

## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE MORAL DIMENSION

## Introduction

Although a great comic artist, Fielding, as many critics have observed, was also a serious moral writer.<sup>1</sup> He claimed a didactic function for all his major works which, in general, deal with profound issues concerning the nature of Mankind and Man's duty to society and to God. Concerning the fundamental nature of Mankind, the most hotly debated philosophical issue of the period,<sup>2</sup> Fielding vigorously opposed the pessimists, who asserted Mankind to be essentially depraved, and supported the optimists, particularly the Latitudinarian Divines, who asserted humanity to be essentially benevolent.<sup>3</sup> He did not, however, regard human nature as being perfect : "though I am

<sup>1</sup>See particularly, James Work, "Henry Fielding, Christian Censor" in *The Age of Johnson, Essays, Presented to C.B. Tinker*, ed. F.W. Hilles, New Haven, 1949, pp 139-48.

<sup>2</sup>See C.A. Moore, "Shaftesbury and the Ethical Poets in England, 1700-1760", *PMLA* XXXI, 1916, p 280.

<sup>3</sup>Fielding particularly objected to the ideas of Thomas Hobbes, La Rochefoucauld, and Bernard Mandeville, the High Church Anglicans, and Calvinist Methodists. See Preface to the *Miscellanies* (Henley XII, p 242), *The Champion*, December 11, 1739 (Henley XV, p 94ff), *The Champion*, January 22, 1739-40 (Henley XV, p 161ff), *The Champion*, March 4, 1739-40 (Henley XV, p 227ff), *The Champion*, March 6, 1739-40 (Henley XV, p 230ff), *TJ*, XI, i (Henley III, p 270f) and *Amelia* III, vi (Henley XI, p 127f). He generally supported the views of Shaftesbury but objected to Deism's atheistic tendencies; see, for example, *The Champion*, January 22, 1739-40 (Henley XV, p 163), *JA*, III, iii (Henley I, p 240f), *TJ*, III, iv (Henley III, p 118), *Amelia* I, iii (Henley VI, p 25), *CGJ*, No.8, January 28, 1752 (Jensen I, p 181ff). Fielding most vigorously expounded the views of the Latitudinarian Divines, particularly those of John Tillotson, Isaac Barrow, Samuel Clarke and Benjamin Hoadly (see M.C. Battestin, "The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art", *op.cit.*, Ch. 5). With them, he defined human nature as being essentially benevolent. See "Of Good Nature" (Henley XII, p 258f), "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men" (Henley XIV, p 285), *The Champion*, January 3, 1739-40 (Henley XV, p 136), *JW*, II, i (Henley II, p 53), *TJ*, VI, i (Henley III, p 272), *Amelia* IX, v (Henley VII, p 145), *Inquiry* (Henley XIII, p 109). According to Fielding, God created Man in His own image, and God was "the best-natured being in the universe". (*The Champion*, March 27, 1740 [Henley XV, p 260]).

unwilling to look on human nature as a mere sink of iniquity, I am far from insinuating that it is a state of perfection".<sup>1</sup> He seems to have been undecided concerning the origin of man's imperfections. On the one hand he attributes it to hereditary factors, as in this observation on the different characters of people:

this original difference will, I think, alone account for that very early and strong inclination to good or evil, which distinguishes different dispositions in children, in their first infancy; in the most uninformed savages, who can have thought to have altered their nature by no rules, nor artfully acquired habits; and lastly, in persons, who, from the same education, etc., might be thought to have directed nature the same way; yet, among all these, there subsists, as I have before hinted, so manifest and extreme a difference of inclination or character, that almost obliges us, I think, to acknowledge some unacquired, original distinction, in the nature or soul of one man, from that of another.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, he attributes it to environmental factors, as in this speech by Dr Harrison in *Amelia*:

... the nature of man is far from being in itself evil; it abounds with benevolence, charity, and pity, coveting praise and honour, and shunning shame and disgrace. Bad education, bad habits, and bad customs, debauch our nature, and drive it headlong as it were into vice. The governors of the world, and I am afraid the priesthood, are answerable for the badness of it.<sup>3</sup>

In general, Fielding believed that both hereditary and environmental factors combined to shape the human character:

tho' Nature however must give the Seeds, Art may cultivate them. To improve or to depress their Growth is greatly within the Power of Education.<sup>4</sup>

Subscribing to the view expressed by Tom Jones to the Man of the Hill: "many a man who commits evil is neither totally bad nor corrupt in his heart",<sup>5</sup> Fielding believed that human nature was often weak and

<sup>1</sup>*The Champion*, December 11, 1739 (Henley XV, p 94). See also, *Amelia* III, i (Henley VI, p 109) and *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (Henley XVI, p 200f).

<sup>2</sup>"An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men" (Henley XIV, p 281f). See also, "A Journey from this World to the Next" I, vi (Henley II, p 238f) and *JA*, III, v (Henley I, p 262).

<sup>3</sup>*Amelia* IX, v (Henley VII, p 145).

<sup>4</sup>*GGJ*, 48, June 16, 1752 (Jensen II, p 27).

<sup>5</sup>*TJ*, VIII, xv (Henley IV, p 152).

confused. Like the Latitudinarian Divines he believed that with proper instruction, it could be brought to a condition of moral excellence. He considered it the duty of the writer to encourage such moral excellence, particularly in young people and, as part of this end, made great use of the conventional rural-urban dichotomy, which provided him with a ready-made framework for contrasting good and evil. In his writings, the country is not presented as idyllic, but as the chief source of cultivation of that ultimate moral quality, good-nature, which he defines as "a flower so fine, / it only grows in soils almost divine",<sup>1</sup> a flower which, in his works, flourishes mainly in the soil of Somersetshire and Wiltshire. The city on the other hand, with few exceptions, is presented as a centre of vicious and depraved people. These two environments influence the character, but only according to impressionability. The intrinsically vicious, such as Jonathan Wild and Blifil, (representing city and country, respectively) would always remain so, independent of environment. This is also true of the intrinsically virtuous, as Fielding himself says:

virtue is not that coy, nor that cruel mistress she is represented. Nor is she of that morose and rigid nature, which some mistake her to be. If she loves retirement, and is more safely preserved there, still she will accompany you in cities, in courts, and in camps.<sup>2</sup>

The principles are dramatised in the novels. The action of *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones*, and *Amelia*, consists (in varying proportions and with varying emphases) of a journey by innocent young people from the country, to London, where they are persecuted. Those who are steadfastly virtuous, such as Joseph Andrews, Sophia Western and Amelia Booth, although they suffer greatly in the urban environment, remain morally uncorrupted by it. Those who are morally confused and/or imprudent, such as Mr Wilson, Tom Jones and William Booth, succumb to the town temptations and undergo severe moral degradation before their gaining of wisdom. All these characters are eventually rewarded for their moral victory in London, with a happy rural

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<sup>1</sup>"Of Good Nature" (Henley XII, p 258).

<sup>2</sup>*The Champion*, January 14, 1739-40 (Henley XV, p 167).

retirement, thereby demonstrating to Fielding's young readers that virtuous and prudent people, with the aid of the Divine Providence, can defeat evil and achieve happiness on this earth. Although the country to which they retire is not perfect, it is the only environment in which reason and benevolence can fashion moral and social order. Thus Fielding uses the country-city contrast to portray allegorically the proper preparation of the individual for society, and to present a vision of that ideal society in operation. Fielding's vision of ideal social order has been extensively discussed in the previous chapter on manners. Concerning social order, however, this chapter deals with the more profound social application of what is, in Fielding's estimation, the ultimate moral quality, benevolence (an issue dealt with only superficially in the previous chapter). Fielding represents the upper classes in London as neglecting benevolence in favour of vice, and as preying upon, rather than promoting, the merit and virtue which it was their responsibility to encourage, both for the benefit of the individual and society. The alternative is represented through the gentry remaining in the country, not the fox-hunting squirearchy, who terrorise all living creatures but, rather, those benevolent landlords and parsons who extend hospitality to all social classes. The order which they create on their estates and in their parishes is represented as part of natural and moral order, ordained by God, and is offered as an ideal pattern for responsible civilisation. The success with which Fielding uses the country-city contrast to these didactic ends throughout the various stages of his career, runs parallel to that of his presentation of manners, discussed in the previous chapter. As this chapter deals with Fielding's most profound moral use of the rural-urban dichotomy, the reasons for the various successes and failures will be examined in greater detail.

## Section One: The Early Writings

In Fielding's dramatic writings, the use of the country-city contrast to portray the moral education of the individual is negligible. In *Love in Several Masques* Wisemore has rejected town vice for country virtue before the play begins and, in *The Modern Husband* and *Miss Lucy in Town*, Gaywit and Thomas respectively make a similar renunciation, but there is no dramatisation of moral reformation in these plays, which deal with education mainly in the realm of manners. The themes of moral education and moral reformation are present in the ballad operas and dramatic burlesques, but these plays deal mainly with manners and political and cultural issues, rather than with deep ethical concerns.

Whilst most of the genteel comedies also deal mainly with manners, some characters, such as Wisemore in *Love in Several Masques* and Sir George Boncour in *The Fathers; or, The Good-Natured Man*, make significant statements concerning the age's alleged moral transgressions. These vigorous yet isolated denunciations, however, do not add up to a profound analysis of society, for which the superficial *genre* gave little scope. Only in *The Modern Husband* does Fielding represent London as that wilderness of Hobbesian predators described by Wisemore as:

... that town, that worst of wildernesses! where follies spread like thorns; where men act the part of tigers, and women of crocodiles; where vice lords it like a lion, and virtue, that phoenix is so rarely seen, that she is believed a fable.<sup>1</sup>

Only in this play do we see, in Fielding's dramatic writings, those lion-like vices which dominate the London of his novels. The play depicts a vicious *beau monde* in which, as was discussed in the previous chapter, Mr and Mrs Modern connive at prostituting Mrs Modern in order to keep pace with town fashion.

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<sup>1</sup>*Love in Several Masques* IV, ii (Henley VIII, p 63).

What is dramatised is modern corruption as caused by irresponsibility amongst society's leaders in Westminster, represented most notably by Lord Richly, who is portrayed as being typical of his class. Instead of using his wealth to promote the public interest, as was his duty, Richly appropriates it to his own gratifications: "my money shall always be the humble servant of my pleasure".<sup>1</sup> Instead of regarding merit and virtue as the chief criteria for public office, as was his duty, Richly advances only those who serve his lusts. He explains to Mrs Bellamant, an innocent countrywoman whom he intends to seduce, that prostitution is a major system of promotion in the nation's capital: "how many families are supported by this method which you start at? Does not many a woman in this town drive her husband's coach?"<sup>2</sup> He is cynical about the corrupting influence of his methods: "I have made twenty such men subscribe themselves cuckolds by the prospect of one place, which not one of them ever had."<sup>3</sup>

In portraying Richly's transgressions, Fielding introduces us, for the first significant time in his writings, to an important symbol which he often used to portray the irresponsibility of society's leaders in Westminster, the inhospitable door of the great man's town house, closed to men of merit and open to those of none. This is discovered at Richly's door by the worthy old soldier, Captain Merit, who is denied entrance, whilst the pimp, Colonel Courtly is admitted:

CAPTAIN BRAVEMORE. Merit, good-morrow; what important affair can have sent you hither, whom I know to shun the houses of the great as much as virtue does?

CAPTAIN MERIT. Or as much as they do poverty; for I have not been able to advance farther than you see me, 'Sdeath, I have mounted a breech against an armed file of the enemy, and yet a single porter has denied me entrance at that door. You, I see, have speeded better.

CAPTAIN BRAVEMORE. Ha, ha, ha! thou errant man of war - Markye, friend, there is but one key to all the great men's houses in town.

<sup>1</sup>*The Modern Husband* IV, ii (Henley X, p 62).

<sup>2</sup>*The Modern Husband* IV, viii (Henley X, p 72).

<sup>3</sup>*The Modern Husband* IV, ii (Henley X, p 63).

CAPTAIN MERIT. Is it not enough to cringe to power, but we must do the same to the servants of power?

CAPTAIN BRAVEMORE. Sir, the servants of a great man are all great men. Would you get within their doors, you must bow to the porter, and fee him too. Then, to go farther, you must pay your devoirs to his gentleman; and, after you have bowed for about half an hour to his whole family, at last you may get a bow from himself.

CAPTAIN MERIT. Damnation! I'd sooner be a galley-slave. Shall I, who have spent my youth and health in my country's service, be forced by such mean vassalage to defend my old age from cold and hunger, while every painted butterfly wantons in the sunshine? (Colonel Courtly crosses) 'Sdeath, there's a fellow now - That fellow's father was a pimp; his mother, she turned bawd; and his sister turned whore: you see the consequence. How happy is that country, where pimping and whoring are esteemed public services, and where grandeur and the gallows lie on the same road!<sup>1</sup>

Throughout Fielding's writings these inhospitable doors with their hostile porters are the symbols of modern urban corruption. They represent the town's rejection of traditional English hospitality, which was celebrated as the foundation of a responsible civilised society, and which was symbolised in poetry by the open doors of the great country houses, such as that of Saxham, in "To Saxham" by Carew:

Thou hast no Porter at thy doore  
T'examine, or keep back the poore;  
Nor locks, nor bolts; thy gates have bin  
Made onely to let strangers in;  
Vntaught to shut, they do not feare  
To stand wide open all the yeare.<sup>2</sup>

In Fielding's writings, the hospitable country house is always the alternative to the inhospitable town mansion, but the town *milieu* of genteel comedy prevented any development of this contrast in

<sup>1</sup>*The Modern Husband* I, viii (Henley X, p 20ff). Neglect of the military by the Great is a major theme in Fielding's urban satire; see, *JA*, III, iii (Henley I, p 234f), *TJ*, VII, xii (Henley IV, p 31) and *Amelia* I, iv (Henley VI, p 29). The story of Captain William Booth in London in *Amelia* is Fielding's most vigorous criticism of this social neglect.

<sup>2</sup>R. Dunlap, ed., *The Poems of Thomas Carew*, Oxford, 1957, p 28.

*The Modern Husband*. Nevertheless, a contrast to Richly is developed in the play in the character of Mr Bellamant, a country gentleman, who, despite being temporarily seduced by Mrs Modern, exemplifies the ultimate Fielding virtue, benevolence. The encounters between Richly and Bellamant dramatise an opposition commonplace in Fielding's writings, one signifying his most profound use of the country-city contrast, that is, the opposition between the nobility based in Westminster, who are portrayed as undermining traditional society with modern corruption, and the non-fox-hunting gentry remaining in the country, who are portrayed as possessing the virtues which had governed that traditional society. Richly is portrayed as the product of a corrupt new age, and Bellamant, as a champion of the old order. In one confrontation, Bellamant describes the disastrous consequences for civilisation when the Great exercise their power arbitrarily, as does Richly: "where grandeur can give license to oppression the people must be slaves, let them boast what liberty they please."<sup>1</sup> This, too, is the terrible lesson learned by William Booth in *Amelia*, when he becomes dependent on the Great in London.

It is in *The Modern Husband* that we see Fielding's most convincing didactic use of the country-city contrast in dramatic writing. In this play the contrast reaches the proportions of an elaborate system for the analysis of character and society which it reaches in the novels. As observed in the chapter on manners, greatly contributing to the successes in *The Modern Husband* is the greater degree of realism in the portrayal of the characters. Most important in the play's moral dimension is that, as the characters are relatively complex, dynamic and three-dimensional, they achieve the status of protagonists, thereby encouraging us to identify more readily with their experiences of town and country, and to accept more fully the moral conclusions to be drawn from these experiences, a response anticipating that to the novels.

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<sup>1</sup>*The Modern Husband* V, vi (Henley X, p 81). For similar views see *The Grub Street Opera* II, vii (Henley IX, p 251), and *Miss Lucy in Town* (Henley XII, p 61).



Despite the successful presentation of its theme, *The Modern Husband* failed on the stage, for political as well as aesthetic reasons.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps town audiences were unimpressed with the play's rhetorical assimilation of medium and message, and found unacceptable in the urbane form of genteel comedy a harsh portrayal, allegedly taken from the life, of vice and corruption in the *beau monde*. The play's strong didactic intent and sharp polarisation of good and evil certainly created moral forces too powerful for the genteel comedy, moral forces more easily accommodated in the novel. Indeed, in its characters, action, dark moral tone and complex study of the corrupt urban environment, *The Modern Husband* provides something of a blueprint for Fielding's final novel, *Amelia*. In the dramatic scene of the 1730s, however, Fielding was still confused. The frequency with which he censures the town and praises the country in his ballad operas suggests that in this *genre* he offers this judgement in full confidence of the audience's acquiescence. He is not so confident with other *genres*. In the epilogue which he wrote for the play produced in the same year as *The Modern Husband*, Charles Johnson's *Caelia or The Perjured Lover*, a tragedy portraying the destruction of an innocent country girl in the pernicious world of London, he tries to give a comic turn to this tragic perspective on the rural-urban dichotomy:

Lud! what a fuss is here! what blood and slaughter!  
 Because poor miss has prov'd her mother's daughter.  
 This unknown bard is some insipid beast,  
 From Cornwall, or Northumberland at least;  
 Where if a virgin chance to step aside,  
 And taste forbidden sweetmeats of a bride,  
 The virtuous ladies, like infection, fly her,  
 And not one marrying booby will come nigh her;  
 But here, 'mongst us so famous for good-nature,  
 Who think a cuckold quite a fellow-creature;  
 Where miss may take great liberties upon her,  
 And have her man, and yet may keep her honour:  
 Here does the wretch his stupid muse invoke,  
 And turn to solemn tragedy - a joke!  
 Had some town-bard this subject undertaken,  
 He wou'd have match'd, not kill'd the nymph forsaken.

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<sup>1</sup>The failure of *The Modern Husband* is discussed by B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 113f.

Wronglove, as now, had the first favour carried,  
 And Bellamy been, what he is fit for, married.  
 What else are all your comic heroes fam'd for,  
 Than such exploits as Wronglove has been blam'd for?  
 The girl was in the fault, who strove to smother  
 That case she shou'd have open'd to her mother;  
 All had been hush'd by the old lady's skill,<sup>1</sup>  
 And Caelia prov'd a good town-virgin still ...

The play's material, presented to some extent in novel form in Richardson's *Clarissa*, as with the material of *The Modern Husband* in Fielding's *Amelia*, was accepted by the public. Despite its stage failure, *The Modern Husband* represents Fielding's most successful didactic use of the country-city contrast in genteel comedy, a form which gave little scope for using the contrast for profound moral purposes.

In general, contemporary drama did not permit the elaborate rural ideal which the descriptive novel later facilitated. Looking forward to the concluding ideal of his novels, many of Fielding's plays conclude with the virtuous rural characters defeating urban vice and retiring to the ideal life in the country, where their happiness largely arises from loving marital and family relationships. As discussed in the chapter on manners, although these couples assert readiness to live on love in a cottage rather than luxury in a palace, Fielding never puts them to the test. Their reward for triumphing over the worldly view of marriage as a union of estates is always marriage and retirement to a country estate. Thus Fielding gets the best of two worlds. Love, represented as a rural virtue, triumphs, but the demands of the system, most visible in London, are met. There was no real opposition between country and city on the issue of marriage. What went on in the town was generated by the needs of the dominant landed classes. Nevertheless, Fielding, whilst satirising many mercenary country squires, portrays the values of the system as being concentrated in London, and represents town cynicism about marital and family relationships as being only the scum of a deeper cynicism, that is, the negation of Man's most profound

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<sup>1</sup>Henley XV, p 365f.

social instincts and obligations. He represents rural sincerity about such relationships as symbolic of the loving community relationships necessary for the maintenance of traditional social order. By making the settlement of his characters into their country estates seem the reward for moral rather than materialistic values, he exploits the illusion long exploited by English writers : that is, that traditional society, based on the supremacy of landed estates, was, according to the feudal ideal, founded in natural and moral law, ordained by God. Amongst Fielding's plays, the conclusion of *The Temple Beau* comes closest to the concluding rural ideal of his novels. In this play, Veromil and Bellaria win their acres, not by the series of tricks conventional to comedy but, rather, by the imposition of the Divine Providence which, with a series of coincidences, restores to Veromil the estate misappropriated by his brother, thereby establishing the country estate as the Providential reward for virtue, as it is to be at the end of *Tom Jones* and *Amelia*. Of the rural ideal itself in the plays, we receive only fleeting descriptions, such as those from Wisemore and Mrs Bellamant. It is to *The Miscellanies* and *The Champion* that we must turn for the early beginnings of the retirement ideal, so prominent in Fielding's novels.

Of the definitive *beatus ille* phrase, "happy the man", there is only one instance in Fielding's early writings, beginning these lines in the poem "Of Good Nature":

Happy the man, with passions bless'd like you,  
 Who to be ill, his nature must subdue;  
 Whom fortune fav'ring, was no longer blind,  
 Whose riches are the treasures of mankind.  
 O! nobler in thy virtues than thy blood,  
 Above thy highest titles place THE GOOD.<sup>1</sup>

Here, the happiness of the *beatus vir* arises, not from rural retirement but from benevolence. Although an admirer of Horace, Fielding had no patience with the Horatian *beatus vir*, who retired from society to a life of self-conquest and self-sufficiency in rural seclusion, a figure often idealised by Augustan writers, who also

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<sup>1</sup>Henley XII, p 259.

idealised the solitary, contemplative "Il Penseroso" figure of the Christian stoic tradition.<sup>1</sup> Fielding did not consider a withdrawal from society to complete solitude as a viable alternative to the corruptions of civilisation. He considered this as a violation of human nature and social responsibility. He always portrays the solitary recluse as being miserable, a figure represented most notably in his writings by the Man of the Hill in *Tom Jones* and, in his early writings, by the hermit in *Of True Greatness*, Diogenes in "A Dialogue Between Alexander the Great and Diogenes the Cynic", published in *The Miscellanies*, and the hermit encountered by Mrs Heartfree in Africa in *Jonathan Wild*.<sup>2</sup> Fielding considered it wiser to improve society than to renounce it. For him, the ideal life was the active public life, which he celebrates in his moral epistles, published in *The Miscellanies* and dedicated to members of Sir Robert Walpole's opposition, conspicuous for their public virtues.<sup>3</sup> His ideal is encapsulated in a couplet in *Liberty*, in which he praises those who leave the retired life to serve their country, like Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus:

Thro' thee, [Liberty] the laurel crown'd the<sup>4</sup>victor's brow,  
Who served before his country at the plough.

In this, his use of the *beatus ille* creed is thoroughly orthodox in contemporary terms. The Augustans, whilst retaining the central argument of the retirement creed, modified it according to the reigning values of the age and stressed social action as an important aspect of human happiness. In this spirit, poets idealising rural

<sup>1</sup>For the Stoical aspects of the *beatus ille* in Augustan literature, see M-S. Røstvig (*op.cit.*, II, p 26f). For the popularity of Milton's "Il Penseroso", see R.D. Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1922, p 43i).

<sup>2</sup>*Of True Greatness* (Henley XII, p 250). "A Dialogue Between Alexander the Great and Diogenes the Cynic" (Henley XVI, p 77f). *JW* (Henley II, p 177ff).

<sup>3</sup>*Of True Greatness*, *Liberty*, and *Of Good Nature* are dedicated to George Dodington, George Lyttleton, and the Duke of Richmond respectively.

<sup>4</sup>Henley XII, p 264.

retirement, for example, Pope in "Windsor Forest", and Thomson in *The Seasons*, even celebrated that very socio-economic progress which the Classical and seventeenth-century *beatus ille* poets represented as being productive of great human misery.<sup>1</sup> Fielding regarded retirement as being justified only if it did not sever the links between the individual and society and like many of his contemporaries, he effected a compromise between the old formula of the creed, and the new spirit.<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the principles of the Latitudinarian Divines,<sup>3</sup> he represents only those who modify their retirement with an active charity as achieving happiness from a country life. This is negatively demonstrated in the story of Ann Boleyn, in "A Journey from This World to The Next", published in *The Miscellanies*. A vain and self-centred girl, Ann Boleyn, in her rural retreat, seeks only to please herself and, being temperamentally unsuited to retirement, is easily enticed to the court and to the disasters which there await her.<sup>4</sup> It is in the description of the clergyman's rural retirement in *The Champion*, February 26, 1739-40, that we see Fielding's earliest exposition of that social interpretation of the *beatus ille* creed which features so prominently in his novels.<sup>5</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, the simple life-style and well-bred behaviour of the clergyman's family are portrayed as being the manners necessary for the maintenance of traditional society. It is the organisation of the family, their fulfilment of their duties, and their benevolent relationships with one another and the surrounding community, which chiefly express Fielding's vision

<sup>1</sup>See M-S. Røstvig (*op.cit.* II, pp 226f and 267ff).

<sup>2</sup>For a summary of the dual interpretation of the creed in Augustan literature, see M-S. Røstvig (*op.cit.* II, p 291).

<sup>3</sup>The Latitudinarian Divines believed that happiness depended on Providence and not on geographical location, but in so far as it could be achieved on this Earth, they represented it as most attainable in a country life. For a discussion of their influence on Fielding in this respect, see M. Battestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art* (p 46f).

<sup>4</sup>Henley II, p 332f.

<sup>5</sup>Fielding uses the *beatus ille* philosophy to describe the moral and social order established by the Heartfrees in *JW* but this family lives in the city of London. See *JW*, II, i (Henley II, p 53 and IV, xv; Henley II, p 267).

of ideal moral and social order. The family are organised along hierarchical lines. At the head is the father, supervising the sons, next the mother, supervising the daughters, with the men performing the outdoor labour and the women the indoor labour. All members are satisfied with their given roles and fulfil their duties with affection and respect for one another and concern for the common welfare. This is the first of many occasions on which Fielding uses such a family unit, dwelling in the simple rural environment, as a microcosm of that loving family-community-society which he regarded as having been the basis of traditional English society. Of great importance in the family is the parents' education of their children, who are taught proper manners and morals and are prepared for their place in the social macrocosm. Above all, it is the family's benevolence to its neighbours which ultimately establishes its members as exemplars of moral and social virtue. They are generous to all their parishioners, and Fielding astutely observes the benefits which accrue to those in positions of responsibility from such universal hospitality:

... the whole parish is by their example the family of love, of which they daily receive instances from their spiritual guide, and which hath such an effect on them, that I believe *communibus annis*, he receives voluntarily from his parishioners more than his due, though not half so much as he deserves.<sup>1</sup>

Thus this paternalistic clergyman, benevolently presiding over his country parish, is presented as a model for responsible social leadership in the old feudal tradition, a model which Fielding again uses in his portrayal of Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews* and Dr Harrison in *Amelia*. In his description of the clergyman's rural retirement, then, Fielding presents an idealised vision of traditional English society, a benevolent hierarchy which, according to the portrayal of town life also given in the paper, has been destroyed in London. It is thus in the journalistic essay,

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<sup>1</sup>Henley XV, p 218.

So full the stream of Nature's bounty flows,  
 Man feels no ill, but what to man he owes.  
 The earth abundant furnishes a store,  
 To sate the rich, and satisfy the poor.  
 These would not want, if these did never hoard;  
 Enough for Irus falls from Dives' board.

And dost thou, common son of Nature, dare  
 From thy own brother to withhold his share?  
 To vanity, pale idol, offer up  
 The shining dish, the empty golden cup!  
 Or else in caverns hide thy precious ore,  
 And to the bowels of the earth restore  
 What for our use she yielded up before?  
 Behold, and take example, how the steed  
 Attempts not, selfish, to engross the mead.  
 See how the lowing herd, and bleating flock,  
 Promiscuous graze the valley, or the rock;  
 Each tastes his share of Nature's gen'ral good,  
 Nor strives from others to withhold their food.  
 But say, O man! would it not strange appear  
 To see some beast (perhaps the meanest there)  
 To his repast the sweetest pastures choose,  
 And ev'n the sourest to the rest refuse?  
 Wouldst thou not view, with scornful wond'ring eye,  
 The poor, contented, starving herd stand by?  
 All to one beast a servile homage pay,  
 And boasting, think it honour to obey?

Who wonders that good-nature in so few,  
 Can anger, lust, or avarice subdue?  
 When the cheap gift of fame our tongues deny,  
 And risk our own, to poison with a lie.

Dwells there a base malignity in men,  
 that 'scapes the tiger's cave, or lion's den?<sup>1</sup>

In his moral epistles, Fielding often uses nature to teach Man his human status and responsibility. In so doing, he uses nature argumentatively, like Pope in the *Essay on Man*, rather than descriptively, like Thomson in *The Seasons*.<sup>2</sup> There is no evidence of the current interest in descriptions of nature in Fielding's poetry.

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<sup>1</sup>Henley XII, p 260f. See also, *Liberty* (Henley XII, p 262).

<sup>2</sup>The argumentative epistolary style was the most common vehicle for *beatus ille* sentiments in Augustan literature (M-S. Røstvig, (*op.cit.*, II, p 151). Pope's epistles were highly influential. Fielding describes Pope as one who "taught me a system of philosophy in English numbers" ("Dedication and Preface to Plutus" [Henley XVI, p 61]). Fielding's use of nature is largely taken from Pope's *Essay on Man*.

a form in which the *beatus ille* creed was often promulgated,<sup>1</sup> that Fielding most extensively uses this creed in his early writings. Whilst all the stock elements are present, Fielding manipulates the creed to serve his didactic purposes, effecting that compromise between the Classical and Christian versions which later characterises the rural ideal of his novels.

Before examining the novels, one motif which emerges in the early writings and becomes prominent in the novels must be noted, that is, the contribution made by nature and the landscape to the moral superiority of rural over urban life. In contemporary *beatus ille* literature, appreciation of external nature contributed greatly to the moral rewards of rural retirement: "In many cases the very perception of the significance of the landscape of retirement came to be viewed as the mechanism whereby happiness was achieved".<sup>2</sup> The reasons for this are complex and must be simplified here. By contemplating the vast, ordered system of the universe, as revealed by scientific discovery, the *beatus vir*, according to Christian thought, viewed the power, wisdom and benevolence of God, manifest in His Creation<sup>3</sup> and, according to Deistic thinking, perceived the principle of order which governed the natural world.<sup>4</sup> According to all creeds, perception of harmony in the natural world instilled moral harmony into the *beatus vir*, who learned his place within the general system and was inspired to extend its order into the world of Man.<sup>5</sup> The main principle to be learned and practised was benevolence, a lesson which Mankind often failed to learn, as observed by Fielding in "Of Good Nature":

<sup>1</sup>Addison and Steele were the most influential in promulgating the creed in the journalistic essay; for example, *Spectator* XV, pp 464, 549, 114, 514, and 610. Fielding partly modelled *The Champion* on the journals of Addison and Steele. See *The Champion*, January 3, 1739-40 (Henley XV, p 136).

<sup>2</sup>Røstvig, *op.cit.*, p 9.

<sup>3</sup>Scientists and Christians promulgated this viewpoint; for example, John Ray (*The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation*, 1693), William Derham Boyle Lectures (lectures which Boyle founded to expound these principles), "Physico-Theology", 1713 and "Astro-Theology", 1715.

<sup>4</sup>The main exponent of this view was Shaftesbury; see particularly "The Moralists", in J.W. Robertson (ed.), *Characteristics* II, London, 1900.

<sup>5</sup>For a discussion of these themes, see M-S. Røstvig, *op.cit.* II, *passim*.



Just as Fielding's early *beatus vir* derives little happiness from contemplating the rural landscape so, too, he derives little happiness from cultivating it, according to the current vogue for landscape gardening. Fielding supported the contemporary preference for the natural as opposed to the artificial: "the works of nature are in themselves infinitely superior to all the little quackeries and impotent imitations of art".<sup>1</sup> His sardonic description of the garden, overrun with pigs and nettles in: "A Description of U---N (*alias* New Hog's Norton)",<sup>2</sup> however, suggests that he had no taste for unadorned nature. Even so, his early *beatus vir* shows little interest in gardening. The clergyman's garden in *The Champion*, February 26, 1739-40, is described simply as being neat, its main function being to provide necessaries for the family table. For Fielding, the main business of Mankind was Man. What he thought of those who renounce society to cultivate their gardens may be deduced from these words by Heartfree in *Jonathan Wild*:

... but let us survey those whose understandings are of a more elevated and refined temper; how empty do they soon find the world of enjoyments worth their desire or attaining! How soon do they retreat to solitude and contemplation, to gardening and planting, and such rural amusements, where their trees and they enjoy the air and sun in common, and both vegetate with very little difference between them.<sup>3</sup>

It is not until he describes the contrasting prospects surveyed by Mr Allworthy and the Man of the Hill in *Tom Jones* that Fielding attributes didactic significance to the rural landscape.

<sup>1</sup>*The Champion*, Tuesday, March 4, 1739-40 (Henley XV, p 229).

<sup>2</sup>Henley XII, p 277ff.

<sup>3</sup>III, ii (Henley II, p 100f).

Section Two: *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*

Despite criticism of insubstantial moral content in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, Fielding, in these novels, is arguably didactic.<sup>1</sup> The moral principles which had begun to take shape in the early writings develop into a highly organised vision of moral and social order. The country-city contrast, not always consistently used in the early writings, and often used merely for comic purposes, develops into an elaborate system for the presentation of such order. Somersetshire and London are the geographical and ethical bases of both novels. In and between these bases Fielding manipulates the action, which consists mainly of a cross-country journey, by innocent rural characters, ending up in the town, where they defeat persecution and are rewarded with a permanent retirement to the country which, to some extent, allows them to fashion the ideal life. Thus Fielding dramatises his Christian "comic" view, that virtuous people, assisted by Providence, can defeat evil and achieve order and happiness on this earth, order being of course, a reinforcement of traditional English society.

In *Joseph Andrews*, the didactic significance of the country-city contrast is fully realised in the interpolated story of Mr Wilson's town career and subsequent rural retirement. At the age of sixteen Wilson left the country for London, where first his manners, then his morals became thoroughly corrupted. Reaching the *nadir* of his degradation in prison, he underwent a spiritual regeneration and then renounced the town for life in the country.

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<sup>1</sup>For a detailed account of Fielding's early detractors on this issue, see Cross, *op.cit.*, III, Chs 32 and 34). F.R. Leavis led the way for modern critics to accuse Fielding of inanity (*The Great Tradition*, London, 1948). Many modern critics have defended Fielding as a didactic writer. M. Battestin considers *JA* and *TJ* to be primarily didactic in nature (*The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art*, p 88 and *The Providence of Wit*, Oxford, 1974, p 148). We must remember, however, that Fielding was also, very importantly, a comic artist.

One function of Wilson's town career is to present a satirical survey of urban vice, in the manner of Juvenal's *Satire III* and Hogarth's "The Rake's Progress". Homer Goldberg sees this satirical theme as being more important than the reformation theme:

[Wilson] is less a character whose fortunes interest us than a device for displaying the town's follies and injustices in summary review - an aim reflected in the topical satiric organization discernible beneath the surface of his story.<sup>1</sup>

In Wilson's adventures as *beau*, rake, atheist, hack writer and gamester, and in his imprisonment for debt, Fielding does systematically itemise those urban phenomena which he always censured as exemplifying the alleged degradation of the age. In Wilson's attempt to win an aristocratic patron, Fielding satirises what is, for him, the ultimate urban vice, that is, the irresponsibility of society's leaders, symbolised as always in his writings by the inhospitable door of the great man's town house. At such a door Wilson danced attendance, with the same success as Captain Merit in *The Modern Husband*:

I now experienced what is worse than poverty, or rather what is the worst consequence of poverty - I mean attendance and dependence on the great. Many a morning have I waited hours in the cold parlours of men of quality, where, after seeing the lowest rascals in lace and embroidery, the pimps and buffoons in fashion admitted, I have been sometimes told, on sending in my name, that my lord could not possibly see me this morning, a sufficient assurance that<sup>2</sup> I should never more get entrance into that house.

Whilst the satirical survey is important, the reformation theme, as Martin Battestin observes, is nonetheless the main *raison d'être* for Wilson's town adventures. As Battestin argues, Wilson's moral degradation and regeneration in London dramatise the Christian concept of reformation through trial by adversity, whereby God restores the sick soul to health by teaching it humility, contempt

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<sup>1</sup>H. Goldberg, *The Art of Joseph Andrews*, Chicago, 1969, p 130.

<sup>2</sup>*JA*, III, iii (Henley I, p 244).

for worldly things, and a realisation that all things depend on Providence.<sup>1</sup> Wilson's degradation and reformation in London, and his subsequent rural retirement, are at the heart of that issue which always concerned Fielding, that is, the moral education of the young. In describing his haste to be in town after leaving school, Wilson, in hindsight, attributes his ensuing misfortunes to lack of proper moral guidance: "and to this early introduction into life, without a guide, I impute all my future misfortunes".<sup>2</sup> London is a disastrous environment for Wilson to make his introduction into life. In town, he is easily corrupted, his moral degradation culminating in his rejection of Christianity for Deism and atheism and, when finally imprisoned for debt, his trusting to Fortune, rather than Providence, by purchasing a lottery ticket with his last shillings. Fortune, however, betrays him, for the ticket, which he had to sell for bread, wins the prize. Reduced to despair, he realises his folly, is converted to Christianity and trusts to Providence, which, in the person of Harriet Hearty, who inherited the prizemoney, intervenes. The couple marry and renounce the town for a country life. Wilson himself sees his rural retirement as the Providential reward for his moral triumph in London:

"Sir," says Adams, "fortune hath, I think, paid you all her debts in this sweet retirement." "Sir," replied the gentleman, "I am thankful to the great Author of all things for the blessings I here enjoy."<sup>3</sup>

This pattern, of reformation in town and subsequent retirement, is one often followed by rural protagonists in Fielding's writings.

Fielding uses his description of Wilson's rural retirement to demonstrate the potential country alternative to the moral and social chaos of London, and to suggest the nature of the choice available to his protagonists. Using, more elaborately, that compromise between the Classical and Christian versions of the

<sup>1</sup>M.C. Batestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art*, p 44ff.

<sup>2</sup>*JA*, III, iii (Henley I, p 229).

<sup>3</sup>*JA*, III, iii (Henley I, p 254).

*beatus ille* creed with which he had portrayed the clergyman's retirement in *The Champion*, February 26, 1739-40, Fielding, in Wilson's retirement, presents an idealised vision of traditional English society. In line with the Classical ideal, the Wilsons live with frugality, and experience "that calm serene happiness which is seated in content, is inconsistent with the hurry and bustle of the world."<sup>1</sup> Whilst the Horatian virtues are present, however, it is the Christian virtues which are emphasized. In the organisation of the family, in the fulfilment of their duties and relationships with one another and their neighbours, Fielding portrays his ideal system. The family are organised along hierarchical lines, with Wilson at the head, performing the outdoor labour, and Mrs Wilson, supervising the children, performing the indoor labour. All members are satisfied with their roles, and fulfil them with affection and respect for one another and concern for the common welfare. Thus Fielding again uses the family, living in rural retirement, as a microcosm of that loving, family-community-society of his ideal. Of great significance is the Wilsons' education of their children, who are thus carefully prepared for their place in life and society. The family's benevolence to all Mankind is their ultimate social virtue. Wilson, unlike the Man of the Hill in *Tom Jones*, does not become misanthropic and retire to complete solitude but, rather, retires to a life of active Christian charity which all the family practise; "for they had nothing which those who wanted it were not welcome to".<sup>2</sup> Although Wilson is not the landlord of a great estate, he exhibits all the virtues of a Sidney, a Bathurst or a Burlington, and is presented as a model for responsible social leadership. Unlike the clergyman's family in *The Champion* essay, however, the Wilsons do not, by their example, make their parish "the family of love". Rather, as we have seen,<sup>3</sup> they are isolated in their rural felicity.

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<sup>1</sup>JA, III, iv (Henley I, p 257).

<sup>2</sup>JA, III, iv (Henley I, p 258).

<sup>3</sup>See above, pp 101-2.

In fact, the Wilsons are surrounded by brutality. Their eldest son, later discovered to be Joseph Andrews, whilst still a baby was taken from their door by gypsies, and they are constantly harassed by the neighbouring squire, who is "as absolute a tyrant as any in the universe".<sup>1</sup> This does not deter Adams, impressed with the atmosphere of Theocritus' idylls and Virgil's eclogues, from declaring that the Wilsons' way of life "was the manner in which the people had lived in the golden age".<sup>2</sup> Fielding, though, did not believe in a golden age as such: "from the expulsion from Eden down to this day no such 'golden age' ... ever had any existence, unless in the warm imagination of the poets".<sup>3</sup> His use of the realistic detail of the Wilsons' life, measured against Adams' idealized view of it, serves to make clear Fielding's own view of the imperfect nature of human life. This is shown, however, within a context of presenting, as example or inspiration, the kind of heights man could, with his limited resources, quite properly reach. Wilson does not live in an Eden or an Arcadia. In the broad social form of the novel Fielding could not portray country life as being idyllic in any romantic or simplistic way. The rural ideal of poetry had to be given a social basis, had to be anchored in contemporary reality. Nevertheless, the description of Wilson's way of life is an idealised one. In it, Fielding exploits the *beatus ille* conventions to create the illusion that the way of life depicted is founded in natural and moral law, ordained by God. By thus anchoring his ideal rural world to the real rural world, Fielding is enabled to recommend, not a total abandonment of the city for the country (which is shown as not idyllic) but, rather, that the values of the rural ideal should govern society in general. Whilst Wilson's way of life is not perfect, it is the best that can be achieved. It provides a pattern for the reinforcement of traditional society. As J.L. Duncan observes, it serves many

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<sup>1</sup>JA, III, iv (Henley I, p 259).

<sup>2</sup>JA, III, iv (Henley I, p 260).

<sup>3</sup>TJ, XII, xii (Henley V, p 19).

general moral functions in the novel.<sup>1</sup> It serves the satirical function of defining the moral criteria against which both the city, and the surrounding countryside, are measured and found wanting. It serves the comic functions of providing the virtuous with their reward for defeating urban chaos and achieving order, and of defining that final order itself. It has, however, another didactic function in the novel, even more important than those noted above.

A main function of Wilson's story is to serve as a negative analogue to that of his son, Joseph Andrews. The story of *Joseph Andrews* is the journey of Joseph, accompanied by his spiritual father, Abraham Adams, from the vice of London, to virtuous marriage and retirement in the country. As Battestin observes, Wilson's story focuses and moralises Joseph's journey by tracing the same steps, nearly disastrous because without a guide, through the corruptions of London society to happy rural retirement.<sup>2</sup> Wilson's urban degradation demonstrates what would have happened to Joseph in London, had not his morals been strengthened by Adams' instruction. Joseph himself sees that the town environment cannot corrupt a steadfast character:

I remember when I was in the stable, if a young horse was vicious in his nature, no correction would make him otherwise; I take it to be equally the same among men: if a boy be of a mischievous, wicked inclination, no school, though ever so private, will ever make him good: on the contrary, if he be of a righteous temper, you may trust him to London, or wherever else you please - he will be in no danger of being corrupted.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst Joseph's manners are tainted by the town air, his morals remain uncorrupted.<sup>4</sup> Despite his rural innocence, Joseph, from the very beginning, understands London's vices, including its greatest transgression, inhospitality or lack of charity and benevolence towards one's fellows: "London is a bad place, and there is so little good fellowship that the next-door neighbours don't know one another."<sup>5</sup> As he travels away from London towards Somersetshire,

<sup>1</sup>J.L. Duncan, *op.cit.*, p 533.

<sup>2</sup>M.C. Battestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art*, p 119f.

<sup>3</sup>*JA*, III, v (Henley I, p 262).

<sup>4</sup>"If he was outwardly a pretty fellow, his morals remained entirely uncorrupted." (*JA*, I, iv, Henley I, p 34)

<sup>5</sup>*JA*, I, vi (Henley I, p 40).

Joseph increasingly censures this vice. In the spirit of this censure, he explains to Adams the rôle of porter which he was obliged to play at the inhospitable (and perfidious) door of Sir Thomas Booby's town house:

whenever a man of fashion doth not care to fulfil his promises, the custom is to order his servants that he will never be at home to the person so promised. In London they call it denying him. I have myself denied Sir Thomas Booby over a hundred times, and when the man hath danced attendance for about a month, or sometimes longer, he is acquainted in the end that the gentleman is gone out of town and could do nothing in the business.<sup>1</sup>

In his lengthy "moral reflections", cited in our previous chapter,<sup>2</sup> Joseph censures the *beau monde* for neglecting benevolence in favour of the selfish indulgence of luxury. His concluding reflections bear repeating:

"Are all the great folks wicked then?" says Fanny. "To be sure there are some exceptions," answered Joseph. "Some gentlemen of our cloth report charitable actions done by their lords and masters; and I have heard Squire Pope, the great poet, at my lady's table, tell stories of a man that lived at a place called Ross, and another at the Bath, one Al-- Al-- I forget his name, but it is in the book of verses. This gentleman hath built up a stately house too, which the squire likes very well; but his charity is seen farther than his house, though it stands on a hill - aye, and brings him more honor too."<sup>3</sup>

Joseph leaves London and returns to the more salubrious environment of Somersetshire, gaining in wisdom and insight as he travels westward, away from the town. However, Fielding uses the idea of the journey, and the locale of "the road", to demonstrate the variety to be met with in human nature, and the difficulties which have to be overcome, whether in town or country. Joseph's is a journey

<sup>1</sup>JA, II, xvi (Henley I, p 203).

<sup>2</sup>See p 112f.

<sup>3</sup>JA, III, vi (Henley I, p 266). Also see n.2, p 113, for the identity of "the man of Ross" and of Ralph Allen.



which can be seen as becoming increasingly allegorical. Martin Battestin views it in this way, and he regards the tradition of the Christian Epic as the most important allegorical dimension of the journey from London to Somersetshire.<sup>1</sup> According to this interpretation, Joseph and Abraham become comic analogues of their biblical namesakes, exemplars respectively of the Christian virtues of chastity and charity. In the tradition of the Christian Epic, popular in secular and homiletic literature, their journey from London to Somersetshire (Adams being considered to visit London through Wilson's story), becomes a pilgrimage of two Christian heroes, wayfaring through strange and hostile lands to salvation and happiness in a better country.

Other traditions can also be seen to contribute to the creation of possible allegorical significance of the journey from town to country, for example, the Continental literature of the road, particularly Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, of which *Joseph Andrews* is avowedly written in imitation. As with Cervantes' Don Quixote, who derives his knowledge of the world from romances, so Fielding's Abraham Adams derives his knowledge of the world from the Classics and Scriptures. Just as Cervantes sets his deluded Quixote, accompanied by his worldly-wise Sancho Panza, onto the roads of sixteenth-century Spain, so Fielding sets his deluded Abraham Adams, accompanied by his (newly) worldly-wise Joseph Andrews, onto the roads of eighteenth-century England. From the ensuing collisions, Fielding, like Cervantes, derives a rich comedy and a telling satire, as the ideal and the real act, often incongruously, as criticisms on one another.<sup>2</sup>

The journey by Adams, Joseph and Fanny, the three presented in their chief capacity as virtuous innocents, is a major device through which Fielding explores the many moral concerns of the novel. These innocent rural protagonists act as touchstones for exposing the virtues and vices of others. Many of their encounters

<sup>1</sup>M.C. Battestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art*, p 26ff.

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of the significance of this journey, see R. Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England*, p 121ff.

expose the absence of benevolence in society's leaders, in both town and country. Adams, although a good parson, is not promoted by his ecclesiastical superiors:

... his virtue, and his other qualifications, as they rendered him equal to his office, so they made him an agreeable and valuable companion, and had so much endeared and well-recommended him to a bishop, that at the age of fifty he was provided with a handsome income of twenty-three pounds a-year, which, however, he could not make any great figure with, because he lived in a dear country, and was a little incumbered with a wife and six children.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Thomas and Lady Booby are exposed by their not rewarding Adams for his services to their parish, and Joseph is also a means of exposing the vices of Sir Thomas and Lady Booby, the former neglecting his real merits in Somersetshire and the latter trying to seduce him in London.

In the episodes parodying the Good Samaritan Parable, Joseph shows up the uncharitableness of the stagecoach driver and passengers, and also of Mr and Mrs Tow-wouse, Parson Barnabas and the surgeon at the Dragon Inn, into whose hands he falls after having been robbed, beaten and abandoned on his way home to Somersetshire. The incident, conversely, reveals the benevolence of the postilion and Betty the chambermaid, who both assist Joseph. At the inn he is joined by Adams, *en route* to London to sell his manuscript sermons to the booksellers, and the two turn back to Somersetshire. They meet Fanny, on her way to find Joseph, and these three, as they travel homeward, run the gauntlet of almost every vice in humanity. The trio encounter so much cruelty amongst country parsons, squires, justices, lawyers, landlords, landladies and rogues of all kinds, that were this not portrayed with humour, it would render the country a more repulsive environment than the city. Even so, it prompts Adams to declare:

"Good Lord! ... what wickedness is there in the Christian world! I profess almost equal to what I have read of the heathens."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>JA, I, iii (Henley I, p 30).

<sup>2</sup>JA, II, xvi (Henley I, p 203).

The cruelty of many parsons and squires is represented as being socially destructive. Amongst the most inhumane people in *Joseph Andrews* are (with the exception of Adams) the country clergy. Fielding considered the maintenance of traditional society to depend greatly on the maintenance of the Christian religion. Increasingly, he represented what he saw as the disintegration of traditional society as resulting from the loss of religious authority.<sup>1</sup> He attributed this loss to two main causes: the neglect of duty by some clergymen, and the humiliating poverty to which society condemned others. In *The Champion*, March 29, April 5, 12 and 19, 1740, he outlines the duties of the clergy who, to maintain their patriarchal authority, should be plain-living, honest, pious and above all, benevolent. Throughout his writings Fielding censures many of the town-based upper clergy and country-based lower clergy for neglecting their duties and for thereby being despised rather than revered and obeyed. *Joseph Andrews* is thickly populated with country parsons who neglect their flocks. Amongst the most corrupt are Barnabas and Trulliber, who not only use the doctrine of faith against good works to excuse themselves from charity, but who also prey upon their parishioners.<sup>2</sup> The most wicked is the rector of Adams' parish, who delights in ruining poor tenants:

the parson had for many years lived in a constant state of civil war, or, which is perhaps as bad, of civil law, with Sir Thomas himself and the tenants of his manor. The foundation of this quarrel was a modus, by setting which aside an advantage of several shillings *per annum* would have accrued to the rector; but he had not yet been able to accomplish his purpose, and had reaped hitherto nothing better from suits than the pleasure (which he used indeed frequently to say was no small one) of reflecting that he had utterly undone many of the poor tenants, though he had at the same time greatly impoverished himself.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See James Work, *op.cit.*, p 147.

<sup>2</sup>For other corrupt country parsons, see *JA*, I, iii (Henley I, p 31), II, viii (Henley I, p 153), and III, iii (Henley I, p 254).

<sup>3</sup>*JA*, I, iii (Henley I, p 32).

Fielding presents, in Parson Adams, who is in every way an ideal clergyman,<sup>1</sup> a contrast to those irresponsible parsons who bring the whole order into discredit. Through Adams' humiliating poverty, Fielding condemns the neglect of poor but meritorious parsons by the church.<sup>2</sup> Through the verbal and physical harassment of Adams throughout the novel, he condemns the unjust contempt for the clergy by the English people. In Adams' government of his parish, in Somersetshire, Fielding presents a model for ideal leadership, in the old feudal manner. Unlike the nameless parson who, "instead of esteeming his poor parishioners as part of his family, seems rather to consider them as not of the same species with himself",<sup>3</sup> and unlike Parson Trulliber who had "so great an authority in his parish that they all lived in the most utmost fear and apprehension of him",<sup>4</sup> Adams considers all people equal in the sight of God and cares for his parishioners as his family, his children. This latter was:

a term he explained to mean no more than his parishioners, saying, "He looked on all those whom God had intrusted to his care to stand to him in that relation."<sup>5</sup>

Although he has egalitarian Christian principles, Adams values the traditional hierarchy. He is deferential to his social superiors,<sup>6</sup> and exacts obedience from those below him:

indeed his word was little less than a law in his parish; for as he had shown his parishioners, by an uniform behaviour of thirty-five years' duration, that he had their good entirely at heart, so they consulted him on every occasion, and very seldom acted contrary to his opinion.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>M. Battestin examines the rôle of Adams in correcting the current contempt for the clergy (*The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art*, Ch. 7).

<sup>2</sup>Fielding often condemned the poverty of the inferior clergy; for example, *TJ*, IV, xiv (Henley III, p 201) and *Amelia* VI, iii (Henley VI, p 285).

<sup>3</sup>*JA*, II, xvi (Henley I, p 198).      <sup>4</sup>*JA*, II, xv (Henley I, p 194).

<sup>5</sup>*JA*, II, xvi (Henley I, p 197f). See also *JA*, III, ii (Henley I, p 223).

<sup>6</sup>Adams rebukes Squire Booby and Pamela for laughing in church, but is deferential to Booby outside church. *JA*, IV, xvi (Henley I, p 391f).

<sup>7</sup>*JA*, I, xi (Henley I, p 59).

Thus Adams' parish, like that of the clergyman in *The Champion*, February 26, 1739-40, and that of Dr Harrison in *Amelia*, is a microcosm of that close-knit network of loving community relationships which Fielding believed bound together people of all social classes into a general desirable commitment to religion and hierarchy. Fielding saw this as being preserved only in remote parts of the country and wished to see it reinforced and maintained over society in general.

Another group who harass Adams, Joseph and Fanny on their journey homeward are the country squires, whom Fielding describes facetiously as "a race of men whom we look upon as entirely inoffensive, and for whom we have an adequate regard",<sup>1</sup> but whom he portrays throughout the novel as being inhumane. Symbolic of their destructiveness is their brutality to animals in the blood sports, which often extends into their relationships with human beings.<sup>2</sup> Adams, Joseph and Fanny are often physically harassed by squires, most notably, the "practical-joking squire".<sup>3</sup> Even more reprehensible than such harassment is the squirearchical abuse of wealth and power. Many squires use their money to serve their own gratifications rather than the public interest, thereby rendering themselves as irresponsible as the *beau monde* in Westminster. The most pernicious in this regard is the "promising squire" who, under pretext of benevolently fulfilling his obligation of providing for the lower classes, lures these people to their ruin. He encourages two young men to educate themselves beyond their degree and then breaks his promise to provide for them, with the result that one becomes a London criminal and is sentenced to transportation and the other dies of alcoholism. He entices a young woman to town with promises of employment and seduces her, with the result that she becomes a common prostitute and dies of the French distemper in a gaol.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to these, and other irresponsible squires, is

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<sup>1</sup>JA, III, ii (Henley I, p 218).

<sup>2</sup>The cruelty of blood sports amongst country gentlemen always disgusted Fielding. He urged legislation against it in *The Champion*, March 22, 1739-40 (Henley XV, p 253).

<sup>3</sup>JA, III, vi-x.

<sup>4</sup>JA, II, xvii (Henley I, p 205).

Squire Booby who, as discussed above,<sup>1</sup> becomes a model for responsible social leadership, in the traditional manner.

Before they can enjoy the economic security provided by Booby, and create their own rural order, Adams, Joseph and Fanny, on their arrival home, suffer more persecution. Here the town-country contrast comes into prominence again, as Lady Booby tries to prevent the marriage of Joseph and Fanny, bringing to her assistance not only the "rustical" Lawyer Scout and Justice Frolic, but also Beau Didapper. The use of the country-city opposition to contrast virtue and vice with regard to sexual issues culminates in the novel in the night adventures at Booby Hall.<sup>2</sup> In this series of bedroom escapades, Adams unwittingly prevents Beau Didapper's intended seduction of Fanny. Joseph and Fanny are providentially rescued from their persecutors when they are discovered to be the son and daughter of Mr and Mrs Wilson and Gaffer and Gammar Andrews, respectively, and are able to marry. Thus town vice is defeated and country virtue promoted. Lady Booby and Beau Didapper return to London and Joseph and Fanny are rewarded with a happy rural retirement. Joseph's pilgrimage then comes to an end. He adopts his father's way of life, which is portrayed as being morally and socially ideal. The presentation of the rural ideal, then, has come a long way from the fleeting descriptions of country life in the dialogue of the plays. In *Joseph Andrews* this ideal is extensively portrayed as being achieved by many characters in many rural environments, Parson Adams in his parish, Squire Booby on his estate and Mr and Mrs Wilson, and Joseph and Fanny on their farm. As in his early writings, Fielding characteristically concentrates on the moral and social, rather than the physical or aesthetic aspects of the order created. The *beatus vir*, for example, does not derive any significant part of his happiness from contemplating the rural landscape. The scene on Wilson's farm is described as being simple; on Joseph's it is not described at all. There is no physical description of Booby's estate or Adams' parish.

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<sup>1</sup>See p 114.

<sup>2</sup>M. Spilka, "Comic Resolution in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*", *College English* XV, 1953, pp 11-19.

Nevertheless, in the following conversation between Peter Pounce and Parson Adams, Fielding firmly establishes that connection between a man's ability to perceive beauty in the natural world and his intrinsic moral nature, which becomes so important in *Tom Jones*:

The chariot had not proceeded far before Mr Adams observed it was a very fine day. "Aye, and a very fine country too," answered Pounce. "I should think so more," returned Adams, "if I had not lately travelled over the Downs, which I take to exceed this and all other prospects in the universe." "A fig for prospects!" answered Pounce; "one acre here is worth ten there; and for my own part, I have no delight in the prospect of any land but my own."<sup>1</sup>

The two then discuss charity, which Adams defines as "a generous disposition to relieve the distressed":

"There is something in that definition," answered Peter, "which I like well enough; it is, as you say, a disposition, and does not so much consist in the act as in the disposition to do it. But alas! Mr Adams, who are meant by the distressed? Believe me, the distresses of mankind are mostly imaginary, and it would be rather folly than goodness to relieve them." "Sure, sir," replied Adams, "hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, and other distresses which attend the poor, can never be said to be imaginary evils." "How can any man complain of hunger," said Peter, "in a country where such excellent salads are to be gathered in almost every field? or of thirst, where every river and stream produce such delicious potations? And as for cold and nakedness, they are evils introduced by luxury and custom. A man naturally wants clothes no more than a horse or any other animal; and there are whole nations who go without them ..."<sup>2</sup>

Pounce, instead of being inspired to imitate the principle of benevolence manifest in the Creation, uses this to excuse himself from his charitable duties, and the irony of the passage puts his speech and behaviour into satiric perspective. Adams perceives and practises the principle of material benevolence, as does Joseph Andrews, who delivers his "moral reflections" on charity, in a setting which Fielding describes as the most beautiful in the universe.<sup>3</sup> In general, however, the *beatus vir* of *Joseph Andrews*

<sup>1</sup> *JA*, III, xiii (Henley I, p 309).

<sup>2</sup> *JA*, III, xiii (Henley I, p 310).

<sup>3</sup> *JA*, III, v (Henley I, p 263).

concentrates on social order. It is in *Tom Jones*, with its broader perspectives on humanity and society, and its greater artistic aspirations, that the aesthetic and natural beauty of the rural scene contributes significantly to the moral emolument of the retired life.

In *Tom Jones*, his masterpiece, Fielding reached the height of his creative faculties.<sup>1</sup> His accumulated experience and mastery over his new species of writing enabled him to create a novel of elaborate didactic and artistic proportions, one in which the country-city contrast is a major organising principle. The moral education of the young, represented by Tom Jones, is the major didactic preoccupation of the novel. Like Wilson in *Joseph Andrews*, Tom is benevolent, but he lacks prudence, that capacity to distinguish good and evil, without which benevolence can be easily misrepresented, as Fielding warns his young readers:

... 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 through it, and to discern the beauties within. Let this, my young readers, be your constant maxim, that no man can be good enough to enable him to neglect the rules of prudence; nor will Virtue herself look beautiful unless she be bedecked with the outward ornaments of decency and decorum.<sup>2</sup>

Although this spontaneity is preferable to the schematic and self-interested behaviour of Thwackum, Square, Blifil and others, Tom is not presented as a "primitive" alternative to the rigid conventions of civilisation. Tom himself values social institutions,

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<sup>1</sup>Although *JA* is not imitative, it is not totally independent of its sources, and is not generally regarded as being the equal of *TJ*.

<sup>2</sup>*TJ*, III, vii (Henley III, p 131f). Fielding often asserted that benevolence should be guarded by prudence; for example, "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men", *Inquiry* (Henley XIII, p 110f), *CGJ*, 44, June 2, 1752 (Jensen 2, p 10), *TJ*, XVIII, xi (Henley V, p 358).



championing both the Church of England and the Hanoverian monarchy.<sup>1</sup> He also sees that those, such as the Man of the Hill, who renounce civilisation, are inevitably miserable. Nevertheless, whilst he is able to distinguish right from wrong, his unrestrained benevolence, linked as it is with his heedless, impulsive behaviour, is destructive, and must be tempered by prudence, as Allworthy advises:

I am convinced, my child, that you have much goodness, generosity, and honor 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.<sup>2</sup>

The main business of *Tom Jones*, then, is Tom's gaining of wisdom,<sup>3</sup> emblematically realised by his marriage to Sophia Western, whose Christian name signifies her innate discretion and whose surname links her virtues with Somersetshire, with which Tom's virtues are also associated by his father's name, Summer.<sup>4</sup> Before he finally weds Sophia, from whom for a time he is estranged, and settles down with her in Somersetshire, Tom must journey in search of her in a real, yet symbolic quest which takes him from the country to London. As in *Joseph Andrews*, then, Fielding uses country and city as agents in the education of youth, but the moral education of Tom is more dramatically, and, therefore, more effectively, presented than that of the protagonists in *Joseph Andrews*. Whereas Wilson's education is described in only two chapters of that novel, and whereas Joseph's moral development is somewhat overshadowed by Adams' exploits, Tom's moral growth occupies almost the entire eighteen books which comprise *Tom Jones*.

In the episodes narrated in the first six books of the novel, Tom's education begins in Somersetshire itself, which is the birthplace, not only of such good-hearted characters as himself, Sophia Western and Allworthy, but also of Blifil. Blifil, despite

<sup>1</sup> Tom decides to fight for God, King and country. *TJ*, VII, xi (Henley IV, p 28f).

<sup>2</sup> *TJ*, V, vii (Henley III, p 243).

<sup>3</sup> See M. Battestin, *The Providence of Wit*, p 167ff.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of this issue, see M. Battestin, *The Providence of Wit*, p 185.

being educated in the country according to Allworthy's maxim, that public schools in the towns corrupt young morals, is irredeemably vicious.<sup>1</sup> Blifil exploits Tom's imprudence in order to alienate Allworthy from him. Other corrupt people in Allworthy's household, such as Thwackum and Square, do much the same thing. Black George, the gamekeeper, easily exploits Tom's benevolence, with disastrous consequences for the young man. Indeed, despite the idealisation of Allworthy at Paradise Hall at the beginning of the novel, Somersetshire is a brutal environment. The hypocrisy surrounding Tom's birth and discovery at Paradise Hall, the malicious treatment of Jenny Jones and Mr and Mrs Partridge in the aftermath, and the cruelty of Deborah Wilkins and Captain Blifil towards the foundling during his early childhood, render Somersetshire far from idyllic, although Tom has the advantages of growing up in Allworthy's house. Apart from Tom, Sophia and Allworthy, the province seems devoid of charity, even of Christianity. As in *Joseph Andrews*, the country clergy neglect their duties to pursue their own interests. Parsons Thwackum and Supple earn their living by truckling to the great, Thwackum to Allworthy and Supple to Western. Supple represents Fielding's culminating portrait of the country clergy who live by that "sordid humour of creeping and cringing to wealthy tables",<sup>2</sup> for which Supple suffers great humiliation at the hands of Western, who treats him like a household servant. Although more obsequious, Supple is less harshly satirised than the corrupt clergy of *Joseph Andrews* and arouses a degree of sympathy when, at the end of the novel, he is married to the somewhat tarnished Mrs Waters.

As in *Joseph Andrews*, too, the brutality of country life is exemplified in *Tom Jones* in the cruelty of blood sports. Again, the squirearchy's cruelty to animals extends into human relationships. Here Fielding voices his greatest objections to blood sports, that is, the lack of benevolence:

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, III, v (Henley III, p 124). Cf. *JA*, III, v.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas Stackhouse, *The Miseries and Hardships of the Inferior Clergy and A Modest Plea for Their Rights and Better Usage* (1722), cited in M. Battestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art*, p 136. See *TJ*, IV, x (Henley III, p 180).

sportsmen, in the warmth of a chase, are too much engaged to attend to any manner of ceremony, nay, even to the offices of humanity: for, if any of them meet with an accident by tumbling into a ditch, or into a river, the rest pass on regardless, and generally leave him to his fate.<sup>1</sup>

He describes Squire Western as one of the "preservers of the game", and ironically praises the moral code of these men:

this species of men, from the great severity with which they revenge the death of a hare or partridge, might be thought to cultivate the same superstition with the Bannians in India, many of whom, we are told, dedicate their whole lives to the preservation and protection of certain animals; was it not that our English Bannians, while they preserve them from other enemies, will most unmercifully slaughter whole horse-loads themselves; so that they stand clearly acquitted of any such heathenish superstition.<sup>2</sup>

Western's cruelty extends to ill-treatment of his wife and daughter. When Sophia flees to London, he pursues her as he would an animal. It is significant that the most virtuous characters in the novels, Adams, Wilson, Sophia, Allworthy, Harrison and Amelia, do not pursue the blood sports, even though the young heroes, Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, do. Within Fielding's writings, such sports always qualify the idealisation of country life.

Somersetshire, then, is a potentially dangerous environment in which Tom Jones, because of his innocence and imprudence, easily comes to grief. In a series of episodes beginning with his involvement with Black George, the gamekeeper, his benevolence is exploited and misrepresented. The result of this imprudence is his alienation from Allworthy and his expulsion from Paradise Hall, the symbolic seat of human happiness and moral excellence in the novel. Fielding makes an explicit allusion to Adams' expulsion from Paradise: "the world, as Milton phrases it, lay all before him; and Jones, no more than Adam, had any man to whom he might resort for comfort or assistance."<sup>3</sup> So Tom then begins his quest for

<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, XII, ii (Henley IV, p 306f).

<sup>2</sup>*TJ*, III, ii (Henley III, p 109).

<sup>3</sup>*TJ*, VII, ii (Henley III, p 337). See *Paradise Lost* XII, 646-647.

wisdom, a quest which takes him from the west country of England to London.

As with Wilson in *Joseph Andrews*, and dealt with more extensively, Tom's experiences dramatise the Christian concept of moral education through trial by adversity. Like Wilson, he sacrifices his initial prosperity in the country and, after much suffering, reaches the *nadir* of his misfortunes in a London prison, where he is regenerated and rewarded by Providence with a happy rural retirement. In his progress, and particularly in his journey through the west country of England, Tom, exemplar of the Christian virtue charity, like Adams and Joseph in *Joseph Andrews*, becomes a type of the Christian hero, a pilgrim, wayfaring through a hostile land in search of salvation and happiness in a better country. Other motifs from *Joseph Andrews* re-appear. In his journey Tom becomes another variant on Cervantes' Don Quixote. Something of an idealist, he believes the rest of humanity to be as benevolent as himself.<sup>1</sup> Accompanied by his worldly-wise Sancho Panza, Patridge, he learns, in his travels, that there is much inhumanity in the human race. Like Adams, Joseph and Fanny, then, he becomes a touchstone for exposing virtue and vice in others. As Ronald Paulson observes, however, Tom's function to some extent is that of the disruptive mobile protagonist, in the tradition of Lucian's Diogenes and Rabelais' Panurge.<sup>2</sup> As he travels through the world, Tom serves as a satirical vehicle for exposing the corruption of rigid institutions and conventions. He is not, however, as destructive as Lucian's Diogenes, largely because Fielding has a dual purpose in his satiric use of Tom. Although Fielding admired and imitated Lucian's ironic technique, he used irony and satire, not to sabotage the system, but both to criticise and to endorse it. Tom is disruptive largely because of his imprudence, which it is seen must be corrected so that he can become part of the system; but his imprudence works to suggest that the system itself must be improved according to the benevolent ideals which he represents.

<sup>1</sup>Fielding describes good nature itself as being Quixotic, in *Rape Upon Rape*; or, *The Justice Caught In His Own Trap* III, ii (Henley IX, p 109f).

<sup>2</sup>R. Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England*, p 135ff.

His journey then, whilst being a realistic journey through the west country of England, can also be seen as an allegory depicting the quest for wisdom, and an *exposé* of humanity and society.

All of Tom's experiences on his journey between Somerset and London, which comprises the second six books of the novel, contribute to his education. Following his expulsion from Paradise Hall, he sets out for Bristol but arrives instead at Hambrook, nearby. Here he meets a Quaker, who has disinherited his daughter for marrying a penniless lover. This is an ominous warning to Tom of the possible consequences for Sophia, should he steal her away from her father. At Hambrook he joins the soldiers, travelling north to join the Duke of Cumberland against The Pretender. With them, he is involved in a series of episodes, in which he exposes the falsity of the military code of honour, as well as the hospitality of many familiar rural types such as the landlady of the inn, and the surgeon. At an unnamed village he is joined by Partridge, and the two journey to Gloucester, after leaving which they travel to the Malvern Hills, to the fictitious "Mazard Hill", probably Worcestershire Beacon. Here they meet the Man of the Hill, a misanthropic recluse, in whose story Tom is given a warning of the possible consequences of his continued imprudence and of the perils of London. Like Tom, in some respects, the Man of the Hill was an imprudent, benevolent young man from Somersetshire. After leaving home, he was debauched at Oxford, and completed his moral destruction in London, in a rake's progress of vice and gambling, similar to that of Wilson and Hogarth's Tom Rakewell, but concluding in the criminal underworld. Whereas Wilson, reformed, and restored to happiness by the love and generosity of Harriet Hearty, acquires Christian wisdom of the Latitudinarian kind, and retires to a life of social benevolence, the Man of the Hill adopts the pessimistic Christian doctrine of human depravity. Also reformed, and saved and forgiven by his father, he returns home, but continues to suffer so much from human depravity that he renounces society for a life of solitude in the wilderness. In something of the same way as Wilson's story provides a negative analogue to that of Joseph Andrews, so the Man of the Hill's story provides a negative analogue to that of Tom Jones. The old man's urban disasters ominously

presage those awaiting Jones in London, and his subsequent rejection of society represents the worst possible consequence for Tom of his continued imprudence. According to Battestin, the scene in which Jones and the old man contemplate, from Mazard Hill, the landscape through which Jones has travelled and that through which he will travel, allegorically summarises the theme of prudence in the novel. Drawn according to literary conventions which translated Man's progress into spatial terms, and from iconological conventions which translated human experiences into emblems, the scene in which Tom, symbolising youth, surveys the route along which he has journeyed from Somersetshire, and the route along which he will journey to London, represents his surveying his past and future lives, his past imprudences, from which he should have learned wisdom to apply to his future actions. Standing beside him is the Man of the Hill, symbolising age, who failed to profit from his past imprudences, and thereby forfeited future happiness.<sup>1</sup> Although Tom sees that the old man's pessimism has resulted from experiences arising out of want of caution in dealing with people,<sup>2</sup> he fails to apply the old man's story to his own situation. When he hears Mrs Waters scream for help, therefore, he characteristically plunges headlong down the hill to rescue her from Ensign Northerton. This action displays Tom's genuine, spontaneous compassion and benevolence towards his fellow creatures, thus exposing the lack of these qualities in the old man, and Northerton's cruelty and brutality, but at the same time it leads him into an imprudent situation, at Upton, which sets off a train of events which bring him to the nadir of his misfortunes in a London prison. The events at Upton Inn, such as the brawl between Tom, Partridge and Mrs Waters (who, of course, do not meet!) and the landlord, landlady and Susan the chambermaid; Mr Fitzpatrick's discovery of Tom in bed with Mrs Waters, having believed the latter to be his wife, and the arrival of Squire Western and Parson Supple in pursuit of Sophia

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<sup>1</sup>M.C. Battestin, *The Providence of Wit*, p 188ff.

<sup>2</sup>*TJ* VIII, xv (Henley IV, p 151).

and Mrs Honour, reveal Fielding at his best in the comedy of the road. Tom's affair with Mrs Waters, however, casts a shadow over the comedy. This affair is a greater transgression than that with Molly Seagrim because, in committing it, Tom breaks his vows of constancy to Sophia and causes her great suffering. In it, he also lays the foundations of his darkest hours in London, when he believes himself to have committed incest at Upton, with his reputed mother, Jenny Jones.

The events at Upton, occurring at the novel's architectural midpoint in Book Nine, function as an elaborate system of encounters in which the themes, characters and major threads of the plot meet and separate again. The appearance of Tom, Partridge, Mrs Waters (Jenny Jones), Sophia, Mrs Honour, Squire Western and Parson Supple bring to mind the preceding events in Somersetshire, and the appearance of Mr Fitzpatrick in pursuit of his wife introduces us to ensuing events in London. Following the adventures at Upton, the scene of Tom's greatest indiscretion thus far, the novel's pursuit motif speeds up the action from the country towards the town, where the major characters all end up. After leaving Upton, Sophia travels towards the north-east and is joined on the road by her cousin, Mrs Fitzpatrick. As Sophia and Harriet Fitzpatrick travel together, Harriet relates her story. This story, occurring in Book Ten, at an equi-distance from the novel's architectural midpoint to the story of the Man of the Hill, which occurs in Book Eight, serves as a negative analogue to the career of Sophia, just as the old man's story does to that of Tom Jones. This story explores yet again the relationship between character and environment in the education of the young in Fielding's writings. Sophia and Harriet were both educated in the country, under the care of their Aunt Western. Harriet, a giddy girl, easily succumbed to the vanities of life at Bath, and imprudently married her feckless husband. Whilst living in Ireland with Fitzpatrick, she became involved with the noble peer, who assisted her to escape to London, an environment to which she readily adapts. Sophia, a steadfast girl, retained her country innocence and virtue. In London her morals were safe; it was only her person which was in danger. With Tom Jones himself it is another matter. In pursuing Sophia from

Upton to London, Tom becomes involved in more rustic adventures, which have some relevance to his later experiences in the town. In the puppetshow master's didactic version of Colley Cibber's *The Provoked Husband*, he sees a picture of London's *beau monde* as a centre of high moral standards. Fielding's mockery about the characters of Lord and Lady Townley's being "well preserved, and highly in nature"<sup>1</sup> suggests that these are cardboard figures, contrived to edify viewers, and not real flesh and blood characters. This play, therefore, hardly presents Tom with the sort of knowledge he should be acquiring as he approaches the capital, where many of the great are treacherous and corrupt. In his adventure with the Warwickshire gypsies, as discussed above,<sup>2</sup> he sees a superior moral code to that which awaits him in Westminster. Following this adventure with the gypsies, Tom's journey to London speeds up. We get the realistic sense of an actual journey as he pursues Sophia through Coventry, Daventry, Stratford and arrives at Dunstable just after she has left it. He passes through St. Albans, and near Barnet is held up by the highwayman, Mr Anderson, a man driven to crime by financial distress, which Tom relieves. This is a benevolent act which afterwards serves in his favour during the crisis in London. This episode concludes Tom Jones' rural adventures, in which he acquired much knowledge, but little wisdom. With his imprudence and impulsiveness intact, he enters the potentially dangerous environment of London, an environment which the episodes "on the road" have been effectively leading up to. Here, in a series of episodes comprising the novel's last six books, he completes his moral education through trial by adversity.

The London in which Tom Jones finds himself greatly resembles the London of Wilson's trial. Again, it is the fashionable world of Westminster. Again, Westminster's greatest transgression is its abandonment of those moral and social standards which Fielding believed to have prevailed in England's past. This is clearly suggested by Fielding in the mode he frequently uses for such criticism, when he describes the difficulty encountered by Tom

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, XII, v, Henley IV, p 321f).

<sup>2</sup>See p 125.



in finding the house of the Irish peer who brought Sophia to town:

From that figure, therefore, which the Irish peer, who brought Sophia to town, hath already made in this history, the reader will conclude, doubtless, it must have been an easy matter to have discovered his house in London without knowing the particular street or square which he inhabited, since he must have been one *whom everybody knows*. To say the truth, so it would have been to any of those tradesmen who are accustomed to attend the regions of the great; for the doors of the great are generally no less easy to find than it is difficult to get entrance into them. But Jones, as well as Partridge, was an entire stranger in London; and as he happened to arrive first in a quarter of the town, the inhabitants of which have very little intercourse with the householders of Hanover or Grosvenor Square (for he entered through Gray's Inn Lane), so he rambled about some time before he could even find his way to those happy mansions where fortune segregates from the vulgar those magnanimous heroes, the descendants of ancient Britons, Saxons, or Danes, whose ancestors, being born in better days, by sundry kinds of merit, have entailed riches and honor on their posterity.<sup>1</sup>

Again, the lack of benevolence amongst society's leaders is symbolised by the inhospitable door of the great man's town house, through which Jones cannot get entrance. In describing the porter's hostility to Tom, Fielding attributes a diabolical character to this urban vice:

I have often thought that, by the particular description of Cerberus, the porter of hell, in the 6th Aneid, Virgil might possibly intend to satirize the porters of the great men in his time; the picture, at least, resembles those who have the honor to attend at the doors of our great men. The porter in his lodge answers exactly to Cerberus in his den, and; like him, must be appeased by a sop before access can be gained to his master.<sup>2</sup>

The inhospitableness Tom encounters in Westminster contrasts markedly with the benevolence and hospitality he had known at

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, XIII, ii (Henley V, p 35).

<sup>2</sup>*TJ*, XIII, ii (Henley V, p 37).

Allworthy's Paradise Hall in Somersetshire. Although, in introducing London and the "manners of upper life",<sup>1</sup> in particular relation to "the characters of women", Fielding assures his country readers: "In my humble opinion, the true characteristic of the present *Beau monde* is rather folly than vice, and the only epithet which it deserves is that of *frivolous*",<sup>2</sup> the London of *Tom Jones*, whilst greatly resembling that of *Joseph Andrews*, is a more vicious world than that of the earlier novel. This has been noted by George Sherburn:

*Tom Jones*, although written in more exuberant high spirits than almost any novel in English, nevertheless loses its effervescence and verve in its last six books, when the narrative moves to London, to the lodging house, the gaol, the gilded mansion of Lady Bellaston, who was certainly ashamed of nothing; and to events dominated by such persons as the inept and cowardly villain Fellamar, the tawdry Mrs Fitzpatrick, or so flabby a youth as Nightingale. The effect becomes grim beyond intention.<sup>3</sup>

Lady Bellaston calculatedly and, hence, most reprehensibly, ensnares Tom at the masquerade and makes him her prostitute. Fielding tries to diminish the squalor of this affair by explaining Tom's being taken into keeping as the result of benevolent gallantry and gratitude to the lady,<sup>4</sup> but the affair is a greater transgression than the spontaneous adventures with Molly Seagrim and Mrs Waters in the country. Tom's involvement with Lady Bellaston is to some extent unpardonable, not only because of his failure to learn discretion from his earlier sexual transgressions, but also because

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<sup>1</sup>Fielding appears, here, to be wishing to dissociate himself from the criticisms applied to Richardson's treatment of upper-class characters in *Clarissa*, that they did not ring true to life because he was not writing at first hand about them. In fact, although Lord Fellamar and Lady Bellaston are almost as vicious as Lovelace himself, Fielding makes clear here that, although they exemplify very real corruption and degeneracy in the upper classes, they are exceptions in the extent of their depravity. They exemplify for the novel the potential dangers of upper-class abandonment of true morality, as Fielding saw it.

<sup>2</sup>*TJ*, XIV, i (Henley V, p 95).

<sup>3</sup>G. Sherburn, "Fielding's Social Outlook", *PQ* 35, 1956, p 260. Reprinted in J.L. Clifford (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century English Literature*, New York, 1959.

<sup>4</sup>*TJ*, XIII, ix (Henley V, p 74f).

we see, from the advice he gives Nightingale, that he is aware of the moral gravity of sexual irresponsibility. Although he sees that the town environment has corrupted Nightingale, another young gentleman from the country, Tom fails to see the town's dangers to himself, and is easily debauched by its inhabitants. Tom's affair with Lady Bellaston brings him closer to moral destruction and also places his physical person in danger. He does attempt to extricate himself from a situation which is quite distasteful to him but, in doing so, he doesn't bargain for the fact that, because he has become inconvenient to her, Lady Bellaston will arrange with Lord Fellamar to have him pressed on board a ship and sent overseas. This plot is thwarted when Tom is involved in a scuffle with Mr Fitzpatrick who is afterwards reported to have been fatally wounded, and so Tom is imprisoned for murder. Like Wilson before him, and Booth after him, Tom's imprudences bring him to the nadir of his career in a London prison. In gaol for "murder", Tom is renounced by Allworthy and Sophia, who learn of the affair with Lady Bellaston. When he is informed by Partridge that Mrs Waters, with whom he had slept at Upton, is his reputed mother, Jenny Jones, Tom is reduced to despair. Again like Wilson before him, and Booth after him, he blames his moral degradation on Fortune, before realising it to be the result only of his own folly:

"Sure," cries Jones, "Fortune will never have done with me, 'till she hath driven me to distraction. But why do I blame Fortune? I am myself the cause of all my misery. All the dreadful mischiefs which have befallen me, are the consequences only of my own folly and vice."<sup>1</sup>

Once Tom accepts responsibility for his own misconduct, his moral education is completed and his trial by adversity is brought to an end. Providence steps in and lifts his burdens from his shoulders. Mr Fitzpatrick recovers. Tom's real mother is revealed to be Bridget Allworthy. Blifil's villainy is discovered to Allworthy, who is reconciled to Tom and makes him his heir. Allworthy, who had earlier advised Tom to acquire prudence, sums up the significance of Tom's moral education:

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, XVIII, ii (Henley V, p 296).

"You now see, Tom, to what dangers imprudence alone may subject virtue (for virtue, I am convinced, you love in a great degree). Prudence is indeed the duty which we owe to ourselves; and if we will be so much our own enemies as to neglect it, we are not to wonder if the world is deficient in discharging their duty to us; for when a man lays the foundation of his own ruin, others will, I am afraid, be too apt to build upon it."<sup>1</sup>

Tom has acquired wisdom, but to complete his happiness, he must acquire Sophia Western, wisdom's symbolic representative, whom he has pursued throughout the novel. This is no easy task. Sophia had suffered greatly on Tom's account in Somersetshire and at Upton. In London she is treated abominably by Lady Bellaston and almost ravished by Lord Fellamar. She is rescued, but cruelly imprisoned by her father, who orders her to marry Blifil, the man she detests. Her misery is completed when she learns of Tom's affair with Lady Bellaston. She knew his good heart but believed the town had corrupted him: "... an entire profligacy of manners will corrupt the best heart in the world".<sup>2</sup> Sophia, therefore, is not easily reconciled to Tom, but many factors count in his favour, particularly his benevolence to Mr Anderson, the "highwayman", whose story is related to Sophia by Mrs Miller. After Tom assures her of his true repentance and of his future fidelity, Sophia marries him, and the couple, like their predecessors in Fielding's earlier writings, having triumphed over persecution in London, retire to the country, where they fashion the ideal life.

Just as the concluding rural order achieved by Joseph Andrews is elaborately prepared for earlier in that novel in the description of Mr Wilson's way of life, so too the concluding rural order achieved by Tom Jones is prepared for earlier in that novel in the description of Mr Allworthy's way of life at Paradise Hall. In fact; in *Tom Jones*, Fielding presents two possible versions of rural retirement for his hero, that of Mr Allworthy, which Tom

<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, XVIII, x (Henley V, p 346f).

<sup>2</sup>*TJ*, XVIII, x.

finally adopts, and that of the Man of the Hill, which Tom might have adopted, had he failed, like the old man, to have gained true prudence from his experiences, experiences both of moral degradation and of that moral elevation which comes from loving, benevolent human relationships. In presenting two contrasting versions of rural retirement, Fielding was following a long-standing tradition, the *locus classicus* of this probably being Virgil's *Georgic II*, in which Virgil contrasts the rural happiness of a philosophical, contemplative man and a convivial, gregarious man, figures most remarkably contrasted in English literature in John Milton's companion poems, *Il Penseroso*, the melancholy man, and *L'Allegro*, the merry man. These two poems, together with *Georgic II*, exercised great influence on Augustan writers.<sup>1</sup> Many of these writers used the framework of the companion poems to present a comprehensive portrait of external nature, using the atmosphere of *Il Penseroso* to portray the rural scene by night, and the atmosphere of *L'Allegro* to portray the rural scene by day.<sup>2</sup> In his retirement, the Man of the Hill consciously models himself on the stoical, Christian, contemplative man of the *Il Penseroso* tradition. He is presented to us in the melancholy atmosphere of night. The theme of Milton's companion poems is introduced in the discussion between Tom and Partridge as they approach Mazard Hill. Tom wishes to enjoy the landscape in *Il Penseroso's* manner:

"I wish I was at the top of this hill; it must certainly afford a most charming prospect especially by this light: for the solemm gloom which the moon casts on all objects, is beyond expression beautiful, especially to an imagination which is desirous of cultivating melancholy ideas."

Partridge, fond of his creature comforts and frightened of ghosts, expresses a preference for the scenes enjoyed by *L'Allegro*:

"... but if the top of the hill be properest to produce melancholy thoughts, I suppose the bottom is likeliest to produce merry ones, and these I take to be much the better of the two."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of complementary and contrasting portraits of rural settlement, which could have influenced Fielding in *TJ*, see M-S. Røstvig, *op.cit.*, II, p 229, p 237, and p 244f.

<sup>2</sup>See John Gay, *Rural Sports*, and John Dyer, *Grongar Hill*.

<sup>3</sup>*TJ*, VIII, x (Henley X, p 104).

Like *Il Penseroso*, the Man of the Hill, in his solitude, devotes himself to the cultivation of virtue, wisdom, and self-knowledge, and to the worship of God, but unlike *Il Penseroso*, he does not derive happiness from his contemplative way of life, a way of life to which Fielding never allowed happiness. Fielding greatly admired Horace, but had no patience with the Horatian doctrine of stoical self-sufficiency, as adopted by the Man of the Hill:

Fortis, et in seipso totus teres atque rotundus,  
 Externi ne quid valeat per laeve morari;  
 In quem manca ruit semper Fortuna.<sup>1</sup>

In *CGJ*, 29, April 11, 1752, Fielding censures men of this temper as being socially irresponsible and unchristian:

men of this Stamp are so taken up, in contemplating themselves, that the Virtues and Vices, the Happiness or Misery of the rest of Mankind scarce ever employ their Thoughts. This is a Character, however truly contemptible it may be, which hath not wanted its Admirers among the Antients. These Men have been called Philosophers, and in the heathen Systems they might deserve that Name; but in the sublimer Schools of the Christian Dispensation, they are so far from being entitled to any Honours, that they will be called to a severe Account (those especially who have received very considerable Talents of any Kind) for converting solely to their own Use, what was entrusted only to their Care for the general Good.<sup>2</sup>

Although the Man of the Hill claims to have subordinated his Horatian stoicism to Christianity, his Christian principles are derived from the high-church Anglican doctrine of human depravity, rather than the benevolent Latitudinarian principles which Fielding regarded as essential to happiness and salvation. Fielding, therefore, represents the old man's misanthropy as resulting in a state of misery and spiritual desolation. The old man fails to learn the ultimate moral lesson to be gained from that intense study of nature from which he claims to derive his greatest reward from rural retirement. According to the widely accepted physico-theological interpretation of nature, outlined in the

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, VIII, xiii (Henley IV, p 137).

<sup>2</sup>Jensen I, pp 306-7.

first part of this chapter, the old man claims to derive from his solitary contemplation of the ordered and harmonious system of the universe and the terrestrial world, ideas of God's power, wisdom and benevolence, as manifest in the works of the Creation:

"... there is one single act, for which the whole life of man is infinitely too short: what time can suffice for the contemplation and worship of that glorious, immortal, and eternal Being, among the works of whose stupendous creation not only this globe, but even those numberless luminaries which we may here behold spangling all the sky, though they should many of them be suns lighting different systems of worlds, may possibly appear but as a few atoms opposed to the whole earth which we inhabit? ... on what object can we cast our eyes which may not inspire us with ideas of his power, and his wisdom, and of his goodness? It is not necessary that the rising sun should dart his fiery glories over the eastern horizon; nor that the boisterous winds should rush from their caverns, and shake the lofty forests; nor that the opening clouds should pour their deluges on the plains: it is not necessary, I say, that any of these should proclaim his majesty: there is not an insect, not a vegetable, of so low an order in the creation as not to be honoured with bearing marks of the attributes of its great Creator; marks not only of his power, but of his wisdom and goodness.<sup>1</sup>

The old man departs from orthodoxy however, when he excludes Mankind from God's benevolent plan:

"... man alone, the king of this globe, the last and greatest work of the Supreme Being, below the sun; man alone hath basely dishonoured his own nature; and by dishonesty, cruelty, ingratitude, and treachery, hath called his Maker's goodness in question, by puzzling us to account how a benevolent being should form so foolish and so vile an animal."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, VIII, xv (Henley IV, p 150f).

Fielding had many of the texts relevant to these issues in his library: *Maclaurin's Account of Newton's Discoveries* (Ethel M. Thornbury, *op.cit.*, item 185) and *Ralph Cudworth's True Intellectual System of the Universe* (Thornbury, *op.cit.*, item 463).

<sup>2</sup>*TJ*, VIII, xv (Henley IV, p 151).

It was generally accepted that Mankind, far from dishonouring his Creator, bore visible marks of the Divine benevolence. Tom Jones puts this view to the old man, pointing out that the essential characteristics of human nature should be taken, not from the worst, but from the best of the species:

"In the former part of what you said," replied Jones, "I most heartily and readily concur; but I believe, as well as hope, that the abhorrence which you express for mankind in the conclusion, is much too general. Indeed, you here fall into error, which, in my little experience, I have observed to be a very common one, by taking the character of mankind from the worst and basest among them; whereas, indeed, as an excellent writer observes, nothing should be esteemed as characteristic of a species but what is to be found among the best and most perfect individuals of that species."<sup>1</sup>

The Man of the Hill then, being morally disillusioned and, hence, lacking, himself, fails to apply the benevolence which he claims to see in external nature, to human nature. He, therefore, fails to derive the crucial moral lesson which the Augustans, such as Pope, in the *Essay on Man*, considered to be the *raison d'être* for the study of nature:

The gen'ral ORDER, since the World began,  
Is kept in Nature, and is kept in Man.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the *beatus vir* in Thomson's *The Seasons*, the old man fails to see that the benevolence of God in the external Creation extends into the world of Man.<sup>3</sup> As a result, he fails to imitate that "universal smile" in the acts of benevolence and social love which were the custom in contemporary literature, in which the *beatus vir*, who appreciates the beauties of the natural scene:

Grows in judgement just, in fancy chaste,  
In reason clear, and delicate in taste:  
Or feeling kind affections seize his mind,  
His heart dilating opens to mankind;  
And shares the highest bliss his state can prove,  
From that divinest passion, social love.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, VIII, xv (Henley IV, p 151).

<sup>2</sup>Ep. I, 171, 172 (J.Butt, *op.cit.*, p 510).

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of cosmic benevolism manifested in nature in Thomson's *The Seasons*, see Røstvig, *op.cit.*, II, p 265f.

<sup>4</sup>*Poetic Essays on Nature, Men, and Morals* (1750), quoted in M-S. Røstvig, *op.cit.*, II, p 323. This discussion of the relationship between man and nature is largely drawn from Røstvig's study.



Indeed, during the period that Fielding produced *Tom Jones*, the study of nature in poetry generally inspired the active rather than the contemplative, the public rather than the private life.<sup>1</sup> This spirit, which logically undermined the central argument of the *beatus ille* creed, meant that the solitary, rationalistic study of nature as practised by the Man of the Hill was not acceptable. This is succinctly expressed in a contemporary poem, in which solitude, personified, rebukes a youth for believing that solitary contemplation will produce happiness:

Youth, you're mistaken, if you think to find  
In shades a medicine for a troubled mind,  
. . . . .  
God never made an independent man,  
'Twould jarr the concord of his general plan.  
. . . . .  
What boots it thee to fly from pole to pole?  
Hang o'er the sun, and with the planets roll?  
What boots thro' space's furthest bourns to roam?  
If thou, O man, a stranger art at home.<sup>2</sup>

These last words, and those of another writer:

Order *without* us, what imports it seen,  
If all is restless anarchy within?<sup>3</sup>

can be applied particularly to the Man of the Hill, who can, as Fielding puts it in an earlier poem:

Converse with Heaven, and soar beyond the stars,<sup>4</sup>  
but is a stranger amongst his own kind. Actively practising his principle that mankind is to be detested, the old man fails to "harmonise with Nature, and live in friendship both with God and Man".<sup>5</sup>

In this, the old man of Mazard Hill, a warped version of *Il Penseroso*, contrasts markedly with Mr Allworthy of Paradise Hall who, although too sober to be a *L'Allegro* figure, is nevertheless gregarious and convivial, and is presented to us in the warm and

<sup>1</sup>Mark Akenside, *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744), Canto III, ll. 620-633 and John Gilbert Cooper, *The Power of Harmony* Book II, The Argument. See M-S. Røstvig, p 317ff. This spirit is expressed in the celebration of arts, science and public service in Thomson's "Summer" in *The Seasons* of 1744.

<sup>2</sup>James Granger, "Solitude. An Ode" (1750), quoted in M-S. Røstvig, *op.cit.*, II, p 372.

<sup>3</sup>William Melmoth, *Of Active and Retired Life* (1735) quoted in Røstvig, *op.cit.*, II, p 322.

<sup>4</sup>*Of Good Nature* (Henley XII, p 260).

<sup>5</sup>As expressed by Shaftesbury. See J. Robertson (ed.), *Shaftesbury Characteristics*, London, 1900, II, p 148.

sunny atmosphere of *L'Allegro's* world. Unlike the old misanthropists, Allworthy derives great happiness from his rural retirement and his contemplation of the rural scene because he is inspired by nature to imitate God's benevolence in the human scene, as outlined by Fielding in this description of Allworthy's walking forth to greet the morning at Paradise Hall:

It was now the middle of May, and the morning was remarkably serene, when Mr Allworthy walked forth on the terrace, where the dawn opened every minute that lovely prospect we have before described to his eye; and now having sent forth streams of light, which ascended the blue firmament before him, as harbingers preceding his pomp, in the full blaze of his majesty rose the sun, than which one object alone in this lower creation could be more glorious, and that Mr Allworthy himself presented - a human being replete with benevolence, meditating in what manner he might render himself most acceptable to his Creator, by doing most good to his creatures.<sup>1</sup>

In this emblematic scene, in which Allworthy's position at the moral centre of the novel is rendered in terms of the sun, a traditional symbol of the Deity, Fielding presents his culminating portrait of ideal human nature, the "great and good". This, along with the "great" and the "good", he defines in the preface to *The Miscellanies*, in words similar to those used in the passage quoted above:

The last of these is the true sublime in human nature. That elevation by which the soul of man, raising and extending itself above the order of this creation, and brightened with a certain ray of divinity, looks down on the condition of mortals. This is indeed a glorious object, on which we can never gaze with too much praise and admiration. A perfect work! the Iliad of Nature! ravishing and astonishing, and which at once fills us with love, wonder, and delight.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, I, iv (Henley III, p 27f).

This passage resembles Thomson's description of George Lyttleton's being inspired to benevolence by the rural scene at Hagley Park ("Spring" [1744] ll. 899-949, J.L. Robertson (ed.), *op.cit.*, p 36ff).

<sup>2</sup>Henley XII, p 245.

Fielding gives another example of this true sublime in human nature in an ideal rural setting in "A Journey from this World to the Next", I, v (Henley II, p 234). This last is also a compliment to Ralph Allen of Prior Park.

Fielding places Allworthy, his embodiment of ideal human nature, into an ideal rural landscape, composed of diverse elements, all of which conduce to the main design. This, a thoroughly orthodox notion in contemporary terms, suggests that nature seems to be producing a work of art but remains predominant, according to the current landscape ethic as practised by many of Fielding's friends and acquaintances, whose estates serve as models for Paradise Hall.<sup>1</sup> Although the description of Allworthy's prospect carries the reader's eye out from the immediate and the local to the infinite it avoids the dangers of excessive imagination:

reader, take care. I have unadvisedly led thee to the top of as high a hill as Mr Allworthy's, and how to get thee down without breaking thy neck I do not well know. However, let us e'en venture to slide down together; for Miss Bridget rings her bell, and Mr Allworthy is summoned to breakfast, where I must attend, and, if you please, shall be glad of your company.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, whilst the prospect from Paradise Hall is the most significant landscape in Fielding's writings, it is only a setting; it is little more than a setting for human affairs, as Fielding characteristically concerns himself, not with external nature, but with human nature and society. The main value of the rural environment to Allworthy is that it enables him, through virtue and reason, to fashion the ideal life in which the major source of happiness is benevolence. In his benevolence, Allworthy is presented as a model for responsible social leadership, along the lines of such prominent contemporary figures as Ralph Allen and George Lyttleton, with whose generosity Fielding was personally acquainted, but also along the lines of those traditionally-oriented landlords long celebrated in the English "country house" ideal as patterns for responsible government. Firmly establishing Allworthy in this role are his traditional values and his dignified yet practical way of life, but mainly establishing him as an ideal leader in the traditional sense is his generosity to men of merit:

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<sup>1</sup>As well as Ralph Allen's Prior Park and George Lyttleton's Hagley Park, Sir Henry Gould's Sharpham Park, Somersetshire, is a major model for Paradise Hall. (Cross, *op.cit.*, II, p 165.)

<sup>2</sup>*TJ*, I, iv (Henley III, p 28).

neither Mr Allworthy's house nor his heart were shut against any part of mankind, but they were both more particularly open to men of merit. To say the truth, this was the only house in the kingdom where you were sure to gain a dinner by deserving it.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the open door of Paradise Hall contrasts markedly to the inhospitable doors of those great town houses. As discussed in the chapter on manners,<sup>2</sup> Fielding in presenting Allworthy as an alternative to the *beau monde* in Westminster, departs from the "country house" tradition by recommending not only members of the landed classes, such as George Lyttleton, as exemplary leadership material, but also the self-made man, Ralph Allen. In encouraging the identification of Allworthy with Allen in the novel, Fielding describes Allen's fortune as having been made in a responsible manner, and he also describes Allen as possessing all of the private and public virtues, which many of the well-born characters throughout his writings conspicuously lack. Of Allen we are told:

that he filled every relation in life with the most adequate virtue; that he was most piously religious to his Creator, most zealously loyal to his sovereign; a most tender husband to his wife, a kind relation, a munificent patron, a warm and firm friend, a knowing and a cheerful companion, indulgent to his servants, hospitable to his neighbours, charitable to the poor, and benevolent to all mankind.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, Fielding makes Allworthy a gentleman, thereby expressing his view that the landed classes were the best qualified to govern the nation. Fielding is careful to stipulate that Allworthy does not represent country landlords in general. Squire Western, although preserving the hospitality of the old English country gentleman, does little to promote the welfare of society. As observed earlier in this chapter, country life in *Tom Jones*, although portrayed with great gusto, is brutal and often destructive. Allworthy, like Wilson, is the exception, rather than the norm.

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, I, x (Henley III, p 47).

<sup>2</sup>See p 129 above.

<sup>3</sup>*TJ*, VIII, i (Henley IV, p 64).

In placing his ideal rural world into the context of the real rural world, Fielding once again achieves the effect of "placing" his ideal while at the same time facing the objections to it. In the case of Allworthy, however, he is not so successful in facing the objections to his ideal. Allworthy's embodiment of the rural ideal is qualified for the reader not so much by his brutal surroundings, as by what could be seen as a major flaw in his presentation. In depicting him as a model for responsible social leadership, Fielding emphasizes his roles as Justice of the Peace, and benefactor to men of merit and virtue. Allworthy's value in these roles, however, is seriously impaired by his extreme innocence, which is too easily imposed upon by the hypocritical and/or the vicious, such as Bridget Allworthy, Doctor and Captain Blifil, Thwackum and Square and most villainously by Blifil. As a result of these impositions, many other people suffer greatly: Mr and Mrs Partridge are ruined, Sophia Western is contracted to a match with Blifil, which obliges her to flee to London, and Tom Jones is expelled from Paradise Hall. Thus, other innocent rural characters suffer on account of Allworthy's rural innocence. Far from being a blessing to society as a leader, Allworthy, in some ways, is a massive liability. Fielding is obviously using this aspect of the character of Allworthy to demonstrate the very grave social and moral dangers of hypocrisy. Even virtuous and prudent men can be imposed on. Despite Fielding's frequent attempts to justify Allworthy's bad judgements, however, as in these words by Tom at the end of the novel:

the wisest man might be deceived as you were; and,  
under such a deception, the best must have acted  
just as you did.<sup>1</sup>

there remains an undercurrent of suggestion that a society governed by the Allworthys would be at the mercies of the Blifils. It is difficult, therefore, to accept Ehrenpreis' assertion that the superiority of country over city life in *Tom Jones* consists mainly in Allworthy's innocence and the opportunities which the simple

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, XVIII, x (Henley V, p 346).  
Fielding makes this justification of Allworthy (*TJ*, III, v, Henley III, p 125).

rural environment gives him to exercise his benevolence free from the deceptions of the town.<sup>1</sup> This is certainly an important part of what Fielding is putting forward, but the deceptions practised on Allworthy in Somersetshire cause as much suffering as the wilful destructiveness of Lady Bellaston and Lord Fellamar in Westminster. Despite his god-like status in the novel then, Allworthy does not present the complete alternative to these vicious Londoners. What Fielding, perhaps inadvertently, dramatises in Allworthy is that rural innocence, whilst being an attractive virtue in such characters as Joseph Andrews, Fanny Goodwill and Sophia Western, needs to be complemented by experience in a great country landlord. He demonstrates that ignorance of the ways of the world, despite the prudence which we know Allworthy possesses, can be a danger for one who occupies a position of responsibility in that world. He therefore dramatises the essential flaw of his rural ideal as exemplified by Allworthy, that is, that knowledge of the town and world, and of the deceitful *forms* which hypocrisy and self-interest can assume, are necessary in those who govern society. Fielding does not press this as a flaw in Allworthy. Rather, the issue of Allworthy's misjudgements is subsumed into the overall design of the novel and the demonstration of the role of Providence. Nonetheless, in terms of the novel's realism in relation to the presentation of the rural ideal (which I will discuss below) there remains the sense of a threat to the working out of that ideal.

In *Tom Jones*, the rural ideal is most successfully established by Tom Jones himself, after his rural innocence has been tempered by experience in the corrupt environment of London, when he retires, at the end of the novel, to Somersetshire. Unlike the Man of the Hill, Tom does not become misanthropic as a result of his town experiences. He retains his good-nature and his optimism. His retirement from London therefore, does not sever all links with society, as with the old man, but rather, is characterised by an active participation in social affairs. In his retirement in which, married to Sophia, he becomes the landlord of Squire Western's

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<sup>1</sup>Ehrenpreis, *op.cit.*, p 35.

estate, he models himself on Allworthy, extending his benevolence to all mankind. We are left with the impression that, in some important ways, he would make a better landlord than Allworthy, because his London experiences would enable him to judge of human affairs more effectively. Like Wilson, he demonstrates that the full potential of a country life can only be exploited after a period of suffering in the city.

Characteristic of the rural ideal with which Fielding concludes his novels, the order which Tom and Sophia create is represented as being an extension of their loving, family relationship: "and such is their condescension, their indulgence, and their beneficence to those below them, that there is not a neighbour, a ~~ten~~ant, or a servant, who doth not most gratefully bless the day when Mr Jones was married to his Sophia".<sup>1</sup> As with Mr and Mrs Wilson, the loving family relationship of Tom and Sophia is represented as a microcosm of ideal social order. The marriage of Tom and Sophia, however, as with Fielding's other worthy couples, is not devoid of material advantage. As discussed in the previous chapter, Fielding in *Tom Jones* is as censorious as ever of the preoccupation with property considerations in marriage but, although the proposed union of Western's and Allworthy's estates with a match between Sophia and Blifil is thwarted, this lucrative union is nevertheless effected with the marriage between Sophia and Tom Jones. As with Fielding's other worthy couples then, Tom and Sophia, for their moral triumph, receive not only intangible, but also tangible rewards. Thus Fielding gets the best of both worlds: love triumphs, but the materialistic demands of the system are met. Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu objected to these conclusions to Fielding's novels, on the grounds that they were socially destructive, in encouraging young people to be imprudent about marriage:

All these sort of Books have the same fault, which I cannot easily pardon, being very mischievous. They place a merit in extravagant Passions, and encourage young people to hope for impossible events to draw them out of the misery they chuse to plunge themselves into, expecting legacys from unknown Relations, and generous Benefactors to distress'd Virtue, as much out of Nature as Fairy Treasures.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, XVIII, Chapter *the Last* (Henley V, p 373).

<sup>2</sup>Letter from Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu to Lady Bute, 1 October 1749. Reprinted in Neil Compton (ed.), *Henry Fielding : Tom Jones*, London, 1970, p 25f.

The conclusion of *Tom Jones*, though, as with Fielding's other novels, is not designed to disrupt but, rather, to endorse the system. It does so, however, by the "unnatural" or contrived means to which Lady Mary objected for, although Fielding declares that he will bring his comic novel to its happy ending without the assistance of supernatural forces, this happy ending, as with that of *Joseph Andrews*, is brought about by a series of coincidences, making visible the existence of the Divine Providence, benevolently active in the affairs of Mankind. By effecting his union of country estates with marriages founded upon humanitarian, rather than mercenary values, and by making all seem the reward bestowed on the virtuous by Providence, Fielding exploits the illusion generally entertained by English writers of the period, that the traditional system, which was in reality maintained by ruthlessly materialistic values, was a humanitarian system, founded in natural and moral law, and ordained by God. Although we are aware that what Fielding is creating at the end of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* is an ideal - even, perhaps, an illusory ideal - of life, he easily manoeuvres us into accepting it.

The reasons for this successful didactic use of the country-city contrast to create such an ideal in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* are manifold. Only briefly examined in the chapter on manners, they need now to be fully analysed in connection with the more profound moral significance of the rural-urban environments under consideration in this chapter. Greatly contributing to the successes in these two novels are the vitality and realism with which Fielding portrays his country-city environments. In both novels, Fielding frequently declares realism to be the defining characteristic of his new species of writing, of which the following example from the preface of *Joseph Andrews* is illustrative: "every thing is copied from the book of nature, and scarce a character or action produced which I have not taken from my own observations and experience".<sup>1</sup> During the 1740s, Fielding was more heavily involved than ever before in town affairs. Many of his personal

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<sup>1</sup>Henley I, p 24.

Several of the introductory chapters of both novels argue this point; for example, *JA*, III, i; *TJ*, VIII, i; *TJ*, IX, i; *TJ*, XIV, i and *TJ*, XVII, i.



observations on the *beau monde*, and the legal and literary worlds, are evident in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. It is generally assumed that, during these years, Fielding was riding the Western Circuit in search of briefs. Little is known of this, but it is known that he did visit friends and spend long periods in the western districts. The vivid portrayal of the country in the novels, the wide range of country characters and activities, certainly gives the impression of having been drawn by one who travelled through the areas often. Compared to the plays then, the novels give a more authentic portrait of town and country, of greater personal involvement with these environments. During this period, Fielding's interest in history and the authentic recording of human affairs, well established by *The Champion*, became more marked. He incorporated much historical material into his *True Patriot* and *Jacobite's Journal*.<sup>1</sup> Both *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* are designated in their titles as being "history". Although this was a convention for novels of the period, meaning a true story, Robert Wallace argues that history proper becomes more important as defining *genre* for each of Fielding's novels. Whereas *Joseph Andrews* is defined as a "comic epic poem in prose",<sup>2</sup> *Tom Jones* is defined as an "heroic, historical, prosaic poem",<sup>3</sup> and Fielding spends an early prefatory chapter showing "what kind of a History this is", and what his method of presenting the events of his history will be.<sup>4</sup> Wallace argues that history is as important a model for both novels as the epic.<sup>5</sup> Both novels are full of contemporary factual details, indicating that Fielding intended giving an authentic record of his times. The novel form itself gave Fielding greater scope for authenticity than the plays had done. One realistic technique of the new form was to anchor

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<sup>1</sup>Cross, *op.cit.*, II, pp 38-41 and p 92.

<sup>2</sup>*JA*, Preface (Henley I, p 18).

<sup>3</sup>*TJ*, IV, i (Henley III, p 143).

<sup>4</sup>*TJ*, II, i.

<sup>5</sup>R. Wallace, "Fielding's Knowledge of History and Biography", *SP* 44, 1947, p 90 and p 107.

R. Paulson also discusses Fielding's shift from emphasis on epic to emphasis on history. See *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England*, p 150ff.

the action firmly in specific time-periods and locations.<sup>1</sup> The action of *Joseph Andrews* takes place in the autumn of 1741, and that of *Tom Jones* during the autumn and winter of 1745, in the time of the Jacobite Rebellion. The action of both novels takes place in and between Somersetshire and London. Indeed, the action frequently takes place in specifically named villages and towns in the country, and areas of the town. In *Joseph Andrews* and, to a greater extent, *Tom Jones*, Fielding maps out the routes taken by the characters on their various journeys. Joseph Andrews is taken from Sir Thomas Booby's seat in Somersetshire (which has been seen as being situated in East Stour, North Dorset),<sup>2</sup> to London. After spending some years in Westminster, an area of the town more fully described in Wilson's story, he returns homeward, accompanied by Adams and Fanny, probably along the road from London to Salisbury, the route generally travelled by those riding the Western Circuit. The topography of *Tom Jones* is more precisely mapped out. Tom Jones sets out from Allworthy's Paradise Hall (which has been seen as bearing the same location as Sir Henry Gould's Sharpham Park, Somersetshire),<sup>3</sup> to a town near Bristol, where he falls in with the soldiers, going north to join the Duke of Cumberland against the Pretender. *En route*, he meets Partridge, and the two travel to Gloucester, after leaving which they travel into the Malvern Hills and then to Upton on Severn. From Upton, Tom pursues Sophia to London, through Coventry, Daventry, Stratford, Dunstable and St. Albans, entering the capital through Gray's Inn Lane. His movements in London are not so carefully mapped out. He lodges first at the Bull and Gate in Holborn, and then with Mrs Miller in Bond Street. He meets Lady Bellaston at the masquerade in the Haymarket, and afterwards attends her assignations in a house near Hanover Square. Sophia's journey from Upton to London is also carefully mapped out. Accompanied by her cousin, Harriet Fitzpatrick, she travels to Mereden, and then to London, along the route later taken by Tom Jones. In London she also visits specifically named locations. She visits the Drury Lane

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<sup>1</sup> See I. Watt, *op.cit.*, p 26ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 347f.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p 165.

theatre on a night when there is a riot, is imprisoned by her father at his lodgings in Piccadilly ("where he was placed by the recommendation of the landlord at the Hercules Pillars at Hide-Park Corner"),<sup>1</sup> and finally marries Tom at Doctors Commons. Further authenticity is added to the portraits of country and city by Fielding's naming or actually incorporating personages living in contemporary society.<sup>2</sup> In *Joseph Andrews* Mr Wilson deals with Mrs Haywood, the famous bawd of Covent Garden.<sup>3</sup> Figures from London's cultural world, for example, Colley Cibber, Orator Henley and John Rich, often feature in observations on town affairs. In *Tom Jones*, Fielding recommends the coaches of Mr King of Bath. Mr and Mrs Whitefield of the Bell Inn at Gloucester made their appearance, and are also recommended to the reader. David Garrick of the Drury Lane playhouse in London receives a commendation for his performance in *Hamlet*.<sup>4</sup> Also contributing to the impression of contemporary authenticity is the fact that many of the characters are partly based on actual personages living in town or country. Beau Didapper is a satirical portrayal of Lord Hervey, an adherent of Sir Robert Walpole's ministry.<sup>5</sup> Peter Pounce is a satirical portrayal of the much-despised Peter Walter, who had acquired large estates by commercial activity.<sup>6</sup> The portrayal of Parson Adams is based largely on the character of Parson William Young of East Stour.<sup>7</sup> Allworthy of Paradise Hall is based partly on Ralph Allen of Prior Park and George Lyttleton of Hagley Park. Squire Western draws some of his characteristics from two well-known country gentlemen, Carew Harvey Mildmay and Sir Paulet St. John.<sup>8</sup> Lawyer Dowling could be a representation of Robert Stillingsfleet, attorney

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<sup>1</sup> *TJ*, XVI, ii (Henley V, p 200).

<sup>2</sup> R.E. Moore claims that Fielding took this practice from Hogarth. *Op.cit.* p 148f.

<sup>3</sup> *JA*, III, iii (Henley I, p 231).

<sup>4</sup> *TJ*, XVI, v (Henley V, p 222).

<sup>5</sup> See M.C. Battestin, "Lord Hervey's Rôle in *Joseph Andrews*," *PQ* 42, (1963), pp 226-241.

<sup>6</sup> Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 348.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p 344.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p 166f.

to Peter Walter.<sup>1</sup> The king of the Warwickshire gypsies is almost certainly a representation of Bampfylde Moore Carew, a gypsy king who operated in the west country.<sup>2</sup> The character of Lady Bellaston could be partly based on that of Lady Townshend, a lady of ill-fame in the *beau monde*.<sup>3</sup> In general, many of the characters in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* have a contemporary ring about them. They give the impression of greater fidelity to human nature than the characters of the dramatic writings. This impression is enhanced by Fielding's practice of drawing images from Hogarth's paintings to assist his own character portraits.<sup>4</sup> All these realistic elements, then, render the rural and urban environments in the novels impressive and convincing, able to carry the didactic significance assigned to them much better than could the plays. Of even greater significance is the fact that the major characters are more complex and three-dimensional than are those of the plays.<sup>5</sup> We therefore identify more easily with them and, hence, with their experiences of town and country, and more readily accept the moral conclusions to be drawn from these experiences.

Although presenting an authentic portrayal of contemporary society in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, Fielding did not aim at minute, circumstantial accuracy. This was Richardson's brand of realism to which he objected. He regarded the art and morality of *Pamela* as having reduced complex moral issues to the narrow arena of virginity and *bourgeois* respectability. He travestied *Pamela* in *Shamela*, published anonymously in 1741, and in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* presented his alternative, in terms of morality, subject and form in the novel. In these novels, he deals not so much with the particular as with the universal aspects of human experience: "I describe not men, but manners; not an

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<sup>1</sup>Cross, *op.cit.*, II, p 167f.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, II, p 150f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, II, p 171.

<sup>4</sup>See *TJ*, I, xi, *TJ*, II, iii and *TJ*, III, vi.

<sup>5</sup>The increasing complexity of the characters in Fielding's novels is demonstrated by R. Paulson in *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England*, p 132ff, in a discussion on the relationship between motive and action. R.E. Moore argues this point with reference to Hogarth's influence on Fielding (*op.cit.*, p 108ff).

individual, but a species".<sup>1</sup> In order to achieve this breadth of analysis, Fielding uses the generalising techniques of the traditional neo-classical *genres*, which still exercised great authority over the writers of the period. Although Fielding, in his introductory chapters, claims to be liberating himself from restricting creative laws,<sup>2</sup> and claims the right to create his own rules, these chapters are no manifesto of revolt. Fielding continually defines his new kind of writing in terms of old models. In these definitions he develops the novel's affinities with older *genres* which from the beginning had dealt with the timeless and the universal. Despite the contemporary authenticity then, and the importance of this, the reigning principle in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* is still one of extreme literariness, as Fielding formalises the raw materials of life to serve pre-established, generic and didactic ends. His method, then, is mainly allegorical. As Battestin observes, the novels' moral purposes largely determine their presentation of character, action and environment, as Fielding habitually transforms the present and the local into the timeless and the universal.<sup>3</sup> Thus, whilst retaining their autonomy within the novels, the characters and environments are used to objectify abstract issues. Whilst being realistic, the characters represent Mankind in general, and the rural and urban environments through which they move, whilst being authentic portrayals of contemporary society, also symbolise good and evil respectively. Characters are sometimes symbolically linked with these environments by their names, for example, Sophia and Squire Western; Mr Summer, Tom's real father. In the various struggles between Joseph, Fanny and Adams, and Lady Booby and Beau Didapper; and between Sophia and Tom, and Lady Bellaston and Lord Fellamar, Fielding dramatises the opposition between virtue and vice.

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<sup>1</sup>*JA*, III, i (Henley I, p 215. See also *TJ*, X, i (Henley IV, p 194).

<sup>2</sup>*TJ*, II, i (Henley III, p 66).

<sup>3</sup>*The Providence of Wit*, p 167. Ian Watt describes Fielding's realism as realism of assessment as opposed to Richardson's realism of presentation. *Op.cit.*, p 298ff.

In assigning the victory to the group of virtuous rural characters he dramatises his Christian, comic vision of life, that is, that good can triumph over evil. To make this victory convincing, he must ensure that the forces of good, largely represented by the country, must outweigh the forces of evil, largely represented by the city. He must keep all aspects of his rural and urban environments under his control. He does so by formalising their various elements with old literary conventions, using almost all of the themes and motifs which he had gathered together during his literary apprenticeship, and introducing many more. What makes the city able to seem so convincingly defeated, is the extremely formal presentation of its evil elements. Although more sinister than in his earlier writings, and more realistic, the London and London characters of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* are nonetheless firmly under Fielding's artistic control, being mainly portrayed by the conventions of the genteel comedy. Lady Booby is very much the fine, town lady of the dramatic tradition. Joseph himself sees her attempted seduction of him in that light, as he tells Pamela that she "talked exactly as a lady does to her sweetheart in a stage-play, which I have seen in Covent Garden, while she wanted him to be no better than he should be".<sup>1</sup> Beau Didapper has many antecedents in Fielding's comedies, for example, Lord Formal, Sir Apish Simple and Rattle of *Love in Several Masques*. In describing his career as town fop, Wilson himself draws this parallel: "half our modern plays have one of these characters in them".<sup>2</sup> In shifting the action of *Tom Jones* to London, Fielding asserts that the conventions of genteel comedy are inappropriate for portraying the town in the late 1740s:

Vanbrugh and Congreve copied nature; but they who copy them draw as unlike the present age as Hogarth would do if he were to paint a rout or a drum in the dresses of Titian and Vandyke. In short, imitation here will not do the business. The picture must be after Nature herself.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *JA*, I, vi (Henley I, p 39).

<sup>2</sup> *JA*, III, iii (Henley I, p 231).

<sup>3</sup> *TJ*, XIV, i (Henley V, p 93).

He describes the results of writers who copy the *beau monde* from books:

hence those strange monsters in lace and embroidery, in silks and brocades, with vast wigs and hoops, which, under the name of lords and ladies, strut the stage, to the great delight of attorneys and their clerks in the pit, and of the citizens and their apprentices in the galleries, and which are no more to be found in real life than the centaur, the chimera, or any other creature of mere fiction.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this assertion, which Fielding had often made in the prologues to his highly conventional genteel comedies, the London of *Tom Jones* is, in many ways, still very much the fashionable Westminster of the stage tradition. Lord Fellamar of the lace and embroidery, and Lady Bellaston of the vast hoop, together with many of their adventures, such as Fellamar's encounter with Squire Western,<sup>2</sup> and Lady Bellaston's exposure in the "screen scenes"<sup>3</sup> in Tom's bedroom, have many precedents on the stage.

Genteel comedy, however, was not Fielding's only source for his portrayal of the town in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. He also drew on other conventions. The town careers of Mr Wilson and the Man of the Hill owe much to the accumulative urban denunciation of Juvenal's Third Satire and its English imitations. These two careers also draw much from the convention of portraying the progress of a rake through fashionable town society, a convention which Fielding adopted from literary works, such as Le Sage's *Gil Blas* but most notably from Hogarth's painting, "The Rake's Progress" which, in praising Hogarth in *The Champion*, he describes as a didactic painting:

I esteem the ingenious Mr Hogarth as one of the most useful satirists any age hath produced. In his excellent works you see the delusive scene exposed with all the force of humour, and, on casting your eyes on another picture, you behold the dreadful and fatal consequence. I almost dare affirm that those two works of his, which he calls the Rake's and the Harlot's Progress, are calculated more to serve the cause of virtue and for the preservation of mankind, than all the folios of morality which have been ever

<sup>1</sup> *TJ*, XIV, i (Henley V, p 93f).

<sup>2</sup> *TJ*, XV, v (Henley V, p 151ff).

<sup>3</sup> *TJ*, XIV, ii (Henley V, p 97ff) and *TJ*, XIV, vii (Henley V, p 171ff).

written; and a sober family should no more be without them, than without the Whole Duty of Man in their house.<sup>1</sup>

Many of Wilson's experiences are familiar to us from Fielding's plays. His career as Grub Street hack draws much from Fielding's dramatic burlesques and Pope's *Dunciad*. The Man of the Hill's experiences in London's criminal underworld draw much from Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* and Gay's *Beggar's Opera*. In general, Fielding took elements from almost all of the city satire of the period, so that literary convention prevails over personal observation in the portrayal of London in these two novels. What is important, however, is that his use of literary conventions is not nearly as derivative as in his early writings. He selects and adapts a wide range of materials from general trends rather than specific models, bringing together whole networks of themes and motifs in his condemnation of the town. Moreover, the absence of inherent attitudes towards the town, in the new novel form, enabled him to adjust these motifs to serve his own didactic needs. He was able to discard that conventional attractiveness clinging to fashionable London, which had prevented his successfully censuring its vices in the genteel comedy. There is no redeeming attractiveness about London in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. Fielding's condemnation of it is comprehensive and unambiguous. With the exception of Mrs Miller and her family in *Tom Jones*, all Londoners in these two novels are evil, or, at best, foolish.<sup>2</sup> Whilst we see more urban evils than in the dramatic writings, and often at closer range, such as when presented through first-person narration in the stories of Mr Wilson and the Man of the Hill, they are at all times under Fielding's artistic control. The fact that Fielding harnesses and organises London's evils with long-established literary conventions

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<sup>1</sup>*The Champion*, June 10, 1740 (Henley XV, p 331).

<sup>2</sup>Fielding hastens to warn that Lady Bellaston is something of an exception: "... let not my country readers conclude from her, that this is the general conduct of women of fashion". But he puts forward the view that most women of this station are "entirely made up of form and affectation", and that "the true characteristick of the present *Beau monde*, is rather folly than vice, and the only epithet which it deserves is that of *frivolous*". (*TJ*, XIV, i [Henley V, p 94f]).



suggests that these evils are not out of hand, that they are predictable and can be defeated. As Fielding, in these novels, plays the role of the omnipotent creator, his organisation of London's vices and follies into a series of formal patterns suggests that these vices and follies are thoroughly under the control of the Divine Providence, part of His principle of *concordia discors*, that harmony arising from the reconciliation of seemingly irreconcilable elements, which the Augustans believed to govern the universe, a principle succinctly summed up by Pope in his *Essay on Man*:

All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;  
All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;  
All Discord, Harmony, not understood;  
All partial Evil, universal Good.<sup>1</sup>

In his artistic organisation of London, then, Fielding may be suggesting that Mankind can impose order on the town. It must be stressed that this is an implication only. The cosmic benevolence which extends itself to the city in James Thomson's *The Seasons*: "God is ever present, ever felt, /in the void waste as in the city full",<sup>2</sup> is never visible in the London of Fielding's novels.

Although largely portrayed through familiar literary conventions, then, the London of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* has many new and sinister elements. The destructive effects of the urban environment on Mr Wilson and the Man of the Hill, Lord Fellamar's attempted rape of Sophia, and Lady Bellaston's plan to have Tom pressed on board a ship, all belong more to the diabolical urban environment of *Amelia* than the brittle Westminster of genteel comedies. Although, as mentioned earlier, Fellamar and Bellaston are caught up in comic situations beyond their control, they are chilling in their depravity. Our impression is that the old moral and social values, revered by Fielding, could never be re-established in London whilst such people prevail there. For the re-establishment of moral and social order at the end of both novels, Fielding withdraws his triumphant rural characters from the town to the country, which, although not

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<sup>1</sup>I, ll. 289-291. John Butt, *op.cit.*, p 515.

<sup>2</sup>James Thomson, hymn at the end of *The Seasons*, ll. 105-106. J.L. Robertson (ed.), *op.cit.*, p 294.

idyllic, is the only potential stronghold of positive values. What makes the country so convincing as an alternative to the city in these novels is the fact that the new form enabled Fielding to move out into the countryside and extensively develop his rural ideal, an opportunity not available to him in the genteel comedy. This rural ideal is extremely attractive, largely because Fielding draws it from the widely-accepted conventions of the *beatus ille* and "country house" traditions, and because he presents it with vitality and realism. Whilst all the stock elements are present, the use of these traditions is not slavishly imitative. Fielding moves freely within his literary heritage, selecting and adapting materials from a wide range of sources, bringing together, as he did for the portrayal of town/city, whole networks of themes and motifs for his idealisation of the country. Another major reason for the success of the rural ideal in the novels is that Fielding's use of it is not escapist. It is always accompanied by satire against the extremely idealistic pastoral tradition. By burlesquing the pastoral tradition's extravagant idealisation of country life, Fielding encourages us to accept his own rural ideal as being realistic. Moreover, he is always careful to portray rural vice, thereby ensuring that the values of the rural ideal do not unrealistically apply to country life in general. By conceding that the country is not perfect, Fielding wins our confidence in his proposition that it is the best environment. Our confidence is also won by his obvious personal love of the country. By portraying the earthy and often brutal country life, sprawling around his rural ideal, he allows personal observation to mix with literary convention, and the resulting vitality is extremely attractive. The rural brutalities, however, never get out of hand. Fielding always formalises the raw materials of his personal observations which are such that many of the characters, for example, the squires and parsons, resemble the stereotype characters of literary convention. As many of these characters are presented comically, their misdemeanours are easily accommodated within the moral framework of the novels. Thus, whilst the portrayal of the country is more flexible and three-dimensional than that of the city, its vices, like those of the town, are always under Fielding's artistic control. By successfully combining literary conventions

with personal observations, then, Fielding in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* makes his rural and urban environments both realistic and allegorical simultaneously, and therefore impressive and convincing in the didactic significance assigned to them. By being thoroughly in control of all the moral forces in the novels Fielding consistently polarises the two environments into sharp oppositions between good and evil and convincingly establishes the victory of the former over the latter.

Another major reason for the successful didactic use of the country-city contrast in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* is the prominence of the contrast within the novels' architectural structures which themselves express and reinforce the novels' moral meanings. In *Joseph Andrews* and, to a greater extent, *Tom Jones*, Fielding carefully organises all his materials so that they conduce to the main design, design characterised by symmetry and harmony, thereby rendering both novels artistic embodiments of the Augustan vision of cosmic order.<sup>1</sup> In both novels the tripartite system of country, road and city is the major structural principle. Somersetshire and London are the twin fixed bases, in and between which Fielding manipulates the action. In both novels the journey is the major device with which Fielding moves the action from the country, along the road to the city, and then back again. In *Joseph Andrews* the initial movement is from country to city, as Sir Thomas and Lady Booby, at the beginning of Book One, remove from Somersetshire to London, taking with them, their chambermaid, Mrs Slipslop, their steward, Peter Pounce, and their footman, Joseph Andrews. At the beginning of Book Two, Adams and Joseph, returning to the home parish are passed by Mrs Slipslop, preceding Lady Booby to her country seat, thereby bringing once again before our eyes, the town events of Book One. In Book Two, Joseph and Adams are joined by Fanny, travelling to London in search of Joseph. At the end of Book Two they are passed for the

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<sup>1</sup>M. Battestin describes the ordered structure of *JA* in *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art* (p 86ff). He describes the more elaborate symmetrical structure of *TJ* in *The Providence of Wit* (p 141ff).

last time by Mrs Slipslop, as she journeys towards the west. In the early chapters of Book Three occurs the story of Mr Wilson, a story summarising and moralising the novel's meaning, as well as the significance of the country-city contrast within that meaning. Following their departure from Mr Wilson's, Joseph, Adams and Fanny continue towards the west. At the end of Book Three, they are passed by Peter Pounce, preceding Lady Booby to her country seat, thereby bringing yet again before our eyes the town events of Book One. As Joseph, Adams and Fanny enter their home parish at the beginning of Book Four, they are passed by the lady herself, in her coach and six, and thus concludes the great geographical movement from London to Somersetshire, which reverses the original journey made to London at the beginning of the novel. In Book Four, all characters are in the home parish for the *denouement*. Joseph and Fanny are rewarded with happy rural retirement, and Lady Booby and Beau Didapper are banished back to London. Thus the various journeys between country and city, which are so important in the novel's structure, express the relevance and significance of the country-city contrast to the novel's moral meaning. At the beginning of Book Two, when Joseph and Adams set out for Somersetshire, Fielding himself emphasizes the importance of the journey in the structure of *Joseph Andrews*. He draws an analogy between a journey through the pages of his novel and a journey through the English countryside, comparing the endings of his chapters to the alehouses, where we stop for refreshment, and the endings of his books to inns, where we stay for prolonged rest, an appropriate analogy, given the action and atmosphere of the novel.<sup>1</sup> The importance of the country-city contrast in the novel's architectural structure is not only realised by the various journeys. The contrast is also prominent within the novel's general design. Important elements in this design are antitheses and juxtapositions between various characters and their situations. Rural virtue and urban vice are contrasted in several character relationships already outlined in this chapter. The story of Leonora in Book Two serves as a negative analogue to that of Fanny Goodwill, and the story of Mr Wilson in Book Three

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<sup>1</sup>*JA*, II, i (Henley I, p 103).

serves as a negative analogue to that of *Joseph Andrews*. These stories dramatise the contrasting effects of the rural and urban environments on the different characters of youth. By such devices, Fielding constantly keeps the country-city contrast before our eyes, and this contributes to his successful use of that contrast in *Joseph Andrews*. This is also the case in *Tom Jones*, where the structure is more elaborate. Fielding himself, in the analogy between his own procedure and that of the cook,<sup>1</sup> suggests that the country-city contrast is the most important organising principle in the structure of *Tom Jones*. Once again, the journey is the major device which carries the action from the country to the city. As in *Joseph Andrews*, these various journeys dramatise the moral significance of the rural-urban dichotomy within the novel. As pointed out previously, *Tom Jones* is divided into eighteen books; the action of the first six books takes place in Somersetshire, that of the second six books on the road, and that of the third six books, in London. The various journeys carrying the action from country to city then, occur in the novel's middle section. Fielding himself emphasizes the importance of the journey motif in the structure of *Tom Jones* with an analogy similar to that with which he had made the same point in *Joseph Andrews*. In Book Eleven, he draws an analogy between a journey through the pages of *Tom Jones* and a journey through the vast and varied landscapes, the great estates and townships of rural England, a thoroughly appropriate analogy, given the atmosphere and movement of this novel.<sup>2</sup> As in *Joseph Andrews*, the journey motif is not the only structural principle realising the prominence of the country-city contrast in *Tom Jones*. The contrast is extremely important within the novel's general architectural design, which is more elaborate in its symmetrical proportions than in the earlier novel. In *Tom Jones*, Fielding constantly keeps the country-city contrast before our eyes. He often parallels events occurring in Somersetshire with events occurring in London, with the obvious moral conclusions being expressed, for example, Molly Seagrim's earthy seduction of Tom in the bushes at Paradise Hall, and Lady Bellaston's ensnaring

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<sup>1</sup>*TJ*, I, i (Henley III, p 19). See above, p 127.

<sup>2</sup>*TJ*, XI, ix (Henley IV, p 193ff).

Tom at the masquerade in the Haymarket; and Molly's rustic ineptitude when Square is exposed in her bedroom, and Lady Bellaston's aristocratic insolence when exposed in Tom's bedroom in Bond Street. By such structural devices as these, then, Fielding constantly emphasizes the moral significance of his rural-urban antithesis and, as in *Joseph Andrews*, he thereby encourages us to accept his use of this antithesis to present his judgements on humanity and society.

In concluding our assessment of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, one important factor contributing to their success, mentioned earlier, must be briefly enlarged upon. This is the presence of the most important character in the novels, the omnipotent, omniscient creator-narrator, Fielding himself, who plays the role of the Divine Providence, organising reality into emblems of universal order. Fielding is at the moral centre of his novels, guiding us through their complexities, manipulating our responses and constantly asserting his authority over us. As we are aware of his presence and his function, from the beginning, we trust him, and our confidence is further won by his constant demonstrations of wisdom and benevolence. He, therefore, easily manoeuvres us into accepting his use of the rural and urban environments to present his highly subjective judgements on humanity and society. Thus, when this semi-divine creator, who is also a genial, tolerant man of the world, who knows, and is therefore qualified to judge on both town and country, assures us that traditional English society is part of cosmic order, that it is being driven out of eighteenth-century London and preserved only in rural England, we accept this conservative proposition. The optimistic spirit which Fielding constantly infuses into his pages enables us to accept easily the final triumph of his Christian, comic vision of life. When the virtuous country characters defeat the vicious city characters and achieve a happy rural retirement at the end of the novels, we are confident that the rural order portrayed, far from being a mere refuge from the chaos of London, is a viable alternative to it. We are persuaded that the values of the rural ideal, which are the values of traditional society, are founded in natural and moral law, and that, despite the chaotic social change represented by London, they should and possibly could, be reinforced and maintained over English society in general.

In *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, then, Fielding, confident about life and literature and at the height of his creative faculties, confidently advocates the maintenance of traditional society with portraits of the country and city drawn largely according to the realistic techniques of the new novel form, but mainly according to the traditional formalising techniques of the old system. This happy union of realistic and authentic, yet formal and stylised, portraits of country and city helps to persuade us that a compromise between the new and the old systems could be effected and maintained. All this changes in *Amelia*.