic ideology see McKeon 131-133; for connections between aristocratic, progressive and conservative ideologies see 154-158 and 205-211.

moral centre of Richardson's continuation remains the conscientious individual, whose capacity for self-determination is always potentially at odds with the demands of the representatives of social authority.

## II. The Bourgeois Romancing of John Kelly and the Pamelists

John Kelly's two-volume novel Pamela's Conduct in High Life is usually singled out as the best of the Pamelist imitations. Nevertheless, when Eaves and Kimpel report that Richardson attacked Kelly for Pamela's excessive familiarity with Mrs. Jervis and the other servants, they imply that Pamela's Conduct in High Life extends the democratic tendencies of Pamela further than Richardson liked.<sup>15</sup> On the surface, their analysis (and, apparently, Richardson's) seems just. Kelly's novel attacks the aristocracy in conventional ways (the court is full of intrigue; aristocratic men, if they can get away with it, will be libertines), and Pamela does betray an unusual desire to ingratiate herself with her servants. But Kelly's novel never really gets a chance to test or even illustrate the spiritual egalitarianism of the original Pamela. Not only does it depict a household in which no servant fears an unjust or even inconvenient command, there are no Polly Barlows or Jacob Swynfords to disrupt social harmony, and Jackey H. makes only a brief appearance, during which he is

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<sup>15</sup>Eaves and Kimpel 137.

humbled once and for all. Given the absence of even the most trifling opportunities for testing the limits of the individual's moral free agency, it may be best to treat the novel's egalitarian veneer with a little skepticism.

Pamela's Conduct in High Life has scarcely begun when Kelly reveals a secret that revises the ideology of Pamela's story. During a dinner at Sir Simon Andrews' estate, Pamela's father unexpectedly reports that he is a descendant of his host's great-grandfather, and that Mrs. Andrews has descended from the respected Jinks family.<sup>16</sup> Both families, it seems, can be traced back to the Norman Conquest. Many years before, through a series of honorable but imprudent business dealings, Mr. Andrews was turned from a respectable tradesman into a tenant farmer and, eventually, a day-labourer. Andrews didn't tell his daughter of her genteel ancestry, for he "fear'd the Knowledge of being deriv'd from two such ancient and unblemish'd Families as that of Andrews, and that of Jinks, might make her vain, and nothing is more contemptible than a proud Beggar" (I, 121). From the moment of Mr. Andrews' disclosure, Pamela's gentility redefines the moral universe of the Pamela story. By raising Pamela's birth and thereby shifting the center of value from the virtuous base-born to

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<sup>16</sup>Pamela's Conduct in High Life, 2 vols (London, 1741), I, 36. For all the major works of the Pamela vogue, except Shamela, I have consulted the facsimile series Richardsoniana (New York: Garland, 1974-75).

the genteel, Kelly rejects Richardson's critique of hereditary honour and begins the process of reaffirming the aristocratic beliefs that the original Pamela attacks.

By raising Pamela's prose style Kelly further distances his novel from Richardson's original. Kelly, it seems, was not alone in wanting Pamela to write in a more elevated manner. According to Eaves and Kimpel, some of Richardson's correspondents complained that her style was too low and urged him to invest it with more dignity.<sup>17</sup> The complaint and Richardson's tendency to revise Pamela's style slightly upward<sup>18</sup> suggest a widespread cultural pressure to redraft Pamela in the heightened style common in conventional depictions of high life. That Kelly undertakes this elevation of style so wholeheartedly is further evidence of his resistance to Richardson's critique of the genteel. Kelly's Pamela has a few moments of homely or idiomatic prose, but she is far more likely to sound like this:

The Diversions of [Bath] I may rather call  
Distractions, as they rob me of several Hours which I  
could spend more to my Advantage and Inclination among  
Books. I am unpolite enough to prefer the old Sages of  
Antiquity, in their Calves-skin Jackets, to all the  
gay, stuttering, dancing, thoughtless Tribe of  
Pleasure-Hunters, who crowd this Place.... What  
Satisfaction can a continual Hurry, Ceremony, Dress,  
Visits, and Play, afford! Methinks this constant Round  
of Pleasure, as 'tis term'd, should grow insipid if not

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<sup>17</sup>Eaves and Kimpel 122.

<sup>18</sup>See T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, "Richardson's Revisions of Pamela," Studies in Bibliography 20 (1967) 61-88.

nauseous by Repetition. Indeed I am heartily tired of it. (II, 182)

No wonder the author of The Life of Pamela (1741) reported that it was a common observation that Richardson's original letters "seem to have been wrote by a Girl," whereas Kelly's continuation reads like the production of a "Man of Sense and Learning."<sup>19</sup> The heightening of the stylistic register (and it extends to Mr. and Mrs. Andrews' speech and letters) is, of course, necessary to make the Andrews family unambiguously genteel. But Kelly's approach to style has regrettable consequences for the inner life of his characters, because their high-life banter presents itself in a bland stylistic homogeneity that robs them of their distinctness. What is lost is Richardson's particularizing realism and all that it suggests about the importance of the individual's response to experience; what is gained is of more dubious value, a model of stylistic decorum based almost wholly on the rank of the speaker.

The moral order implied by Pamela's new-found gentility is confirmed by interpolated tales featuring such staples of romance as hidden births and dramatic revelations of gentility. In one such story, Susan Darnford writes of seeing a footman who possessed "one of the genteelest Figures we had seen" (II, 141). The high birth that the footman's appearance suggests is immediately confirmed by

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<sup>19</sup> Pamela in High Life; or, Virtue Rewarded (London, 1741) 416.

his manner, and Sir Simon Darnford predictably remarks, "the Man was certainly some Nobleman's Bastard, his Behaviour and Mien spoke good Blood in him" (II, 141). His polished conversation, proficiency in music, and fluency in the continental languages could only be the effects of a genteel education, but it is his appearance--his "fine Face and Shape" (II, 141)--that alerts the reader to his hidden rank. Days later the footman marries his employer, who is suggestively named Miss Dives, and appears in his true person as Mr. Stanmore of Horsegate Meadow, a man of fortune and family. Susan Darnford's tale, in which the first evidence of a man's high birth is his appearance, reaffirms Kelly's premise that beauty and virtue are inextricably linked with genteel ancestry. The echoes of a belief in hereditary honour that are almost drowned out by the strident egalitarian pleas of the original Pamela--that Pamela appears "better descended" than the other servants and that Miss Godwin is the "genteelest shaped" of the little girls<sup>20</sup>--and are carefully muted in Pamela II resonate in ways that attest to Kelly's assumptions about natural hierarchy and innate class characteristics.

Pamela's Conduct in High Life extends the association of hereditary rank with innate physical, temperamental, and moral traits to servants who pose a threat to the blood-integrity of the gentry. When a sketch of Mr. Barnwell

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<sup>20</sup> Pamela 59, 372.

begins with the information that his father grew rich by collecting "a Treasure of melted Gold and Silver from among the Rubbish" left by the fire of London (II, 18), we just know that something is wrong with Barnwell, though the description of him as a bisexual transvestite and amateur seamster might come as a surprise. And in the letter that follows Susan Darnford's story of Mr. Stanmore, Pamela reports a tale of a woman who "threw herself away upon her Footman" (II, 170), this time a real footman, as immediately becomes clear from Mr. B.'s account:

[A]s to his Person, he is of low Stature, narrow-shouldered, thick-legged, and tun-bellied; as to his Behaviour, he is, as the French say, poli comme un cheval de carosse, as polite as a Coach-Horse; as to his Parts, ignorant, weak, and illiterate; and for his Temper, insolent, rough; and since taken out of his Livery, makes good the old Proverb, set a Beggar on Horseback, and he will ride to the Devil. (II, 170)

The attack centers on the footman's moral and intellectual deficiencies, which even Kelly would likely ascribe to an impoverished education, but it is the Hogarthian caricature that betrays Kelly's assumptions about class. The story elicits disgust from Mr. B.'s audience, one of whom priggishly remarks, "a great many young People of Birth, and Fortune of either Sex, have thrown themselves away, and married their Parents Servants, by their being accustomed to keep them Company" (II, 170). This straitlaced condemnation of those who marry beneath themselves and of parents who

allow their children to converse with servants<sup>21</sup> comes from the newly gentrified Pamela who, by now, has all but forgotten her modest upbringing.

Reversion to the romance conventions of hidden genteel ancestry and innate class characteristics suggests, at best, a failure on Kelly's part to recognize the ideological implications of the conventions he uses and, at worst, an attempt to appropriate Richardson's novel as an aristocratic text. As I noted in Chapter 1, there are moments in Pamela when Richardson seems on the verge of ennobling the virtuous poor--figuratively, by comparing them with nobility; and literally, by allowing them to have fallen from slightly more genteel circumstances. These moments suggest a nostalgia on Richardson's part for the good order that aristocratic honour promises. But despite their vestigial glamour, Richardson's genteel characters are responsible for a crisis in aristocratic authority, the symptoms of which include the gentry's self-interested use of personal prestige and legal authority, and a corresponding refusal to recognize moral authenticity in social inferiors. For Richardson, as for Pamela, the subordinate's awe of rank and

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<sup>21</sup>Significantly, Richardson's Pamela objects to this very prohibition on the grounds that it "may be the means to fill the minds of the [children] with a contempt of those below them, and an arrogance that is not warranted by any rank or condition, to their inferiors of the same species" (Pamela II 393). For an account of Pamela II's treatment of servants, see John A. Dussinger, "Masters and Servants: Political Discourse in Richardson's A Collection of Moral Sentiments," Eighteenth-Century Fiction 5 (1993) 241-44.

desire to appropriate aristocratic prestige must ultimately be held in check by conscience. Kelly, on the contrary, apparently sees little that is problematic about aristocratic authority. Consequently, in Pamela's Conduct in High Life the prestige of rank is much more potent than it is in Pamela. Kelly continues Pamela as a romance in which urgent existential problems of conscience are replaced by the enjoyment of wine, food, and tired stories about fabulous dowries and tests of honour. Although Kelly's bookseller claimed that his author was more conversant with high life than was Richardson,<sup>22</sup> Kelly's novel presents a bland idealization of aristocratic existence that could only be the product of an outsider's imagination. For instance, despite a certain conventional affirmation of the value of charity, Kelly presents a high life that entails many privileges and no duties. In Pamela II the reader is given a detailed, even tedious account of Pamela's "benevolent round" (181) as well as discussion about the appropriate degree to which a woman in Pamela's position might promote the interests of her family. But in Kelly's novel, Pamela's tendency to concern herself with the well-being of none but her dinner guests and correspondents suggests that charity is indistinguishable from showing off one's wealth or promoting the interests of friends.

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<sup>22</sup>Eaves and Kimpel 137.

The most serious consequence of Kelly's use of literary convention is the reduction of the self to something that is conveniently and completely subjugated to the demands of social order. Of the many interpolated stories, there is one that briefly rehearses a variation of the Pamela story (II, 184-191), with the emphasis falling on the man's defiance of his family; in the others the emphasis falls squarely on the preservation of social order. Love stories are reported with great attention to ancestry and wealth, but little concern for the sentiments of the man and none at all for those of the woman. In several of these tales, disguise figures prominently as a means of courting one's beloved or of defeating "a too scrupulous Point of Honour" in one's parents (II, 52). Deception in the service of an honourable match is forgivable, but marrying much beneath one's degree is not. In a story that at first seems bound to end in an unequal match, Mr. Grantwell falls in love with his foster sister, the poor granddaughter of an Alderman. When his perfunctory attempt at seducing the lovely Etheldred fails, Grantwell arranges a marriage between her and Mr. Skerton, an alderman's son. Etheldred acquiesces, since "all Men, her Master excepted, were equally indifferent to her" (34); Mr. Grantwell goes to university and becomes learned. The story is presented by Sir Simon Darnford as a lesson in "autarchy" (II, 23), and the implications for the body politic are inescapable.

Kelly is certainly not alone in resorting to the romance conventions of hidden birth and natural hierarchy. In Goldoni's popular Pamela Nubile (which appeared in English translation in 1756), the heroine is nobly born, as Lord Bonfil learns before he marries her;<sup>23</sup> similarly, the author of The Life of Pamela apparently adapts Kelly's account of the Andrews' ancestry, remarking that Andrews formerly lived "partly as a Gentleman, and partly as a Farmer, upon a slender Estate of his own."<sup>24</sup> And Eaves and Kimpel report that The Universal Spectator, and Weekly Journal published a dramatic poem entitled "Pamela the Second" which resolves the tension between hypergamy and natural hierarchy in a different way. Here Pamela resists the advances of her father's landlord until she is rescued by her true love, a young miller.<sup>25</sup>

Nor is Kelly alone in wanting Pamela to write in a more elegant prose. The homogeneous and heightened style and the consequent reduction of psychological complexity that mar Pamela's Conduct in High Life infect almost all Pamelist literature except for the anonymous Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded. A Comedy, which consists mainly of dialogue

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<sup>23</sup>Goldoni's ennobling of Pamela is sometimes ascribed to the author's need to abide by strict Italian laws which prohibited representations of very unequal marriages. Nevertheless, the opera fits neatly into the pattern of romance transformations that characterize Kelly's novel.

<sup>24</sup>The Life of Pamela (London, 1741) 1.

<sup>25</sup>Eaves and Kimpel 134.

lifted from Richardson, and Giffard's Pamela, A Comedy (1742), which deserves special attention as the most sensitive Pamelist response to the questions of class and conscience raised by Richardson's novel. When in 1743 Edge rewrites Giffard's Pamela as an opera, he raises Belvile's style because Giffard's hero doesn't speak as a "Gentleman or a Lover"<sup>26</sup>; Belvile, needless to say, becomes a lot less interesting, as does Pamela, whose style is also much above that of Richardson's original. Memoirs of the Life of Lady H[esilrige], The Celebrated Pamela (1741), a fictionalized biography of Hannah Sturges, also resorts to a class-based model of stylistic decorum. Though Sir A-- H--'s other servants speak in a fairly robust rural manner, the virtuous (though uneducated) Pamela is given style elevated enough so that she can lament her lack of education in the following terms:

I cannot be insensible of the Obligations your Love and Esteem have laid me under: I am thoroughly sensible of the Disadvantages occasioned by the want of Education; and I was wishing for the Opportunity now offer'd for my Instruction--My Parents, however, taught me to tread the paths of Virtue, from which I have never lost my Way: They likewise told me, if ever I was married, that I must be dutiful to my Husband: I have hitherto been so; and it shall always be the Study of my Life to regulate my Behaviour to your Liking: and I am satisfy'd, that all your Commands will be to my Happiness--I will therefore apply my self with the utmost Diligence to what you require of me; and I make

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<sup>26</sup>Edge, Pamela, An Opera (Newcastle, 1742) vi.

no doubt but I shall soon attain those Qualifications  
you seem desirous I should be Mistress of--<sup>27</sup>

If Kelly's novel is as representative as these correspondences suggest, then Pamelist literature is marked by a strain of incomprehension of--or resistance to--Richardson's interest in the confrontations that can occur between the conscientious individual and the hereditary stewards of political and social authority. Reading Pamelist works, one never senses that hereditary honour is seriously in question or that a servant might find her conscience irreconcilably at odds with the demands of her position. Viewed from the ideological perspective that informs these works, Pamela must have seemed a confusing and threatening social chimera, exhibiting oddly mismatched linguistic, moral, and physical qualities. She must therefore have posed special problems for the writer who sought to appropriate Richardson's novel as an aristocratic text. Pamelist fascination with a servant girl who marries into the gentry is ultimately inconsistent with the project of making Pamela's birth conform to her beauty and moral qualities; but the inconsistency can, I think, be traced to a mixture of desire and anxiety--desire to appropriate aristocratic prestige, and anxiety that cultural order itself might be threatened by a too serious examination of the nature of aristocratic authority. By removing Pamela

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<sup>27</sup> Memoirs of the Life of Lady H--, The Celebrated Pamela (London, 1741) 50.

from her humble origins and forging linguistic and hereditary links between her and an idealized gentry, the Pamelists attempt to reconcile desire and anxiety. Pamelist revisionism, then, is a way of neutralizing Pamela.

### III. Anti-Pamelist Conservatism

Writers opposed to Pamela attacked Richardson's novel on various grounds, both formal and thematic, trivial and important: at some point, its length, its colloquialisms, its violation of classical poetics, its adulatory puffs, and the self-approving tone of the 'editor' all came under attack. Despite the apparent diversity of critical opinion, anti-Pamelists were united on what they saw as three serious problems, all of which have to do with the early, apparently subversive part of the novel: first, the warmth of the novel's language and its potential effect on the morals of youth; second, the perceived hypocrisy of the heroine and callow ineptness of the hero; and third, the breakdown of social distinctions. The attack on Richardson's language of sexuality is not of concern here, since it doesn't bear directly on the politics of the Pamela vogue.<sup>28</sup> But the

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<sup>28</sup>It is worth noting in passing that even among Richardson's critics there is greater prurience than can be found anywhere in Pamela. Pamela Censured (1741) is largely a compendium of Pamela's double entendres and racier passages, glossed in a tone of moral outrage. At times, however, the author seems to enjoy himself a little too much, given the strict morality he professes: "the Young Lady can never

charges of faulty characterization and social levelling can both be traced to resistance against Richardson's treatment of the relation of the complex, individuated self to the structures of social authority.

The Pamela-as-hypocrite interpretation arose with Shamela (April, 1741) and was adopted by almost all subsequent anti-Pamelist works. Among these, the only serious exploration of the psychology of hypocrisy is to be found in Eliza Haywood's Anti-Pamela (1741), an ideologically conservative book that is anti-Pamelist mainly in the sense that it presents a heroine unlike Richardson's. In

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read the Description of naked Breasts being run over with the Hand, and Kisses given with such Eagerness that they cling to the Lips; but her own soft Breasts must heave at the Idea and secretly sigh for the same Pressure; what then can she do when she comes to the closer Struggles of the Bed, where the tender Virgin lies panting and exposed, if not to the last Conquest (which I think the Author hath barely avoided) at least to all the Liberties which the ungoverned Hands of a determined Lover must be supposed to take? If she is contented with only wishing for the Trial to shew the Steadiness of her Virtue it is sufficient; but if Nature should be too powerful, as Nature at Sixteen is a very formi[d]able Enemy, tho' Shame and the Censure of the World may restrain her from openly gratifying the criminal Thought, yet she may privately seek remedies which may drive her to the most unnatural Excesses" (23-24).

There is another interesting side-light here. The one major anti-Pamelist writer whose arguments against Richardson have almost uniquely to do with Pamela's potential effect on the sexual conduct of the young was Charles Povey, author of The Virgin in Eden, an allegory modeled on The Pilgrim's Progress. Although Povey does not quite accuse Pamela of hypocrisy, he does object to Richardson's characterization of her on the grounds that she is not "Innocency in the Abstract" (70). He did not, however, seem particularly concerned by the levelling tendencies of Pamela, a fact perhaps not surprising in a man whose main literary model was Bunyan.

it, Haywood's anti-Pamela, *Syrena Tricky*, occupies ground somewhere between Pamela and Shamela: she is not very virtuous, but she isn't, at first, very hypocritical, either. Like Defoe's heroines, she is neither vicious nor cruel, but weakly religious and aggressively entrepreneurial. But other Anti-Pamelist interpretations of Richardson's novel, following Fielding's lead, tend to present Pamela as a hardened hypocrite. An epigram appearing in the London Magazine (June 1741) begins, "Admired Pamela, till Shamela shown,/ Appear'd in every colour--but her own."<sup>29</sup> And Pamela Censured (1741) is representative in its claims that from the beginning "the innocent girl appears might skilfull" and that later "the innocent Pamela...with all the Inconsistence imaginable expresses herself as cunningly and knowing...as the best bred Town Lass of them all could have done."<sup>30</sup> A few years later, the author of a shilling pamphlet entitled Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa, and Pamela (1754) complains that Pamela is a "pert little minx" and that instead of inculcating "some great and useful moral," Pamela teaches servant girls to resist their masters in order to elicit a marriage proposal.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>McKillop 74.

<sup>30</sup>Pamela Censured (London, 1741) 26, 32.

<sup>31</sup>Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa, and Pamela (London, 1754) 11-12.

The portrayal of Pamela as a hypocritical schemer entails an exaggeration of some aspects of her personality and a compensating suppression of almost all the others. Typically, Pamela's interest in Mr. B.'s status as a gentleman and in such accidental aspects of genteel life as fine clothing blossoms into an obsession while her concern with reputation and her moral self-examination wither completely away. The author of Critical Remarks, for instance, writes of Mr. B.'s giving Pamela "silk stockings and fine clothes to feed her pride and vanity" (22), but reduces Pamela's resistance to this: "All young girls are taught to put a value on their virginity, and unless debauched by their own sex, they never will part with it, but to those they like" (23).

Setting aside the possibility of an anti-Pamelist misogyny, one can see that anti-Pamelist distrust rests at least partly on the Hobbesian belief, nearly absent from Kelly's novel, that social relations are based on competition and deception. This premise in turn provides the grounds for the charge that Richardson's novel is politically heterodox, partly because it provides a model for education that effaces social distinctions, and partly because it challenges assumptions about innate class characteristics. In Anti-Pamela Haywood objects, without naming Richardson's novel, to the levelling tendencies that characterize the education of Pamela Andrews and Syrena

Tricksy. Haywood complains of parents "who flattering themselves that by breeding [their daughters] as Gentlewomen, and setting them forth to the utmost of their Abilities, and often beyond, [think that] they shall be able to make their Fortune by Marriage."<sup>32</sup> The result, in Syrena Tricksy's case, is a Moll-Flanders-like ambition to establish herself socially, if not morally, as a gentlewoman. Critical Remarks reiterates Haywood's conservatism, but extends its criticism of Pamela to include an attack on the very idea of chastity among the lower orders. After distinguishing between political chastity, by which the "internal happiness of the state much depends" (29), and religious chastity, which is "equally obligatory in all ranks" but in practice much less binding than political chastity (32), he contends that Pamela "was not of that rank or situation in life which could entitle her to those notions of honour and virtue, which are extremely proper or becoming in Clarissa" (34). Haywood's remarks offer the kind of common-sense conservatism that also lies behind Pamela's initial misgivings about the value of her education, but in their recourse to class stereotypes that enforce comfortable social distinctions the anonymous pamphleteer's claims seem much less tolerant.

Anti-pamelists also charged that the portrayal of Mr. B. was morally and politically dangerous. Since Pamela is

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<sup>32</sup>Anti-Pamela (London, 1741) 6.

obviously a scheming hypocrite, the reasoning seems to go, then Mr. B. must be an imbecile to submit to Pamela's terms. The author of Pamela Censured states the case mildly when he complains to Richardson, "your fine Gentleman does not come up to the character you would fain have him be thought to assume" (22). The author of Critical Remarks accuses Richardson of teaching that "when a young gentleman of fortune cannot obtain his ends of a handsome servant girl, he ought to marry her" (11). The pamphleteer accepts Fielding's portrayal of Mr. B. completely, referring to Richardson's character as Booby calling him "one of the greatest bubbles, and blunderers that one can meet withal.... a downright Covent-garden rake" (21-23), before concluding that "any man of common sense might have had [Pamela] on his own terms in a week or fortnight" (58). The pamphleteer even contends that Mr. B.'s cuckolding by Williams would be "a proper catastrophe for all such preposterous matches" (24).

One result of the extreme conservatism of Pamela Censured in particular is its unwitting emphasis on the gap between Richardson's probing examination of the effects of aristocratic authority on the conscientious self and his evasion of the question of authority within marriage, particularly in cases of male hypergamy. This gap was exploited by the author of Pamela Censured not to attack Richardson's attitudes towards women, but to ridicule his

social criticism. The pamphleteer makes the following argument:

by the same Rule that it may hold good with Servant Maids, in regard to their obtaining their Young Masters, (which he would call as above--the Reward their Virtue procured them,) it must equally make the Ladies conclude, that if they can find any Thing more deserving in their Footmen, than in the Young Gentlemen, who by a suitable Rank and Fortune are designed to be their Suitors, they are under no Obligation to chuse the latter, but act meritoriously, throwing down all Distinction of Family, and taking up with the former. (18-19)

Like Lady Davers, who argues this case in Pamela, the pamphleteer argues in bad faith, momentarily ignoring the cultural values he shares with his opponent in order to propose a case which both would likely dismiss in the terms Mr. B. uses: "a Man ennobles the Woman he takes, be she who she will; and adopts her into his own Rank, be that what it will: But a Woman, tho' ever so nobly born, debases herself by a mean Marriage, and descends from her own Rank, to his she stoops to" (Pamela 349-50). Even the tone of the pamphleteer's argument--the suggestion that the case is patently ridiculous--discloses the sponsor's bad faith. In the next paragraph, the author of Pamela Censured falls back on the gender assumptions he momentarily ignores, remarking that Pamela is particularly inappropriate reading for young women.

Anti-Pamelist attacks invariably dehumanize Pamela by stripping away the complex, authentic self that she attributes to the influence of Lady B., her parents, and

Mrs. Jervis. What is left after the pamphleteers get through with her is a sketch of a vain and socially ambitious servant who is less bland, but hardly more complex, than the Pamelist's Pamela. It would be difficult to say exactly how much anti-Pamelist skepticism stems from social conservatism and how much from misogyny. The anti-Pamelist's Pamela doesn't retain much right to self-determination, and the pamphleteers in particular come perilously close to saying her resistance is a denial of Mr. B.'s droit du seigneur. It is, after all, striking that of the anti-Pamelas (Fielding's Shamela, James Parry's Parthenissa, Haywood's Syrena Tricksy) and reconstructed Pamelas of Pamela Censured and Critical Remarks, Haywood's is the most likeable and most complex. Still, the anti-Pamelist's Pamela, unlike her Pamelist counterpart, retains some of the subversiveness of the original Pamela, though it is that of the insurgent, not the reformer.

#### IV. Shamela

Almost every significant anti-Pamelist argument originates with Shamela (April, 1741), the first and best of the attacks on Pamela. Although Fielding has several targets in mind, including Conyers Middleton's Life of Cicero and Colly Cibber's Apology, what most modern readers remember most strikingly about Shamela is its satire on Richardson's literary practice: Conny Keyber's letter of

praise to himself, for instance, or the lampooning of Pamela's practice of writing in the present tense, or the stylistic briskness that points up the dilatory pace of events in the original. These satiric touches are undoubtedly the best features of Shamela, and their brilliance has contributed to the pamphlet's status (at least among those who dislike Richardson's novel) as a kind of sacred text, a definitive and irrefutable attack on Pamela.<sup>33</sup> But there is a distinction to be made between literary parody and a political critique which is not (to a modern sensibility at least) targeted against what Fielding else-where calls "the true Ridiculous."<sup>34</sup> Any attempt to locate Shamela accurately within the Pamela vogue must eventually set aside the matters of technique that Fielding

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<sup>33</sup>Consider for instance Martin Battestin's introduction to the Riverside edition of Joseph Andrews. Battestin doesn't identify limitations of Shamela or offer a single substantial judgment against the work, yet he informs his reader that "[by] the time the burlesque has run its course, the absurdities and pretensions of Pamela [a.k.a. "Richardson's fatuous performance" (x)] have been exposed once and for all" (xi). Bernard Kreissman repeatedly complains of Richardson's snobbery, then explains away the "harsh little note of class awareness" that occurs in Parson Oliver's last letter by claiming that Fielding was only exploiting a conventional representation of servant girls (16). Even Eric Rothstein, an able Fielding critic and something of an expert in epistemological problems in the eighteenth-century novel, scarcely mentions Fielding's misrepresentations of Pamela, claiming instead that Richardson's novel is more the opportunity than the target of Fielding's satire ("The Framework of Shamela," ELH: A Journal of English Literary History 35 [1968] 381-402).

<sup>34</sup>Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, ed. Martin C. Battestin (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1967) 7.

burlesques so effectively, and consider how well Shamela answers Richardson's claims about the effects of abused authority on the conscientious self.

Whereas Kelly and the other Pamelists raise Pamela's rank to make it conform to her moral qualities, Fielding reverses the direction of the transformation, first making Pamela the illegitimate daughter of an orange-wench and a disreputable customs official, and then lowering her morality and prose style. The comic transformation of Pamela into Shamela is, of course, attributable to Fielding's exaggeration of the colloquial and aphoristic elements of Pamela's prose and his complementary stripping-away of her education and moral sense. Her letters exhibit the brisk, simplified syntax and orthographic peculiarities common to conventional portrayals of servants; as Claude Rawson points out, they also possess a farcical exuberance that is distinctly Fielding's and extends far beyond the local demands of parody.<sup>35</sup> The immediate consequence of these stylistic transformations is that Shamela's prose becomes inadequate for moral distinctions of any value, and Pamela returns in Fielding's pamphlet as a semi-literate gold-digger whose very rare gestures toward conscience are impossible to take seriously.

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<sup>35</sup>"Dialogue and Authorial Presence in Fielding's Novels and Plays," Order From Confusion Sprung (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985) 262.

Although the transformation of Pamela relies heavily on literary-social stereotypes, Fielding differs from other anti-Pamelists in that he exploits rather than simply suppressing Pamela's psychological complexity. Nevertheless, some simplification of motive must inevitably occur, and when it does Fielding's cavalier attitude toward tensions between the self and aristocratic authority emerges. In particular, when Fielding comically exaggerates Pamela's interest in gentility and the unrefined speech that (in the original novel) makes that interest slightly gauche, he ignores her increasingly difficult project of conducting herself as befits her position as a servant. The result is a presentation of some of Pamela's psychological contradictions that ignores the moral center that struggles, often unsuccessfully, to reconcile conflicting tendencies:

I immediately run up into my room, and stript, and washed, and drest myself as well as I could, and put on my prettiest round-ear'd cap, and pulled down my stays, to show as much as I could of my bosom (for Parson Williams says, that is the most beautiful part of a woman), and then I practised over all my airs before the glass, and then I <sup>36</sup>sat down and read a chapter in The Whole Duty of Man.

Fielding exaggerates the incongruity between Pamela's self-dramatization and her desire to do right; in the references to clothes, he also shrewdly captures mundane details that are significant to the adolescent. The effect is undoubtedly funny, but it would be hard to imagine any very

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<sup>36</sup>Joseph Andrews and Shamela, Ed. Martin C. Battestin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961) 322.

interesting character in the English realist novel who would be immune to this tactic, and some of the most engaging-- Dorothea Brooke in the opening chapters of Middlemarch, for instance--seem particularly vulnerable. Moreover, what Fielding excludes is as significant as what he admits: throughout Shamela, Pamela's temper remains in evidence, but not her unsuccessful struggles to control it; her self-congratulatory resourcefulness remains, but not the imperfect submission to providence that competes with it. Other facets of her character--her only dimly understood attraction to Mr. B., her qualms about the demands of adult life, and her adolescent skittishness about sex--disappear completely as Pamela becomes Shamela.

The tendency to whittle away the moral centre of Richardson's characters also appears in the transformation of Mr. B. into Booby. As I noted, both Edge, a Pamelist, and the anti-Pamelist author of Critical Remarks (1754) object that Mr. B.'s lovemaking is inept and that his speech is inappropriate for a gentleman. Fielding makes both points by exaggerating contradictions in the original Mr. B.'s behaviour. Whereas Richardson's character betrays a mixture of desire and diffidence that makes him alternately approach and avoid Pamela, Fielding's Booby simply doesn't have the gumption to execute his designs, and so his assaults seem perfunctory and, for all Shamela's claims to the contrary, passionless:

[M]y master cried out, hussy, slut, saucebox, boldface, come hither--Yes, to be sure, says I; why don't you come, says he; what should I come for, says I; if you don't come to me, I'll come to you, says he; I shan't come to you, I assure you, says I. Upon which he run up, caught me in his arms, and flung me upon a chair, and began to offer to touch my under-petticoat. Sir, says I, you had better not offer to be rude; well, says he, no more I won't then; and away he went.... (312)

Passages scarcely more abrupt than this, awkwardly attesting to Mr. B.'s ambivalence, abound in Pamela, and they are a real embarrassment. Mr. B.'s erratic behaviour extends beyond his relations with Pamela and, if it can be traced partly to Richardson's artistic clumsiness or inexperience with high life, it is also an insight into what happens to Mr. B. when he, too, loses confidence in the authority of rank. Although Fielding's portrayal of Booby doesn't point to the last and most interesting of these causes, it does comically recreate Mr. B. as an inept low-life character whose speech and behaviour are ill-suited to his rank. The reduction of Mr. B. serves Fielding's parodic ends, but as an attack on Richardson's gentleman it is only a qualified success, because Fielding's sensitivity to a weakness of Richardson's novel is accompanied by an insensitivity to one of its most important strengths, Richardson's subtle discrimination of the effects of changing social conditions on character.

The ideological assumptions that begin to emerge through Fielding's treatment of character become more striking as Fielding confronts, through his treatment of the

Methodism of Parson Williams, questions about the nature of conscience. It is hardly a new observation that of all the characters Fielding recreates, none is more strikingly unrecognizable from Richardson's original than Williams. Fielding turns Richardson's Williams from a well-meaning, imprudent dupe who contends with ulterior motives, into a canting and duplicitous preacher whose texts--"Be not righteous over-much" seems to be a favourite (319)--push justification by faith well into antinomian territory. In Shamela Methodism becomes synonymous with hypocrisy, and Fielding's Williams is considerably more reminiscent of Richardson's Parson Peters than of the original Williams. The degree of simplification necessary for the caricature of Williams betrays a deep-rooted limitation in Fielding's treatment of Pamela. Fielding's confrontation with the abuse of ecclesiastic authority is necessarily perfunctory because Williams' hypocrisy is so transparent that it could beguile only a simpleton and attract only those who have renounced scriptural authority. Without a stronger and subtler sense of character (as distinct from caricature) Fielding cannot convey the felt consequences of conflicting demands upon the individual conscience. Instead of confronting Richardson on his own terms, Fielding concentrates on fairly simple abstractions--notably, hypocrisy, avarice, authority, and subordination. Whereas Richardson uses Williams as the locus where complex and

conflicting allegiances to the principles of social subordination and the primacy of conscience meet (and are only sometimes resolved), Fielding can use his caricatures only to affirm one authority at the expense of another. It can be no surprise, then, that in Shamela Fielding retreats, as McKeon argues about Joseph Andrews, into "an instrumental belief in institutions whose authority may be fictional."<sup>37</sup>

It is in Parson Oliver's concluding letter that Fielding obligingly lays bare the ideological foundation of Shamela. With the exception of the first objection--that complaining of the "lascivious images" (338)--Oliver's five points attack Richardson's progressive tendencies while betraying Fielding's reluctance to take the moral complexities of character seriously. Here are Oliver's second and third objections:

2dly, Young gentlemen are here taught, that to marry their mother's chambermaids, and to indulge in the passion of lust, at the expense of reason and common sense, is an act of religion, virtue, and honour; and, indeed, the surest road to happiness.

3rdly, All chambermaids are strictly enjoined to look out after their masters; they are taught to use little arts to that purpose: and lastly, are countenanced in impertinence to their superiors, and in betraying the secrets of families. (338)

The second objection is properly two complaints. Pamela, Oliver claims, teaches "Young gentlemen...to marry their mother's chambermaids [Objection 2a], and to indulge in the passion of lust [Objection 2b]." The grammatical

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<sup>37</sup>McKeon 392.

coordination slyly glosses over Richardson's careful distinctions. Yes, Mr. B. marries Pamela, but no, he does not "indulge in the passion of lust"; his passions are educated before they are gratified, and by the time he and Pamela marry, his beliefs are too complex and his emotions too varied to be adequately described in the space Oliver accords them. The third objection begins by reiterating the Pamela-as-hypocrite thesis and ends by repeating Mr. B.'s two most common accusations against Pamela. What it ignores entirely is Pamela's struggle to contend with what she herself recognizes as objectionable tendencies in her behaviour. Taken together, the second and third objections suggest, first, that the getting of power is a primary concern for maidservants and, second, that those who have power must perpetually be on their guard against the schemes of those who do not.<sup>38</sup>

If Oliver's second and third objections imply a Hobbesian state of social contention, his fourth and fifth objections reveal inconsistencies in Fielding's thinking about the importance of conscience:

4thly, In the character of Mrs. Jewkes vice is rewarded; whence every housekeeper may learn the usefulness of pimping and bawding for her master.

5thly, In Parson Williams, who is represented as a faultless character, we see a busy fellow, intermeddling with the private affairs of his patron, whom he is very

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<sup>38</sup>The second point is effectively dramatized in the deliciously conspiratorial Letter VII, in which the alliance of servants suddenly extends to include Jewkes, Robin Coachman, and (Mrs. Jervis suggests) all the rest.

ungratefully forward to expose and condemn on every occasion.

It is a common observation that in Shamela Mrs. Jewkes is portrayed with remarkable inconsistency and bears an unstable relationship to her counterpart in Richardson's novel. At times she is the pander of Pamela, and as such she is subject to Oliver's censure in his fourth objection; at other times, she is the properly obedient servant who would protect Booby from Shamela's schemes. Fielding's evasion of the question of whether the original Mrs. Jewkes ought to serve her master's illegitimate interests suggests that he has not understood the central dilemma of Richardson's novel. On the one hand, he suggests that good servants always obey their master; on the other, like Richardson, he would not have a servant obey a vicious command. But if, in the fourth objection, Oliver complains that "In the character of Mrs. Jewkes vice is rewarded," then he cannot reasonably claim, in the fifth, that Williams--a clergyman whose concern ought to be the conduct of his parishioners--is "a busy fellow, intermeddling with the private affairs of his patron." Furthermore, Fielding can only carry out his attack on Williams in the fifth objection by employing the usual anti-Pamelist trick of caricature, which he has already applied to Pamela and Mr. B. in the second and third. In the original Pamela, Williams is not "faultless": he is, on the contrary, vain, imprudent, gullible, physically cowardly, and a little

opportunistic. Moreover, he neither "exposes" nor "condemns" Mr. B. "on every occasion," as Fielding claims, nor is it very likely that Richardson would approve if he did.

To say that Shamela does not answer the central political concern of Pamela is not to imply that Shamela affirms nothing, or that Fielding is simply complacent. All the elements necessary for a rethinking of the relation of the individual to aristocratic authority are present in Shamela, but the events of the original novel are distorted and the characters' motivations fudged to reflect conservative resistance to Richardson's treatment of master-servant relations. Eric Rothstein argues that Shamela protests against "the doffing of authority for personal assertion" and that Fielding fears "the social chaos inherent in disrupting the established places of gentlemen, maids, and curates."<sup>39</sup> These, however, are precisely the offenses of which Mr. B. is guilty in Pamela. Fielding does not admit that an Anglican Justice of the Peace is as capable as a Methodist preacher of abusing his authority; if he did, he could not be quite so hostile to Richardson's heroine. The position Fielding takes in Shamela is that it is always the individual who poses the threat to community standards, and never the other way around: as long as the

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<sup>39</sup>Eric Rothstein, "The Framework of Shamela," ELH: A Journal of English Literary History 35 (1968) 394-95.

forces of social chaos are kept in check, abuses of aristocratic authority may safely be ignored.

Perhaps the most important difference between Richardson and the writers of the Pamela vogue, including Fielding, is that the voguists ignored what Richardson saw with great clarity: first, that there is something genuinely problematic about the relation of the conscientious individual to representatives of cultural authority; and second, that for the Christian--and particularly the Puritan--concerned with salvation, acting by the dictates of conscience is a far greater concern than the appropriation of power. Richardson's detractors seem partly to understand the first point, but not the second. For them, the getting of power is the primary motivation for all members of the lower orders, and the only real cultural problem is that of keeping the upstart poor in their place. Given the seductive appeal of such beliefs for those who could identify themselves with the sources of political and cultural authority, it can hardly be surprising that there appeared a group of writers to exploit the ambiguities that are part of Pamela's adolescent complexity in order to recast Richardson's heroine as a scheming impostor. Even those who see themselves as continuing the literary and moral tradition of Pamela, some of whom considered themselves to be improving upon Richardson, have, if anything, read Pamela with less acumen, and only a little

more sympathy, than the anti-Pamelists. Whereas the anti-Pamelists negate the subversive potential of Richardson's novel attacking Pamela's motives, the Pamelists achieve the same end by depriving Pamela of her humble background. When formal strategies evolve out of their ideological position, the Pamelists appropriate Pamela's story as an aristocratic text in which Richardson's discriminating depiction of character gives way to romance plot conventions, class stereotypes, and a homogenously bland style. The immediate result of the ideological preoccupations of Pamelists and anti-Pamelists alike is that Richardson's most important early contribution to the English novel--the effective use of psychological realism as a means of inquiry into the problem of abused authority--seems to pass virtually unnoticed among his first readers. It is a notable quirk of literary history that Pamelists and anti-Pamelists end up opposing Richardson's novel on largely the same grounds.

And yet, this is not to suggest that there is nothing to distinguish Shamela from the other productions of the Pamela vogue. If Shamela rewards rereading more than Pamela Censured or Pamela's Conduct in High Life, it is because Fielding's reading of Pamela is manifestly conscious of epistolary technique and of the range of styles at Richardson's command. But whatever Fielding can show his readers about the absurdities of Richardson's self-promotion, or the clumsiness of "writing to the moment," or

even the wild inconsistencies in Mr. B.'s conduct, he fails to destroy Pamela because he is unsympathetic to--and even uncomprehending of--its central concerns. The evidence suggests that when Fielding wrote Shamela, he did not believe that a servant's conscience might be severely tested, and could not seriously consider the possibility that conscience might serve as a corrective to the dictates of aristocratic authority rather than the other way around. It should not be surprising, then, that Fielding has little patience for the kind of subtle and probing delineation of character that Richardson excelled in. But as early as Joseph Andrews Fielding begins to take seriously the will of the individual, and by the time he has read Clarissa he understands much more thoroughly what Richardson's approach to character is capable of. As Fielding rethinks the relationship between self and authority and the effect of that relationship on the novel, it becomes clear that what he simplifies in 1741--the complexities of self--no longer bears simplification, and he is forced into a radical reconsideration of the appropriate techniques of the novel.

### Chapter 3: Divided Allegiances, Antagonistic Forms: The Ideological Inconsistencies of Joseph Andrews

Early in Joseph Andrews Lady Booby asks Joseph one of those dangerous hypothetical questions: Would a kiss "content" him, or would it kindle uncontrollable desires?<sup>1</sup> Instead of answering with the gallant ambiguity of a Restoration rake, Joseph proclaims, stoutly and rather priggishly, "I hope I should be able to controll [my passions] without suffering them to get the better of my Virtue" (40). His reply leads to a telling exchange:

'Your Virtue! (said the Lady recovering after a Silence of two Minutes) I shall never survive it. Your Virtue! Intolerable Confidence! Have you the Assurance to pretend, that when a Lady demeans herself to throw aside the Rules of Decency, in order to honour you with the highest Favour in her Power, your Virtue should resist her Inclination? That when she had conquer'd her own Virtue, she should find an Obstruction in yours?' 'Madam,' said Joseph, 'I can't see why her having no Virtue should be a Reason against my having any. Or why, because I am a Man, or because I am poor, my Virtue must be subservient to her Pleasures.' (41)

The depiction of women as sexual predators is a familiar anti-Pamelist means of ridicule; moreover, the reversal of social positions, combined with Joseph's frosty defense of his chastity, evokes the unfulfilled comic promise of James

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, ed. Martin C. Battestin (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1967) 41. Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses in the text of this chapter.

Parry's True Anti-Pamela.<sup>2</sup> But there is also a flicker of moral seriousness that briefly detracts from the parodic impulse otherwise dominating the early chapters of Joseph Andrews. In requiring Joseph to ignore the promptings of his conscience (or rather, as her appalled tone suggests, in assuming that a servant can have no conscience at all), Lady Booby inadvertently raises the question of how conscientious servants might respond to the objectionable demands of their employers. Even though Joseph is ridiculous here--he is immature, pompous, humourless, insensitive, and ungallant--his defense of his chastity against what Lady Booby believes to be the determinants of gender and rank is too just to be what Fielding calls "the true Ridiculous" (7). The impasse between servant and mistress is real, but the serious implications of the episode immediately dissipate as the novel returns to its parody of Pamela and its broadsides at the lechery and hypocrisy of clergymen and magistrates.

The damage has been done, however, for the exchange invites--even requires--consideration of how Fielding treats the crisis of aristocratic authority that is also at the heart of Richardson's novel. In several particulars, the confrontation between Lady Booby and Joseph and the chapters

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<sup>2</sup>"Anti-Pamela, is rich, and kept me for her Pleasure several Years, still leading me on with the Thoughts of marrying me, till I was almost ruined, and then she jilted me" (James Parry, The True Anti-Pamela; or, Memoirs of Mr. James Parry, late Organist of Ross in Herefordshire [London, 1741] v).

that introduce it echo the beginning of Pamela. As in Richardson's novel, a seduction attempt shatters the fiction of a harmonious if rigidly hierarchical society guaranteed by the honourable conduct of the superior classes, and a dispute over the proper limits of duty and free will erupts between a member of the gentry and a morally fastidious servant. Moreover, a similar pattern of sexual coercion marks both novels: the genteel seducer begins with apparently casual praise of the servant's character, conduct, and beauty (29, 39; Pamela 26, 31), then hints obliquely at the possibility of the servant's rising socially (39; Pamela 35), before resorting to forthright demands and reminders of the authority and prerogatives of rank. Both Fielding and Richardson present the loss of social distance--reflected here in the references to Lady Booby's "demean[ing] herself" (41) and "condescend[ing] a great deal below" herself (40)--as an affront to a normative and desirable order; and in both novels the vocabulary of morality--"honour," "Favour," and "Virtue"--loses its stability as servant and employer defend opposing ethical standards. The episode from Joseph Andrews ends with Lady Booby accusing Joseph of "Misconstru[ing]" a "little innocent Freedom" that was designed as a test of virtue (41). Here, too, there are echoes of Mr. B: "I own I have demean'd myself; but it was only to try you: If you can

keep this Matter a Secret, you'll give me the better Opinion of your Prudence" (Pamela 35).

One must, of course, be careful not to exaggerate the similarities between Pamela and Joseph Andrews. Although Fielding and Richardson share an interest in the possible conflicts between the authority of an employer and the conscience of a servant, Fielding differs from Richardson in his tendency to emphasize moral qualities in comparative isolation from their felt consequences on the lives of individuals. In Joseph Andrews, charity acquires a thematic resonance that diminishes little when the word is considered independent of Adams or Betty the chambermaid or Mrs. Towouse; in Pamela, virtue is Pamela's or Miss Godfrey's virtue, inseparable from the fears and aspirations of the character whose authenticity is in question. Not surprisingly, Fielding's use of dramatic conflict to propose normative moral standards results in a treatment of character that is very different from Richardson's. Although some critics in the fifties and sixties made extravagant claims for Fielding's success at what can only be described as psychological realism,<sup>3</sup> the episode from

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<sup>3</sup>See, for instance, George Sherburn, "Fielding's Social Outlook," 1956; rpt. in Wolfgang Iser, ed., Henry Fielding Und Der Englische Roman Des 18. Jahrhunderts (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972). After quoting the passage "'Consider Child, (laying her Hand carelessly upon his) you are a handsome young Fellow; and might do better; you might make your Fortune'" (39), Sherburn writes, "It may be remarked that Fielding is the mere spectator. But what a spectator! What insight! What a perfect blend

Joseph Andrews tell much less than the corresponding scenes in Pamela about how conscientious servants may resist the unjust demands of their employers and yet feel morally compromised by their affront to traditional authorities. What is most striking in the episode from Joseph Andrews is neither the urgency of Lady Booby's desire nor any complexity of response on Joseph's part, but the ridiculous nature of the affront to normal master-servant relations.

Given Fielding's emphasis on the moral rather than the psychological implications of the conflict between Lady Booby and Joseph, it is no surprise that academic discussion of Joseph Andrews has tended to examine Fielding's treatment of contemporary cultural authorities in comparative isolation from their effect on particular characters. Michael McKeon, for instance, argues that "although Fielding strips...the law and the gentry of their authority, at times...the reigning fictions are allowed a certain

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of psychological contrasts, of moral implications, of social satire" (142). Similar but more modest claims can be found in Robert Alan Donovan, The Shaping Vision: Imagination in the English Novel From Defoe to Dickens (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1966) and Robert Alter, Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1968), but perhaps the most intriguing claim is Ronald Paulson's contention that one of Fielding's early contributions to the realist novel is the replacement of "traditional, emblematic Augustan satire with a more restrained delineation, closer to experience, and reliant on 'character' rather than 'caricature,' on variety rather than the exaggeration of expression." (Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England [New Haven: Yale UP, 1967] 108).

instrumental utility."<sup>4</sup> The consequences for the conscientious self of this "instrumental utility" are not considered by McKeon, and reading Origins of the English Novel one gets the impression that Fielding may not have considered them either. McKeon's essay represents both the usual critical attitude towards Fielding's conception of the self and one of the most sophisticated refinements of a critical consensus that emerged in the late fifties, when nineteenth- and early twentieth-century democratic interpretations of Fielding's novels came under attack.<sup>5</sup> At that time, Watt warned that "the vigor of Fielding's satire on the upper classes... should not be interpreted as the expression of any egalitarian tendency" and contended that for Fielding, "the basis of society is and should be a system of classes each with their own capacities and responsibilities."<sup>6</sup> At about the same time, in his influential essay on "Fielding's Social Outlook," George Sherburn argued that although Fielding attacked genteel

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<sup>4</sup>Michael McKeon, The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) 402.

<sup>5</sup>For an example of the outdated belief in Fielding's democratic sympathies, see Frederic T. Blanchard's uncritical reference to the admiration that Byron and other Romantics had for Fielding's "democratic spirit" (Fielding the Novelist: A Study in Historical Criticism [1926; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966] 351). In Fielding's Social Pamphlets (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966) Malvin Zirker surveys democratic interpretations of Fielding's political sympathies (132-34).

<sup>6</sup>Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (1957; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) 307.

vices and exhibited marked sympathies for the industrious poor, he believed that the welfare of English society depended upon a class-based social system in which all members had a duty to act in the role assigned to them by the "All-Wise Creator."<sup>7</sup> In the practical measures later proposed by such pamphlets as An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers (1751) and the Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor (1753), this outlook meant that the law should protect the economic and political prerogatives of the upper orders while keeping the lower orders productive, partly by repressing their appetite for luxuries and partly by compelling the idle poor to labour in country workhouses.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Sherburn, "Fielding's Social Outlook," 124.

<sup>8</sup>Questions of Fielding's views on polity invariably raise the subject of his political journalism, territory that has been admirably covered and is of only peripheral concern to the critic interested in the various connections between social authority, the self, and novelistic form. For an overview of Fielding's political career, see Morris Golden's essay, "Fielding's Politics," in Henry Fielding, Justice Observed, ed. K. G. Simpson (London: Vision, 1985) 34-55. More extensive accounts of Fielding's political career include Brian McCrea's Henry Fielding and the Politics of Mid-Eighteenth-Century England (Athens, Georgia: U of Georgia P, 1981), which contends that Joseph Andrews marks the end of Fielding's political uncertainty and the beginning of his commitment to "the Whig establishment" (104); Thomas Cleary's scholarly Henry Fielding, Political Writer (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1984), which argues that Fielding's consistent allegiance to the Broad-Bottom faction can be traced in his political journalism and in topical references throughout all three of his novels; and Zirker's Fielding's Social Pamphlets, which concentrates on Fielding's later political writing. The most important discussion of Fielding's engagement in Joseph Andrews with topical political concerns is Martin C. Battestin,

In recent discussion of the nature and extent of Fielding's belief in contemporary cultural authorities, the extremes of emphasis, as far as Joseph Andrews goes, have been marked by Brian McCrea and Aaron Schneider. According to McCrea, Joseph Andrews is a corrective to Richardson's portrayal of class conflict, in which Fielding affirmed "the power and virtue of England's ruling class" and improved upon Richardson's treatment of the dual imperatives of conscience and social subordination by incorporating them into the character of Parson Adams.<sup>9</sup> More recently, Schneider reformulated the argument that for Fielding social distinctions are essentially arbitrary.<sup>10</sup> In Schneider's reading of Joseph Andrews, Fielding pits rationalist and sentimentalist views of human nature against each other "to suggest that 'higher,' more refined passions are not any more likely to be found in the upper than in the lower classes" (378). The apparent opposition of Schneider's argument to McCrea's is largely a matter of emphasis, and

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"Fielding's Changing Politics and Joseph Andrews," Philological Quarterly 39 (1960): 39-55. All these works demonstrate that Fielding, in his practical politics, had a fine understanding of the changing economic and social conditions of the day, but none has much to say about how literary form and ideology impinge on one another in the novels.

<sup>9</sup>Brian McCrea, "Rewriting Pamela: Social Change and Religious Faith in Joseph Andrews," Studies in the Novel 16 (1984): 145.

<sup>10</sup>Aaron Schneider, "Hearts and Minds in Joseph Andrews: Parson Adams and a War of Ideas," Philological Quarterly 1987 (3): 367-389.

both accounts ultimately meet under the umbrella of McKeon's claim that Fielding endorses the "instrumentality and utility of belief" in contemporary cultural authorities (392).

Nevertheless, McKeon's claim, with all its suggestions of the unity of Fielding's purpose and achievement, needs qualification. Arguments against ideological consistency in Joseph Andrews have recently been proposed by James Cruise and Charles Knight, both of whom argue that the novel exhibits a loss of narrative authority.<sup>11</sup> When one considers Fielding's understanding of the relation between the conscientious self and the community it inhabits, a relationship which is already markedly different from that found in the parodic world of Shamela, other inconsistencies emerge. There are moments in Joseph Andrews when Fielding's avowedly conservative politics clash with narrative strategies that owe more to romance than to his habitual satire; there are other moments when his techniques and goals seem close to those of realist prose fiction. Some of these inconsistencies are, I think, early reflections of Fielding's psychological interests, but they mean that Joseph Andrews is not nearly as ideologically uniform as

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<sup>11</sup>James Cruise, "Fielding, Authority, and the New Commercialism in Joseph Andrews," ELH: A Journal of English Literary History 54 (1987) 270 and Charles A. Knight, "Joseph Andrews and the Failure of Authority," Eighteenth-Century Fiction 4 (1992) 109.

McCrea--or for that matter, Sherburn or Watt or McKeon--has argued.

## I The Critique of Authority

The conventional belief that superior rank confers preeminence in matters of conduct and moral judgment dies suddenly when Lady Booby acts on her desire for Joseph. But despite early indications that Joseph Andrews, like Pamela, concerns itself mainly with sexual conduct, it is not chastity but charity, defined both as a general ethic of benevolence and more narrowly as an economic responsibility,<sup>12</sup> that provides the main grounds for Fielding's critique of contemporary cultural authorities. At the most obvious level, Fielding attacks the clergy and the gentry, two traditional repositories of political power and ethical wisdom whose evasion of the twin duties of acting charitably themselves and promoting charity in others threatens the social contract. Among the first class of offenders are the complacent and insensitive Barnabas, the hypocritical Trulliber, and the corrupt clergymen to whom only passing reference is made (I, iii; II, xvi); among the second, the false promiser who maliciously encourages social ambitions in his inferiors, and the squire who invites the travellers

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<sup>12</sup>Fielding's definition of charity has been discussed at length in Martin C. Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1959) 14-22.

to his estate in order to 'roast' Adams and seduce Fanny. Without the example of traditional authorities to encourage ethical conduct, most members of the new, economically powerful classes--lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs, and even (to the weary travellers of Joseph Andrews) innkeepers--refuse to temper their legal or commercial interests with the spirit of charity. Lawyers, whose self-interest is second only to that of their clients, are particularly predatory. After Adams' brawl with an innkeeper, lawyers appear as if by magic to represent both sides of the dispute. The unlicensed attorney Scout, charged with preventing the marriage of Joseph and Fanny, obligingly sacrifices the law to Lady Booby's interest, remarking, "The Laws of this land are not so vulgar, to permit a mean Fellow to contend with one of your Ladyship's Fortune" (285).

Criticism of the clergy and gentry and their modern counterparts does not imply--as it sometimes seems to in Pamela--any wholesale relocation of ethical standards in the servant classes and the industrious poor. To his parishioners, Parson Adams is a figure of authority and a model of charity; in the tale of Leonora's failed love affairs, Horatio is a wholly ethical lawyer. But Fielding does portray base-born ethical exemplars who serve--each in a single, well-defined episode--as foils for vicious or irresponsible professionals and gentry. The first of these is the postilion who gives his coat, "his only Garment," to

Joseph, who has been stripped of his clothes by highwaymen (53). Since the main concern of the episode is to expose the hypocrisy of the wealthy coach-travellers, and since the driver himself is no more charitable than his passengers, it is clear that the charity of the postilion serves mainly to point up the moral evasions of his social superiors. The only specifying references to the young man--that he swears a "great Oath" and that he "hath been since transported for robbing a Hen-roost" (53)--prevent him from being sentimentalized while sharpening the reader's distaste for the pitiless administration of the law. Later, Betty the chambermaid (I, xii-xviii), the itinerant pedlar (II, xv), and the well-travelled innkeeper (II, xvii) also provide ad hoc models of charity; like the postilion, none of these characters is idealized. Betty's "Good-nature, Generosity and Compassion" (86) distinguish her motives from the self-interested sensualism of Lady Booby and Slipslop, and place her close to the humane ideal which Parson Adams in his own way approximates. But her comic and somewhat misdirected energy and her "prudent" resolve "to share her Favours" among several lovers qualify her status as exemplar. Similarly, the pedlar's complicity in the switching of Joseph and Fanny, and the innkeeper's impish enjoyment of his neighbor's false promises disqualify them as general ethical exemplars. All exhibit the good nature that their powerful superiors lack, but even among the base-born, the

charitable are in a minority, and Fielding, asserting his interpretive authority as narrator, reminds his reader that ethical exemplars belong to no particular class:

in our general Descriptions, we mean not Universals, but would be understood with many Exceptions.... I could name a Peer no less elevated by Nature than by Fortune.... I could name a Commoner, raised higher above the Multitude by superior Talents than is in the Power of his Prince to exalt him.... (190)

In the absence of innate class characteristics, social divisions become both arbitrary and unstable. In the chapter subtitled "A Dissertation concerning high People and low People," Fielding lends even greater narrative authority to his critique of aristocratic virtue. He describes social subordination as a "Picture of Dependence like a Ladder" in which each rung so closely resembles the rung below that "the Question might only seem whether you would chuse to be a great Man at six in the Morning, or at two in the Afternoon" (157-58). Fielding's "Picture of Dependence" explodes the idea that "Persons of Fashion" (that is, "high People") may be identified by "Behaviour and Accomplishments superior to the Herd of Mankind" (156); on the contrary, a "Person of Fashion," Fielding slyly maintains, is merely someone "who drest himself in the Fashion of the Times" (156). Fielding's appeal to a fictitious original signification of the word "Fashion" implicitly rejects the nostalgic notion of an ideal past order where social distinctions corresponded to real moral qualities. The divisions portrayed in the "Picture of Dependence" are,

moreover, unstable, for "the lowest of the High, and the highest of the Low, often change their Places according to Place and Time; for those who are Persons of Fashion in one Place, are often Persons of no Fashion in another" (157).

As the heavy traffic on the ladder of dependence suggests, Fielding resembles Richardson not only in his analysis of the crisis of aristocratic authority, but in his understanding of some cultural implications of that crisis. Both writers argue that the loss of common standards of conduct destroys harmony between employers and servants by allowing relations of power to displace traditional relations of authority. When Lady Booby reveals her desires to Joseph she knows that she has put her reputation into Joseph's keeping, but it is Slipslop, who has been eavesdropping at the door, who benefits from her mistress's indiscretion. When Slipslop is next summoned to Lady Booby, she takes advantage of her new information, "answer[ing] her Mistress very pertly" because, we are told, she "had preserved hitherto a Distance to her Lady, rather out of Necessity than Inclination, and...thought the Knowledge of this Secret had thrown down all Distinction between them" (42). And in a sense it has. In the ensuing dispute, Lady Booby tries to maintain control of her servant by invoking the principle of subordination as the sufficient criterion for obedience, while Slipslop justifies bridging the traditional social gulf through decidedly egalitarian

arguments (specifically, the spiritual and moral equality of servants and employers, and the democratic right to speak one's mind). The episode ends with a curious reversal whereby Lady Booby decides "to submit to any Insult" (43) rather than risk her reputation, while Slipslop, choosing to husband her power, "put on some small Condescension" toward her employer (44). This reversal, by which Slipslop acquires two prerogatives of rank--the power to give a character and the ability to condescend--lingers, though its extreme manifestation is only temporary. Once Slipslop has been bribed with some of Lady Booby's cast-off clothes, she leaves to go for from the pantry, abandoning her employer to consider her predicament. It is by now a little difficult to tell who is the servant and who the mistress.

In a society where limited social ambitions coexist comfortably with a hierarchical social order based on birth, an ambitious servant like Slipslop derives status from her employer and, if she is fortunate, from the power she exerts over that employer. The encounter between Slipslop and Miss Grave-airs, the daughter of a steward to a powerful family, is a case in point. Like Slipslop, Miss Grave-airs is a snob, and her snobbery shows itself in her insistence that she "would not demean herself to ride" in a stagecoach with Joseph (153), despite the appeals of others, including "an Earl's Grand Daughter, [who] begged it with almost Tears in her Eyes" (123). Slipslop, who still hopes to seduce

Joseph, and who mistakenly believes that Miss Grave-airs is a gentlewoman of small fortune, assumes a prerogative to invite Joseph into the coach. Upon hearing Miss Grave-airs complain that "she was not used to converse with Servants," Slipslop asserts her dignity as a servant who commands others. "Some People," she says, "kept no Servants to converse with: for her Part, she thanked Heaven, she lived in a Family where there were a great many, and had more under her own Command, than any paultry little Gentlewoman in the Kingdom" (123). But Slipslop spends some anxious moments when she discovers that her rival is not a poor gentlewoman but a servant whose "Alliance with the upper Servants of a great Family in her Neighbourhood" might be exploited to influence Lady Booby (124). In the end, only Slipslop's recollection of her ability to blackmail her mistress puts her mind at ease.

In Joseph Andrews, then, as in Pamela, the gentry's loss of moral authority results first in a diminishing of the traditional distance between servants and employers and ultimately in a disintegration of normal social relations into rivalries over power and status. Such rivalries are usually confined to people of comparable social standing (Slipslop and Miss Grave-airs, for instance, or Horatio and Bellarmine) or to those whose normal relations of authority and obedience have been catastrophically replaced by competition over power (such as Lady Booby and Slipslop or

Joseph). The rivalries of the main narrative are minor and comic, as befits a comic novel; those relegated by Fielding to the interpolated tales hover between the melodramatic and the tragic, and it is through them that Fielding presents most emphatically the dangers of social ambition. In one of the novel's most curious episodes, the travellers encounter a country squire who promises Adams a lucrative living, as well as lodgings for the night and horses for the journey home (II, xvi). The episode becomes increasingly funny as the squire apologetically withdraws each of his promises. But when the local innkeeper reports that the squire has falsely encouraged social ambitions by promising the children of poor farmers livings as excisemen, clergy, and servants to fashionable families, the episode's connection to Fielding's critique of aristocratic authority becomes clear. After the poor parents educate their children and inflate their expectations, the squire withdraws his support, effectively quashing the social pretensions he has raised. The parents' optimistic compliance with the squire's will is always disastrous, resulting in crime and transportation for one child; drink and an alcoholic death for another; and prostitution, disease, and death for a third. In another interpolated tale, this one anticipating Miss Mathews' social rivalries in Amelia, Leonora, faced with the choice between Horatio and Bellarmine, destroys her prospects for happiness when she allows her conduct to be

dictated by rivalry with other women of her rank. And in the most important of the embedded tales, Wilson nearly ruins his future by turning his back on his patrimony and seeking his fortune in London. The lesson offered by all three interpolations is manifestly conservative: people ought not to desire beyond the social sphere in which luck or Providence has placed them. Leonora and Wilson, like the false promiser's victims, fail because they succumb to social or professional ambitions. Only the sea-faring innkeeper, who had once been flattered into hopes of obtaining a naval commission, overcomes his ambitions in time to retire, relatively unscathed and without serious regrets, to a happy life.

Fielding's analysis of the crisis of aristocratic authority and the remedy he proposes are, then, distinctly conservative. In Pamela the destabilization of social relations almost always results in the victimization of servants; in the Hobbesian world of Shamela, employers suffer at the hands of their servants. But in Joseph Andrews everyone is at risk. Those in traditional positions of authority--the wealthy parson, the country squire, the entrepreneur, the lawyer--must see that retaining their standing depends on not putting themselves in the power of their inferiors. Those who are in subordinate positions--the footman, the poor curate--must learn that social ambitions are usually attended by bad consequences.

Fielding's recognition of the arbitrariness of traditional and modern institutions of ethical authority enables him to show what happens when a Slipslop, a Lady Booby, or a Peter Pounce loses sight of ethical standards. When characters do not, like Lady Booby or Leonora, directly bring about their own downfall, Fielding can at least resort to ridicule, as he does in the cases of Slipslop and Miss Grave-airs, by exposing their vanity or hypocrisy. In Joseph Andrews, then, Fielding's endorsement of political authority is more comprehensive and coherent--in short, more cogently argued--than the simple, reactionary appeal to order that characterizes Shamela and the less distinguished anti-Pamelist literature.

## II The Ideological Implications of Romance Form

Only Joseph, the nominal hero, instinctively perceives the danger of social aspirations, yet it is with Joseph that the ideological inconsistencies in Fielding's novel begin to appear. In an early indication of prevailing social conservatism of Joseph Andrews, Joseph rejects Adams' advice that he seek social and professional advancement. Joseph remarks,

he hoped he had profited somewhat better from the Books he had read, than to lament his Condition in the World. That for his Part, he was perfectly content with the State to which he was called, that he should endeavour to improve his Talent...but not repine at his own Lot, nor envy those of his Betters. (24-25)

In the end, however, Joseph readily and unselfconsciously accepts the wealth and power that are conferred upon him. The artificial and conspicuously engineered resolution to Joseph Andrews implies a belief on Fielding's part that prose fiction should operate according to a doctrine of rewards and punishments, but the novel's outcome and the literary conventions that make that outcome possible are in their way as problematic as the marriage between Pamela and Mr. B., for they reintroduce the idea of innate class characteristics that Fielding elsewhere takes pains to explode.

Rejection of the notion of hereditary honour ought to entail a rejection of the literary forms that give it its best expression. Fielding's two sustained attacks on French romances (Preface; III, i) suggest such a rejection, but the persistence of romance conventions raises questions about how strongly Fielding broke with romance tradition.<sup>13</sup> Given

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<sup>13</sup>There has been considerable debate about the generic status of Joseph Andrews. For various arguments that Joseph Andrews' greatest literary debt is to romance in general see Melvyn New, "'The Grease of God': The Form of Eighteenth-Century Fiction," PMLA 91 (1976): 235-244 and McKeon 381-409. Arguments about Fielding's indebtedness to specific romances include Sheridan Baker, "Henry Fielding's Comic Romances," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters 45 (1960): 411-419 and "Henry Fielding's Comic Epic-in-Prose Romances Again," Philological Quarterly 58 (1979): 63-81; and Homer Goldberg, The Art of Joseph Andrews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969). For opposing arguments that Fielding's novel is really a kind of epic see Watt's chapter on Joseph Andrews in The Rise of the Novel, Battestin's The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews, and Ronald Paulson's article, "Models and Paradigms: Joseph Andrews, Hogarth's Good

the ideological conclusions that romance conventions force on such defenders of Pamela as John Kelly and Goldoni, the use of elevated romance style, birth-mystery plots, and social stereotypes based on innate class characteristics must have presented a minefield for the writer anxious to promote a skeptical view of aristocratic virtue. In an only partly successful effort to preserve this skepticism in his readers, Fielding apparently deployed several comedic strategies. Sheridan Baker perceptively notes that Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews "mock heroic adventure with the

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Samaritan, and Fénelon's Télémaque," Modern Language Notes 91 (1976): 1186-1207. In a recent contribution to the debate, John Bender makes the Bakhtinian argument that Fielding "assimilated the epic...into the novel by parodic means" (Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987] 146). In An Exemplary History of the Novel: The Quixotic versus the Picaresque (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), Walter Reed has convincingly argued that in Joseph Andrews Fielding tries to reconcile elements of the popular romance, particularly Don Quixote, with neoclassical epic theory.

The debate goes on, but whatever importance one accords to epic conventions, it is clear that in Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones Fielding employs some conventions derived from romance. The debate about the generic status of these novels has been waged primarily on formal grounds without much concern for the ideological implications of generic classification, although in the second of his articles, Baker claims that "The eighteenth-century novel is basically a success story adapted from romance to the emerging mobile society, wherein all unknown nobodies could dream of recognition, wealth and the impossible marriage, their innate and hidden nobility discovered at last" (77). I think that Baker is too categorical, for he considers neither the ideological issues that his claim raises nor the elements in Richardson or in Fielding's last two novels which resist romance. Clearly, not all heroes and heroines in the eighteenth-century novel discover their "innate and hidden nobility," and some of the most influential works, as McKeon argues, openly attack the pattern.

picaresque scuffling of low life," but adds that the central characters--in other words, those with a plausible claim to aristocratic virtues--remain immune to the mockery.<sup>14</sup>

McKeon claims that "Fielding's romance conventions are equally parodic, anti-romance conventions...creat[ing] in us the erroneous expectation of a...progressive ending"<sup>15</sup>; but this claim seems a little doubtful, at least until late in the novel, when Beau Didapper makes his appearance. What the romance conventions make one expect on a first reading (and what they confirm on subsequent readings) is a resolution that has strong elements of what McKeon identifies as aristocratic ideology. Throughout the novel, in fact, the politically conservative satire evident in Fielding's usual treatment of the gentry and clergy remains in tension with romance conventions that seem to endorse hereditary honour; ultimately, this tension suggests divided sympathies on Fielding's part toward the legitimacy of the cultural authority vested in the genteel.

Fielding's satire, like the morally engaged realist fiction practised by George Eliot or Jane Austen, rests upon a belief in the need for specific remedies to specific problems; romance, as we have seen in the prose fiction of the Pamela vogue, suggests either the sufficiency of a natural order that is taken for granted or a nostalgic

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<sup>14</sup>"Henry Fielding's Comic Romances," 416.

<sup>15</sup>McKeon 406.

attachment to a past, fictive order. As early as the second chapter of Joseph Andrews, Fielding seems to be steering between the contradictory demands of the two literary modes. His attack on the idea of hereditary honour mocks the notion of inherent class distinctions that the popular romance of a John Kelly promotes: "Would it not be hard," the narrator remarks, "that a man who hath no Ancestors should therefore be rendered incapable of acquiring Honour, when we see so many who have no Virtues, enjoying this Honour of their Forefathers?" (21) But the spiritual egalitarianism of the first pages is undermined by the satiric echoes of Pamela and by the sly equivocation that Joseph "was esteemed to be" the Andrews' only son (20). Soon the tell-tale marks of romance creep in and reinforce all but the most naive reader's initial suspicions about Joseph's birth. Joseph is unsuited to his first job as a scarecrow because "his Voice being so extremely musical...it rather allured the Birds than terrified them" (21). It is just possible that the reference alludes to Joseph's sexual immaturity, a reminder of his inability to "perform the Part the Ancients assigned to the God Priapus" (21); but the passage undoubtedly carries a suggestion of Joseph's innate gentility. Joseph fares no better in his second job as a "Whipper-in" because the dogs "preferr[ed] the melody of his chiding to all the alluring Notes of the Huntsman" (22). He is soon transferred to the stable where he distinguishes himself by

his apparently innate talents as a horseman and by his formidable ethical standards. He then pleases Lady Booby, ostensibly by his virtue in refusing a bribe, and she hires him as her foot-boy when he is seventeen.

In succeeding chapters, romance idealization centres on Joseph's physical attributes. As Sean Shesgreen has observed, the description of Joseph derives from a Renaissance tradition of idealized literary portraiture that typically presented aristocratic subjects and flourished in the French romances that Fielding attacks.<sup>16</sup> The first description of Joseph's appearance immediately precedes the second of Lady Booby's forthright assaults on his chastity and serves to hint that the social distance between servant and employer is more apparent than real:

He was of the highest Degree of middle Stature. His Limbs were put together with great Elegance and no less Strength. His Legs and Thighs were formed in the exactest Proportion. His Shoulders were broad and brawny, but yet his Arms hung so easily, that he had all the Symptoms of Strength without the least Clumsiness. His Hair was of a nut-brown Colour, and was displayed in wanton Ringlets down his Back. His Forehead was high, his Eyes dark, and as full of Sweetness as of Fire. His Nose a little inclined to the Roman. His Teeth white and even. His Lips full, red, and soft. His Beard was only rough on his Chin and upper Lip; but his Cheeks, in which his Blood glowed, were overspread with a thick Down. His Countenance had a Tenderness joined with a Sensibility inexpressible. (38)

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<sup>16</sup>Sean Shesgreen, Literary Portraits in the Novels of Henry Fielding (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois UP, 1972) 30-32.

After describing Joseph's aristocratic lineaments, the narrator remarks, "Add to this the most perfect Neatness in his Dress, and an Air, which to those who have not seen many Noblemen, would give an Ideal of Nobility" (38-39). The pattern is set, and references to Joseph's genteel bearing and appearance proliferate in the first book. According to the narrator, Joseph is "smarter and genteeler, than any of the Beaus in Town, either in or out of Livery" (27); Slipslop calls him "one of the genteelest young Fellows you may see in a Summer's Day" (26); and Betty, of the Dragon Inn, "believed [Joseph] was a Gentleman; for she never saw a finer Skin in her Life" (61), and later argues that "the extreme Whiteness of his Skin, and the Softness of his Hands" attest to his gentility (66). Given the strength in Joseph Andrews of the convention of idealized literary portraiture, contemporary readers would likely have been surprised had Joseph not been well-born. Even a 'straight' reading of the narrator's account of Joseph's birth--something that could hardly be expected from many of Fielding's contemporaries--cannot be sustained a second time, once the reader knows Joseph's real parentage.

The only other character whose "natural gentility" is "superior to the Acquisition of Art" is Fanny Goodwill (153). Wilson, who must later approve of Fanny's marriage to Joseph, conveniently has "a much higher Opinion of her Quality than it deserved" (199-200), and the Captain who

kidnaps her rationalizes his actions by thinking, "notwithstanding her Disguise, her Air, which she could not conceal, sufficiently discovered her Birth to be infinitely superior to" Joseph's and Adams' (257). But Fanny is not high-born, and although some characters believe that she is more genteel than Joseph, Fielding does not allow his reader to make the same mistake. Unlike her adoptive brother, she is illiterate, and her speech (like the original Pamela's) manifests ruralisms which Joseph's does not. She is rather more plump than, say, Sophia Western or Amelia, both of whom are described largely in terms of stereotyped gentility; her arms are "a little reddened by labour"; her teeth are "white, but not exactly even"; and she has a dimple-like small-pox scar on her chin (152-53).<sup>17</sup>

It is not until late in the novel that there are clear instances of the parodic romance conventions to which McKeon refers. When Beau Didapper appears, Fielding treats the reader to a distinctly anti-romance portrait of an aristocrat:

Mr. Didapper, or Beau Didapper, was a young Gentleman of about four Foot five Inches in height. He wore his own Hair, tho' the Scarcity of it might have given him sufficient Excuse for a Periwig. His Face was thin and pale: The Shape of his Body and Legs none of the best; for he had very narrow Shoulders, and no Calf; and his

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<sup>17</sup>Shesgreen sees the description of Fanny as particularly complex, incorporating several striking physical similarities to Joseph, hints of Fanny's class origins, and concessions to Ian Watt's principle of formal realism (97).

Gait might more properly be called hopping than walking. (312)

Although the description leaves no doubt that there is something lacking in this man's character, the narrator proceeds to anatomize Didapper's moral corruption. The treatment of Didapper is, as Shesgreen claims, an attack on aristocratic degeneracy and a "Hogarthian distortion and reversal of Joseph's idealized face and masculine physique"<sup>18</sup>; but it should also be noted that its force as a general condemnation is weakened by its being a topical attack on a specific, identifiable aristocrat, Lord Hervey. Certainly, the description of Didapper belongs to that part of the novel which is marked by conservative skepticism about the virtue of the aristocracy. But coming as late as it does, the portrait of Beau Didapper sits in unresolved tension with the romance elements that Fielding uses to characterize Joseph; in itself it does not seem enough to convert them to parody.

Although Fanny's hypergamy once contributed to the impression among progressively inclined readers that Joseph Andrews was the work of a leveller, the final chapters offer

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<sup>18</sup>Shesgreen 80. Although Shesgreen also claims that the element of vitality in the description of Joseph is a "Swiftian statement about the physical vitality of the working classes as opposed to the debilitated real-life aristocracy" (80), it is clear from the examples of idealized literary portraiture Shesgreen takes from various romances that vitality was a conventional attribute of the aristocracy. In other words, there may be some question about Beau Didapper, but there is nothing in the description of Joseph to suggest anything other than high birth.

few concessions to a democratic interpretation of the novel. They do, however, offer both an endorsement of aristocratic authority and a conservative critique of that authority without finally choosing between the alternatives. To begin with, the romance expectations raised by the idealized portrayal of Joseph in the early chapters are fulfilled through a series of surprising discoveries. The last chapters read as a list of romance conventions ultimately confirming that Joseph's gentility is a matter of lineage: mysterious birth, distinguishing birthmarks, switched infants, providential intervention resulting in surprising revelations of ancestry, and sentimental reconciliations between parents and their lost children all figure prominently.<sup>19</sup> But the marriage of Joseph and Fanny also partly transforms the romance resolution into a conservative answer to Pamela in which Fielding ingeniously subverts Richardson's progressive tendencies. By having Joseph, Pamela's well-born adopted brother, marry Pamela's real sister, Fielding constructs a community of much subtler

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<sup>19</sup>For a tragic version of this traditional plot, in which all these elements figure, see Aphra Behn's story, "The Dumb Virgin; or, the Force of Imagination," in which Dangerfield seduces Maria and is then identified as her brother by his birthmark, "a bloody Dagger on his Neck, under his left Ear" (Aphra Behn, The Works of Aphra Behn, ed. Montague Summers, Vol. 5 [1915; New York: Phaeton, 1967] 443).

social gradations than exist in Pamela.<sup>20</sup> In Richardson's novel, Pamela needs to accommodate herself to the demands of the local gentry at the same time that she transforms it. In Joseph Andrews, Fielding places no such demands on his characters: the social gradations are subtle enough, the levelling slight enough, and Fielding's psychological interest in the principal characters meagre enough, to be acceptable to conservative readers who may have found Richardson's novel distasteful. Fanny, a potential embarrassment to high-life society, is made acceptable by the dowry that Booby supplies and by her blood relation to Pamela, whose marriage is presented as a given, not, as in Shamela, as something whose ramifications need to be scrutinized.<sup>21</sup> Joseph's decision to retire to a secluded life near his parents' estate further dissipates the social

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<sup>20</sup>If we accept McCrea's rather simple equation of identity with either birth or marriage ("Rewriting Pamela," 142) and take gender into account, the hierarchy at the end of Fielding's novel is as follows: Lady Booby (who has herself benefitted from hypergamy), Squire Booby, Pamela (by marriage), Joseph (by birth), Fanny (by marriage), Joseph (by upbringing), Pamela (by upbringing), with Pamela's parents occupying the lowest rungs. But of course we have only one set of characters, not two, and at the end of the novel they are chiefly defined as married couples within a community: Pamela and Booby, the Wilsons, Joseph and Fanny, and Mr. and Mrs. Andrews. Degree is maintained, and whatever Lady Booby might hope, hypergamy remains an option only for women.

<sup>21</sup>The give-away is, of course, that Fielding, like the Pamelists, raises Pamela's speech to conform to her new rank. Although Lady Davers-like snobbery betrays her class origins, she is consistently portrayed as a woman who fits as well as any other epigone of the gentry into her new rank.

threat that Fanny poses. Where Richardson's tests of Pamela in the days following her marriage extend the democratic tendencies of his novel, Fielding's last-page summary of the happiness that follows the lovers' marriage suggests that the gentry is flexible and robust enough to absorb the occasional upstart without being substantially threatened.

It has sometimes been argued that Joseph Andrews represents a hybridization of various genres, including the picaresque tale, the artificial comedy, and the heroic romance.<sup>22</sup> This formal hybridization results partly in ideological divisions within the novel. The satiric elements embedded in the picaresque journey that occupies the two middle books suggest the inadequacies of reigning cultural authorities as well as the necessity of social divisions, even arbitrary ones. These elements appear closest to Fielding's original intentions and offer considerable insights into the crisis of cultural authorities. Nevertheless, the social satire remains in unresolved tension with romance conventions that are particularly strong in the opening and closing chapters. These conventions are the living fossils of a much older, aristocratic vision of a natural order that holds out the comforting promise of resolving contradictions in moral

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<sup>22</sup>See, for instance, Michael Irwin, Henry Fielding, The Tentative Realist (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 65, and Knight 112-13.

experience by identifying ethical authority with hereditary rank.

### III Conceiving and Depicting the Self: Characters, Narrators, and Some Problems of Form

In an article on Pamela and Joseph Andrews, Brian McCrea claims, "rather than discovering a true identity that has been lost (as Joseph and Fanny do), Pamela changes her identity" through marriage.<sup>23</sup> McCrea's conception of identity as a garment that one puts on and takes off as circumstances warrant is inadequate when applied to Pamela. A moment's consideration of Watt's statement--whatever qualifications it requires--that the English realist novel is erected on a belief in "the autonomy of the individual, irrespective of his...social status"<sup>24</sup> exposes the inadequacy of McCrea's formulation. Pamela does not simply exchange one identity for another; her identity evolves through her complex responses to the demands placed upon her--by Mr. B., by her parents, by Jewkes and Jervis, by high-life society, by God. Although McCrea's notion of identity makes a sensitive reading of Pamela impossible (as it would a sensitive reading of Amelia), Fielding's concern with formulating normative moral standards means that McCrea's idea can be applied with impunity to most

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<sup>23</sup>McCrea, "Rewriting Pamela," 139.

<sup>24</sup>Watt, The Rise of the Novel, 66.

characters in Joseph Andrews. The conventions derived from romance tend to define men and women according to the social positions in which Providence places them at birth. In most episodes, Joseph's identity--his mien, his moral and temperamental qualities, his characteristic speech patterns--is circumscribed by Fielding's tacit reliance on the concept of innate class characteristics derived from what McKeon calls aristocratic ideology. Fielding's satire on particular social and professional groups also tends towards categorical formulations of identity, although not the ones McCrea considers: lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and innkeepers are all delineated first as moral or professional types and rarely, if ever, as complex individuals. This, at least, is the narrator's boast: "I describe not Men, but Manners; not an Individual, but a Species.... This Lawyer is not only alive, but hath been so these 4000 years, and I hope G-- will indulge his Life as many more to come" (189).

If the treatment of characters as embodiments of general moral or temperamental qualities limits the subtlety of Fielding's presentation of conscientious selves, so too does Fielding's unwillingness to admit that unconscious motivation plays a part in moral choice. In the section on Jonathan Wild in the Preface to the Miscellanies (1743), Fielding invokes a favorite metaphor to illustrate the inviolability of conscience:

However the Glare of Riches, and Awe of Title, may dazzle and terrify the Vulgar; nay, however Hypocrisy

may deceive the more Discerning, there is still a Judge in every man's Breast, which none can cheat nor corrupt, tho' perhaps it is the only uncorrupt Thing about him. And yet, inflexible and honest as this Judge is, (however polluted the Bench be on which he sits) no Man can, in my Opinion, enjoy the Applause which is not thus adjudged to be his Due.<sup>25</sup>

Here the conception of conscience has much to do with Fielding's immediate moral and literary aims, but it is also applicable to Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones. The idea of an incorruptible conscience evinced here is perhaps the only way of stabilizing the irony of Jonathan Wild and ensuring that the full burden of moral responsibility falls on Wild himself. Were Fielding to concede that the unconscious is an integral part of the self, he would have to admit the possibilities of self-deception and attenuated moral responsibility. Moreover, if it weren't for the presumption of full self-knowledge, Fielding would run the risk, as Richardson later does with Lovelace, of losing control over the reader's sympathies. As the passage from the Preface suggests, reduction of the difficulties of casuistry allows Fielding to control the reader's moral response to Wild.

Another attempt at neutralizing the complications posed by unconscious or only half-understood motivations appears in "An Essay on the Knowledge of Characters of Men," also published in the Miscellanies. The essay, a kind of how-to guide for avoiding the impositions of hypocrites,

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<sup>25</sup>Henry Fielding, Miscellanies by Henry Fielding, Esq: Volume One, ed. Henry Knight Miller (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP) 10.

confidently argues the possibility of interpreting actions and countenances. Fielding's argument rests on the premise that deception is always deliberate, and so Fielding cannot entertain the possibility that people do not always understand the reasons for their actions. Difficulties arise when Fielding uses the example of a well-dressed man falling "in a dirty Place in the Street" to define what constitutes character. Fielding comments, "I am afraid there are few who would not laugh at the Accident," and then offers a Hobbesian analysis of the laughter:

Now what is this Laughter other than a convulsive Extasy, occasioned by the Contemplation of our own Happiness, compared with the unfortunate Person's! a Pleasure which seems to savour of ill-nature; but as this is one of those first, and as it were, spontaneous Motions of the Soul, which few, as I have said, attend to, and none can prevent; so it doth not properly constitute the Character. When we come to reflect on the Uneasiness this Person suffers, Laughter, in a good and delicate Mind, will begin to change itself into Compassion; and in Proportion as this latter operates on us, we may be said to have more or less Good-Nature....<sup>26</sup>

Fielding evidently has some difficulty fitting shadowy Hobbesian resentments into a rational framework and sugarcoating malicious laughter with Shaftesburian benevolism. The reference to "Contemplation," for instance, with its suggestions of rational effort, clashes with the claim that the laughter is, on the contrary, "convulsive" and "spontaneous"; moreover, the suppression of a laughter that "seems to savour of ill-nature" by a "good and delicate

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<sup>26</sup>Fielding, Miscellanies, 160.

Mind" opens a gulf between will and desire. But what is most troubling about these "spontaneous Motions of the Soul" and what makes them seem other than spontaneous (in the sense of being without cause) is the fact that they rest on unarticulated social prejudices. The laughter is directed not generally at anyone who "tumble[s] in a dirty Place in the Street" but specifically at "a Person well drest." Such reactions are, then, more likely to come from a Slipslop or a Miss Grave-airs, who have social aspirations and feel resentment towards superiors, than from an Earl's granddaughter or a poor postilion who do not.<sup>27</sup> To the mind like Richardson's that views the self as a mysterious and only partly knowable entity, the "spontaneous Motions of the

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<sup>27</sup>The passage from Leviathan to which Fielding's passage is indebted has some striking differences of emphasis:

Sudden Glory, is the passion which maketh those Grimaces called LAUGHTER; and is caused either by some act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves. And it is incident most to them, that are conscious of the fewest abilities in themselves; who are forced to keep themselves in their own favour, by observing the imperfections of other men. And therefore much Laughter at the defects of others, is a sign of Pusillanimity. For of great minds, one of the proper workes is, to help and free others from scorn; and compare themselves onely with the most able. ("Of the Interiour Beginnings of Voluntary Motions," Leviathan, Ed. C. B. MacPherson [1651; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968] 125).

The passage from Hobbes does not recognize the possibilities of self deception, but both the motivation for malicious laughter and its relation to character are clear.

Soul" are an integral if potentially dangerous part of the self, and as such a worthy subject of serious inquiry; to the mind like Fielding's that tends to see human motivations as essentially transparent, they are anomalies best excluded from consideration.

Whatever Fielding's claims as an essayist about the nature of character or describing the species rather than the individual, his critique of aristocratic authority, no less than Richardson's, entails the need to abandon generalized and pat definitions of the self as fruitlessly reductive. With the recognition in Joseph Andrews that not every servant is a Machiavellian Shamela or even an opportunist, Fielding enters into serious engagement with the possible confrontations between particular selves and various cultural authorities, including the law, the church, and the gentry. If this development is to result in any very convincing endorsement of social order and the institutions of authority, then it demands that Fielding concentrate less on general formulations of ethical principles and more on the forms these principles take when appropriated by individual men and women. By showing the consequences of particular moral choices on particular individuals--as he does at times with Joseph, Slipslop, Adams, and Lady Booby--Fielding assumes a burden of psychological realism by which he both enters the central tradition of the English novel and invites judgment

according to the critical standards and preoccupations that evolve from it.

Concern with the effects of abused authority on the conscientious self is, to be sure, decidedly peripheral and intermittent in Joseph Andrews, and it may be largely the result of Fielding's engagement with Richardson's novel. Where such a concern does occur, it usually appears in the company of certain challenges of form. The early chapters dealing with Lady Booby and Joseph are a case in point. Some of the formal strategies that Fielding characteristically employs to represent the self and the failings to which they are prone appear in the episode with which I opened this chapter:

'Tell me, therefore, Joseph, [said Lady Booby] if I should admit you to such Freedom [a kiss], what would you think of me?--tell me freely.' 'Madam,' said Joseph, 'I should think your Ladyship condescended a great deal below yourself.' 'Pugh!' said she, 'that I am to answer to myself: but would not you insist on more? would you be contented with a Kiss? Would not your Inclinations be all on Fire rather by such a Favour?' 'Madam,' said Joseph, if they were, I hope I should be able to control them, without suffering them to get the better of my Virtue.' You have heard, Reader, Poets talk of the Statue of Surprise.... 'Your Virtue! (said the Lady recovering after a Silence of two Minutes) I shall never survive it. Your Virtue! Intolerable Confidence! Have you the Assurance to pretend, that when a Lady demeans herself to throw aside the Rules of Decency, in order to honour you with the highest Favour in her Power, your Virtue should resist her Inclination? That when she had conquer'd her own Virtue, she should find an Obstruction in yours?' 'Madam,' said Joseph, 'I can't see why her having no Virtue should be a Reason against my having any. Or why, because I am a Man, or because I am poor, my Virtue must be subservient to her Pleasures.' 'I am out of patience,' cries the Lady: 'Did ever Mortal pretend to any of this Kind! Will Magistrates who

punish Lewdness, or Parsons, who preach against it, make any scruple of committing it? And can a Boy, a Stripling, have the Confidence to talk of his Virtue?' 'Madam,' says Joseph, 'that Boy is the Brother of Pamela, and would be ashamed, that the Chastity of his Family, which is preserved in her, should be stained in him. If there are such Men as your Ladyship mentions, I am sorry for it, and I wish they had an Opportunity of reading over those Letters, which my Father hath sent me of my Sister Pamela's, nor do I doubt but such an Example would amend them.' (41)

Here the consequences to Joseph of a loss of authority in his social superiors are partly obscured by Fielding's presentation of character. Unlike the corresponding scenes in Pamela, the passage cited above displays considerable indebtedness to the conventions of dramatic comedy. As in drama, the only direct access the reader has to the inner life of the characters is through utterances that are, except for what is spoken in soliloquy, at least partly public. These utterances depend upon dramatic situation and may be qualified or contradicted by the speaker's actions or other utterances, by telling emphases in style, or by commentary coming from other characters. What Joseph says in the above scene is clear enough, but his motives must be inferred (and inferred with some difficulty) entirely from the dialogue. In contradistinction, Pamela's letters and journals supply both dialogue and extensive commentary and reflection by which she partly reveals and partly disguises her own thoughts and feelings while she interprets, with varying degrees of accuracy, the world around her.

In Pamela, Mr. B. sometimes seems insubstantial because the reader has so little access to his private thoughts; in the passage from Joseph Andrews, Fielding's protagonist remains a little shadowy for similar reasons. Because the dramatic mode denies us direct access to Joseph's thoughts, it is impossible to tell at exactly what point Joseph recognizes the import of Lady Booby's questions. Does he understand his employer perfectly well but dissemble until her outburst "after a Silence of two Minutes" makes the fiction untenable? Or does the incomprehension evident in his first interview with her persist until that point? One cannot be certain. By attending to internal stylistic evidence the reader can, of course, infer some things about Joseph that he either does not understand or wishes to hide. For instance, his defense of his sister's status as exemplar, though offered mainly as a jab at Richardson, suggests a young man's naivety and moral simplicity. Direct access to Joseph's mind would have given Fielding an economical means of expressing the subjective realities that are revealed in a desultory manner throughout the succeeding chapters: the contest between desire and conscience that Joseph's second letter to his sister discloses, complicated by the affection for Fanny Goodwill that the narrator later reveals and perhaps by some degree of moral revulsion or pure incomprehension. But in this episode Fielding's methods prohibit direct access to Joseph's thoughts, and

where Richardson's epistolary mode facilitates, Fielding's dramatic mode discourages representing the felt effects of conflicting demands on the conscientious self. Readerly interest remains, instead, upon the general ethical problems that those demands raise. The challenge of form Fielding faces, then, is that of mediating between the reader and the private selves of essentially dramatic creations.

After using Shamela to expose the technical weaknesses of Richardson's epistolary methods, Fielding abandons epistolary fiction altogether and develops his narrator, potentially a far more powerful means of mediating between character and reader than Richardson's letters. Much fine work has been written on Fielding's narrators, so much that an attempt to complement or even summarize it would be futile.<sup>28</sup> The present study addresses only the relation of

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<sup>28</sup>Much of the best work on Fielding's narrators has concentrated on how the narrator transforms his reader. See in particular, Wolfgang Iser's chapter, "The Role of the Reader in Fielding's Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones" in The Implied Reader (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974) 29-56; John Preston, The Created Self (London: Heinemann, 1970) 94-132.

My main interest here is the effect of problematic social authorities on the conscientious self and the usefulness of various literary conventions for exploring this question. Some recent studies of authority in Joseph Andrews have centered on the question of narrative authority. As Charles A. Knight recently pointed out, discussions of Joseph Andrews present the narrator as an analogue to either a secular or a religious authority (109). Knight takes issue with Bender's contention that Jonathan Wild and Amelia represent Fielding's marshalling of the "narrative resources" for narrative authority (160). Knight argues instead that in Joseph Andrews Fielding does not maintain narrative authority, but that the novel "distributes authority between judicious readers and a

the narrator of Joseph Andrews to Fielding's treatment of authority. Where Fielding identifies conflicts between private selves and some aspect of authority, his narrator acts in two important capacities: first, as a commentator of greater knowledge and wisdom than any individual character, and second as the means of mediating between the private selves of the characters and the reader.

In isolation from other aspects of Joseph Andrews, the importance of the narrator to Fielding's critique of aristocratic authority seems clear. One need only think of the introductory chapter of the first book or the "Digression concerning high People and low People" (156-158) to see how Fielding turns the narrator's wide range of ironic tones into a means of communicating the novel's critique of hereditary honour directly to the reader. But complications arise when aspects of the narrator's personality--his extensive command of ironic tones and classical references, for instance--interfere with the presentation of specific events and characters. In the episode dramatizing Lady Booby's attempted seduction of

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judicial author." In "Fielding, Authority, and the New Commercialism in Joseph Andrews," James Cruise sees in the novel a failed attempt by Fielding at preserving patriarchal authority in the face of rising new commercialism. For the argument that in Tom Jones, at least, Fielding's narrator manifests impressive authoritative control in the face of numerous rivals including the reader, Fielding's own characters, and other literary genres, see Eric Rothstein, "Virtues of Authority in Tom Jones," The Eighteenth Century 28 (1987) 99-126.

Joseph, a sudden intrusion by the narrator implies an uncertainty of intention on Fielding's part. Here Fielding pre-empts the flashpoint in the dispute by introducing an elaborate and erudite digression on the impossibility of describing Lady Booby's surprise:

You have heard, Reader, Poets talk of the Statue of Surprise; you have heard likewise, or else you have heard very little, how Surprise made one of the Sons of Croesus speak tho' he was dumb. You have seen the Faces in the Eighteen-penny Gallery, when through the Trap-Door, to soft or no Musick, Mr. Bridgewater, Mr. William Mills, or some other of ghostly Appearance, hath ascended with a Face all pale with Powder, and a Shirt all bloody with Ribbons; but from none of these, nor from Phidias, or Praxiteles, if they should return to Life--no, not from the inimitable Pencil of my Friend Hogarth, could you receive such an Idea of Surprise, as would have entered in at your Eyes, had they beheld the Lady Booby, when those last Words issued out from the Lips of Joseph.--'Your Virtue! (said the Lady recovering after a Silence of two Minutes)....' (40-41)

The narrator's genial engagement of his readers and his whimsical display of classical learning now take precedence over the conflict between Joseph and his employer. The exposition of Lady Booby's dumbfoundedness muffles the explosion by directing the reader's attention away from the participants in the scene, toward the artifice of the novel and beyond it toward experiences common to a town-educated contemporary reader but independent of the episode itself. Moreover, the narrator's direct engagement of his readers displaces any interest they might have in the psychological questions at hand. The new dynamic is initiated with a direct address ("You have heard, Reader...you have heard

likewise, or else you have heard very little") and sustained by the repeated references to contemporary extra-literary experience. By raising matters extrinsic to the episode, Fielding diverts the reader's attention and detracts from the episode's serious engagement with the ways that social subordination influences moral choice.

Although the narrator's digression is strongly referential in the sense that it raises topical concerns, it subverts important mimetic claims made in the Preface and the introductory chapter to the third book. In the Preface, Fielding formulates a decorum for his new kind of writing. He begins by making some commonplace claims for realistic representation, contending that his comic writing is confined "strictly to Nature," and attacking burlesque as the "Exhibition of what is monstrous and unnatural" (4). The mimetic imperative is reinforced in the third book when the narrator renews his attack on "those voluminous Works commonly called Romances" (4) which contain "Persons who never were, or will be, and Facts which never did nor possibly can happen" (187). Fielding does, however, promise to use burlesque diction, principally for the "Entertainment" of the "Classical Reader," and apparently, he believes, without interfering with the mimetic qualities of his writing. But the burlesque intrusion quoted above robs the confrontation between Lady Booby and Joseph of its immediacy and injects an element of staginess into Lady

Booby's conduct. The tension between Fielding's local interest in the moral dilemma that Joseph faces and his tendency to draw attention to the literariness of his writing reflect a division between his theory and practice of fiction, a division like that implicit in the ornamental theory of literature that emerges in Richardson's letters on Pamela. If Richardson's generalizing morality sometimes devastates the realism of his work, Fielding's tendency to have his narrator indulge in burlesque diction functions as a preemptive strike against the mimetic claims of his.

In the episode quoted above, Fielding promotes a secondary aim--the entertainment of the classical reader--at the expense of the mimetic aims upon which he places so much emphasis in the Preface. But the role of the narrator in mediating between character and reader is just as likely to be fruitful. In some places, the narrator provides direct analysis of the characters, effectively revealing their private thoughts to the reader; in others, as Paulson observes, the narrator's irony mimics the character's moral evasions.<sup>29</sup> In still others, there are complex trade-offs between psychological realism and the narrator's self-conscious literariness. Both here and in Tom Jones one strategy that Fielding uses to mediate between characters and readers is psychomachia, the division of the mind into warring factions that debate matters of casuistry. In the

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<sup>29</sup>Paulson, Satire and the Novel, 107.

early chapters, Fielding uses this strategy to make sense of Lady Booby's ambivalence towards Joseph:

[W]hat hurt her most was, that in Reality she had not so entirely conquered her Passion; the little God lay lurking in her Heart, though Anger and Disdain so hoodwinked her, that she could not see him. She was a thousand times on the very Brink of revoking the Sentence she had passed against the poor Youth. Love became his Advocate, and whispered many things in his Favour. Honour likewise endeavoured to vindicate his Crime, and Pity to mitigate his Punishment; on the other side, Pride and Revenge spoke as loudly against him; and thus the poor Lady was tortured with Perplexity, opposite Passions distracting and tearing her Mind in different ways.

So have I seen, in the Hall of Westminster, where Serjeant Bramble hath been retained on the right Side, and Serjeant Puzzle on the left, the balance of Opinion (so equal were their Fees) alternately incline to either Scale. Now Bramble throws in an Argument, and Puzzle's scale strikes the beam; again, Bramble shares the like Fate, overpowered by the Weight of Puzzle. Here Bramble hits, there Puzzle strikes; here one has you, there t'other has you; till at last all becomes one Scene of Confusion in the tortured Minds of the Hearers; equal Wagers are laid on the Success, and neither Judge nor Jury can possible make anything of the Matter; all things are so enveloped by the careful Serjeants in Doubt and Obscurity. (45)

The passage begins as a genuine attempt at presenting Lady Booby's private self to the reader. The first sentence offers a straightforward account of her emotions, although the reference to the "little God" should alert readers that Fielding's self-conscious literariness is not far off. Considered for its presentation of character, the passage takes a turn for the worse in the second sentence with the rather conventional exaggeration that Lady Booby was "a thousand Times on the very Brink of revoking the Sentence." The ensuing psychomachia hints at Lady Booby's state of mind

without ever defining it. Part of the problem has to do with the imprecise nature of Fielding's emotional and moral abstractions, part with the unsuitability of psychomachia for representing mental states in which there is an unconscious element. The "little God" of the first sentence indicates that Lady Booby is in the grip of powers she does not fully understand, but the implication of unconscious influence has to be excluded from the psychomachia itself. In the second paragraph Fielding's presentation of character disintegrates completely as his characteristic literariness appears and pushes Lady Booby entirely from consideration.

If Joseph Andrews is a reexamination of the cultural questions at stake in Pamela, undertaken (as the Preface claims) with strict regard for the authority of experience, then Fielding's handling of these questions is inconsistent. Ultimately, Fielding's presentation of the conflict between Lady Booby and Joseph is not very convincing, though as Michael Irwin remarks, passages dramatizing Lady Booby's difficult moral choice suggest a latent interest on Fielding's part in genuinely complex characters.<sup>30</sup> The problem is not simply that Fielding's narrator is meddlesome or show-offish, but that the intelligence and complexity of the narrator is unmatched by any comparable intelligence or complexity in most of the characters. Either Fielding does not entirely admit the desirability of having complex,

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<sup>30</sup> Irwin 81.

highly individualized characters (as his generalizing pronouncements imply), or (as his treatment of Lady Booby suggests) he is feeling his way toward narrative strategies that can define complex characters and mediate between them and his reader. The truth probably contains both possibilities. Fielding's reliance on certain well-established literary models--dramatic comedy for the rendering of social interactions, epic and parody for the burlesque diction, and romance for the plot--forces his characters into simple psychological patterns that are, for the most part, consonant with Fielding's comic aims. But the Fielding who is most alert to the problems of self and authority does see the need for complex characters through whom he can diagnose contemporary experiential problems. Lady Booby and Joseph may, ultimately, disappoint; but there is always Parson Adams.

#### IV Parson Adams and the Novelistic Centre of Joseph Andrews

None of Fielding's characters has been more admired, even by readers not usually sympathetic to Fielding, than Parson Adams. Except for the narrator, Adams is the novel's single most complex intelligence, and through him Fielding engages a wide range of moral and religious controversies. As critics since Aurelien Digeon have attested, Adams appeals to modern readers largely because he is so highly individuated and, despite his outlandish eccentricities,

among the most believable comic characters in eighteenth-century prose fiction.<sup>31</sup> As a literary creation, Adams has many virtues, but his immediate importance for the present discussion lies in his being the most reliable gauge of Fielding's interest in the tensions between the self and the various cultural authorities that make demands upon it. Adams' role in Fielding's thinking about self and authority is two-fold: first, he reveals how a general ethics of submission to Providence (an ethics for which Fielding himself feels some sympathy) can fail when applied to particular individuals in particular circumstances; second, he stands as the novel's most fully realized example of how individuals simultaneously resist and accommodate themselves to the demands of superiors whose authority is questionable.

When he sermonizes on contemporary matters unrelated to the central events of the novel--for instance, Whitefield's

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<sup>31</sup>In Henry Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1968), Robert Alter, a critic who is usually anxious to defend Fielding in terms other than those of realism, refers to Adams' "moral and psychological credibility" and claims that the clergyman is "one of the few completely engaging representations in fiction of a good Christian." And Michael Irwin, whose concern is Fielding's relationship to realism, remarks that Adams' idiosyncrasies "have the effect of exciting an interest in Adams for his own sake, of a kind which is not aroused by the other characters" (79).

The complexity of Adams may owe much to Fielding's patterning him on a real-life 'original,' the Reverend William Young. For an account of the biographical basis for Adams see Battestin's essay, "Fielding's Muse of Experience," in J. Paul Hunter and Martin C. Battestin, Henry Fielding in His Time and Ours (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1987): 29-61.

career and luxury among the clergy (I, xvi)--Adams often speaks for Fielding, though his little vanities and affectations tend to leave their mark. When he speaks on general matters of theology or conduct--in his sermon on "the Duty of Man, much more of a Christian, to submit" to Providence (265), or his discourse on the text "Riches without Charity [are] nothing worth" (274)--he voices orthodoxies eminently appealing to most contemporary readers. His opinions are therefore in keeping with Fielding's declared intention of presenting a generalized account of experience. And yet Adams' pronouncements, as orthodox and unexceptionable as they seem, are never a fully adequate response to the events of the novel. On the contrary, they reveal the futility that complex individuals in difficult circumstances experience in living up to the abstract ethical precepts they profess. Adams' ill-considered attempt to console Joseph for the loss of Fanny by counselling rational submission to Providence only enrages the young man who, with a little help from Adams' lurid descriptions, imagines that Fanny is about to be raped (III, xi). Later, another impromptu sermon on the wisdom of submitting to Providence, designed to cool Joseph's desire until the publication of the banns, backfires when Adams is told that his son has drowned (IV, viii).

There is often a mismatch between Adams' advice and the subjective responses of the characters, but Adams himself is

much more than the representative of an inadequate ethics. He is the novel's most complex and engaging character, and any attempt at placing him must take into account the subjective reality he embodies. Adams' attitude toward the authority of rank, like that of Richardson's Pamela, is defined by a contradiction: he believes firmly in the principle of social subordination, but he preserves the integrity of his own conscience as jealously as the fiercest Puritan. If his general faith in the legitimacy of his social superiors, unlike Pamela's, is never shaken, we immediately recognize that Fielding does not share that faith, and so seek reasons for it in Adams' psychic make-up. To begin with, Adams seems impervious to the lessons of experience. Despite all his adventures on the road, Adams never does learn to generalize from particulars, and so he never learns to see beyond the cloak of respectability that hypocrites wear. Moreover, Adams never suffers from any serious threat to his integrity. Oblivious to the prestige of money, and strangely imprisoned in a world where Aeschylus is a more strongly felt presence than the innkeeper who has just attacked the travellers, Adams seems immune to the temptations of power and social mobility. Consequently, the contradictions Adams manifests at the outset remain intact at the end.

One of the most interesting things about Adams' psychological contradictions is that they are so absolute,

particularly when they relate to the question of authority. On the one hand, Adams "preach[es]...up Submission to Superiors" (306); on the other, when Lady Booby orders him to stop the marriage between Joseph and Fanny, the reader is told that her "excellent Arguments had no effect on the Parson, who persisted in doing his Duty without regarding the Consequences it might have on his worldly Interest" (307). Although Adams never succeeds in integrating or even fully recognizing these contradictory attitudes, he stands as the novel's main argument in favour of spiritual egalitarianism. In particular, he prides himself on having been a victim of conscience: "I have not been without Opportunities of suffering for the sake of my Conscience, I thank God for them," he reflects (132). When he meets the self-proclaimed patriot, he takes the opportunity to tell of how his influence on a nephew had resulted in neglect by those with livings to dispense. A perennial dupe of hypocrisy, he had persuaded his nephew to support Esquire Fickle, who promptly forgot his promise to defend the interests of the church. He then threw his support behind Sir Oliver Hearty, who "would sacrifice every thing to his Country...except his Hunting," before finally endorsing Sir Thomas Booby, who "never could persuade the Parliament to be of his Opinion" (134). It does not matter to Adams that his judgment is invariably impaired, nor does he for a moment consider submitting to the better judgement of someone else.

For Adams conscience is important enough to sacrifice all worldly considerations. As he himself boasts, "I am not a Man of Consequence as I was formerly. I have now no longer any Talents to lay out in the Service of my Country" (134).

Adams' beliefs, then, manifest a strain of Puritanism that belongs to the most recognizably novelistic strain of Joseph Andrews. Adams' belief in the inviolability of his own conscience, like Joseph's resistance to Lady Booby, is tantamount to a rejection of the cultural authorities endorsed, in different ways and for different reasons, by both the romance and the satire of the novel. Indeed, the significance Fielding places on conscience, in the cases of both Adams and Joseph, suggests that the most healthy self is the conscientious self, even when the judgment is flawed.

McCrea sees the success of Joseph Andrews as the reconciliation of contradictory politics in the doublethink of Parson Adams.<sup>32</sup> But what McCrea labels success points equally to a limitation in Fielding's formal handling of the problems he raises. Parson Adams does represent Fielding's best thinking in Joseph Andrews on both the crisis in cultural authorities and the ability of the new genre to make sense of that crisis. But Adams' complex and divided personality does not entail a successful reconciliation of the divergent tendencies in Pamela, though it certainly implies Fielding's recognition of the damage that a crisis

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<sup>32</sup>McCrea, "Rewriting Pamela," 142-143.

in contemporary cultural authorities can do to the integrity of the individual self. Any reconciliation of social tensions in Joseph Andrews occurs at the level guaranteed by the romance plot. The limitation of Fielding's treatment of Adams does not stem directly from the parson's lack of an integrated self, nor from Fielding's decision to deny Adams the self-knowledge necessary to understand, or even perceive, his own contradictory conduct. By not explicitly drawing the reader's attention to Adams' fragmented self, Fielding fails to address, in the only adequate way at his disposal, the existential problem his novel first raises when Lady Booby tries to seduce Joseph. But even if Fielding's comic intentions tend to direct his energies in directions other than a discriminating consideration of Adams' conscience, Joseph Andrews represents an important technical innovation for the realist novel, the creation of a genuinely intelligent narrator whose role is at least partly to make complex characters intelligible to the reader. It is not until Amelia that Fielding again creates characters as complex as Adams, but the virtues of a narrator who can comment on modern experiential problems remain in evidence in Tom Jones.

Chapter 4: Tom Jones: Social Emulation, Romance Form, and the Risks to the Generous Heart

The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling is an extraordinary novel, and extraordinary claims have been made for it. It would be difficult, for instance, to overestimate either the recognition it received among Fielding's contemporaries or its influence on such later novelists as Austen, Dickens, and Eliot, all of whom contributed greatly to a tradition of realism but exhibited markedly different temperaments.<sup>1</sup> And yet, the paradox of Tom Jones for subsequent realist fiction is that Fielding's great novel represents fewer technical innovations than Joseph Andrews and fewer insights into the felt consequences of moral choice than Amelia. In Joseph Andrews Fielding exchanges epistolary form for a narrator who engages the reader directly, and politically reactionary parody for conservative satire pointing to a crisis of aristocratic authority that jeopardizes the moral well-being of rich and poor alike. Later, in Amelia, Fielding opens new lines of inquiry into the conditions of moral experience while rejecting some of the comic practices--mock-heroic

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<sup>1</sup> The classic study of Fielding's changing reputation among contemporary and later writers is Frederic T. Blanchard's Fielding the Novelist: A Study in Historical Criticism (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale UP, 1926). For a more recent account of the immediate reception of Tom Jones see the preface to the handy collection of contemporary views of Fielding's work, Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage, eds. Ronald Paulson and Thomas Lockwood (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) 10-15.

intrusions, for instance, and heavy reliance on social and professional caricatures--that have guaranteed the longevity of Joseph Andrews but preempt close or subtle exploration of the effects of a crisis in authority on the conduct and character of individual men and women. Between these two novels, Fielding refines many of his literary practices and in doing so writes his comic masterpiece.

The many similarities between Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews imply a consolidation of Fielding's social attitudes. The ideological 'shape' of both novels is established mainly by conservative social commentary and modified by such remnants of romance as aristocratic literary portraiture, class-based stereotypes, and birth-mystery plots. But the absence of Pamela and all its revolutionary implications as objects of attention relieves Fielding of the obligation of explicitly addressing the relation between conscientious individuals and problematic authorities. There are no equivalents of Joseph's response to Lady Booby's attempts at seduction, or of Parson Adams' staunch defense of his conscience, to attest in even a general way to the importance and difficulty of achieving responsible moral choice. And there are not yet characters resembling Richardson's Pamela or Amelia's Mrs. Bennet or Sergeant Atkinson to represent the psychological effects on conscientious men and women of resistance to, or compliance

with, the demands of social superiors who stand in a position of authority but may possess ulterior motives.

Fielding's attention to comic practice and his apparent neglect of the questions that haunted Richardson suggest a skepticism about the preoccupations of realist prose fiction. And yet, criticism of the last half-century has identified a significant and complex relationship between Tom Jones and the tradition of realism represented by Defoe, Richardson, and Austen. In The Great Tradition, F. R. Leavis credits Fielding with "opening the central tradition of English fiction" and making possible the novels of Jane Austen, but contends that "Fielding's attitudes, and his concern with human nature, are simple, and not such as to produce an effect of anything but monotony (on a mind, that is, demanding more than external action) when exhibited at the length of an 'epic in prose.'"<sup>2</sup> Four years later, at the end of a complex neo-Aristotelian analysis of the plot of Tom Jones, R. S. Crane acknowledges the necessity of answering Leavis's harsh criticism, but contends that a criticism of forms must precede questions of evaluation.<sup>3</sup> According to Crane, Tom Jones is a "plot of action" that evokes in the reader the "comic analogue[s]" of fear and

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<sup>2</sup>F. R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (1948; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 12.

<sup>3</sup>R. S. Crane, "The Concept of Plot and the Plot of Tom Jones" (1952; rpt. in Wolfgang Iser, ed., Henry Fielding und der Englische Roman des 18 Jahrhunderts [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972]) 86-87.

pity (75-76); moreover, Crane contends that in order for Fielding to sustain the "general frame of mind appropriate to the emotional quality of the story," he must not over-particularize Tom and Sophia (that is, create in them the kind of psychological complexity or "inward interest" that Leavis values<sup>4</sup>) (80).

The full implications of Crane's account become clear when Ian Watt, who sets the agenda for much subsequent discussion of Tom Jones, writes of Fielding's contributions to the English realist novel. Watt attributes Fielding's rejection of "formal realism" and its corollary, "realism of presentation," to the design of "mak[ing] visible in the human scene the operations of universal order."<sup>5</sup> For Fielding (according to Watt) this means the absolute priority of plot construction over the presentation of character, and particularly of the kinds of subtly delineated states of thought and feeling that emerge in Pamela and Clarissa. Nevertheless, Watt argues, Fielding strengthens and redirects the realist tradition by establishing a "realism of assessment" that is attributable to a "responsible wisdom about human affairs which plays upon the deeds and characters of his novels" (328).

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<sup>4</sup>Leavis 12.

<sup>5</sup>Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (1957; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) 328, 308. In Watt's discussion, as in mine, the term 'plot' is used much more loosely than it is in Crane's essay.

Watt's account has proven extraordinarily influential, and most critics of the sixties and seventies who allow Tom Jones any referential claims at all find themselves returning, sometimes reluctantly, to something like "realism of assessment." Robert Alter, for instance, repeatedly attacks critics--specifically, Leavis, Kermode, and Watt--who have judged Tom Jones according to criteria of psychological realism.<sup>6</sup> But Alter also argues that Fielding's "generalized moral assessment can be an effective novelistic equivalent for particularized psychological rendering" (69). And Martin Battestin, who contends that Fielding rejects "the methods of 'formal realism' for a mode which verges on the symbolic and allegorical,"<sup>7</sup> argues that near the heart of Tom Jones lies Fielding's fine discrimination between the different meanings of the concept of prudence. But if these critics praise Fielding for what Watt calls "responsible wisdom," their praise, and perhaps even Watt's, evades an important question: Can "realism of assessment" exist independently of other forms of realism--realism of presentation, formal realism, or psychological realism? In other words, can realism of assessment be detached from a convincing presentation of lived experience?

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<sup>6</sup>See Robert Alter, "The Critical Dismissal of Fielding," the first chapter of his Henry Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1966).

<sup>7</sup>Martin C. Battestin, The Providence of Wit: Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) 151.

The question, though it is seldom fully articulated, dogs critics who evaluate Fielding's moral claims. Michael Irwin, who is more reluctant than either Battestin or Alter to praise Fielding on referential grounds, argues that Tom Jones is "much more realistic...than Joseph Andrews in the sense of conveying the existential quality of people and places"; nonetheless, Irwin contends that the "moral effectiveness" of Tom Jones is at many points compromised because "the realism of [the characters'] behaviour and relationships" is subordinated to the demands of Fielding's artificial plot.<sup>8</sup> John Coolidge goes further, contending that Fielding's allegiances to a rationalistic literary order undermine any "convincing resolution of the moral and psychological dilemma with which he was preoccupied."<sup>9</sup> And Mary Poovey finds that, in order to account for the absence of psychologically individuated characters, she must take Tom Jones as a symbolic rendering of Providence.<sup>10</sup>

Defenses of Fielding on the grounds of realism--even realism of assessment--have become unfashionable, but recent criticism still attests to a significant if uncomfortable relationship between the self-conscious literariness of Tom

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<sup>8</sup>Michael Irwin, Henry Fielding. The Tentative Realist (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971) 98, 111.

<sup>9</sup>John S. Coolidge, "Fielding and 'Conservation of Character,'" Modern Philology 57 (1960) 248.

<sup>10</sup>Mary Poovey, "Journeys From This World to the Next: The Providential Promise of Clarissa and Tom Jones," ELH: A Journal of English Literary History, 43 (1976) 808-809.

Jones and the concerns and procedures of realist prose fiction. K. G. Simpson, for instance, claims that Fielding's "blatantly self-advertising style, a style far removed from the neutrality or self-effacement beloved of later orthodox realism, is a realism of attitude" because it exposes "the comic irrelevance of stylized modes--heroic and pastoral--to the representation of ordinary rural life."<sup>11</sup> And in a recent essay on the function of the introductory chapters, Robert Chibka contends that although "the self-conscious artifice...would seem to divorce literature and life, text and experience, theory and practice," the novel "continuously insists on a set of shifting mutual implications between social/moral and literary/critical worlds; learning to interpret and judge in either of these apparently separate worlds may help one to do so more effectively in the other."<sup>12</sup> As the ongoing concern with the relation of Fielding's narrator to his subject matter attests, the realism of Tom Jones is as problematic as that of Joseph Andrews.

The uneasy relationship between realism of assessment and realism of presentation points to a now-familiar tension in Fielding's work. Fielding apparently wants to provide an

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<sup>11</sup>K. G. Simpson, "Technique as Judgment in Tom Jones," Henry Fielding, Justice Observed, ed. K. G. Simpson (London: Vision, 1985) 163.

<sup>12</sup>Robert L. Chibka, "Taking 'The Serious' Seriously: The Introductory Chapters of Tom Jones," The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation 31 (1990) 38.

orderly assessment of social life, but the chaotic particulars of moral experience sometimes interfere. On the one hand, his attention is usually fixed not on the particular effects of moral choice on individual characters but on certain moral qualities, abstractly considered (among these, honour, prudence, and generosity) that need to be cultivated by the good-natured gentleman (or gentleman's wife) who wishes to live happily in a society whose general, hierarchical character Fielding values. In Tom Jones, as in Joseph Andrews, this emphasis on the social necessarily diminishes the importance of individuals, and time and again the psychological complexity of particular characters is limited by Fielding's tendency to represent the self as a social entity defined by birth or status or profession or moral type. On the other hand, in his capacity as narrator Fielding raises troubling questions about the self-protective measures the individual must take in a society that exploits generosity, candour, and ingenuousness, the very qualities that distinguish Tom and Allworthy. At these moments, the social order that Fielding would preserve shudders a little, and the cracks that appear where the celebrated Palladian façade of Tom Jones is exposed to nonliterary disorder provide strong indications of the problematic relation between Fielding's allegiance to a literary order that places little value on the subjective self and his latent interest in the realist project of

representing the felt effects of moral experience on individual men and women.

#### I Emulation and the Isolation of the Self

With great economy and little insistence, Tom Jones rehearses the conservatism of Joseph Andrews. As in his first novel, Fielding criticizes traditional and contemporary sources of economic and political power for their failure to provide the moral authority necessary to the stability (and, in Fielding's mind, well-being) of English society. The corrupt representatives of aristocratic power, Lady Booby and Beau Didapper, return in Tom Jones under the slightly more menacing guises of Lady Bellaston and Lord Fellamar, and the venal and self-serving clergymen who populate Joseph Andrews reappear as Supple and Thwackum. The staggering inadequacy of the new class of lawyers and public administrators to supply the moral void is also treated more economically than in Joseph Andrews. Fielding identifies various abuses of the law, sometimes after his characters' scrapes with legal authority and sometimes in ironic, metaphoric glosses on other events,<sup>13</sup> but he hides the full implications of these abuses until the

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<sup>13</sup>For an account of Fielding's far-reaching use of the language of legality see Raymond Stephanson, "Fielding's 'Courts': The Legal Paradigm in Tom Jones," English Studies in Canada 14 (1988): 152-168.

closing chapters, and even then refrains from much commentary.

Tom Jones also resembles Fielding's first novel in its depiction of social rivalries that exist, paradoxically, alongside deeply entrenched desires to preserve class distinctions. Because snobbery, social emulation, and servility remain among the distinguishing marks of ambitious servants, many episodes in Tom Jones echo episodes in Fielding's earlier novel. For instance, it is in Deborah Wilkins' nature, as in Mrs. Slipslop's, "to insult and tyrannize over little People...to recompense [herself] for [her] extreme Servility" to her social superiors.<sup>14</sup> And later, Honour Blackmore and Mrs. Western's maidservant quarrel in a manner distinctly reminiscent of the contest between Slipslop and Miss Grave-airs in Joseph Andrews. In fact, much of the local comic force of Tom Jones, as of Joseph Andrews, derives from the tendency of ambitious low-born characters to misunderstand or ignore true gentility while clumsily aping less admirable models of rank. The famous churchyard brawl arises first from Molly's dressing herself, pretentiously and incongruously, in Sophia's cast-off dress, "a new laced Cap, and some other Ornaments which Tom had given her" (176-177), and then from her inability to

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<sup>14</sup>Henry Fielding, The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling, Eds. Martin C. Battestin and Fredson Bowers, 2 Vols. (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan UP, 1975) 47. Subsequent references to this edition will appear in parentheses in the text of this chapter.

restrain herself when she is pelted with "certain missile Weapons...sufficiently dreadful to a well-dressed Lady" (178). Later, in a scene that echoes Slipslop's conduct in Joseph Andrews, Honour bullies and bluffs her way to the warm seat by the fire, vulgarly announces the delicacy of her stomach, and enters into affected dialogue with another social pretender, Partridge. In each instance, the reader fresh from Joseph Andrews is likely to feel a sense of déjà vu.

Despite these obvious similarities to Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones presents a new emphasis on particular kinds of destructive social models that arise from a crisis of aristocratic authority. This new emphasis appears early, when Fielding, dissenting from common usage, contends that the word "Mob" includes "Persons without Virtue, or Sense, in all Stations, and many of the highest Rank are often meant by it" (59). The strategy of emphasizing the propensity of different social ranks to similar vicious conduct is significant. In Joseph Andrews, Fielding's usual means of attacking the concept of innate class characteristics is to create base-born characters--Betty the Chambermaid, a nameless postilion, an equally nameless innkeeper, Fanny Goodwill--who stand in for their social superiors as provisional ethical exemplars; in Tom Jones, however, Fielding attacks the equation of rank with morality largely through the narrator's glosses on the vicious

conduct of the poor, who are now without ethical superiors to imitate:

The Great are deceived, if they imagine they have appropriated Ambition and Vanity to themselves. These noble Qualities flourish as notably in the Country Church, and Churchyard, as in the Drawing-Room, or the Closet. Schemes have indeed been laid in the Vestry, which could hardly disgrace the Conclave. Here is the Miniscry, and here is an Opposition. Here are Plots and Circumventions, Parties and Factions, equal to those which are found in Courts. (177)

Or again: "as there is so much of Policy in the lowest Life, great Men often overvalue themselves on those Refinements in Imposture, in which they are frequently excelled by some of the lowest of the Human Species" (653). At times, to be sure, Fielding makes his point less harshly, and with clearer indications of sympathy for the working poor. Fitzpatrick bribes Susan the chambermaid with "a Handful of guineas...which would have bribed Persons of much greater Consequence than this poor Wench, to much worse Purposes" (528). But in general the levelling impulse of Tom Jones is confined to wry analysis of vice, and Fielding often reminds his readers that there is little to choose between the vices of the poor and those of their wealthy superiors.

The implications of this curious anti-Puritan levelling begin to emerge in Fielding's treatment of acquired (rather than innate) distinctions between poor and rich. The chapter that brings Sophia to London begins with the following description of morning:

Those Members of the Society, who are born to furnish the Blessings of Life, now began to light their Candles, in order to pursue their daily Labours, for the Use of those who are born to enjoy these Blessings. The sturdy Hind now attends the Levee of his Fellow Labourer the Ox; the cunning Artificer, the diligent Mechanic spring from their hard Mattress; and now the bonny House-maid begins to repair the disordered Drum-room, while the riotous Authors of that Disorder, in broken interrupted Slumbers, tumble and toss, as if the hardness of Down disquieted their Repose. (609)

The passage serves several purposes. It works as one of the narrator's amusing periphrastic intrusions, it anticipates the principal characters' movement from rural to urban settings, and it identifies the temptations of town life to young gentlemen like Jones and Nightingale. Through Fielding's deft handling of connotation, the description also presents commentary and judgment on important distinctions between the working poor and their leisured superiors. As health yields to sickness, order to disorder, and industry to decadence, Fielding establishes a crucial distinction between the healthy normality of the daily lives of (most of) the working poor and the diseased idleness to which the rich, particularly the urban rich, are prone. Later, in the introductory chapter to Book Fourteen, Fielding elaborates his critique of the idle wealthy. After stating the difficulty and necessity of the writer's gaining access to high life ("Birth and Fortune" are the best qualifications, but in a pinch the "honourable Profession of a Gamester" will do [742]), Fielding characterizes the wealthy:

The various callings in lower Spheres produce the great Variety of humorous Characters; whereas here, except among the few who are engaged in the Pursuit of Ambition, and fewer still who have a Relish for Pleasure, all is Vanity and servile Imitation. Dressing and Cards, eating and drinking, bowing and curtseying, make up the Business of their Lives. (743)

Notwithstanding such robust exceptions as Lady Bellaston (whom Fielding here identifies as a rarity), the characteristic effect of this atmosphere of "Vanity and servile Imitation" is a moral and physical lassitude that vitiates normal desires.<sup>15</sup> Fielding proceeds to describe

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<sup>15</sup>In Henry Fielding and the Augustan Ideal Under Stress (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), C. J. Rawson discusses the introductory chapter to Book Fourteen at some length, acutely observing that "sexual love, even in the case of some passing and occasionally some really disreputable amours, is to be valued to the extent that it carries warmth and mutuality of feeling" (15). Clearly, Fielding's critique of sexuality has nothing to do with the Puritan attitudes that Watt identifies in The Rise of the Novel in his chapter on Pamela, but there is a critique nonetheless. The inability to enter into affectionate and fully reciprocal sexual relations appears to be one of the defining qualities of the men and women who reject their place and duties in society. Impotence and perverse sexuality are, of course, not qualities unique to the over-refined and their low-class imitators; they are to be found wherever women and men withdraw from communal life. The Man of the Hill is a kind of psychological eunuch; Blifil is alternately masturbatory and sexually sadistic; and for all his energy, Squire Western exhibits a remarkable sexlessness. When Fielding presents admirable characters who are not sexually active, as in the case of Allworthy, he takes care to protect them from his reader's suspicions. Relatively healthy sexuality, marked by the "warmth and mutuality of feeling" that Rawson identifies, is to be found in characters (Molly, Nightingale, and Mrs. Waters are three) who, whatever their foibles and affectations, partake robustly of their sexual nature. For an enjoyable discussion of Fielding's treatment of sexuality in Tom Jones see Paul-Gabriel Boucé's essay, "Sex, amours and love in Tom Jones," Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century 228 (1984): 25-38.

the loveless, sexless lives of fashionable women who are "taught by their Mothers to fix their Thoughts only on Ambition and Vanity, and to despise the Pleasures of Love as unworthy their Regard" (743), and then concludes that "the true Characteristic of the present Beau Monde, is rather Folly than Vice, and the only Epithet which it deserves is that of Frivolous" (744).

The distinctions between the working poor and their idle superiors are real but they are also precarious, for the glamour of gentility threatens to destroy industry among the lower orders. In Book Eight, there appears a gouty innkeeper who "had been bred, as they call it, a Gentleman, that is bred up to do nothing, and had spent a very small Fortune, which he inherited from an industrious Farmer his Uncle in Hunting, Horse-racing, and Cock-fighting" (428). The destructiveness of this aped gentility appears not only in its social implications--in the innkeeper's undoing the life's work of his uncle, the "industrious Farmer"--but also in domestic life. Having expended both his fortune and health, Fielding's innkeeper now spends his days drinking and conversing with travellers while his wife runs the inn. Trapped in a hateful marriage, he has lapsed into a gouty, passionless stupor, having "long since desisted from answering" the "Purposes" for which his wife married him (428).

Although most instances of social emulation in Tom Jones, as in Joseph Andrews, are comic, the Man of the Hill's story provides a glimpse at the tragic potential of the prevailing models of social conduct.<sup>16</sup> Like his older brother, the Man of the Hill, the son of a "prudent and industrious" "Gentleman Farmer" (451), receives a genteel education. While his brother flunks out and gives himself over to idleness and hunting, the Man of the Hill discovers a love of learning and attends Exeter College, where he meets a young nobleman, Sir George Gresham, whom he describes in the following terms:

This young Fellow, among many other tolerable bad Qualities, had one very diabolical. He had a great Delight in destroying and ruining the Youth of inferior Fortune, by drawing them into Expenses which they could not afford so well as himself; and the better, and worthier, and soberer, any young Man was, the greater the Pleasure and Triumph had he in his Destruction. Thus acting the Character which is recorded of the Devil, and going about seeking whom he might devour.  
(453)

Sir George offers temptations of idleness and dissipation to which the Man of the Hill submits because, he reports, he "was high-mettled, had a violent Flow of animal Spirits, was

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<sup>16</sup>Like the reports of the false promiser in Joseph Andrews (II, xvii), the Man of the Hill's story allows Fielding to make his point more seriously than his choice of a comic form would normally permit. Both episodes offer tragic analogues to the main action without seriously disturbing the comic tone of the novel. For an account of the connections between the Man of the Hill's story and the main action of Tom Jones, see Henry Knight Miller, "The 'Digressive' Tales in Fielding's Tom Jones and the Perspective of Romance," Philological Quarterly 54 (1975): 258-274.

a little ambitious, and extremely amorous" (453). He abandons his studies and engages in a series of expensive intrigues with young women and financial deceits against his father. After he squanders his money, he steals from his college roommate until he is caught and imprisoned. He later goes to London, where he subsists as a professional gambler until a chance meeting with his father affords him an opportunity to reform his ways and withdraw to the country for a life of solitary reflection. Upon his father's death, the Man of the Hill secures a small annuity from his brother, travels a little, and then retires to a life of misanthropic contemplation.

Like the incidents in the main action that pertain to Jenny Jones and Molly Seagrim, the Man of the Hill's story suggests the dangers of aspiring above one's rank; it also, however, implies that the cost of withdrawing from participation in the larger community is moral and psychological isolation. When the Man of the Hill condemns the egocentric hedonism that affects his older brother and Sir George alike, Fielding clearly shares in the condemnation; but Fielding himself has little sympathy for the self-serving hermitism of the Man of the Hill. The Man of the Hill's moral failure in neglecting and eventually repudiating the social responsibilities of his class is everywhere suggested in his misanthropic ruminations and rather weakly confirmed by his unwillingness to scamper down

Mazard Hill to rescue Mrs. Waters.<sup>17</sup> Nor is the Man of the Hill alone in his selfish rejection of the duties of his class or in the moral and psychological isolation that follows withdrawal from active participation in community life. To take just one other example--similar claims could be made about Western or Blifil or Fellamar--Lady Bellaston, who offers not charity but "Wages" to worthy young men, finds her aggressive pursuit of sexual gratification brings only psychological exile. As Paul-Gabriel Boucé notes, the reader may even feel "a twinge of perhaps misplaced sympathy" at the pathetic urgency of the demi-rep's notes to Jones.<sup>18</sup>

The desire to preserve social order in the face of the threats posed by social emulation is certainly familiar, but the attention to the effects on the self--the vitiation of normal sexual desires, the cordoning off of the self from the larger community--marks a darkening of Fielding's novelistic universe and a tentative shift of focus away from general social conditions to the individual who experiences those conditions. This difference, I think, is a

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<sup>17</sup>Here, I think, is an instance where Fielding's topical political intentions, general commentary about misanthropic withdrawal from community life, and particularizing realism get in one another's way. In order to draw parallels between the dangers of Jacobitism and James II's brutal suppression of Monmouth's rebellion in 1685, Fielding must make the Man of the Hill eighty-eight, an age which would, presumably, excuse him from running down the hill with Tom.

<sup>18</sup>Boucé 30.

development rather than a rupture with past practice: if one looks to Joseph Andrews, one can certainly find characters--Beau Didapper and Leonora are the two most striking--whose subjective selves are destroyed by the characteristic vanities of high life. But the psychological dangers of withdrawing from community life are more striking in Tom Jones, and the difference in emphasis between Fielding's first and second novel can be glimpsed in the differences between the analogous interpolated tales told by Wilson and the Man of the Hill. Whereas Wilson ultimately weathers his temptations and lives the last half of his life within a community and without sustaining any deep psychological scars, the Man of the Hill remains permanently isolated, an object lesson in the potential of social emulation to destroy trust.

## II The Limits of Romance

Despite his characteristic social conservatism, refined here in its emphasis on preserving industry among the poor and competent social management among the rich, Fielding sometimes seems to endorse the idea of innate class characteristics. Here is what the narrator says of the need for the writer to have extensive social experience:

Now this Conversation in our Historian must be universal, that is, with all Ranks and Degrees of Men: for the Knowledge of what is called High-Life, will not instruct him in low, nor e converso, will his being acquainted with the inferior Part of Mankind, teach him the Manners of the superior.... [T]he Follies of either

Rank do in Reality illustrate each other. For instance, the Affectation of High-Life appears more glaring and ridiculous from the Simplicity of the Low; and again, the Rudeness and Barbarity of this latter, strikes with much stronger Ideas of Absurdity, when contrasted with, and opposed to the Politeness which controls the former. Besides, to say the Truth, the Manners of our Historian will be improved by both these Conversations: for in the one he will easily find Examples of Plainness, Honesty, and Sincerity; in the other of Refinement, Elegance, and a Liberality of Spirit: which last Quality I myself have scarce ever seen in Men of low Birth and Education.

The threat of this passage to the prevailing ideological conservatism of Tom Jones (I use the term in McKeon's sense) may be accidental, stemming from Fielding's unwillingness to compromise the pleasing stylistic qualities of balance, contrast, and antithesis; the passage may, however, reveal the vestiges on Fielding's part of an allegiance to a doctrine of innate class qualities. One source of confusion is that, given the scarcity of "Plainness, Honesty, and Sincerity" among the poor of Tom Jones, Fielding's remark appears to be little more than sentimentality of privilege or, at best, a kind of noblesse oblige. The other, related, problem is more perplexing. The "Liberality of Spirit," which Fielding has "scarce ever seen in Men of low Birth and Education," and nowhere presents itself in Tom Jones, implies the straightforward equation of rank and virtue that Fielding usually rejects. Does Fielding mean to suggest that the necessary condition of "Liberality of Spirit" is genteel birth? Or is it genteel education? Or for that matter both? The equivocation is a little unsettling.

The passage on the writer's need to study both high and low life, and other passages that run counter to the narrator's claim that the rich and the poor have an equal propensity to vice--for instance, the reference to Jones's "Air of natural Gentility, which it is neither in the Power of Dress to give, nor to conceal" (692)--raise the possibility of an 'aristocratic' reading of the novel. The romance conventions that give aristocratic ideology its fullest expression do persist in Tom Jones, but in a much more attenuated form than in Joseph Andrews. Like Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones reaches its conclusion through the discovery of a hidden birth; but unlike Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones does not immediately (or for that matter consistently) identify its protagonist as genteel. The full title, with its reference to a mysterious birth, is liable to excite romance expectations, but Fielding carefully holds these expectations in check until well into the novel. It is not until Upton that Fielding describes Tom in a set-piece of aristocratic literary portraiture, and he never becomes so heavy-handed as to refer to Tom's charming the birds or fox-hounds with his sweet voice. In fact, we learn nothing of Tom's appearance or character until the third book, when Fielding presents the first sustained commentary on his young hero:

[W]e are obliged to bring our Hero on the Stage in a much more disadvantageous Manner than we could wish; and to declare honestly, even at his first Appearance, that it was the universal Opinion of all Mr. All-

worthy's Family, that he was certainly born to be hanged.

Indeed, I am sorry to say, there was too much Reason for this Conjecture. The Lad having, from his earliest Years, discovered a Propensity to many Vices, and especially to one, which hath as directly a Tendency as any other to that Fate, which we have just now observed to have been prophetically pronounced against him. He had been already convicted of three Robberies, viz. of robbing an Orchard, of stealing a Duck out of Farmer's Yard, and of picking Master Blifil's Pocket of a Ball.

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. He was indeed a Lad of a remarkable Disposition; sober, discreet, and pious beyond his Age. Qualities, which gained him the Love of every one who knew him, while Tom Jones was universally disliked.... (118)

Of course, the narrator's gentle if obvious irony and the well-established tendency of the community to get things backwards rescue the reader from participation in the general condemnation of Tom. The prevailing tone here and everywhere indicates that Jones is not destined for the gallows, but first-time readers might be forgiven for expecting a life of maritime opportunism in the manner of Roderick Random. Indeed, if there were any doubt about Master Blifil's birth, he would at this point seem (except for his inauspicious name) the most likely equivalent to Joseph Andrews.

The anecdote that immediately follows disabuses Fielding's readers about Blifil and confirms their sympathy for Jones, but it does not identify the kinds of genteel characteristics that cling to Joseph Andrews from boyhood.

The preternaturally sensitive reader might see Tom's treatment of Black George as an early exercise in aristocratic generosity, but Allworthy correctly identifies it as misguided allegiance (an allegiance, it should be noted, that belongs to Tom's good-natured ingenuity and persists until the end of the novel). In the early books, Tom is variously described, with some justice, as "an idle, thoughtless, rattling Rascal" (165) and a "thoughtless, giddy Youth" (134). As the action proceeds, however, the process of romance idealization begins to transform Jones from ne'er-do-well into gentleman. He grows handsome, and in his dealings with Sophia develops the romantic idiom of a conventional hero, despite the fact that all his schooling comes from Thwackum and Square. By the fourth book, Mrs. Honour is attesting to Jones's having "one of the whitest Hands in the World" and breath "as sweet as a Nosegay" (206-207).

After his expulsion from Paradise Hall in Book Six, Jones' native gentility begins to emerge more strikingly. The physical marks of this gentility are not quite unambiguous, for Fielding's agenda of social satire demands that Tom frequently be mistaken for a low-class adventurer, especially by tight-fisted innkeepers. To the soldiers he encounters in Book Seven, Tom appears an "honourable, noble, and worthy Gentleman" (367), but their opinion has more to do with Tom's settling their tab than with natural

gentility. The narrator, however, soon confirms their opinion by referring to Tom's "remarkable Air of Dignity in his look, which is rarely seen among the Vulgar, and is indeed not inseparably annexed to the Features of their Superiors" (370). This indicator of Tom's true status, slight and equivocal as it is (Tom has, after all, been educated as a gentleman), anticipates the first sustained description of his aristocratic mien, which occurs just before his seduction by Mrs. Waters:

Mr. Jones, of whose personal Accomplishments we have hitherto said very little, was in Reality, one of the handsomest young Fellows in the World. His Face, besides being the Picture of Health, had in it the most apparent Marks of Sweetness and Good-Nature. These Qualities were indeed so characteristical in his Countenance, that while the Spirit and Sensibility in his Eyes, though they must have been perceived by an accurate Observer, might have escaped the Notice of the less discerning, so strongly was this Good-nature painted in his Look, that it was remarked by almost every one who saw him.

It was, perhaps, as much owing to this, as to a very fine Complexion, that his Face had a Delicacy in it almost inexpressible, and which might have given him an Air rather too effeminate, had it not been joined to a most masculine Person and Mien; which latter had as much in them of the Hercules, as the former had of the Adonis. He was besides active, genteel, gay and good-humoured, and had a Flow of Animal Spirits, which enlivened every Conversation where he was present.  
(510)

As Sean Shesgreen notes, this portrait of Jones, strategically placed at a moment of great erotic significance, is indebted to aristocratic literary portraiture in general and to Scudéry's description of

Albindarrays in particular.<sup>19</sup> But the description of Tom is both slighter and more general than its counterpart in Joseph Andrews, and its resemblance to the family of aristocratic descriptions is almost entirely owing to the emphasis Fielding places on Tom's genteel effeminacy--a "Sweetness," "Sensibility," and "Delicacy" balanced nevertheless by a masculine athleticism that has nothing to do with labour--as well as to two or three painterly references that act as subtle reminders that this is, indeed, a kind of portrait.

To a lesser degree, other characters are also defined according to the physical stereotypes of class. The novel's most elaborate and complex description is of Sophia Western. The description, which extends for an entire chapter, manifests considerable variations in tone, and generalizations are therefore dangerous.<sup>20</sup> However, one of the means Fielding uses to describe Sophia is the idealized and stereotyped description of her as a genteel heroine:

Her black Eyes had a Luster in them, which all her Softness could not extinguish. Her Nose was exactly regular, and her Mouth, in which were two Rows of Ivory, exactly answered Sir John Suckling's Description in those Lines,  
Her Lips were red, and one was thin,  
Compar'd to that was next her Chin.

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<sup>19</sup>Sean Shesgreen, Literary Portraits in the Novels of Henry Fielding (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois UP, 1972) 127-128.

<sup>20</sup>For sustained discussions of this passage see Shesgreen 131-140 and Battestin, The Providence of Wit, 181-82.

Some Bee had stung it newly.

Her Cheeks, were of the oval Kind; and in her right she had a Dimple which the least Smile discovered. Her Chin had certainly its Share in forming the Beauty of her Face; but it was difficult to say it was either large or small, tho' perhaps it was rather of the former Kind. Her Complexion had rather more of the Lilly than of the Rose; but when Exercise, or Modesty, encreased her natural Colour, no Vermilion could equal it.... (157)

Possessed of both genteel birth and genteel breeding, Sophia really is unambiguously genteel, and Fielding doesn't need to remind his reader, three paragraphs later, of her "natural Gentility" (158).

Sophia's status is never in question, and so her gentility, after the first description, is one of the novel's givens. But in the case of Captain Blifil, a man whose place in polite society is in question, Fielding can be seen 'placing' his subject socially. After a brief preliminary description suggesting Blifil's capacity to assume an air of gentility at will (62-63), the narrator writes, "His Shape and Limbs were indeed exactly proportioned, but so large, that they denoted the Strength rather of a Ploughman than any other. His Shoulders were broad, beyond all Size, and the Calves of his Legs larger than those of a common Chairman" (66). Despite the concession to the Captain's exact proportions, the grotesque oversizing indicates that the Captain is better suited to a life of physical labour. In much the same way that the descriptions of Tom raise suspicions about his birth and hint at his ultimate suitability as a husband for

Sophia, these details would likely have contributed to the contemporary reader's sense that Captain Blifil's presence in Allworthy's household is a violation of the natural order assumed by conventional romance.

Such stereotypes of class and the ultimate disclosure of Tom's true birth at first seem to reinforce an ethos that Fielding often attacks, but the handling of the birth-mystery plot at least is very close to the parody of aristocratic ideology that McKeon sees in Joseph Andrews.<sup>21</sup> The revelations of the last book constitute an impressive structural device, neatly resolving most questions of plot and many ambiguities in the pronouncements of the narrator and the conduct of Bridget, Blifil, Jenny Jones, and the lawyer Dowling. Still, the disclosure of Tom's parentage must have felt distinctly unsettling to Fielding's first readers, and not only because of the question of Tom's bastardy. Bridget Blifil is too grotesquely caricatured and carries too great a burden of satire to be anything but an unappealing choice as Tom's mother. And despite the fact that Tom's father is intriguingly named Summer, the son of a poor clergyman of the kind that lurks in the family trees of Honour Blackmore and Molly Seagrim can offer little glamour to Tom's background.

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<sup>21</sup>Michael McKeon, Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987) 406.

The disappointment, however, is not only a necessary result of Fielding's ideological conservatism, but also part of the intended overall effect of Tom Jones.<sup>22</sup> Crane argues that had Fielding made more of a mystery of Tom's birth, he would have "divert[ed] our attention unduly from the question of what is likely to befall Tom as the result of his mistakes to the question of who he is."<sup>23</sup> Fielding's de-emphasizing the question of Tom's parentage by downplaying his aristocratic mien is clearly part of the strategy (which for thematic reasons is indispensable) of keeping the reader's attention focussed on the nature and moral implications of Tom's transgressions. But had Fielding desired to promote the class values that mark the birth-mystery plot of Joseph Andrews, he had other paths open to him. He could easily have legitimized Tom's birth by resorting to the convention of the secret marriage. Or he might have humanized Bridget to a greater degree than he did, by relieving her of her considerable burden of satire; he could, for instance, have dramatized the "Satisfaction

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<sup>22</sup>Several critics have suggested that Fielding deliberately disappoints his reader at the end of Tom Jones. See, for instance, Sheridan Baker's comparison of Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews, "Fielding and the Irony of Form," Eighteenth-Century Studies 2 (1968) 138-154. And Leopold Damrosch Jr. reaches a conclusion similar to mine in God's Plots and Man's Stories: Studies in the Fictional Imagination from Milton to Fielding (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), when he claims that Tom Jones "contradicts the comforting satisfaction of the foundling motif" (285).

<sup>23</sup>Crane 83.

and Delight" she receives in Tom's company (140).<sup>24</sup> But by killing off both Tom's parents (one of whom makes only a tardy, posthumous appearance), and arranging matters so that the revelation of Tom's birth must entail the irrevocable estrangement between Tom and his closest blood relation, Fielding diminishes the reader's satisfaction at the family reunion.

Notwithstanding Fielding's handling of Tom's genteel birth, there is a problem inherent in the structure of Tom Jones. The comic birth-mystery plot in which a benign providential order ensures a just distribution of Allworthy's estate cannot avoid lending credence to an 'aristocratic' reading of the novel in which questions of moral responsibility are ultimately evaded.<sup>25</sup> There is a sense in which Michael Irwin is surely right when he claims

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<sup>24</sup>For an account of the limited extent to which she did outgrow her type of the aging hypocritical prude, see Sheridan Baker, "Bridget Allworthy: The Creative Pressures of Fielding's Plot," Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters 52 (1987): 345-356.

<sup>25</sup>For a dedicated 'aristocratic' reading of the plot of Tom Jones see Battestin's The Providence of Wit, 141-163. Battestin's extreme emphasis on Fielding's faith in Providence, while not quite allowing him to ignore Fielding's social concerns, does seem to downplay passages like the introductory chapter to Book fifteen, which I deal with in the next section. In his essay "More Providence than Wit: Some Recent Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Literature" (1975; rpt. in Order From Confusion Sprung [London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985]), C. J. Rawson argues, convincingly I think, that Battestin "has a dangerously oversimplified conception of the history of ideas, and of the relationship of the history of ideas to literary texts" (384).

that Fielding's "concentration on Tom's morality shows up the helplessness of individual merit in the eighteenth-century social system." Irwin continues: "A more virtuous Tom who was merely the son of Jenny Jones could not have been rewarded by marriage with Sophia; a much wickeder Tom who was truly heir to the Allworthy estates, would have had her as a matter of course."<sup>26</sup> The birth-mystery plot of Tom Jones--indeed any comic variation of this plot--allows a suspiciously easy reconciliation of romantic love and social duty in the manner of Congreve's Incognita. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the difference between Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones in the handling of the plot is that in the first novel Fielding exploits a conventional plot to create the greatest possible satisfaction in the reader, whereas in the second novel he comes precariously close to denaturing the convention by testing its limits too strenuously. If Joseph Andrews allows one to luxuriate in the comfortable assurances provided by an obsolete and perhaps dangerous literary convention, Tom Jones directs the reader's attention back to the convention and in doing so, I think, forces a critical reconsideration of the value of that convention. The birth-mystery plot can be adapted only so well to the novelistic end of exploring moral experience in a world where there is no correspondence between moral worth and social standing.

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<sup>26</sup>Irwin 112.

### III. Providence, Prudence, and the Generous Heart

Despite a few dissenting arguments, two of the most cogent by C. J. Rawson and Mark Kinkead-Weekes,<sup>27</sup> the prevailing view of Tom Jones is that the narrator functions as an analogue of a providential God and that the narrative commentary, assuredness of tone, and rigorously conceived plot argue both Fielding's faith in a providentially ordered universe and his belief in the need for prudence as a guard against the schemes of the vicious. In the words of Martin Battestin, the main proponent of this view,

Tom Jones stands as an elaborate paradigm of those correlative tenets of the Augustan world-view: the belief in the existence of Order in the great frame of the universe [providence], and the necessity for Order in the private soul [prudence]. Its special triumph as a work of art is that it does not merely declare these values explicitly in the narrator's commentary and in the dialogue, but embodies them formally in the structure of its periods and its plot, and in the function of its narrator, and expresses them figuratively through the controlled complexities of its language and the emblematic significance of many of its scenes and principal characters.<sup>28</sup>

According to Battestin, Tom must learn true prudence, or "moral vision and self-discipline," before Providence can take its course and unite him with Sophia, herself an emblem for Prudentia, or "practical wisdom" (176). Although Battestin, following Eleanor Hutchens' discussion of irony

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<sup>27</sup>C. J. Rawson "More Providence than Wit: Some Recent Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Literature," Order From Confusion Sprung, 396-402, and Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "Out of the Thicket in Tom Jones," Henry Fielding, Justice Observed, Ed. K. G. Simpson (London: Vision, 1985) 137-157.

<sup>28</sup>Battestin 142.

in Tom Jones,<sup>29</sup> recognizes that the vast majority of the novel's references to prudence are pejorative, and although he concedes that Fielding's idea of prudence is "essentially synthetic," an amalgam of Ciceronian prudence and "certain less ignoble features of the modern version," Battestin assumes that for Fielding some version of prudence is not only essential but essentially costless.<sup>30</sup> A straight reading of Allworthy's advice to Jones thus becomes crucial: "you have much Goodness, Generosity and Honour in your Temper; if you will add Prudence and Religion to these, you must be happy: For the three former Qualities, I admit, make you worthy of Happiness, but they are the latter only which will put you in Possession of it" (244). Never mind that Allworthy, like Adams before him, habitually voices pieties that are in the abstract unexceptionable but seem curiously inadequate accounts of immediate moral experience, or that the narrator offers important qualifications: Battestin's assumption of Fielding's "Augustan faith in Order" (164) precludes reservations, ironic undercuttings, and explorations of the contradictions in moral experience.

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<sup>29</sup>See Eleanor Hutchens' claim that the word "prudence" is "used unfavourably three times to every one time [it is] used favourably" (Irony in Tom Jones [University, Ala: University of Alabama Press, 1965] 101).

<sup>30</sup>Battestin's Ciceronian account of prudence seems to have the most currency, but in "Aristotle and the 'Prudence' Theme of Tom Jones," Eighteenth-Century Studies 15 (1981) 26-47, Frederick Ribble cogently argues an opposing account based on the Aristotelian model of prudence.

Earlier I suggested that Fielding's treatment of the conventional birth-mystery plot represents a darkening of his novelistic universe since Joseph Andrews, a misgiving about the capacity of romance conventions to represent extra-literary order. When Fielding explores the implications of prudence for the self, reservations about the adequacy of abstract moral concepts for resolving the contradictions in moral experience also become striking. In an address to the "well-disposed Youths, who shall hereafter be our Readers," the narrator sets forth the problem of having one's conduct and character misrepresented:

Goodness of Heart, and Openness of Temper, tho' these may give them great Comfort within, and administer to an honest Pride in their own Minds, will by no Means, alas! do their Business in the World. Prudence and Circumspection are necessary even to the best of Men. They are indeed as it were a Guard to Virtue, without which she can never be safe. It is not enough that your Designs, nay that your Actions, are intrinsically good, you must take Care they shall appear so. If your Inside be never so beautiful, you must preserve a fair Outside also. This must be constantly looked to, or Malice and Envy will take Care to blacken it so, that the Sagacity and Goodness of an Allworthy will not be able to see thro' it, and to discern the Beauties within. Let this, my young Readers, be your constant Maxim, that no Man can be good enough to enable him to neglect the Rules of Prudence; nor will Virtue herself look beautiful, unless she be bedecked with the outward Ornaments of Decency and Decorum. (141)

The passage works partly as an exposition of the problem that Tom faces--how to prevent his good nature and good deeds from being turned against him--but that is not to say that the advice is straightforward or without need of qualification. To begin with, close inspection of the

narrator's key terms reveals a contradiction. Although no incompatibility immediately appears between "Goodness of Heart" and the "Prudence" that stands guard, it is difficult to see how candour or "Openness of Temper"--the corollary of the first term--can coexist with the "Circumspection" that is the main instrument of prudence. At first the contradiction may seem negligible, the result perhaps of Fielding's momentary inattention to the implications of his terms, but taken in context it becomes significant. The narrator's commentary occurs at the very moment when Allworthy's affections begin to shift from Tom to Blifil, and there is clearly some ironic relish in the fact that Allworthy's admirable qualities--his "Goodness of Heart, and Openness of Temper"--are what leave him vulnerable to the impositions of the self-servingly prudent. The "Goodness of an Allworthy" (in the passage above "Sagacity" is clearly ironic) is not only not enough to see through "Malice and Envy," it is what allows Blifil to thrive and what indirectly endangers Tom's claim on Allworthy's affections.

When, at the beginning of Book Fifteen, Fielding considers the providential rewards for good conduct, he again questions the compatibility of "Circumspection" with "Openness of Temper":

There are a Set of Religious, or rather Moral Writers, who teach that Virtue is the certain Road to Happiness, and Vice to Misery in this World. A very wholesome and

comfortable Doctrine, and to which we have but One Objection, namely, That it is not true. (783)<sup>31</sup>

One must be careful. The passage does not, of course, raise serious fears about the novel's conclusion: it portends complications to the plot, notably Fellamar's schemes against Sophia and Tom. It therefore serves as a tease that contributes to what Crane calls the "comic analogue of fear."<sup>32</sup> But over and above its function in conditioning the reader's expectations, the passage introduces thematic complications that lie not so much in the blunt anti-providential claims as in Fielding's subsequent qualification of the term "Virtue." As the chapter continues, Fielding contrasts two definitions of virtue:

Indeed if by Virtue these Writers mean, the Exercise of those Cardinal Virtues, which like good House-wives stay at Home, and mind only the Business of their own Family, I shall very readily concede the Point: For so surely do all these contribute and lead to Happiness, that I could almost wish, in Violation of all the antient and modern Sages, to call them rather by the Name of Wisdom, than by that of Virtue: For with regard to this Life, no System, I conceive, was ever wiser than that of the antient Epicureans, who held this Wisdom to constitute the chief Good; nor foolisher than that of their Opposites, those modern Epicures,

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<sup>31</sup>Fielding had made milder versions of the same claim before, most notably a propos of Jonathan Wild in the Preface to the Miscellanies: "And though perhaps it sometimes happens, contrary to the Instances I have given, that the Villain succeeds in his Pursuit, and acquires some transitory imperfect Honour or Pleasure to himself for his Iniquity; yet I believe he oftner shares the Fate of my Hero, and suffers the Punishment, without obtaining the Reward" (Henry Fielding, Miscellanies by Henry Fielding, Esq; Volume One, ed. Henry Knight Miller [Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1972] 11).

<sup>32</sup>Crane 87.

who place all Felicity in the abundant Gratification of every sensual Appetite.

"But," Fielding writes,

if by Virtue is meant (as I almost think it ought) a certain relative Quality, which is always busying itself without Doors, and seems as much interested in pursuing the Good of others as its own; I cannot so easily agree that this is the surest way to human Happiness; because I am afraid we must then include Poverty and Contempt, with all the Mischiefs which Backbiting, Envy, and Ingratitude can bring on Mankind in our Idea of Happiness; nay, sometimes perhaps we shall be obliged to wait upon the said Happiness to a Goal, since many by the above Virtue have brought themselves thither. (783-84)

Fielding refrains here from naming the two competing versions of virtue, but the distinction he makes clarifies the connection between what he earlier refers to as "the Rules of Prudence" and "Goodness of Heart" (141). The first definition implies that generalized "Virtue" is the exercise of prudence and, secondarily, temperance, the two cardinal virtues which "like Good House-wives stay at Home." The association of "Virtue" with prudence in particular is reinforced by Fielding's ironic dissent from the opinions of "ancient and modern Sages" who did in fact call prudence wisdom.<sup>33</sup> Although Fielding does not distinguish between true and false notions of prudence, his endorsement of

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<sup>33</sup>Cf. Battestin's claim that Cicero's distinction between *sophia* and *phronesis* might be termed a distinction between "speculative and practical" wisdom (166) as well as his discussion of eighteenth-century formulations of prudence (169-176).

prudence is at best luke-warm.<sup>34</sup> The passage most strongly evokes the spectre of Blifil, who, in his control of his passions and in his abstemious life seems a ghastly parody of the "antient Epicureans" for whom moderation of desire was the means to a happy life. Furthermore, the reference to stay-at-home housewifery calls to mind the cramped and contracted life of The Man of the Hill, while the reader fresh from Joseph Andrews might also be reminded of the uncharitable Mrs. Adams. Even more striking is the fact that the second generalized definition of virtue, towards which Fielding is clearly sympathetic, entails a distinction not between true and false prudence but between prudence and something else entirely. The second definition of virtue is consonant with Fielding's idea of "good Nature," and it here applies most strikingly to Tom, who is at this moment engaged in "preserv[ing] his fellow Creatures [Nightingale and Miss Nancy] from Destruction" (784). The second definition also echoes "Of Love," the introductory chapter

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<sup>34</sup>Admittedly, if one assumes along with Battestin that Fielding is completely dedicated to a classical view of prudence, an argument could be made that Fielding circuitously endorses prudence. The argument would run thus: since orthodox Christian theology holds that prudence is the "cause, root, mother, measure, precept, guide, and prototype of all ethical virtues" (Joseph Pieper, The Four Cardinal Virtues [1954; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966] 8), any notion of prudence which does not foster justice and fortitude as well as temperance must be false. Fielding, however, does not quite say this; moreover, his exclusion of any idea of prudence from his second definition of virtue suggests that he is much closer to the modern view that "the concept of the good rather excludes than includes prudence" (Pieper 5).

to Book Six. In particular, the narrator's remark that this second kind of virtue is "as much interested in pursuing the Good of others as its own" recalls the portrayal of love as "a kind and benevolent Disposition, which is gratified in contributing to the Happiness of others" (270).

Significantly, one cannot both "stay at Home" and "busy... [oneself] without Doors": the self-protecting prudence of the Man of the Hill or Blifil is, ultimately, incompatible with the generosity of Allworthy or Tom. Prudence protects one against the schemes of one's enemies, but only "Goodness of Heart, and Openness of Temper" (142) allow full participation in community life. Unfortunately, the very qualities that suit one for society also leave one vulnerable to "Backbiting, Envy, and Ingratitude" (784), and so, at the end of his introduction to Book Fifteen, Fielding is forced to defer happiness to the next life and turn acceptance of earthly injustice into "one of the noblest Arguments that Reason alone can furnish for the Belief of Immortality" (784). But if prudence can never fully be cleansed of its pejorative associations, it is not because all prudence is self-serving, but because prudence involves compromises to the self. In a world populated by Blifils, the qualities of generosity, candour, and open-heartedness--the distinguishing qualities of Tom and Allworthy--cannot safely exist without the protection of prudence; but prudence by its very nature vitiates all these qualities.

The two extended passages dealing with prudence are, I think, among Fielding's finest moments of what Watt calls "realism of assessment." Although both passages are followed by intrusive remarks from the narrator, they are relatively free of the literary self-consciousness that in Joseph Andrews so often diverts the reader's attention at moments when Fielding's handling of his subject matter risks becoming serious. And yet, Tom himself rarely seems an adequate vehicle for Fielding's exploration of the implications to the self of prudence. Tom eventually accepts responsibility for his sexual misconduct, and, in the end, the narrator reports that "[w]hatever in the Nature of Jones had a Tendency to Vice" has been "corrected" by his friendship with Allworthy and his marriage to Sophia. Tom has "also," we are told, "by Reflexion on his past Follies, acquired a Discretion and Prudence very uncommon in one of his lively Parts" (981). Kinkead-Weekes argues, convincingly I think, that even the order of terms--the 'also' introducing the last, least important quality--betrays Fielding's sympathies.<sup>35</sup> But the tidy summary seems a letdown after the narrator's patient and subtle examination of the nature and implications of prudence, for it evades the question of what the acquisition of prudence does to Tom. One is, finally, reminded of the distinction Henry James makes between Tom, who "has so much 'life' that

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<sup>35</sup>Kinkead-Weekes 152.

it amounts, for the effect of comedy and application of satire, almost to his having a mind, that is to his having reactions and a full consciousness," and his author, who, "handsomely possessed of a mind...has such an amplitude of reflection for him and round him that we see him through the mellow air of Fielding's fine old moralism, fine old humour and fine old style which somehow really enlarge, make everyone and everything important."<sup>36</sup> The only "full consciousness" in the novel is the narrator's, and that is both the strength and limitation of Tom Jones.

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<sup>36</sup>Henry James, Preface to The Princess Casamassima (1886; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) 15.

Chapter 5: Amelia and the Dystopia of Emulation.

Modern academic discussion of Fielding's last novel owes much to George Sherburn's 1936 essay, "Amelia: An Interpretation." Rejecting the contemporary tendency to dismiss Amelia as either a second-rate comic sequel to Tom Jones or the product of its author's impaired health, Sherburn was among the first to argue that Fielding sought to explain the Booths' domestic troubles in terms of widespread "political and social degeneracy."<sup>1</sup> But despite Sherburn's success in rehabilitating Fielding's intentions, neither his nor any subsequent defense of Fielding's "favorite Child"<sup>2</sup> has expressed the nearly unqualified admiration that Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews sometimes inspire, and even the most sympathetic assessments have conceded that Amelia lacks the rhetorical brilliance of the earlier novels. Amelia has, however, attracted interest as a forerunner of the Victorian social novel. Robert Alter calls Amelia "an embryonic novel of social protest" and "a first anticipation of the masterful interlocking of separate lives through shared situation that gives Middlemarch such

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<sup>1</sup>George Sherburn, "Amelia: An Interpretation," ELH: A Journal of English Literary History 3 (1936): 14.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Fielding, The Covent-Garden Journal, ed. Gerard Edward Jenson, 2 Vols (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964) I, 186.

remarkable structural coherence."<sup>3</sup> In a similar vein, Martin Battestin claims that Amelia is "the first novel of social protest and reform in English--a kind of book scarcely attempted again on such a scale before Dickens."<sup>4</sup> And David Blewett, also invoking Dickens, observes that Amelia has "an urgency and pathos that are not to be found in English fiction until nineteenth-century novels such as Bleak House."<sup>5</sup>

As the tendency to judge Amelia by the concerns of Eliot and the later Dickens suggests, Fielding moves toward a serious realism at the expense of his habitual comic themes and practices.<sup>6</sup> This development has important

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<sup>3</sup>Robert Alter, Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1968) 148, 151.

<sup>4</sup>Martin C. Battestin, "General Introduction" in Henry Fielding, Amelia, ed. Martin C. Battestin (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1983) xv.

<sup>5</sup>David Blewett, Introduction, in Henry Fielding, Amelia (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) xx.

<sup>6</sup>This is not to suggest that Amelia represents a simple rupture with Fielding's characteristic concerns and practices. In Occasional Form: Henry Fielding and the Chains of Circumstance (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1975), J. Paul Hunter presents most fully the case that Amelia represents thematic and in many ways formal continuity with Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones (206-207), but argues that the change in the novel's rhetoric attests to Fielding's despair at the efficacy of his characteristic rhetoric (194).

On the question of how far Fielding moved away from a neoclassical presentation of an orderly Augustan world view and embraced the concerns and procedures of realism, there has been much more debate. Hunter rejects the view that Amelia is a realist, psychological novel (195), arguing that Fielding is still concerned to show the connection between prudence and providence (197-99). C. J. Rawson, on the other hand, attributes Fielding's fluctuations in tone and

implications for the connection between Fielding's ideological position and his presentation of character. Long ago, John S. Coolidge identified Fielding's oscillation between "Conservation of Character,"<sup>7</sup> a principle derived from dramatic comedy by which characters remain true to character sketches usually supplied at the moment of their appearance, and a more tentative, "realistic" mode of presentation by which characters become "subject to modification or enlargement" over the course of the novel.<sup>8</sup> Eric Rothstein, whose main concern with Amelia is the "hiddenness of [the characters'] thought, and therefore of motive," identifies a "psychological density not hitherto

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his intense interest in the theme of fortune to a struggle between the "rage for order and the senseless brutality of fact," between neoclassic desire to affirm a natural order that is theoretically present in English society, and the reluctant recognition of the disorder actually present (Henry Fielding and the Augustan Ideal Under Stress [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972] 68).

In recent years, there has been considerable intensification of claims for Fielding's realism, although these claims do not usually include any claim for a markedly more sophisticated treatment of the self. In Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), for instance, John Bender argues that Fielding transfers authority from the intrusive narrator to Harrison, thus undertaking a significant "move toward transparent narration...[that] increases the realism of presentation" (192).

<sup>7</sup>Henry Fielding, The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling, eds. Martin C. Battestin and Fredson Bowers, 2 Vols (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1975) I, 405.

<sup>8</sup>John S. Coolidge, "Fielding and 'Conservation of Character,'" Modern Philology 57 (1960) 246.

typical of Fielding."<sup>9</sup> And Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that Fielding's last novel "emphasizes the degree to which an experience's location in time determines its psychological valence" and that Fielding "implicitly inquires" how characters might change over time.<sup>10</sup>

The new emphases on character and the conditions of social existence raise a question central to any valuation of Amelia: does Fielding's treatment of his characters' private concerns permit both a critique of contemporary society and a workable answer to contemporary social problems? The answer that most of Fielding's critics have offered is 'not quite,' at least not if one pays close attention to the end of the novel. Sherburn characterizes Amelia as "less tolerant of the idle rich, or of the governing classes" than Tom Jones or Joseph Andrews, but contends that the novel fails because Fielding ultimately "turns his back on the larger theme."<sup>11</sup> Michael Irwin argues that while "only in Amelia does social reform become an important motive," the "glib economic solution [the restoration of Amelia's inheritance] enables Fielding to beg

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<sup>9</sup>Eric Rothstein, Systems of Order and Inquiry in Later Eighteenth-Century Fiction (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975) 154, 164.

<sup>10</sup>Patricia Meyer Spacks, Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1976) 276, 281, 280.

<sup>11</sup>Sherburn 11, 14.

most of the moral questions he has been concerned to raise."<sup>12</sup> And in one of the best, most sustained analyses of the problem, Cynthia Griffin Wolff identifies the evasions that diminish the novel's ending: whereas Fielding's good men--Harrison, Allworthy, and Adams, among others--tend to be socially ineffective, "shrink[ing] from a vigorous exercise of power and tend[ing] instead to spontaneous acts of individual benevolence," the problems confronting the good in a corrupt society "can be solved only when some significant and workable connexion can be established between private good and public morality."<sup>13</sup> The general success of Amelia, Wolff argues, is paradoxically diminished by the particular forcefulness of Fielding's depiction of "public depravity" and "private goodness" (54).

Still, the extent of Fielding's success in making private experience the locus of a social critique is owing to an implicit concession that the representation of moral experience cannot easily be subordinated to the kinds of moral abstractions--chastity and charity, for instance--that it was the business Joseph Andrews to elaborate. Perhaps as

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<sup>12</sup>Michael Irwin, Henry Fielding, The Tentative Realist (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 113, 132.

<sup>13</sup>Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "Fielding's Amelia: Private Virtue and Public Good," Texas Studies in Language and Literature 10 (1968) 50, 54. In a similar vein, Spacks writes that the "relative powerlessness" of Amelia and Booth "reveals the horror of social reality--a horror that Fielding finally evades" (299).

a result of this concession, Fielding sheds those aspects of his past practice--burlesque and mock-heroic intrusions, romance conventions, class-based caricatures--that, at best, encourage him to ignore questions about the nature of the self in society and, at worst, make such questions unposeable. This shift in emphasis from literary artifice to the presentation of moral experience allows a partial resolution of the tension between Fielding's commitment to presenting a general assessment of social ills and what has been until now a less pronounced interest in representing the self. The realism that emerges, uneven as it is, allows an acute analysis of the effects of a crisis of aristocratic authority on the social and sexual ambitions of a handful of highly individuated characters.

Any discussion touching on the politics of Amelia must address any shifts in Fielding's ideological perspective after Tom Jones. Like the political pamphlets of Fielding's last years, Amelia manifests its author's deepening conviction that English society is menaced by forces of civil disorder at once more powerful and more pervasive than Fielding had once thought. Since Amelia was written during this period of ideological revision, I will first address the cultural critique posed by the Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers before turning to Fielding's novelistic elaboration of this critique in Amelia.

I. Legislating the Poor, Scolding the Rich, Evading the Issue: The Politics of Fielding's Enquiry

In the years following the publication of Tom Jones, the particulars of Fielding's administrative and literary careers suggest growing disaffection with the ability of English criminal justice, as it stood, to ensure civil order. Upon his appointment as Justice of the Peace for Westminster (1748) and Middlesex (1749), Fielding strengthened legal administration by establishing the Bow Street Runners;<sup>14</sup> at the same time, he turned much of his attention to writing reformatory political pamphlets. In both An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers (1751) and the Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor (1753), Fielding proposes extensive legislative reforms designed to regulate the conduct and movement of the poor, thereby checking crime and increasing economic productivity.<sup>15</sup> During this period, he also wrote Examples of the Interposition of Providence in the Detection and Punishment of Murder (1752), a list of providential

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<sup>14</sup>For an informative, if pious, account of Fielding's improvements to urban policing, see Holmes Dudden, Henry Fielding: His Life, Works, and Times (Oxford: Clarendon, 1952) II, 764-69.

<sup>15</sup>The standard account of these two pamphlets in the context of contemporary political writing is Malvin Zirker's, Fielding's Social Pamphlets (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), esp. 43-64. Zirker emphasizes the conventionality of both the Enquiry and the Proposal (63-64), placing Fielding's reformatory attitudes and proposals at the politically conservative end of the spectrum of contemporary views (58).

compensations for imperfections of human justice that Hunter describes as betraying "something near desperation about the relation of reality to order."<sup>16</sup> Even Fielding's last work, The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon (1754), has strong affiliations to the reform-minded political pamphlet. Partly an indignant exposé of the depredations of sailors, customs officers, and watermen on unsuspecting travellers, the Journal proclaims Fielding's intention "to bring about at once...a perfect reformation of the laws relating to our maritime affairs."<sup>17</sup> An account of Fielding's reformatory projects is beyond the scope of the present study; however, a brief examination of the Enquiry's cultural critique may offer a glimpse at the value of novelistic realism as an expression of Fielding's social criticism.

The Enquiry, which Fielding interrupted his work on Amelia to write,<sup>18</sup> addresses a crisis in the English "Constitution," a term by which Fielding means the harmony resulting from the "Order and Disposition" of "the original and fundamental Law of the Kingdom...; all legislative and executive Authority; all the municipal Provisions which are commonly called The Laws, and, lastly, the Customs,

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<sup>16</sup>Hunter 193.

<sup>17</sup>Henry Fielding, The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon, Ed. Harold E. Pagliaro (New York: Nardone, 1963) 30.

<sup>18</sup>Martin C. Battestin with Ruthe Battestin, Henry Fielding: A Life (London: Routledge, 1989) 498.

Manners, and Habits of the People."<sup>19</sup> In Fielding's view, the constitution evolves through legal and administrative reforms and through changes in the "Genius, Manners, and Habits" of the people (66). Fielding attributes a recent threat to the constitution--the epidemic of robberies--to the centuries-long emancipation of the commonalty from the feudal authority of the nobility (64), but identifies its immediate cause as the spread of luxury brought about by trade and the increased prosperity of the poor. The rise of fashionable entertainments, gaming, and gin-drinking among the lower ranks threatens economic and, ultimately, political order. Places of public diversion modelled on Ranelagh and Vauxhall cause "inferior Tradesmen" great "Loss of Time, and Neglect of Business" (80). A taste for cards and dice is yet more dangerous, for it makes impoverished gamblers turn highwaymen to support their habit (93-94). Worst of all, gin, though cheap, "disqualifies [the poor]...from using any honest Means to acquire it," while "remov[ing] all Sense of Fear and Shame, and embolden[ing] them to commit every wicked and desperate Enterprize" (89).

Fielding's anxiety about the economic and political consequences of social emulation is familiar from Tom Jones: one might think of the gouty innkeeper who squanders his uncle's fortune or of Nightingale's insolent, whist-playing

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<sup>19</sup>Henry Fielding, An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers and Related Writings, ed. Malvin R. Zirker (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1988) 66, 65.

servant. What is new to the Enquiry is the implication that, in their present form, cultural institutions are powerless to preserve civil order. Characteristically reluctant to admit attacks on the law itself, but compelled to admit them nonetheless, Fielding contends that the impotence of English criminal justice stems "partly from the Abuse of some Laws, and partly from the total Neglect of others; and (if I may presume to say it) somewhat perhaps from a Defect in the Laws themselves" (98). He even expresses the fear that unless means are found to regulate the conduct of the poor, their luxury will bring about a complete dissolution of civil order. At one point he quotes Middleton's Life of Cicero to compare modern England with ancient Rome before it fell to the rule of banditti (73-74); at another he anticipates further increases in crime (75); and at yet another he foresees an England depopulated and militarily weakened by the effects of gin on the poor (92).

Since Fielding takes the economic and political consequences of luxury and social emulation more seriously in the Enquiry than in Joseph Andrews or Tom Jones, it is not surprising that here his anxiety to preserve industry among the poor is more pronounced while his concern with the conduct of the upper orders is correspondingly weaker. Take, for instance, the following account of the effects of social emulation:

In free Countries, at least, it is a Branch of Liberty claimed by the People to be as wicked and as profligate

as their Superiors. Thus while the Nobleman will emulate the Grandeur of a Prince; and the Gentleman will aspire to the proper State of the Nobleman; the Tradesman steps from behind his Counter into the vacant Place of the Gentleman. Nor doth Confusion end here: It reaches the very Dregs of the People, who aspiring still to a Degree beyond that which belongs to them, and not being able by the Fruits of honest Labour to support the State which they affect, they disdain the Wages to which their Industry would intitle them; and abandoning themselves to Idleness, the more simple and poor-spirited betake themselves to a State of Starving and Beggary, while those of more Art and Courage become Thieves, Sharpers, and Robbers. (77)

The passage reads like a desperate version of the "Ladder of Dependence"<sup>20</sup> in which Fielding emphasizes political disorder rather than risible affectation. Fielding begins with a moral critique that denies innate distinctions between aristocrats and commoners, but his deft control of connotation ("Grandeur," "State," and "Place"; "emulate," "aspire," and "step") betrays a tolerance proportional to the social standing of his subject. Although here luxury originates among the nobility and proceeds downward through imitation,<sup>21</sup> Fielding excuses luxury among the upper orders as "rather a moral than a political Evil" (77) and spends the greater part of the Enquiry--eight of eleven sections--

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<sup>20</sup>Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, ed. Martin C. Battestin (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1967) 176.

<sup>21</sup>In the passage quoted above, as in the novels, Fielding attributes luxury among the lower orders to the imitation of false models of gentility, but he is not entirely consistent in the Enquiry about where to place responsibility. In the dedicatory letter, for instance, Fielding implies that the origins of constitutional "Disease" are among the "lower Branches of our Constitution" (63) rather than among those who provide bad models of conduct.

advocating measures far more distasteful to the poor than to their superiors. The upper orders, whose vices Fielding tolerates for reasons of Mandevillian economics (83), must quarantine themselves by preserving traditional social distinctions; at the same time, legislative reforms need to be enacted to extirpate luxury among the underclasses. Thus, in the early sections of the Enquiry, Fielding advocates banning gin or at least taxing it heavily (91-92), closing all public places of diversion except Vauxhall and Ranelagh (84), and strictly enforcing existing laws on gambling (96).

In his essay on authority in Fielding's late writings, Hugh Amory identifies a fundamental inconsistency in the Enquiry's approach to social reform. Amory argues that Fielding oscillates between his traditional literary role as censor and his official public role as magistrate:

Fielding ...[is] ready to proceed by potestas [legislation] against the "low" but [he is] lacking in auctoritas [the moral authority of the Roman censor] to reform the "great".... He proposes a very Ciceronian solution: let the corrupt patricians withdraw from the political arena, the city, where their example is corrupting the plebs. Then, when the "great" have "withdrawn" to their private amusements, Fielding can carry on a "just war" against the gangs of robbers that remain in the city....<sup>22</sup>

If the double role accurately reflects Fielding's patrician social attitudes, it also presents a serious obstacle to his

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<sup>22</sup>Hugh Amory, "Magistrate or Censor? The Problem of Authority in Fielding's Later Writing," Studies in English Literature 12 (1972) 506.

project of social reform. The literate public to whom Fielding addresses himself is as subject as the poor to luxury, fashionable vices, and social emulation; but not being composed of gin drinkers and highwaymen, it is exempt from the measures Fielding advocates. The great must be appealed to on some grounds if the causes of social emulation are to be addressed, but it is on this point that the Enquiry abruptly founders. Amory convincingly argues that Fielding's role as magistrate is "inadequate to [the] vision of authority" that is needed to change the conduct of the upper orders (512). Rather than assuming this role and addressing the twin problems of luxury and emulation, Fielding offers his readers common-sense advice undercut by an irony that concedes the unlikelihood of changing the conduct of the wealthy:

[W]e may, I think, reasonably desire of these great Personages, that they would keep their favourite Vice to themselves, and not suffer others, whose Birth or Fortune gives them no Title to be above the Terrour of the Laws, or the Censure of their Betters, to share with them in this Privilege.... What Temptations can Gamesters of Fashion have to admit inferiour Sharpers into their Society? Common Sense, surely, will not suffer a Man to risque a Fortune against one who hath none of his own to Stake against it. (93)

The logic of Fielding's advice is undeniable, and yet the tone betrays the inadequacy of simple appeals to reason to change conduct.<sup>23</sup> For all its apparent pragmatism,

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<sup>23</sup>One can detect a similar tone whenever Fielding raises the problem of luxury among the upper orders: in the paragraph preceding the one quoted above, for instance, and in Fielding's brief aside on the diversions of genteel women

Fielding's advice to the upper orders, like his proposed legislation of the lower, can be only partly effective, for it ignores the reasons for the luxury and social emulation that threaten civil order.

The impasse Fielding reaches manifests itself most strikingly in his use of the commonplace metaphor of disease (a metaphor to which he returns in Amelia) to describe the effects of luxury and emulation on the constitution.<sup>24</sup>

Employing the language of malady, Fielding refers to "political Diseases" (77) in general and to the spread of fashionable vices to the poor as a particular "Contagion" (83), worries about the law's having become "lethargic" (73) as its representatives grow "rotten" (77), searches to

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(83).

<sup>24</sup>In a footnote to the Wesleyan edition of the Enquiry, Zirker notes, "[t]he familiar body/state/disease metaphor is ubiquitous in writings dealing with the lower class" (63). In fact, for nearly fifteen years, Fielding had used the metaphor of disease in the body politic, but not always to address the problem of the poor. In "A Dream Vision of the Body Politic" (The Craftsman, no. 571, 11 June 1737; rpt. New Essays by Henry Fielding: His Contributions to the Craftsman (1734-1739) and Other Early Journalism. With Stylometric Analysis by Michael G. Farrington, ed. Martin C. Battestin [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989] 213-220), Fielding sees England as a great corpse, its "Head, and some other superior Members" bloated with blood. The implication, of course, is of political corruption, something that, however serious, does not contaminate what the Enquiry calls the "Genius, Manners, and Habits" of the people. In his notes to this essay, Battestin lists other instances of this metaphor, mainly in Fielding's journalism (213-215, 219-220); interestingly, it is only in his later writings--the Enquiry and Amelia--that the metaphor begins to refer to recalcitrant social problems that could not be eradicated by a simple change of administration.

"remedy" luxury among the poor (77), and proposes measures to "palliate the Evil" of gin drinking (92). Having used the dedication and preface to establish the analogy between the "Political" and the "Natural Constitution" (65), Fielding exploits the metaphor of disease to generalize about the destabilizing effects of crime on political order:

The Customs, Manners, and Habits of the People, do, as I have said, form one Part of the Political Constitution; if these are altered therefore, this must be changed likewise; and here, as in the Natural Body, the Disorder of any Part will, in its Consequence, affect the whole. (67)

And later, to argue the dangers of slack administration of the laws against drunkenness:

What Physicians tell us of the animal Functions, will hold true when applied to Laws; Both, by long Disuse lose all their Elasticity and Force. Froward Habits grow on Men, as they do on Children, by long Indulgence: nor will either submit easily to Correction in Matters where they have been accustomed to act at their Pleasure. (63)

But in an early admission that the disease of the body politic is ultimately beyond the remedy of legislation, Fielding writes that "Palliatives alone are to be applied" to the problem of luxury (78). And in the last section of the Enquiry Fielding concedes that the specific legislative measures he proposes are palliatives rather than cures:

[I]f the former Part of this Treatise [i.e. the discussion of the causes of luxury among the poor] should raise any Attention in the Legislature, so as effectually to put a Stop to the Luxury of the lower People, to force the Poor to Industry, and to provide for them when industrious, the latter Part of my Labour [the specific reforms he proposes] would be of very little Use; and indeed all the Pains which can be taken in this latter Part, and all the Remedies which can be

devised, without applying a Cure to the former, will be only of the palliative Kind, which may patch up the Disease, and lessen the bad Effects, but can never totally remove it. (171-72)

Fielding's political sympathies--his desire to oblige the upper orders while proposing measures to govern the lower--create a stumbling block that the generic constraints of the political pamphlet do not, I think, permit him to surmount. By his own metaphor, Fielding's legislative and administrative reforms are palliatives rather than cures. But the disease itself, the social emulation that proceeds from high to low life and makes luxury so seductive, stems not from the laws, which can be changed by political will, but from the "Genius, Manners, and Habits" of the English (66), which are immune to legislation. Fielding cannot legislate against the emulation that affects the upper orders, nor can he effectively admonish his novel- or pamphlet-reading public without exploring the private, psychological causes of emulation, a project beyond the scope of a reform-minded political tract but well-suited to the agenda of psychological realism.

## II. The Politics of Preferment and the Subversion of Romance

In the dedication to Amelia, Fielding promises to "expose some of the most glaring Evils, as well public as

private, which at present infest the Country."<sup>25</sup> But the politics of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, and even of the Enquiry, do not prepare the reader for the resemblance between Amelia's England and Pamela's Lincolnshire or Clarissa's London. Pamela, I argued, distinguishes itself from the conventional fiction of the Pamela vogue because it convincingly presents the complex subjective effects of a crisis of aristocratic authority. Richardson's attack on the equation of hereditary rank with ethical authority leads to an ideological position that is progressive not only because it insists that the conscientious self may sometimes legitimately oppose the representatives of aristocratic authority, but also because it proposes a model of social relations based on mutual recognition among spiritual equals. In contradistinction, Fielding's fiction from Shamela to Tom Jones derives its ideological shape from a politically conservative satire that argues the dangers of democratic disorder and the corresponding need for social subordination and submission to the law. In Fielding's comic novels, English society is governed by relations of power by which most men and women demand submission from social inferiors but willingly suspend their judgment to comply with the demands of superiors. The arrangement may

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<sup>25</sup>Henry Fielding, Amelia, ed. Martin C. Battestin (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1983) 3. Subsequent references to this edition occur in parentheses in the text of this chapter.

be distasteful to readers of Puritan moral sensibilities, but it is, Fielding implicitly argues, preferable to the disorder arising from the canting antinomian Methodism of a Williams or the self-serving rationalizations of a Peter Pounce. There persists, to be sure, an undercurrent of what McKeon calls aristocratic ideology (implicit in the birth-mystery plots, aristocratic literary portraiture, and class-based stereotypes) as well as occasional eddies of a progressive tendency approaching Richardson's (in, for instance, Parson Adams' ferocious defense of conscience and the narrator's inquiry in Tom Jones into the costs of prudence). Nonetheless, the conservative impetus of Fielding's cultural critique is unmistakable in his early fiction. Amelia, however, is another matter.

If Pamela appeals to later readers because Richardson successfully dramatizes the psychological effects of a crisis of aristocratic authority, Amelia endures partly because of Fielding's acute sociological analysis of the same crisis. To begin with, social standing in Amelia is more strikingly mutable than in any contemporary fictional representation of English society. Here, where economic and professional status is gradually displacing hereditary rank, professional affiliations based on a system of bureaucratic patronage play as large a role as birth in determining standing and social relations. Bath's military service propels him above men who began life as his social

superiors, and the broken, half-pay Captain Booth remains an intimate acquaintance of Captain James even after James's promotion to Colonel and election to Parliament. Although a virulent prejudice against women who marry beneath themselves is commonplace, male hypergamy occurs frequently enough to complicate the preferment system, increasing social flexibility and fostering some surprisingly egalitarian social relations. Booth, perhaps remembering his own rise in the army, hopes Atkinson will marry a woman who can buy him a commission (200). His wishes are portentous: through marriage to Mrs. Bennet, Atkinson, who had been Booth's batman and unpaid bodyguard, eventually finds himself on an equal footing with the man he is accustomed to serve.

Despite the partial displacement of hereditary rank by professional and economic status, social order still depends largely upon the judgment of the hereditary élite, in whose power it rests to grant preferments. As in Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews, Fielding attacks the judgment and motives of the powerful; here, however, he sharpens his attack by suggesting that administrative corruption has become endemic and irremediable. In Book Eleven, Harrison petitions an unnamed nobleman to have Booth readmitted to the army. The peer implies that he will gladly use his interest, regardless of Booth's qualifications, in return for Harrison's support for Colonel Trompington's mayoralty bid.

When Harrison refuses on the grounds that Mr. Fairfield, the other candidate, is better qualified, the nobleman retracts his offer, and their meeting becomes a dialogue on polity. The nobleman opposes Harrison's idealism with a cynical appeal to realpolitik. He recognizes that modern-day England, like Rome in its decline, is in a state of advanced moral decay, and so advises Harrison to "make the best of your Time, and the most you can in such a Nation" (461). Harrison naively advocates a simple return to religion, but the peer replies, "you are too well acquainted with the World to be told, that the Conduct of Politicians is not formed upon the Principles of Religion" (461). In a last attempt at establishing a moral framework for political action, Harrison falls back upon two values, "honour" and "honesty," which he hopes will appeal to the aristocrat's belief in the traditions of his class. In a reply that once and for all rules out a return to an idealized past, the nobleman remarks, no doubt correctly, that no minister could retain power without cynically exploiting the patronage system.

The encounter between Harrison and the peer renders explicit a political critique that has long been implied in the catalogue of legal and bureaucratic injustices that befall Booth, but it is mainly through the treatment of Mrs. Ellison's noble cousin that Fielding establishes a significant connection between political corruption and the

moral deficiencies of the nobility. In much the same way that Harrison's interlocutor makes the best of his time, Mrs. Ellison's cousin exploits his political influence and personal charms along with some of the most attractive values of his class--specifically, generosity and graceful manners--for the purposes of sexual conquest. It is worth noting, of course, that although Fielding's treatment of Mrs. Ellison's cousin is an integral part of Amelia's portrayal of endemic political corruption, neither the allegation of aristocratic sexual misconduct nor that of self-interested use of political power for the purposes of sexual conquest is new to Fielding's writing. The Temple Beau (1729) and The Intriguing Chambermaid (1734) both present the genteel as rakes. In the much more sombre comedy, The Modern Husband (1731), Lord Richly, like Mrs. Ellison's cousin, uses the promise of bureaucratic preferments to seduce the wives of impoverished men. The attitude the play directs against Richly crystallizes in the last-act confrontation between Richly and Bellamant, whose virtuous wife Richly has tried to seduce:

MR. BELLAMANT. Come, come, my lord; this prevarication is low and mean; you know you have used me basely, villainously; and under the cover of acquaintance and friendship, have attempted to corrupt my wife; for which, but that I would not suffer the least breath of scandal to sully her reputation, I would exact such vengeance on thee--

LORD RICHLY. Sir, I must acquaint you, that this is a language I have not been used to.

MR. BELLAMANT. No; the language of flatterers and hireling sycophants has been what you have dealt in--wretches, whose honour and love are as venal as their

praise. Such your title might awe, or your fortune  
bribe to silence; such you should have dealt with, and  
not have dared to injure a man of honour.<sup>26</sup>

But Lord Richly's crude assumption that all women of inferior rank have their price results in a quaint unselfconsciousness that blatantly advertises all the nobleman's schemes while robbing him of any hint of menace: "I have gone too far to retreat, madam!" he says after his clumsy attempt at seducing Mrs. Bellamant fails: "if I cannot be the object of your love, let me be obliged to your prudence. How many families are supported by the method which you start at? Does not many a woman in this town drive her husband's coach?" (IV, viii) If Mrs. Ellison's cousin is decidedly more menacing than Lord Richly or Beau Didapper or Lord Fellamar, his nearest antecedents in Fielding's fiction, it is not because he is more vicious but because his intelligence and inscrutability make him a greater threat to those who are willing to judge him according to the favourable stereotypes of his class. Mrs. Bennet eventually learns the danger of assuming the presence of hereditary honour, but her lesson is, sadly, one of experience. She can do little to stop the steady supply of victims, new Mrs. Bennets and new Amelias, who are willing enough to see the aristocrat in terms of the traditional

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<sup>26</sup>Henry Fielding, The Modern Husband (V, vi), in The Works of Henry Fielding, Esq., ed. Leslie Stephen (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1882) 9: 145-146.

authority of his class, something which never occurs in the world of The Modern Husband.

For his critique of aristocratic authority to reach its logical conclusion, Fielding must, of course, also consider the potential for aristocratic virtues in the baseborn, something he is reluctant to do in Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones. In Amelia, the new, progressive drift of Fielding's attack on hereditary honour manifests itself most strikingly in the portrayal of the low-born Joseph Atkinson, a man who displays the "Goodness, Generosity and Honour"<sup>27</sup> previously reserved for his social superiors. In Book Seven, Fielding engineers a comparison between the nameless Lord and Booth's unpaid servant. Mrs. Bennet has been alerting Amelia to the aristocrat's vicious designs. At the crisis of her account of her own victimization by the nobleman, she conveniently lapses into a fit, and at Amelia's cry for help Atkinson rushes in. After Mrs. Bennet's recovery, Amelia, seeking confirmation of her belief that Atkinson has married Mrs. Bennet (and not, as she previously thought, Mrs. Ellison), remarks that Atkinson has "great Tenderness of Heart, and a Gentleness of Manners, not often found in any Man; and much seldomer in Persons of his Rank" (304). Her friend replies,

"And why not in his Rank?.... Indeed, Mrs. Booth, we rob the lower Order of Mankind of their Due.... I have myself, I think, seen Instances of as great Goodness, and as great Understanding too, among the lower Sort of People, as among the higher. Let us compare your

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<sup>27</sup>Tom Jones I, 244.

Serjeant now, with the Lord who hath been the Subject of Conversation; on which Side would an impartial Judge decide the Balance to incline?"

"How monstrous then," cries Amelia, "is the Opinion of those, who consider our matching ourselves the least below us in Degree, as a Kind of Contamination!" (304-305)

Mrs. Atkinson is hardly an impartial judge, and Amelia might be accused of using a little hyperbolic praise to draw her friend into owning what some (including Mrs. Ellison, the novel's mouthpiece for conventional social attitudes) would judge a scandalous marriage. But neither Amelia nor Mrs. Atkinson ever strays far from the opinions they express here, and it is these very opinions that make their own marriages possible.

Atkinson's conduct and the respect he commands from the other characters offer empirical support to the ideological framework established by the conversation between Amelia and her friend and by two earlier conversations, one between Booth and Miss Mathews (III, vii), the other also between Amelia and Mrs. Bennet (V, iii). The discrepancy between Atkinson's low birth and natural gentility is first suggested by Booth's reference to Atkinson's "noble Spirit" (107); later, general indications of Atkinson's true nobility are provided by Amelia (201) and the authoritative narrator (182). Atkinson's two generous offers to Booth (III, vii; V, iv) confirm his noble qualities, while his physical attractiveness and apparently effortless appropriation of the idiom of sensibility suggest physical

and temperamental traits usually reserved, in Fielding's novels, for the well-born. In some respects, Atkinson becomes the novel's only male aristocrat, embodying many of the aristocratic standards against which Fielding invites his readers to judge the nameless nobleman. The grounds for comparison are numerous: one man is nobly "ingenuous" (182), the other devious; one's generosity is disinterested, the other's self-serving; one has scruples of honour, the other has no honour to speak of; and one's devotion to Amelia is courtier-like, where the other's is merely opportunistic.

Had Fielding wished to affirm the genetics of class that asserts itself fitfully in the literary-social stereotypes and conventional plots of Joseph Andrews and, to a lesser extent, Tom Jones, he could easily have contrived an ending by which Atkinson was discovered to be a genteel and even legitimate relation of Amelia's, à la Macartney in Evelina. (Given Fielding's love of the incest theme, it's even a little surprising that he didn't take that route.) Significantly, Fielding rejected this solution, undertaking instead a remarkable subversion of the usual effect of conventional romance plots. To be sure, Sheridan Baker has argued that Fielding is "intent on domesticating the 'serious romance' he had formerly denounced,"<sup>28</sup> but it is

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<sup>28</sup> Sheridan Baker, "Fielding's Amelia and the Materials of Romance," Philological Quarterly 41 (1962): 442.

important to note that Fielding's selection and use of romance conventions mark a departure from his practice in Joseph Andrews and even Tom Jones. Baker's argument focuses mainly on stock situations: Booth's stratagem of the wine-hamper, Atkinson's retrieval of the casket, the various masquerades, Atkinson's courtier-like worship of Amelia, the providential conclusion, and Fielding's extensive use of the sentimental idiom. But these conventions are, with one exception--the providential ending--devoid of the usual ideological implications of romance. Fielding's abandonment of the birth-mystery plot in particular ensures that the impact on the reader of the remaining romance conventions is so attenuated as to be virtually non-existent. And the extension of the sentimental idiom to Atkinson has the curious effect of directing romance conventions to progressive ends. Amelia, then, is the last step--both formal and ideological--that Fielding takes in the rejection of romance.

### III. Nature, Experience, and a New Understanding of Self

At times Joseph Atkinson's thematic importance risks reducing him to the simple embodiment of an ideological critique, but the real success of Atkinson as a critical commentary on aristocratic honour can be attributed, paradoxically, to his status as the first base-born character who is sufficiently independent of Fielding's

comic or satiric purposes to possess any interior life, and about whom readers can say, along with Coolidge, "our knowledge is always provisory, pending further discovery."<sup>29</sup> Unlike Trulliber or Black George or even a 'serious' character like Joseph Andrews, Atkinson escapes the rigorous moral, social, and temperamental delineation that is so often provided in Fielding's novels by an introductory character sketch. He is introduced by a provisional narrator, Booth, whose overriding concern with telling his own life story translates into rather slender attention to Atkinson's character (III, iii). Not only is Booth sparing in his account of Atkinson's qualities, he is remarkably obtuse: his ignorance of Atkinson's motives, and particularly of the nature of Atkinson's devotion to Amelia, causes him to misrepresent his batman to the extent that the first-time reader's interpretations are often false or purely conjectural. It would have been difficult for the reader opening Fielding's novel for the first time in 1752 to understand Atkinson's tears at setting out for Gibraltar or to interpret correctly Booth's report that his servant "chose rather to die with me, than to live to carry the Account of my Death to my Amelia" (111). Even the reader who suspected, along with Miss Mathews, that Atkinson, not James, writes to Amelia of Booth's injuries at Gibraltar would likely have been as much at a loss as she is to assign

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<sup>29</sup>Coolidge 50.

any motive for his secrecy. In short, Atkinson's actions are conditioned by motives that become fully apparent only late in the novel.

It is largely the impression that much of Atkinson's character is not accessible to a casual observer that establishes him as a complex, psychologically individuated creation--and as a convincing attack on the idea of innate class characteristics. But Fielding's presentation of Atkinson is impressive also because of how past experience conditions Atkinson's responses to present circumstances. Despite his natural gentility, Atkinson is not, like Joseph Andrews or Tom Jones, a misplaced gentleman, essentially unaffected by past or present experience and waiting to have his estate providentially restored. He is a man in whom there inhere tensions, both subtle and obvious, between an under-class birth and the polite qualities he has acquired through his devotion to Amelia and education in Dr. Harrison's household. To a degree that would have been unthinkable in Tom Jones or Joseph Andrews, Fielding both dramatizes the tension between Atkinson's education and background and uses the narrator to interpret this tension to the reader. Atkinson's mauvaise honte (which appears in combination with his suppressed love for Amelia) sometimes overwhelms him, as when Amelia mistakes him for an officer:

So weak and absurd is human Vanity, that this Mistake of Amelia's possibly put poor Atkinson out of Countenance; for he looked at this Instant more silly than he had ever done in his Life; and making her a

most respectful Bow muttered something about Obligations, in a scarce articulate or intelligible Manner.

The Serjeant had indeed among many other Qualities, that Modesty which a Latin Author honours by the Name of ingenuous: Nature had given him this, notwithstanding the Meanness of his Birth; and six years Conversation in the Army, had not taken it away. To say the truth, he was a noble Fellow; and Amelia by supposing he had a Commission had been guilty of no Affront to that honourable Body. (178)

Or again, in the passage that Rawson analyzes in his essay, "Gentlemen and Dancing Masters"<sup>30</sup>:

...poor Atkinson would, I am persuaded, have mounted a Breach with less Concern, than he shewed in walking cross a Room before three Ladies, two of whom were his avowed well Wishers.

Tho' I do not entirely agree with the late learned Mr. Essex, the celebrated Dancing-Master's Opinion, that Dancing is the Rudiment of polite Education, as he would, I apprehend, exclude every other Art and Science; yet it is certain, that Persons whose Feet have never been under the Hands of the Professors of that Art, are apt to discover this Want in their Education in every Motion, nay, even when they stand or sit still. They seem indeed to be over-burthened with Limbs, which they know not how to use, as if when Nature hath finished her Work, the Dancing-Master still is necessary to put it in Motion.

Atkinson was at present an Example of this Observation, which doth so much Honour to a Profession for which I have a very high Regard. He was handsome and exquisitely well made; and yet, as he had never learnt to dance, he made so awkward an Appearance in Mrs. Ellison's Parlour, that the good Lady herself, who had invited him in, could at first scarce refrain from Laughter at his Behaviour.

He had not however been long in the Room, before Admiration of his Person got the better of such risible Ideas. So great is the Advantage of Beauty in Men as well as Women, and so sure is this Quality in either Sex of procuring some Regard from the Beholder. (199-200)

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<sup>30</sup> See Rawson, Henry Fielding and the Augustan Ideal Under Stress, 4-6.

Even after his social and professional elevation, Atkinson displays a stubborn submission to those he has been accustomed to regard as social superiors, including his wife, whose status as his intellectual superior also embarrasses him. Atkinson's humiliating deference to the Booths after the quarrel between Mrs. Atkinson and Amelia is a late reminder that he never feels comfortable with the social standing conferred with his marriage and new commission.

This modern conception of the self--as mysterious, partly inaccessible, capable of change, and, above all, conditioned by immediate and past experience rather than the genetics of class--permeates Amelia, but it is not universal. Something like Fielding's tendency to view characters as professional or social types lingers in the descriptions of such characters as Thrasher, Bondum, or, most strikingly, Blear-Eyed Moll:

The first Person who accosted [Booth] was called Blear-Eyed Moll; a Woman of no very comely Appearance. Her Eye (for she had but one) whence she derived her Nick-name was such, as that Nick-name bespoke; besides which it had two remarkable Qualities; for first, as if Nature had been careful to provide for her own Defect, it constantly looked towards her blind Side; and secondly, the Ball consisted almost entirely of white, or rather yellow, with a little grey Spot in the Corner, so small that it was scarce discernible. Nose she had none; for Venus, envious perhaps at her former Charms, had carried off the gristly Part; and some earthly Damsel, perhaps from the same Envy, had levelled the Bone with the rest of her Face: Indeed it was far beneath the Bones of her Cheeks, which rose proportionally higher than usual. About half a dozen ebony Teeth fortified that large and long Canal, which Nature had cut from Ear to Ear, at the Bottom of which

was a Chin, preposterously short, Nature having turned up the Bottom, instead of suffering it to grow to its due Length.

Her Body was well adapted to her Face; she measured full as much round the middle as from Head to Foot; for besides the extreme Breadth of her Back, her vast Breasts had long since forsaken their native Home, and had settled themselves a little below the Girdle (27-28)

This description is in some ways typical of Fielding's past practice (one can detect, for instance, a grim resemblance to Slipslop), and it might therefore be considered a local weakness in the sense that it militates against the novel's prevailing psychological realism. But Moll is not simply a throw-back to Fielding's earlier practice. Rawson argues that in the portrayal of Blear-Eyed Moll, Fielding's writing points in new directions. On one hand, Fielding's style betrays, in its syntactic balance and repeated references to natural order, an "unyielding obsessional insistence on fitness and propriety"; on the other hand, Fielding seems duty-bound to recognize the "extreme grotesquery" that violates that sense of order.<sup>31</sup> The treatment of Moll represents a break with Fielding's practice in another respect, too. Moll's having been "taken in the Fact with a very pretty young Fellow" and her unaccountable status as "one of the merriest Persons in the whole Prison" (28) suggest an inscrutability about her and an unpredictability about human behaviour in general that would have been distinctly out of place in Fielding's earlier caricatures.

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<sup>31</sup>Rawson 81.

Nevertheless, since Moll and some other minor characters are constructed upon principles of moral or physical freakishness, and since they are so clearly subordinated to Fielding's satiric purposes, they locally undermine the novel's project of psychological realism.

Another qualification must be made to the general claim that Fielding's treatment of the self is recognizably modern. The belief in the self as possessing a certain susceptibility to change in the face of new experiences does not quite preclude innate qualities. When Harrison, speaking for Fielding, inveighs against the "[b]ad Education, bad Habits, and bad Customs" that "debauch our Nature" (374), he suggests a core of self that experience can perfect or corrupt rather than a Lockean tabula rasa or unfurnished room that experience simply fills. A full account of what for Fielding constitutes "our Nature" is beyond my aims here, and Fielding does not seem to be entirely consistent on the matter. Rawson argues that Fielding's late writings betray a "see-sawing...between his faith in benevolence and an increasing, at times obsessional, sense of the natural depravity of man."<sup>32</sup> Battestin, with at least equal cogency, identifies "an unresolved tension between the new psychology [the deterministic psychology of the dominant passion, as expressed by Hume], to which Fielding no less than Booth

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<sup>32</sup>Rawson 96.

implicitly subscribes, and the antithetical orthodoxy [a Christian humanism in which reason can guide the passions] which he wishes to reaffirm."<sup>33</sup> In either case, Fielding embraces a view of the self that seeks to reconcile innate qualities with a susceptibility to moral or temperamental development. As the objects of James' sexual desires change, so do his feelings and actions toward other characters and toward sexuality; nevertheless, James manifests an abiding obsession with sexual conquest. His wife, though apt to act with wild inconsistency toward Amelia as Amelia's circumstances change, is consistently concerned with improving and consolidating her social position. But whatever qualifications one places on Fielding's largely modern conception of the self, his treatment of character proves a much more potent tool of social criticism than it does in the earlier novels, for by treating the self as minutely responsive to social conditions Fielding shows the felt consequences of England's constitutional disease on the men and women who live in his society.

#### IV Desire and the Dystopia of Emulation

At the heart of Amelia lie the private concerns of a small group of men and women whose moral experience has been

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<sup>33</sup>Martin C. Battestin, "The Problem of Amelia: Hume, Barrow, and the Conversion of Booth," ELH: A Journal of English Literary History 41 (1974): 635.

rendered bewilderingly uncertain by social conditions that imperil conventional standards of conduct. As in the Enquiry, the aristocracy neither exerts moral authority nor provides adequate models of conduct. Yet for many (and here Amelia develops Fielding's concerns in directions that the Enquiry could not), the desire to appropriate aristocratic prestige through social emulation is intensified by the recognition that unprecedented historical forces are unsettling traditional hereditary distinctions. But as Miss Mathews and Mrs. Bennet discover, to take advantage of the new opportunities for professional, economic, or social advancement has its dangers: in a world where the political power of the aristocracy has been cut off from its moral justification, the vestigial tradition of noblesse oblige that implicitly requires the social inferior's trusting compliance may mask the ulterior motives of the putative benefactor. The problem of responsible social conduct--of placing appropriate limits on ambition, for instance--is exacerbated by the widespread decay of Christian teaching. Most men and women--including Booth, James, and Miss Mathews--simply lack the wisdom to exercise social freedom responsibly. As a result of this complex of social conditions, the attenuated moral and social conventions that Fielding's main characters seek to preserve often buckle under the pressures of resentment, social ambition, and

sexual rivalry, and even the most scrupulous men and women face new temptations and new threats to the self.

Whether their obsessions are sexual or social, Fielding's ambitious characters inhabit a world of remarkable psychological consistency.<sup>34</sup> In a novel that sometimes seems preoccupied with adultery, James provides the clearest example of the usual course of physical desire. For James, a simple desire for Miss Mathews' body is transformed into a much more complex desire for recognition when, against his expectations, she resists his advances.

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<sup>34</sup>Throughout this section, as in my discussion in Chapter 1 of Mr. B.'s insecurities, I am indebted to René Girard's account of desire in Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure, Trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1965). Although I have avoided Girard's specialized vocabulary, I argue that what Girard variously calls "imitative," "mediated," or "triangular" desire (the tendency to desire objects designated by a model or "mediator" [2]) appears in and even dominates the behaviour of some of Fielding's characters in Amelia. Fielding's characters have a striking tendency toward what Girard calls "internal mediation," the tendency to choose a mediator whose "sphere of possibilities" (9), particularly in matters of love or social distinction, coincides with one's own, and with whom one enters into a rivalry. According to Girard, the symptoms of internal mediation include the imitation of admirable models from whom one seeks confirmation of one's value, the entering into destructive rivalries with those models, and the denial of the imitative nature of the rivalry. Although Fielding's understanding of desire does not correspond as exactly to Girard's as does Richardson's (cf. James Maddox's essay, "Lovelace and the World of Ressentiment in Clarissa," Texas Studies in Literature and Language 13 [1983] 131-140), I do think that Fielding believes (along with Girard) that destructive mimetic rivalries proliferate in societies in which traditional social distinctions and Christian doctrine are falling into disuse.

James soon learns that it is not Miss Mathews' beauty but her resistance that sustains his desire:

[I]f I was to be shut up three Years with the same Woman, which Heaven forbid! nothing, I think, could keep me alive, but a Temper as violent as that of Miss Mathews.... With the Spirit of a Tigress, I would have her be a Prude, a Scold, a Scholar, a Critic, a Wit, a Politician, and a Jacobite: and then perhaps eternal Opposition would keep up our Spirits; and wishing one another daily at the Devil, we should make a Shift to drag on a damnable State of Life, without much Spleen or Vapours. (226-227)

Or more tellingly: "I would give half my Estate, Booth, she loved me as well as she doth you. Tho', on second Consideration, I believe I should repent that Bargain; for then, very possibly, I should not care a Farthing for her" (226). By this point, Miss Mathews has become a rival whom James must vanquish in order to establish his sexual prowess; yet as his remarks imply, her love would end the spell of desire. That he never succeeds in bringing Miss Mathews to his will becomes clear when the narrator notes in the last chapter that James now "doat[s] on her (though now very disagreeable in her Person, and immensely fat) to such a Degree, that he submits to be treated by her in the most tyrannical Manner" (531). The last-page emphasis on Miss Mathews' unsavoury appearance and conduct underscores just how much her immunity to James's original physical desires has obsessed her lover.

Although Frances Mathews' resistance determines the course of her affair with James, for her suitor sexual desire is never simply a matter between two lovers. Early

in his pursuit, James discovers that his desire has been intensified by Miss Mathews' affront to his comfortable assumptions about the value and prerogatives of rank. "[S]he hath piqued my Pride," he reports, "for how can a Man of my Fortune brook being refused by a Whore?" (177). But his desire undergoes yet another transformation when he discovers that Miss Mathews has taken a new lover, Booth, on whom she has squandered her benefactor's money. Miss Mathews' continuing affection for Booth, even after her submitting to James's advances, forces James's implicit recognition of the sexual superiority of Booth, which in turn invests Amelia, the woman Booth really loves, with an aura of desirability. James does not understand the role of Booth in determining the direction and intensity of his desires, but Fielding does: it is significant that James's desire for Amelia appears suddenly, and only after his discovery of Miss Mathews' continued affection for his rival. In a way that James is only dimly aware of, the sexual conquest of Amelia promises sexual and social recognition even greater than that which Miss Mathews withholds.

At first, the pattern of James's desires seems to bear only a tenuous connection to contemporary social conditions. But when that pattern repeats itself in Mrs. Ellison's noble cousin, conduct that seems private and even idiosyncratic in James is suddenly confirmed as culturally pervasive. Like

James, the nobleman "must have Novelty and Resistance" to sustain his desire (303); like James (and like Lovelace, the nameless nobleman's closest literary predecessor), Mrs. Ellison's cousin considers women "in the Light of Enemies" (303). Seduction thus becomes rivalry with women over their chastity and with men over their wives, daughters, or sisters. For James as for his lordship, independence in a social inferior inflames desire; for both men, sexual recognition is a triumph over that independence, with the effect that desire itself vanishes or is immediately transferred to another object.

The similar patterns of desire in his lordship and James suggest that territory usually considered the realm of the spontaneous, the private, and the purely natural has been invaded by larger cultural forces. In fact, such rivalries flourish only under particular social conditions: first, there must have been a weakening of traditional social distinctions extensive enough for members of disparate ranks such as James and Miss Mathews (or the nameless nobleman and Mrs. Bennet) to converse freely; second, the aristocrats' sense of their own self-sufficiency must have weakened enough for social inferiors to acquire prestige that exceeds the purely physical. For James, a woman's indifference to the desires of a social superior invests her with an aura of prestigious independence; for

his lordship, on the other hand, desirability resides in the greater-than-aristocratic virtue of a social inferior.

Latent democratic social tendencies provide a necessary but not a sufficient condition for such rivalries; social and sexual emulation can proliferate only where traditional moral restraints have weakened. In a society characterized by unprecedented social freedoms, moral education, which for Fielding amounts to an education in the latitudinarian divines, assumes tremendous importance in regulating conduct. But in Amelia a robust moral education is a rare commodity. Atkinson, whatever his natural virtues, has reason to thank Harrison and Amelia for their tutelage; Colonel James, on the other hand, is the novel's best example of a man whose good qualities have been corrupted by fashionable vices. Here is Booth's account of James's generosity, expressed with Booth's usual deference to the idea of the ruling passion:

The Behaviour of this Man alone is a sufficient Proof of the Truth of my Doctrine, that all Men act entirely from their Passions; for Bob James can never be supposed to act from any Motive of virtue or Religion; since he constantly laughs at both; and yet his Conduct towards me alone demonstrates a Degree of Goodness which, perhaps, few of the Votaries of either Virtue or Religion can equal. (114)

James, who does indeed have a healthy predisposition to be generous, becomes incapable of living his good qualities because of "[b]ad Education, bad Habits, and bad Customs" (374). He is able to act with great propriety while he is in Gibraltar and subject to military discipline; but once he

is turned free in the idle and corrupt world of London, he assumes the fashionable vices, and his generosity, like the nameless nobleman's, becomes bribery.

If the thoughts and deeds of Colonel James bring into focus the effect of contemporary social conditions on sexual conduct, those of his mistress provide the novel's most direct commentary on the felt consequences of the social emulation Fielding discusses in the Enquiry. In her brief account of her life, Frances Mathews betrays an almost obsessional drive to establish her social preeminence over others. She begins her life's story by reminiscing exultantly about how, at an assembly, Booth once supported her claim for "standing uppermost" over Miss Johnson, her "Rival for Praise, for Beauty, for Dress, for Fortune, and consequently for Admiration" (48). The incident sets the pattern for the course of Miss Mathews' life. Soon Hebbers, a handsome and calculating young officer who "had besides all the Qualifications of a Gentleman, was genteel, and extremely, polite, spoke French as well, and danced to a Miracle" (49) inflames her vanity by praising her limited musical abilities and encouraging her "Emulation" of her more talented sister (50).<sup>35</sup> In becoming her sister's

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<sup>35</sup>That Hebbers' strategy is both calculated and habitual is evident in his transparent manipulation of Mr. Mathews: "[W]hat chiefly recommended him to my Father was his Skill in Music, of which you know that dear Man was the most violent Lover. I wish he was not too susceptible of Flattery on that Head; for I have heard Hebbers often greatly commend my Father's Performance, and have observed,

rival, Miss Mathews increases her emotional reliance on the man who, because of his gentility and reputation as a judge of music, seems to guarantee her continued preeminence in the opinion of others. Hebbers strengthens his hold on Miss Mathews' affections first by courting Mrs. Cary, a fashionable widow, and then by appearing to reaffirm his devotion to Miss Mathews. By now the cycle of jealousy, resentment, and exultancy that orders Miss Mathews' life is well established. She reports, "To triumph over the Widow, for whom I had, in a very short Time, contracted a most inveterate Hatred, was a Pride not to be described" (52). Hebbers completes his seduction of Miss Mathews on her sister's wedding night (and Miss Mathews, one notes, interprets the event partly as a sexual triumph over her sister). By deftly appealing to his victim's vanity, Hebbers eventually persuades her to live as his mistress in London, where her resentment widens to include her family, all her former equals, and the few people with whom she now converses--in short, everyone whose existence reminds her of her exile from high-life. Now subsisting in the world of rakes and mistresses, Miss Mathews is reduced to tormented and self-imposed seclusion, for, she says, "no Company, but what I despised, would consort with me" (57).

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that the good Man was wonderfully pleased with such Commendations" (49).

Although Miss Mathews expresses her character largely in terms of her sexuality, most of her conduct is motivated by a will to acquire the potent prestige of rank, a project which she nevertheless takes care to disguise, even from herself. She clearly feels an emotional need to endorse moral standards independent of rank, and even seems sincere insofar as she is unconscious of her own violation of them. Her vapid moralizing is, however, uniformly unconvincing, and when she criticizes what she sees as the susceptibility of her sex to envy and duplicity (67), or when she expresses romantic egalitarian sentiments (86), there is something in her that is less hypocrisy than an impressive ignorance of the excessive value she herself places on social standing. Her original attraction to Hebberts is based on his gentlemanly qualities and his ability to establish her preeminence in public opinion; her triumph over Miss Johnson and Mrs. Cary delights her because it affirms not only her sexual but her social desirability. But in spite of her best efforts to disguise the allure of rank, Miss Mathews finds it impossible to voice the requisite egalitarian commonplaces convincingly. Her gloss on the experience of going to the theatre with the daughter of her landlady is representative. The daughter is a young woman of "good Sense, and many good Qualities," she reports, "but how much beneath me was it to be the Companion of a Creature so low! O Heavens! When I have seen my Equals glittering in a Side-

box, how have the Thoughts of my lost Honour torn my Soul!" (57). Apparently, good qualities mean nothing to the woman who cannot glitter in a side-box. Here Miss Mathews, like Richardson's Mrs. Jewkes, shamelessly though unconsciously evacuates the word "honour" of any moral content, leaving it an impoverished signifier of the simple fact of rank: what matters, ultimately, is the prestige of gentility.

Throughout her brief autobiography, Miss Mathews establishes a character that she herself does not understand, but which her subsequent behaviour precisely confirms. As she listens to Booth's story, she interrupts sporadically, revealing an admiration for Amelia that resentment gradually displaces. The following series of remarks to Booth traces the evolution in Miss Mathews' mind of yet another rivalry:

[Y]our Affections were more happily disposed of to a much better Woman than myself. (38)

I admire your Taste extremely...I remember perfectly well the great Heroism with which your Amelia bore that Misfortune [the injury to her nose]. (66-67)

To be honest with you, Mr. Booth, I do not agree with your Lady's Opinion.... (70)

It is highly generous and good in you... to impute to Honesty what others would call Credulity. (71)

I do not say this to lessen your Opinion of Mrs. Booth. I have no doubt but that she loves you as well as she is capable. (119)

I pity you, I pity you from my Soul. A man had better be plagued with all the Curses of Egypt than with a vapourish Wife. (120)

After her release from prison and her retreat to the Pelican and Trumpet (the associations with both self-torment and self-advertisement are significant), Miss Mathews hardens into a destructive opposition to Amelia and Booth, the wife providing a sexual rival and the husband a social rival in the sense that (as far as Miss Mathews can tell) he represents a class--the class into which she was born--that now refuses to recognize her.

Despite her many inconsistencies and self-deceptions, Miss Mathews is a psychologically crude example of the threat that emulation poses to one's moral health. She bears on Fielding's treatment of self in much the way that Mrs. Jewkes bears on Richardson's: neither understands the system of values within which she is imprisoned, and neither conceives of moral standards that are independent of rank and by which the nominally genteel might be found wanting. Both command interest for the cultural phenomenon that reveals itself through their actions, but neither responds to her experiences with enough intelligence or emotional sensitivity to sustain much interest for her own sake. For most readers the interest in Mrs. Jewkes eventually diminishes to consideration of her role as a test of Pamela's ingenuity and moral understanding; in like manner, Miss Mathews soon exhausts her usefulness as a psychological study and persists only as a means of propelling and complicating the plot of Amelia.

But if Miss Mathews provides a crude example of the connection between the social and sexual manifestations of the disease of emulation, she prepares the reader for one of Fielding's great successes, Mrs. Bennet. Coolidge, who relies heavily on Mrs. Bennet for his account of Fielding's characterization, writes that in her, "the possibilities of Fielding's new method [of characterization] are brilliantly demonstrated" (253).<sup>36</sup> He is right. Fielding presents a character who develops convincingly from a pathetic to a potentially tragic figure, before revealing herself as a woman of remarkable resourcefulness and morally ambiguous resiliency. When she is introduced in Book Four, illness and mourning have left her "remarkably grave" but significantly without "Sourness of Temper" (192). The reasons for her past sorrow, at first a matter of speculation, are partly revealed by Mrs. Ellison, who tells of Mr. Bennet's death and shows Amelia the anguished letter written by his wife. Nonetheless, questions about Mrs. Bennet accumulate, partly because she betrays an apparently inexplicable dislike for his lordship and a marked ambivalence about Mrs. Ellison, and partly because the narrator's explanations of her extraordinary behaviour

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<sup>36</sup>Coolidge's reading of Mrs. Bennet is particularly probing, and it lurks in the background of my own treatment of her. Eric Rothstein, who suggests the relation between Miss Mathews and Mrs. Atkinson when he calls the latter's story "a (discriminated) version of Miss Mathews's" (183), offers a reading that complements Coolidge's.

invariably seem inadequate. New and unforeseen aspects of Mrs. Bennet's character suddenly appear one day when she acts with "more than ordinary Gaiety" (254) and deploys an impressive if flawed classical understanding of the subject of second marriages. By the time the reader discovers that she is the author of the warning to Amelia, her past, her motives, and her character all beg explanation.

By rehearsing the events of her life, Mrs. Bennet dispels many mysteries, but in doing so she increases, I think, most readers' sense of the complexity and inherent interest of her character. Her story does not fully exonerate her, but it does militate against her claim that she is "an Adulteress and a Murderer" (267)<sup>37</sup>; it also suggests that the individual who can remain completely innocent must be distrustful, implausibly scrupulous, and unusually willing to starve. Despite a sound moral upbringing, she (like her virtuous father) is implicated in the system of desire that confines and eventually destroys so many of her contemporaries. At one point she appears on the losing side of a rivalry with her new step-mother over the affections of her father; at another, with the help of her acknowledged lover, young Mr. Bennet, she turns to advantage a rivalry between herself and her vain and

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<sup>37</sup>Her story, like Booth's and Miss Mathews' respective stories, also serves a sociological or broadly thematic function by offering independent confirmation of the epidemic of social and sexual emulation that infects the characters of the main narrative.

pretentious aunt. When the Bennets arrive in London, they run into debt and soon find themselves dependent upon and (mainly because of Mrs. Bennet's ambitions) vulnerable to Mrs. Ellison's predatory cousin. She traces her own downfall to the ostensibly innocent attentions of his lordship to her baby, by which, she reports, he "gained something more, I think, than my Esteem, [and] took the surest method to confirm himself in my Affection" (291). Having persuaded her to meet him at a masquerade at Ranelagh, the aristocrat makes his passion felt, and Mrs. Bennet reports, "I fancied I might give some very distant Encouragement to such a Passion in such a Man, with the utmost Safety; that I might indulge my Vanity and Interest at once, without being guilty of the least Injury" (295). Mrs. Bennet's strategy, however, goes disastrously awry: she is drugged and raped by the nobleman, and subsequently infects her husband, who dies of uncertain causes.

Without exculpating his lordship, Mrs. Bennet skilfully distinguishes between her own imprudence in contributing to the conditions necessary for the attack and the aristocrat's guilt as the perpetrator. In doing so, she raises complex questions about her own ethics and motivations. Her initial statement that she is an "Adulteress and a Murderer" is patently false and perhaps histrionic; her subsequent remark that, after the attack, she was "conscious of I knew not what--Guilt I hope it cannot be called" (298) is more

suggestive of the truth, though (as Coolidge points out), Amelia's hesitation brings the claim into some doubt.<sup>38</sup> What is clear from Mrs. Bennet's account of her early dealings with his lordship is that she is first attracted to the aristocrat--a man whom she calls "the handsomest and genteelst Person in the World" (291)--partly for the reasons that Pamela is attracted to Mr. B.: both women are flattered by the attentions of a social superior who is enveloped and obscured by a mist of aristocratic prestige. Until the masquerade, Mrs. Bennet invariably puts the most favourable construction possible on his lordship's actions, referring variously to his motives of "Modesty," "Respect," "Awe," and "Delicacy" (290-91, 295), and believing, in short, in his "good Sense and good-Nature, Condescension, and other good Qualities" (291). Willingness to perceive his lordship exclusively as the most favourable stereotype of his class impairs Mrs. Bennet's judgment, but it is of course her own opportunism that proves most dangerous. In retrospect, she recognizes her own ulterior motives and thinks of herself, rather equivocally, as "Innocence

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<sup>38</sup>Coolidge 256. By viewing Mrs. Bennet with something like the critical detachment that nearly all readers apply to Miss Mathews, Coolidge sketches an unsympathetic reading of Mrs. Bennet's story by which "we may, if we are perhaps ill-natured readers, form for ourselves a very natural but unlovely picture" (255). It is a valuable exercise, for by emphasizing the vanity, resentment, jealousy, and opportunism that sometimes infect Mrs. Bennet's actions, Coolidge reveals complexities of self that appear in her subsequent conduct and attest to the moral ambiguity that makes her so interesting to modern readers.

unguarded, intoxicated with foolish Desires, and liable to every Temptation" (294). Her culpable opportunism, however, is made possible only by a sympathetic attraction to the glamour of rank and an imprudence directly related to her beliefs about aristocrats.

To this point there are striking similarities between Mrs. Bennet's and Amelia's beliefs about his lordship: Amelia has also seen in the nobleman the traditional moral and temperamental qualities of his rank, has been flattered by his attentions to her children, and has even echoed her friend's feelings in calling him "the finest Gentleman she had ever seen" (203). Moreover, like Mrs. Bennet, Amelia decides to go to the masquerade to indulge her interest (though not, apparently, her vanity). Mrs. Bennet's subsequent behaviour towards his lordship, however, is more problematic than Amelia's and therefore much more interesting. Accepting an annuity from his lordship would be unimaginable to Amelia, yet Mrs. Bennet thinks herself uncompromised by such a decision. And her scheme to obtain a commission for Atkinson by posing as Amelia raises, particularly in the moral universe that Amelia inhabits, even more serious problems.

The quarrel between the two women over Mrs. Bennet's conduct at the masquerade constitutes the confrontation of greatest ethical and psychological complexity in Fielding's novel; and Fielding, apparently in spite of himself, reveals

the excessive simplicity of Amelia's character and the potential narrowness of her virtue. Disguised at the masquerade as Amelia, Mrs. Bennet has hinted to his lordship that she would receive his advances if he were to obtain a commission for Atkinson. Amelia discovers the stratagem when his lordship, still acting under a misapprehension, sends her the signed commission enclosed in a love-letter. Speaking from a position of compelling opportunism, Mrs. Atkinson reduces the ethical propriety of her conduct to the single question of how one might best take advantage of a scoundrel; Amelia, on the other hand, is solely concerned with the preservation of her own precious reputation. Mrs. Atkinson hints that Amelia's scruples are over-refined when she snappishly identifies Amelia's overreaction to his lordship's love-letter, saying, "don't be so affected; the Letter cannot eat you, or run away with you" (443). As the quarrel progresses, Amelia's tone becomes increasingly shrill and embattled, and in perhaps the novel's only moment of open criticism of Amelia, the narrator refers to Amelia's speaking "peevishly" (446). Eventually, from a spirit of conciliation or perhaps martyrdom, Amelia concedes that she may have been in the wrong. But Booth and Atkinson have already entered to take Amelia's side, and Mrs. Atkinson (whose judgment is now impugned by a passing reference to her having "taken a Sip too much that Evening" [447]), soon repents of her conduct, allowing Fielding an easy means of

reestablishing Amelia's status as an unquestioned exemplar. Ultimately, however, the quarrel between Amelia and Mrs. Bennet complicates without clarifying the ethical universe of the novel. Not only does Mrs. Bennet's second attempt at indulging in "Vanity and Interest at once" succeed, her self-justification may ultimately be more compelling than Amelia's moralizing. Mrs. Atkinson shows how a woman of ambition, intelligence, and sensibility can exist and even prosper among people who seek to victimize her. She may be criticized from the moral heights Amelia inhabits, but most modern readers--and probably a great number of Fielding's contemporaries--would agree with Mrs. Atkinson when she lashes out, "Indeed, indeed, you are too great a Prude" (445).

Fielding, of course, never allows Mrs. Atkinson to usurp Amelia's role as exemplar. Mrs. Atkinson does, however, consistently hold the reader's interest, largely because her most engaging and admirable qualities are balanced by social ambitions and intellectual pretensions that remain slightly ridiculous to the end. When, after the quarrel with Amelia, she finds herself in the awkward position of having to ask her slighted friend to visit Atkinson, who is ostensibly dying, she betrays her new pride of position (or perhaps only her wish to assert some little independence in the only way she knows how) by insistently referring to her husband as "the Captain" and "my dear

Captain" (480-81). And, as the narrator reminds his readers in the last chapter, her inflated sense of her own intellect "sometimes oblig[es Atkinson] to pay proper Homage to her superior Understanding and Knowledge" (532); in this, at least, she seems to have repeated the folly of her aunt. More principled than Moll Flanders and more resilient than Clarissa, Mrs. Atkinson, like them, survives as a literary creation in whom contemporary cultural conditions shape a highly individualized self to produce a vivid and memorable character.

#### V. Fielding's Simplification of Self: the End of Amelia

It is neither new nor risky to claim that Fielding fails to establish a consistently adequate connection between his public concerns and the private conduct of his characters, or that his failure relates, paradoxically, to his moral intentions. Such claims stem from two important criticisms of the novel: first, Amelia and Harrison are cartoonish in their simplicity, while Booth, at the crucial moment of his conversion, becomes cartoonish too; and second, the providential restoration of Amelia's estate and the Booths' flight to the country amounts to an admission on Fielding's part of a failure to formulate a workable remedy for the social ills he has been formulating. The first criticism points to Fielding's sporadic renunciation of his new treatment of the self in order to further his moral

agenda (in this, Fielding's last novel resembles Richardson's first), the second to an anxiety about rewards and punishments that is rooted as much in Fielding's beliefs about Providence as in his tendency to see the self as a function of social status.

The movement from exteriority to psychological interiority, from caricature to character, demands that the narrator relinquish a degree of interpretative authority to the reader. In Joseph Andrews, the narrator presents a "Dissertation concerning high People and low People" (156) by which readers interpret Slipslop's rivalry with Miss Grave-airs. The set-piece implies the transparency of Slipslop's motivations and of human conduct in general. By Amelia, however, such authorial assurance has disappeared in the presence of characters who are not easily seen through, and who are as likely to hide their thoughts and feelings as to reveal them, and as likely to misinterpret their experiences plausibly as to interpret them correctly. The weakening of narrative assurance makes itself felt in the narrowing of Fielding's characteristic range of tones. Gone are many of the self-consciously 'literary' touches--the classical allusions and burlesque episodes designed for the "Entertainment" of the "classical Reader" (JA 4)--and there is a loss of Fielding's urbanity. The following passage is representative:

There is nothing more difficult than to lay down any fixed and certain Rules for Happiness; or indeed to

judge with any Precision of the Happiness of others, from the Knowledge of external Circumstances. There is sometimes a little Speck of Black in the brightest and gayest Colours of Fortune, which contaminates and deadens the whole. On the contrary, when all without looks dark and dismal, there is often a secret Ray of Light within the Mind, which turns every thing to real Joy and Gladness.

I have in the Course of my Life seen many Occasions to make this Observation; and Mr. Booth was at present a very pregnant Instance of its Truth....  
(161)

In the careful balancing of generalizations, one still detects Fielding's characteristic assuredness of tone, but the comparative directness of the narrator's treatment of Booth has the obvious advantage of allowing Fielding to mediate more effectively--though at the considerable sacrifice of his habitual range of irony--between his characters and readers.

The movement toward representing the felt consequences of social conditions rather than simply their sociological implications also entails a descent into psychological or motivational uncertainty. As Fielding relaxes his usual narrative control, he allows the characters to speak for themselves to an unprecedented extent (to the extent, in fact, that Books Two, Three, and Seven, as well as much of Book One, are consumed by the autobiographies of important characters). Readers who try to validate the claims of these characters often encounter profound, even insoluble, problems of interpretation. Eric Rothstein identifies the ways in which Booth's portrayal of the major characters is

later qualified or invalidated;<sup>39</sup> Coolidge's unsympathetic reading of Mrs. Atkinson's story raises serious questions about her reliability.<sup>40</sup> What is true of Booth and Mrs. Atkinson is also true of Miss Mathews, whose more obvious resentment clouds her judgment and repeatedly threatens her reliability. Her class-conscious attacks on rivals for status and respectability are undermined by their very crudeness and strained logic, and by the implicit spiritual egalitarianism of the novel. But Miss Mathews also makes statements that are simply impossible to evaluate: Booth's remark that he does not know the widow Cary pointedly reminds the reader that there can be no independent confirmation of Miss Mathews' resentful claim that "Mrs. Cary...is far from being handsome; and yet she is as finished a Coquette as if she had the highest Beauty" (51). Similarly, the reader must suspect Miss Mathews' claim--pure unsupported constatement--that her brother "would rather have thanked any man who had destroyed me," especially given her gratuitous afterthought, "and I am sure I am not in the least behind Hand with him in good Wishes" (55).

Where Fielding most strenuously exerts authorial control his novel seems weakest to a modern sensibility. Harrison and Amelia both manifest an unconvincing simplicity of self relating to their function as moral exempla. Amory

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<sup>39</sup>Rothstein 175-176.

<sup>40</sup>Coolidge 255; see also Rothstein 160-62.

argues that Harrison's simplicity is fully intended by Fielding, and that because Harrison sometimes speaks to the reader much as a minister preaches to his congregation, we should therefore consider him as "a pure role, not a character."<sup>41</sup> But Amory's argument ignores, I think, Fielding's general project of psychological realism, as well as his specific, if sporadic, attempts at delineating Harrison as an irascible figure who sometimes strains against the requirements of his profession.<sup>42</sup> In the case of *Amelia*, the problem is similar but more severe. As T. C. Duncan Eaves argues, *Amelia* seems to have been an unsuccessful attempt, patterned on a misreading of Richardson's *Clarissa*, to present a woman who manifests impressive virtues and significant flaws.<sup>43</sup> To be sure,

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<sup>41</sup> Amory 514.

<sup>42</sup>I'm thinking particularly of Harrison's awareness in his first lecture to Booth and in his letter to Booth and Amelia that his role as a member of the clergy requires a moralizing that does not, at the moment, interest his auditors or readers. For the argument that Fielding attempts to transfer narrative authority to Harrison while preserving Harrison's psychological distinctness, see Bender 191-196.

<sup>43</sup>T. C. Duncan Eaves, "Amelia and Clarissa," in *A Provision of Human Nature: Essays on Fielding and Others in Honor of Miriam Austin Locke*, ed. Donald Kay (University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1977) 95-110. The argument has also been made that Amelia (like the Harrison of Bender's argument) oscillates between the roles of psychologically individuated character and straightforward indicator of Fielding's moral intentions. See, for instance, Allan Wendt, "The Naked Virtue of Amelia" (*ELH: A Journal of English Literary History* 27 [1960]), for a discussion of Amelia both as a "symbol of naked human virtue" and a "real woman" (134).

Eaves pays little attention to moments where Fielding has tried to invest Amelia with complexities that would detract from her stature as an exemplar--in particular, her deliciously catty "Taste and Enjoyment of the Ridiculous" that appears just once, in some remarks about Bath (127), her attraction to Mrs. Ellison's noble cousin, and her moment of temptation at Atkinson's bedside. But such moments are isolated and clearly subordinated to Fielding's moral aims, and Eaves's claim that Amelia fails to attain full complexity of character is essentially correct. In order to confirm the lack of interiority of Fielding's heroine, one need only think of the bathetic revelation that Amelia has known all along of Booth's dalliance, and then attempt on subsequent readings of the novel to locate the precise moment of her discovery by discerning tell-tale shifts in her mood.

The second criticism, that the providential ending defeats Fielding's attempt to formulate what Wolff calls a "significant and workable connection...between private good and public morality"<sup>44</sup> has important thematic implications. In the first place, the resolution of Amelia seems a blatant violation of the claim in the exordium that the novel is an examination of the "ART OF LIFE" (17), which includes, in particular, the project of "retriev[ing] the ill Consequences of a foolish Conduct...by struggling manfully

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<sup>44</sup>Wolff 54.

with Distress to subdue it" (16). Booth does not struggle "manfully with Distress" to rescue himself from his "foolish Conduct"; he undergoes a fortuitous conversion, and he and Amelia are precipitously and perhaps miraculously whisked from their poverty. The events that bring about the novel's conclusion are unlikely, if not quite implausible, and the characters themselves sense the hand of Providence directing their affairs. As in Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, then, Fielding imports a providential order that restores the most important characters to their predestined rank. Moreover, the ending suggests Fielding's indebtedness to an idea of rewards and punishments that is as crude as that which Shamela attacks in Richardson. There is a part of Fielding that still, apparently, sees the self as defined by status, and Booth and Amelia are therefore not complete without wealth.

Fielding's psychological reduction of Amelia and Booth, though a serious failing, does not destroy Amelia, any more than Richardson's equivalent simplification of Mr. B. and Pamela destroys Pamela; it does, however, allow modern readerly interest to stray from the titular heroine. The enduring centre of Amelia is not Amelia: one need only look at how little space critical discussion of Amelia takes up in academic accounts of the novel. Coolidge writes, in a hyperbole that is not far from the truth, "[i]t hardly seems

too much to say that Mrs. Atkinson saves the novel."<sup>45</sup>  
 When fortune smiles on Amelia and Booth, it does so without reservation: the Booths remain essentially unaffected by the changes in their fortune. But when fortune smiles on the Atkinsons, the smile is a little wry, for it has exacted its price from both of them. Mrs. Atkinson's moral integrity is ultimately compromised by her late actions towards his lordship; and Atkinson does sacrifice some peace of mind to become a military officer and the undereducated husband of an educated woman.

Early in my discussion I suggested that Amelia contains the partial resolution of the tension between the representational and moral aims of Fielding's work (that is, between the desire to "describe human Nature as it is, not as we would wish it to be" [429] and the competing desire to propose normative moral standards of the kind that appear in Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews). The unprecedented representational success of the novel lies in Fielding's delineation of a few strikingly realistic characters who, no matter what their social background, are defined as individuals in whom confrontations between accumulated experience and present circumstances define and modify the self. Indeed, Ian Watt's claim that the novel embraces the distinctly modern world view "which presents us...with a

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<sup>45</sup>Coolidge 258.

developing but unplanned aggregate of particular individuals having particular experiences at particular times and at particular places"<sup>46</sup> becomes largely applicable to Fielding's fiction only in Amelia. The claim in Joseph Andrews that "this Lawyer is not only alive, but hath been so these 4000 Years" (189) would be distinctly out of place here, for Fielding has entered history and discovered what must have seemed paradoxical to a sensibility that tended to view the self in terms of social or moral categories: the importance of the highly individuated self to an understanding of human nature in general and the forms that human nature takes under specific historical and social pressures.

The extent to which Fielding succeeds in his moral aims of not only exposing but convincing his readers to reject "some of the most glaring Evils, as well public and private, which at present infest the Country" (3) depends largely on his treatment of the felt effects of emulation in specific characters. Where he attempts to provide moral exempla, particularly in the case of Amelia, his intentions appear too stark and his psychology too simple to have aged well. But the dangerous consequences of turning from Christian doctrine, particularly in a society suffering from an epidemic of emulation, are effectively dramatized. Fielding

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<sup>46</sup>Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (1957; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) 34.

presents, with striking vividness, the soul-numbing effects of Miss Mathews' and James's social ambitions. And he presents, moreover, the comparatively lively Atkinsons who, if they are not entirely admirable, are fairly convincing portraits of people trying to live, as best they can, in a society that places unjust demands on them.

## Conclusion.

A few years after Pepys wrote about sitting at the doorway of the royal barge, two expressions of popular menace, mob and hoi polloi, entered the English language. The fact that both derive from classical languages--the first being a shortened form of mobile vulgus or 'vacillating crowd', the second a transliteration of the Greek for 'the many'--should not be overlooked. Both terms were coinages of the classically educated and reflect the social experience of the upper orders<sup>1</sup>; both hearken back to the aristocratic promise of good order that, in the summer of 1665, Pepys could neither accept nor quite reject; and both attest to an anxiety that the emancipation of the lower orders from aristocratic authority might lead not merely to an undesirable political order, but to chaos. By the mid-eighteenth century, the concern reflected in these terms commanded much attention from novelists whose allegiances, like Pepys's, were profoundly divided. Even a conservative writer could, in one mood, leave unexamined the dubious assumptions about political subordination and, in another, expose them in all their inadequacy. In The Enquiry, for instance, Fielding worries, conventionally and

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<sup>1</sup>The second edition of the Oxford English Dictionary identifies Shadwell as the first to use the longer version, mobile, in 1676; the short version is attributed to John Verney, later 2nd Baronet and 1st Viscount Fermanagh, in 1688. Hoi polloi finds its way into English through Dryden's Essay Of Dramatic Poesie (1668).

rather shrilly, about "a Mob of Chairmen or Servants... almost too big for the Civil Authority to oppress"<sup>2</sup>; but in Tom Jones the man who imagined himself a descendant of the Hapsburgs is bluffly apologetic about his use of the word "Mob" to denote "Persons without Virtue, or Sense, in all Stations" including "many of the highest Rank."<sup>3</sup>

Although differences in their politics and moral concerns led to strikingly different emphases in their fiction, both Fielding and Richardson offer important insights into the psychological and political implications of a loss of hereditary honour. For Richardson, who wrote the most provocative of the contemporary treatments of the subject, anxiety about the loss of aristocratic authority translated into a concern with the conscientious women and men whose integrity was endangered by aristocratic whim. For the Fielding of Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews, a man whose background and professional duties encouraged strong allegiances to political authority, the same anxiety usually expressed itself in a desire to preserve social rather than psychological order. This does not mean that Richardson ignored the implications for the body politic of a loss of hereditary honour, or that Fielding believed that any cost

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<sup>2</sup> An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers and Related Writings, Ed. Malvin R. Zirker (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1988) 72-3.

<sup>3</sup> The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling, eds. Martin C. Battestin and Fredson Bowers, 2 vols. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan UP, 1975) 59.

to the self was acceptable: Pamela's concern about the goings-on in Squire Martin's household and Fielding's treatment of casuistry in Adams suggest quite the contrary.

For both writers the loss of aristocratic authority created numerous formal and ideological challenges. One of these was how best to accommodate literary form to an examination of moral experience in a society without agreed-upon authorities. If the experiences these writers addressed were historically recent, it followed that there were no wholly adequate literary models. For instance, since categorical representations of the self no longer obtained--since Lord Hervey, the model for Beau Didapper, was not honorable or even genteel-looking, and since not every servant girl was dull-witted, quaintly comic, easily seduced, or even demure--literary-social stereotypes that governed fiction like John Kelly's needed to be abandoned in favour of new, as yet undefined ways of representing the self in its historically most recent manifestation... Hence all the talk in prefaces and private correspondence about "new species" and "new Province[s]" of writing.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, as both Fielding and Richardson recognized, a loss of faith in aristocratic honour meant that conscientious women and men in a position of social inferiority might find themselves at odds with the will of

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<sup>4</sup>Samuel Richardson, Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson. ed. John Carroll (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964) 41; Tom Jones I, 77.

their superiors and the demands of their position. The potential for such conflicts between superiors and inferiors, masters and servants, complicated literary representation of the self by making ambivalence about aristocratic authority an almost integral part of any conscientious citizen; at the same time, it made an examination of conscience and, by extension, the representation of the self all the more pressing. And in Fielding's case, it gradually pushed a sensibility of striking literary and political conservatism towards a Richardsonian recognition of the urgency of discovering a literary form that could represent the self in its full, subjective complexity rather than as a function of rank, status, or moral type.

In the case of both novelists, the discovery of an appropriate form was partially impeded by allegiances to conventions best suited to other purposes. In the last twenty-five years, literary historians have identified numerous literary forms that, in the early decades of the eighteenth-century, seemed laden with the potential to give meaningful expression to moral experience.<sup>5</sup> The choice of

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<sup>5</sup>Although here, as in the body of my argument, I emphasize literary forms that have in some ways interfered with the representation of the self, it needs to be said that both Fielding and Richardson found some literary models immensely amenable to the purposes of representing the self in a society without reliable authorities. More than twenty years ago, in Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character (Hampden, Conn.: Archon, 1972), Richardson's use of Puritan spiritual autobiography was

conventions, however, is not a neutral matter, and particular choices can lead to unintended effects. Richardson's tacit reliance on the conduct book and Fielding's more self-conscious use of conventions derived from heroic romance represent allegiances to literary conventions that grew out of the experiences of an earlier time. In 1740, the conduct book still addressed the important project of forming middle-class sensibilities, but its broadly didactic or formative purposes could not accommodate an inquiry into the complex, subjective responses to abused authority. Similarly, Fielding's and Richardson's complaints about the improbabilities and bloated rhetoric of continental romances, not to mention Johnson's redefinition of the term romance to meet contemporary literary needs, suggest that the heroic romance, with its endorsement of hereditary honour and a providentially regulated social order, was also an inadequate vehicle for representing the self under contemporary social conditions.

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discussed by Cynthia Griffin Wolff; arguments have also been made by Carol Flynn in Samuel Richardson: A Man of Letters (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982) 145-195 and D. C. Muecke in "Beauty and Mr. B.," Studies in English Literature 7 (1967): 467-474 that in Pamela Richardson exploited the fairy tale convincingly. In the case of Fielding, the passages in Tom Jones that I identify as particularly effective treatments of the prudence theme are heavily indebted to the periodical essay, a form that Fielding handles best when it is adapted to the ends of his prose fiction.

Richardson's indebtedness to the simplified morality of the conduct book and Fielding's similar indebtedness to the conventions of continental romance result in a datedness in both writers' treatment of self that is much more striking in the novels I have discussed than in, say, those of Jane Austen. In the last volume of Richardson's original novel as in the sequel, Richardson's usually subtle and particularized representation of Pamela is displaced by a clumsier, more generalized, conduct-book version. Over the span of Fielding's three novels, the movement is in the opposite direction, partly because Fielding's changing understanding of the dangers of political subordination without authority brings him closer to Richardson's original concern with the difficulties of conscientious conduct. In Joseph Andrews the interest in the effects on the self of a crisis of aristocratic authority is decidedly peripheral, imperfectly subordinated to Fielding's comic intentions and confined to momentary glimpses into the workings of conscience in Lady Booby and Parson Adams. In Tom Jones, the narrator's treatment of the difficulties of reconciling prudence with "Goodness of Heart, and Openness of Temper" (141) addresses questions of moral choice in a world where the traditional, external signifiers of moral worth no longer count for anything. And yet in Tom Jones Fielding's characters are too close to literary-social stereotypes to dramatize the narrator's general claims--what Ian Watt calls

Fielding's "realism of assessment"<sup>6</sup>--about the costs of prudence to the self. In Amelia, Fielding narrows his focus from an essentially sociological analysis to the representation of character. Here, in Fielding's most Richardsonian novel, the psychologically individuated self becomes a useful tool of inquiry into the effects of a crisis in aristocratic authority on the body politic.

Perhaps the most recalcitrant formal problem Fielding faced was how to use providentially regulated plots without endorsing all the ideological conclusions of romance. In Joseph Andrews, Fielding uses both a comic variation of the conventional birth-mystery plot and literary-social stereotypes to defeat the progressive tendencies of Pamela and, apparently, to assert a providential world view. In Tom Jones, too, Fielding exploits a variation of the birth-mystery plot, but here he attenuates its effect by subduing the references to Tom's gentility and by engineering a conclusion that precludes a joyous family reunion. More importantly, in the introductory essay to Book Fifteen, he opens a gap between the providentially regulated world of comic romance and the less orderly, extra-literary world where justice is often deferred until the after-life. In Amelia, Fielding rejects the literary-social stereotypes so closely associated with providential plots, and yet he finds

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<sup>6</sup>Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (1957; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) 328.

himself unable, finally, to abandon a providential resolution that triumphs over the chaos of contemporary social experience.

Recognition of Fielding's growing interest in representing the conscientious self entails an important modification to what might be called the orthodox Palladian or architectonic understanding of Fielding's fiction.<sup>7</sup> According to this view, which sees Fielding's comic novels in terms of architectural metaphors (as opposed to the organic metaphors often applied to Richardson's novels), Fielding shares none of Richardson's concern with exploring subjective moral experience; instead his project is to construct an orderly work whose internal coherence implicitly rejects the realist project of accommodating literary form to the particulars of extra-literary reality. But close attention to Fielding's treatment of the relationship between conscience and authority reveals a genuine and growing concern with representing the

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<sup>7</sup>The first term is from Dorothy Van Ghent's The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Rinehart, 1953) 80, the second from Robert Alter's essay, "The Architectonic Novel" in Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1968) 99-139. See also Martin C. Battestin, "The Argument of Design" in The Providence of Wit: Aspects of Form in Augustan Literature and the Arts (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974). The embarrassment for palladian criticism has always been Amelia, whose realist agenda has been subordinated to an architectonic reading based on the Aeneid (See L. H. Powers, "The Influence of the Aeneid on Fielding's Amelia," Modern Language Notes 71 [1956] 330-336) or explained away as a rupture with past practice (see Alter 139).

conscientious self; moreover, even in Fielding's comic novels, the combination of narrative analysis of characters' motivations and rhetorically unobtrusive styles represents a significant concession to an agenda of psychological realism. In Joseph Andrews, representation of the conscientious self is a decidedly peripheral concern, but in the treatment of the prudence theme in Tom Jones it gains a new thematic importance. In Amelia, finally, Fielding's interest in representing the self all but displaces his original comic intentions and the Palladian facade crumbles.

For Fielding and Richardson alike, formal innovation was a means to an end, whether that end was comic, as in Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, or serious, as in Pamela and Amelia. If one asks what form the conscientious self takes when Fielding's and Richardson's characters are most independent of the conventional representations of the self supplied by conduct books and heroic romances, some significant similarities emerge. To begin with, there is a striking (and, I think, generally overlooked) concurrence that the loss of hereditary honour turns relations of authority into relations of power, and that the new opportunities for social advancement are fraught with risks of social and sexual emulation for both the upper and lower orders. But perhaps the most striking similarity between Pamela and Fielding's last two novels in particular is the argument that the loss of hereditary honour demands of the

conscientious individual a prudence that may, paradoxically, destroy the self it should protect. As Pamela learns to distrust Mr. B.'s promises, she finds her actions increasingly dictated by a self-protective resourcefulness that risks irrevocably isolating her from others; in the end, it is a minor miracle that she is able to overcome her suspicions to return to Booby. Similarly, the narrator of Tom Jones recognizes that the "Goodness, Generosity and Honour" (244) that characterize Tom and Allworthy leave good men and women vulnerable to the schemes of the world's Blifils; at the same time, he argues that the prudence that protects against "Backbiting, Envy, and Ingratitude" (784) is, ultimately, incompatible with the moral qualities most worth cultivating. In Amelia, finally, Fielding's more psychologically complex characters--particularly Mrs. Bennet, but even Booth and Amelia--dramatize the difficulty of reconciling prudence with a trust of others.

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