

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

THE LITERARY AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND: THE NATURE OF THE
COUNTRY-CITY CONTRAST IN FIELDING'S WRITINGS, AND
FIELDING'S REASONS FOR USING IT

The essential features of the country-city contrast in literature are difficult to describe; we must always oversimplify. Simply speaking, the nature of the antithesis in Fielding's writings is generally characteristic of the phenomenon throughout its history and in Augustan literature. The particular quality of Fielding's works derives from the fact that he presents a complex, dynamic, three-dimensional portrait of the country, taken from personal experience and literary convention, but a relatively static, two-dimensional portrait of the city, taken predominantly from literary convention: and presents both good and bad aspects of the country, but only the bad aspects of the city.

Broadly speaking, a tension between realistic, authentic, factual portraits of rural and urban life on the one hand, and formal, stylised, conventional portraits on the other, is a feature of the country-city contrast throughout its history. Writers usually expressed something of their personal experiences of town and country life (the main socio-economic, political and cultural division of most civilisations), but also used the antithesis to promote discussion of abstract issues, which obliged them to manipulate the evidence to favour their own viewpoints by presenting only those aspects of rural or urban life which supported their arguments and by suppressing those which did not,¹ thus deliberately withholding a total view of reality.

¹Eighteenth century "pastoral" poets decreed that pastoral poetry present only the pleasing aspects of country life (see Alexander Pope, *Discourse on Pastoral Poetry. The Poems of Alexander Pope. A One Volume Edition of the Twickenham Text with Selected Annotations.* ed. John Butt, London, 1965, p 119; Tickell, *The Guardian*, 22,23,28, 30,32). Maren-Sophie Røstvig claims that the *beatius ille* tradition presented a realistic portrayal of country life as opposed to the pastoral tradition's idealistic portrait. (M-S. Røstvig, *The Happy Man. Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal.* II, Oxford, 1958, p 331.) Raymond Williams demonstrates how writers manipulated the evidence to support their subjective viewpoints about town and country. (R. Williams, *The Country and the City*, New York, 1973, Chs 4-10.) Ian Donaldson demonstrates the manner in which satirists selected

As this manipulative process began to occur early in classical literature, certain facts about country and city life quickly became established as conventions through which these two environments were henceforward portrayed. These increasingly conventional portraits were then carried by literary momentum into succeeding ages, where the reality of rural and urban life greatly differed from that of preceding eras. This increased the tension between rhetoric and realism, as successive writers had the choice of portraying country and city according to their literary heritage or their contemporary society. A study of the rural-urban antithesis is therefore important in the general study of the relationship between literary forms and the societies whence they spring. Since the imitation of vital traditions does not necessarily preclude the recording of a writer's personal experience and since literature itself greatly contributes to our impression of what life was like at a given place and time, it is hazardous to try to determine too closely what springs from art and what from nature.¹ This difficulty is compounded when examining early eighteenth-century English literature because the neo-classicists regarded their inherited traditions as so completely apprehending life that one imitated nature by imitating the best classical models. Some actually modelled their lives on artistic conventions: Alexander Pope at his Twickenham estate and William Shenstone at Leasowes consciously posed as the conventional retirement figures of classical literature.² These neo-classicists, of course, realistically portrayed contemporary society but did so by formalising its circumstantial details according to pre-established principles. Thus their portraits of rural and urban life are conventionalised, with varying degrees of stylisation. Literary

certain details about city life to support their subjective viewpoints. (I. Donaldson, "The Satirists' London", *EC*, XXV, 1, January 1975, p 101.)

¹New and original impulses were often expressed through old conventions carrying antithetical assumptions. Sometimes the new impulses were not pure, but under the influence of the old conventions and their opposing attitudes, the possibilities in the relationship between influence and effect were rendered almost infinite.

²Alexander Pope at Twickenham and William Shenstone at "The Leasowes" cultivated the literary *persona* of the retired *beatus vir*. According to Maren-Sofie Røstvig, Phillip Southcote modelled his "Woburn" farm on the description of rural life in Horace's Epode II (*op.cit.*, p 97).

techniques which presented contemporary reality without subordinating its details to pre-established formulae were, however, gaining ground. Increasingly as Augustan literature became more realistic the presentations of rural and urban life became more literal and authentic.¹

Fielding, both an "antient" and a "modern", combines literary convention with personal observation on contemporary society to present in the novels a highly organised, yet complex, dynamic and three-dimensional portrait of the country environment. Whilst ridiculing the "pastoral" tradition's unrealistic depiction of rural life, Fielding frequently presents the country with the more flexible, yet still stylising, conventions of the *beatus ille* creed, which he adapts to serve his didactic purposes. As well, other conventions, such as rural ballads and songs, and rustic stereotypes from the stage, such as country squires and bull parsons, feature in Fielding's presentation of the country. Also apparent in this presentation are Fielding's personal observations on the country, where he was born and bred and spent much time even while his later career confined him mainly to the town.² Without geographical or sociological minutiae, he presents

¹R. Paulson has demonstrated that literature portrayed life more authentically as the eighteenth century progressed. (*Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England*, New Haven and London, 1967.) See also, Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel, Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, London, 1963 and Raymond Williams (*op.cit.*, Chs 6-10).

²Biographical details of Fielding's experiences of rural England are scant but the bare facts indicate that he was well acquainted with it. His early life until 1724 was spent predominantly in the country, first on his parents' small estate at East Stour, North Dorset, then at Eton College. He studied for a short time at the University of Leyden and moving to London in 1729 began his dramatic career in earnest. Thereafter, permanent residence in the country does not seem to have been a serious proposition for Fielding. In 1738 he sold the estate at East Stour, and became more firmly based in London, as a law student and barrister. During the next decade he lived at several places in the western districts, when he was not working in London. During the 1740s he made visits to Ralph Allen at Prior Park, near Bath, and as far as is known, was riding in the Western Circuit in search of briefs. Late in 1748 Fielding became Justice of the Peace at Bow Street and thereafter was predominantly a Londoner. He did, however, purchase a small farm in the summer of 1752, at Fordhook, Ealing, where increasing illness obliged him to retire frequently from his duties in town. Thus the bare outline of Fielding's career indicates that he was acquainted with life in rural England, but his professional work as writer, lawyer and magistrate indicates that he was more heavily involved in the world of eighteenth-century London. (Biographical details about Fielding are mainly taken from W. Cross, *The History of Henry Fielding*, New York, 1963.)

the great variety of environments, people and ways of life of eighteenth-century rural England : its mountains, valleys, woods and groves; its estates, farms and cottages; its roads, highways, ale-houses, inns, parishes, villages, hamlets, towns and counties; its squires, justices, parsons, lawyers, doctors, landlords, landladies, chambermaids, gypsies, sheep-stealers and strolling players; as well as the great mobility of people between its environs and the capital. Fielding's portrait of the city environment is static and two-dimensional compared with that of the country. We see little of England's agricultural, industrial, trading and cultural towns and cities. Urban life in Fielding's works is represented by London, the capital, the 'town'. Of eighteenth-century London, Fielding presents a fairly narrow view, portraying few of its diverse environments, peoples and ways of life.¹ We only glimpse its semi-rural areas, its suburbs and, prior to Fielding's magistracy, its poorer districts. We see something of the ancient City of London, 'the east end of the town' or, simply, 'the city', which traditionally housed the mercantile classes, the more wealthy of whom, however, since the late seventeenth century, had been moving to the fashionable north-west, into the City of Westminster.² This city of Westminster, 'the west end of the town' or often simply 'the town', with its fashionable squares, mansions, parks, gardens, entertainment and cultural centres, its legal and political precincts, the province of the upper classes and those serving them, is predominantly the London of Fielding's writings. Indeed, Fielding's London is mainly the exclusive circle of 'the *beau monde*' or 'the world'.³ Although

¹I. Watt, *op.cit.*, p 193.

²"The dominant fact in the development of London from the time of Elizabeth has been the cleavage between the East and West, accentuated by the position of the City between the two." (M.D.George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1976, p 75.)
 "Fashion moved westward and northward while to the east settlements arose which were almost exclusively inhabited by the labouring poor." (I. Watt, *op.cit.*, p 184.)

³Fielding's London is predominantly the City of Westminster. (I. Ehrenpreis, *op.cit.*, p 32.)

Fielding frequently claims to be portraying this *beau monde* according to contemporary society rather than literary traditions,¹ its portrait is largely taken from the formulae of genteel comedy and is therefore conventionalised. Even the descriptions of London's lower classes, in his ballad operas, low-life writings and, one critic argues, his sociological pamphlets, are stereotypes according to well-established conventions.² The most powerful conventions portraying eighteenth-century London, those of urban satire, Fielding uses sparingly. Urban satire, whilst seeming to present an endless catalogue of realities, does so selectively. The satirists, whilst keeping our noses away from the dung-hills of the country, unmercifully rub them into the sewers of the city, conventionally adducing such tangible and repulsive "facts" about Augustan London (many of which can be traced to Juvenal's Rome) as evidence to prove the existence of alleged intangible urban problems, persuading us that their subjective propositions, like their scenarios, must be demonstrably true.³ Fielding, like Johnson, shied away from scatological material; he portrays "Grub Street", the main target of his urban satire, without the assistance of sewers. This portrait, however, despite its vitality and relevance to the contemporary theatrical scene and Fielding's experiences of it, is highly conventional, a dramatisation of *The Dunciad*, minus Fleet Ditch. Thus Fielding draws his London as much from literary conventions as from his experiences as town gentleman, writer, lawyer and businessman. The argument of this thesis is that, following Fielding's appointment as Middlesex Magistrate in 1749, this literary portrayal of London gives way to a relatively realistic one, which has profound implications for Fielding's didactic

¹See *TJ*, XIV, i.

²W.R. Irwin outlines the conventions with which London's criminal world is portrayed in *JW*. (*The Making of Jonathan Wild. A Study in the Literary Method of Henry Fielding*, Connecticut, 1966.) Malvin R. Zirker, Jr., argues that Fielding's portrayal of London in his sociological pamphlets is equally conventional. (*Fielding's Social Pamphlets*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966.)

³I. Donaldson, *op.cit.*, p 101.

use of the country-city contrasts; urban chaos, always held in artistic check in Fielding's early writings, gets out of control and predominates, and rural England, formerly idealised as a convincing alternative to it, becomes a mere refuge from it.

Why does Fielding portray London so schematically? Perhaps his belief that its vices should be harnessed and controlled prompted him to do so. Other reasons, however, can be offered. Perhaps his complex, dynamic portrayal of the country and his formal, stylised portrayal of the city result from his finding the country his best artistic medium. Fielding was a comic and a neo-classical writer, who displayed humanity and society in the form of spectacle, for which his best *milieu* was the great outdoors, the open countryside, rather than the confines of the city, which provided Richardson with his best *milieu* for a detailed study of unique human experience. The differences between Fielding and Richardson here, as elsewhere, are informative. According to Ian Watt, "the world of the novel is essentially the world of the modern city; both present a picture of life in which the individual is immersed in private and personal relationships because a larger communion with nature or society is no longer available".¹ Watt describes Fielding's novels, which idealise traditional community and common standards in rural *milieux* as being artistically as well as socially reactionary. Watt sees the disparity between Fielding's rural novels and Richardson's urban novels as marking a fundamental parting of the ways in English literature, a parting in which the urban Richardson reflects the way which eventually triumphed; social change ensured that the private experience of the individual in the city would dominate the novel. Thus Fielding's social orientation made the country rather than the city his most dynamic artistic medium. Watt also observes² that Fielding's robust rural constitution also contributed to this, but we must note that Fielding was also extremely urbane, as much at home in the coffee-house and drawing-room as the ale-house. On the whole, however, it is Fielding the robust comic artist who portrays the country, and Fielding the satirist who portrays the town.

¹*Op.cit.*, p 192.

²*Op.cit.*, p 191. See also Cross, *op.cit.*, I, pp 48-49, 50, 280.

In comparing Fielding's complex rural and stylised urban environments, another issue comes to the fore. As mentioned above, Fielding presents both good and bad aspects of the country but only the bad side of the city. The number of good town dwellers in his writings can be counted virtually on one hand.¹ Many critics have described Fielding's condemnation of London as comprehensive and unambiguous.² Is it unambiguous? Fluctuating, even ambivalent attitudes towards country and city are discernible in Augustan literature. Most Augustans, in life and letters, display mingled feelings of attraction and repulsion for both town and country. Most expressly preferred the country, yet left it for the town; most condemned London, yet continued living there; most, in their writings, idealise, and criticise, rural and urban environments equally.³ Pope, for instance, cultivated the *persona* of a rural recluse at Twickenham, yet was a busy manager of worldly affairs in town; he celebrates London in "Windsor Forest", yet satirises it in *The Dunciad*; he idealises the country in his "Ode on Solitude", yet ridicules it in *The Guardian*.⁴

¹ Apart from a few insignificant characters in the plays, the only virtuous Londoners in Fielding's writings are Mr and Mrs Heartfree in *JW*, Mrs Miller in *TJ* and the worthy justices at the end of *JW* and *Amelia*.

² See General Introduction, p iv, fn.1, above.

³ Raymond D. Havens notes the Augustans' mingled feelings of attraction and repulsion in relation to retirement and solitude. ("Solitude and the Neoclassicists", *ELH*, 2, 1954, pp 251-272.) Ian Donaldson (*op.cit.*) notes similar feelings with regard to the town.

⁴ See "Windsor Forest", ll. 371-395. London is satirized in *The Dunciad* and other satirical poems. Country life is idealised in the pastoral poems, his "Ode on Solitude", "Windsor Forest", and many other poems. Rustic life is ridiculed in *The Guardian*, 40. In general, Pope's poetry (as Maynard Mack observes) "begins with a garden and ends with a city". (*The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope 1731-1743*, Toronto, 1969, p 1.)

Johnson satirises the town in *London*, yet assured Boswell, "No Sir! when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life, for there is in London all that life can afford".¹ These ambivalences are perhaps not so much contradictory, as revealing of the writers' easy accommodation to multiple perspectives on town and country. Perhaps the seemingly irreconcilable judgements are largely different responses to different aspects of the environments between which the Augustans, and Fielding, moved freely. Their *penchant* for natural beauty, landscape and peaceful surroundings attracted them to a rural environment which they could equate with the world of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*. Their stoicism approved the simple country lifestyle, which, ideally, enabled the rational, virtuous man to fashion the wise, independent, happy life, a life governed by the values traditionally associated with the country: innocence, honesty, moderation and commonsense. Yet their refinement repelled them from the physical earthiness, ignorance, brutality, boorishness and vulgarity, which also were a part of country life. Their gregariousness and urbanity drew them to the social life of the town and their socio-economic, cultural and national progressivism attracted them to the business, political and intellectual worlds of London, which many celebrated as reflecting the glorious achievement of English civilisation. During this period, however, urban satire reached its pinnacle in English literature. Many features of town life repelled the Augustans: its dirt and stench, its crowds and noise, and its visible concentration of such vices as greed, ambition, hypocrisy, vanity and debauchery, which made London seem a sink of corruption. Thus early eighteenth-century writers, like their predecessors, found in their rural settlements emblems of what was most valuable and most

¹ James Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ed. G.B. Hill, rev. L.F. Powell, III, Oxford, 1950, p 178.

Johnson, who came to London from Litchfield, idealises the country in *The Rambler*, 135 (*The Rambler*, ed. W.J. Bate and A.B. Strauss, New Haven and London, 1969), yet ridicules facile acceptance of the rural ideal in his *Life of Richard Savage*. Many other Augustans display similar ambivalence in their treatment of town and country. Joseph Addison, for example, who was born and bred in the country, became heavily involved in the literary, political and social life of London. He devoted much energy in *The Spectator* to teaching mankind how to live in urbane society. In *The Spectator*, however, he frequently censures London and idealises the country, (for example, *The Spectator*, 15). Richard Steele idealises the country in *The Spectator*, 118, yet ridicules rural life in *The Spectator*, 474. (*The Spectator*, ed. D.F. Bond, 5 vols., Oxford, 1965.)

John Gay, who came to London from Devon, idealises the country in rural sports yet ridicules rural life in "The Birth of a Squire".

contemptible in human life and in their urban settlements, emblems of supreme human achievement, along with deplorable degeneracy. To explain this by examining the different aspects of country and city which attracted and repelled them is only partly to answer the question. Amongst the mingled feelings we can detect irreconcilable elements, such as an attraction for what was officially repulsive, for example, London's chaos. The Augustans felt morally obliged to reject the disorderly town life, yet found in its vitality something stimulating, "there is in London all that life can afford".¹ These ambiguities reveal that whilst we may over-simplify the country-city contrast in Augustan literature, the writers themselves simplify it for us. The breadth of analysis which they achieve by polarising human and social experiences to their widest possible perspectives, in their antithetical sentences, simplifies discussion of the very complex rural-urban phenomenon in their writings. For their real feelings and the real picture we must often read between the lines.

Does Fielding's total condemnation then, reveal perhaps an unconscious attraction to London? Fielding was largely obliged by circumstances to live in the capital, but he had also many of the qualities which found urban life appealing: his nature was gregarious and he was civic-minded. Professedly disliking solitude,² he never cultivated the *persona* of the rural recluse, always that of the Congreve "man of the world". These urbane qualities, however, never manifest themselves in any significant commendation of the town.

He satirises the pastoral tradition in "The Shepherd's Week" yet presents an appealing picture of rustic life. He satirises urban life in "Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London" yet presents a not unattractive portrait of town life. See *John Gay: Poetry and Prose*, 2 vols., ed. V.A. Dearing and C.E. Beckwith, Oxford, 1974, *passim*.

James Thomson in *The Seasons*, an encyclopaedia of country-city themes in Augustan literature, idealises both rural and urban England. (J. Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. J. Sambrook, Oxford, 1981.)

¹Boswell, *op.cit.*, III, p 178.

²Fielding describes himself as "Having contracted no great degree of good humor, by living a whole day alone, without a single soul to converse with". (*The Journal of A Voyage to Lisbon*, Henley XVI, p 252.)

Vitality of portrayal, that tell-tale sign of fascination with urban chaos in other writers, is noticeably absent from Fielding's London, manifesting itself only in the depiction of the theatrical world in the dramatic burlesque. As stated earlier, Fielding's depiction of the town is formal, stylised, static and two-dimensional; it exists as pure symbol. Although subscribing to the view of Horace and the "latitudinarian divines"¹ that happiness is independent of environment, Fielding portrays the country as the only haven of happiness and virtue but he also presents the ignorance and brutality of country life. By thus anchoring his ideal rural world into the context of the real rural world, Fielding achieves the advantage of placing his ideal while at the same time facing the objections to it, so we find it convincing. This tolerance of the country's vices, which are portrayed with great relish, underscores the severity of Fielding's picture of the city. In idealising rural England, Fielding was recommending that certain moral values, such as virtue and benevolence, prevail in society generally, but his almost total condemnation of London, an Hobbesian wilderness largely devoid of charity, suggests that he gave up the city as lost. That he personally loved the country is evident from the frequency with which it is idealised and the gusto with which it is presented in his writings; whether or not he liked London we can only speculate.

As far as these can be determined, Fielding's reasons for using the country-city contrast are thoroughly orthodox. A major reason for his using it is that it was there. The rural-urban dichotomy of classical literature reached the eighteenth century in many old forms and found its way into many new ones. In accordance with the Augustan spirit, Fielding regarded translation, imitation and paraphrase as legitimate literary exercises and frequently engaged in them, often for the rhetorical sake of doing so. Although he usually wrote with a serious moral purpose, he was also a

¹Horace Ode II 16 and several sermons of "the latitudinarian divines" asserted that happiness did not depend upon environment, profession, or similar worldly circumstances. See M.C. Battestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art : A Study of Joseph Andrews*, Connecticut, 1959, p 47ff.

professional writer, ready to give the public what it wanted and therefore ready to adopt the current modes. The 'town and country' traditions which he inherited and used were very numerous and can only be briefly described here, being more fully discussed in the relevant parts of this thesis. The oldest and most formal conventions portraying the country in the Augustan literary canon were those of the 'pastoral' ideal, which arose in classical times with Theocritus' idylls and Virgil's eclogues, and which were greatly refined by European Renaissance writers and proliferated into many new forms. Defying close definition, the pastoral tradition generally idealised the shepherd's life, which early became the basis for allegorical examinations of more abstract issues. Revived by late seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century writers, such as Alexander Pope and Ambrose Philips, pastoral poetry was a mainly rhetorical *genre* portraying country life unrealistically, thereby inviting in that stridently realistic age a strong counter-pastoral movement, headed by John Gay of the Scriblerians with his poem 'The Shepherd's Week' and with his *The Beggar's Opera*, this latter being a 'town pastoral', which burlesques pastoralism's idealisation of humble country life with an idealisation of low life in London. A major target of this latter was the highly romantic pastoral elements of the currently popular Italian Opera, to which Gay and others, including Fielding, objected on nationalistic as well as aesthetic grounds. Fielding, who declared himself that he was not a poet ("This branch of writing is what I very little pretend to, and will appear to have been very little my pursuit"¹), did not, as was the custom, cut his literary teeth by writing pastoral verse, but he readily adopted the mock-pastoral conventions and, in the manner of *The Beggar's Opera*, wrote many ballad operas, parodying the extremely formal diction and romantic spirit of the pastoral tradition, a practice which he continued throughout his novels.

The most powerful conventions idealising the country in the Augustan literary heritage were those of the *beatus ille* or "retirement" tradition. This arose in a number of classical works, for example, some of Horace's satires, epistles and odes, particularly his *Epode II*,

¹Fielding's preface to his *Miscellanies*, Henley XII, p 237.

and Virgil's *Georgic II*, amongst others, in response to the question "What constitutes the ideal, the happy life?" The answer was given as, "Happy the man"¹ who leads a life of moderation and independence in healthy, peaceful rural surroundings, far from the noise and corruption of the cities and the courts. This general principle was shaped into a definite creed by seventeenth-century English writers such as Ben Jonson in "To Sir Robert Wrothe" and "To Penshurst", Abraham Cowley in his *Essays and Translations*, and other authors who selected relevant passages from the classics to support their rejection of what they did not like about contemporary society, as represented by London. The tradition reached the peak of its English popularity in the early eighteenth century, where it was accepted by writers of all classes and creeds, subjected to many contemporary interpretations and expressed through most of the current literary modes. Fielding used it extensively throughout his writings, but seldom rhetorically, always didactically, adapting and modifying it to serve his own serious moral purposes.

The most powerful, indeed, almost obligatory, conventions portraying urban life in the Augustan literary canon were those of urban satire, the *locus classicus* of which was Juvenal's *Satire III*, a poem which vigorously denounces the alleged chaos and corruption of life in Rome, and which, together with other classical works, inspired many similar denunciations of life in London, for example, Jonson's 'The Famous Voyage', Spenser's *Prothalamion*, Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*, Pope's *Dunciad* and Johnson's *London*, all of which display great individuality and were written at varying times, but make essentially the same points. City satire reached its crescendo in English literature with the Tory satirists of the Augustan period, particularly Pope, who represented London's alleged disorders as heralding a collapse of civilisation, an exaggeration to say the least in that age of prosperity and progress, achievements which were most visible in the nation's capital, which Pope and others

¹"Happy the man" or *beatus ille* is the opening of Horace *Epode II*, a major source of the tradition. Other major sources are Virgil's praise of the *agricola* in *Georgics II*, the chorus from Seneca's *Thyestes*, Act II, Martial's epigrams X, 47 and II, 90. The most important sources were the works of Horace, his *Epode II*, rural odes and numerous satires and epistles. (M-S. Røstvig, *op.cit.*, I, Ch. 1.)

often eulogised. When Fielding began his career in the late 1720s, these satirists were at the height of their power, with Swift producing *Gulliver's Travels*, Gay *The Beggar's Opera* and Pope *The Dunciad*. The young arrival from Somersetshire immediately fell under the spell of these older writers with whom he had many literary affinities, and at once joined in their conventional denunciation of the town and the times, particularly the degeneracy of the arts allegedly occurring in Grub Street and the London theatres. He also followed conventions censuring London's cultural scenes in dramatic satire, such as Butler's and Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, as well as in the journalistic essays, such as those of Addison and Steele. Through his writings he continued to censure the town in these terms, often, it would seem, simply to join in this common rhetorical pastime, but generally with serious moral aims in view.

Another fashionable *genre* in his literary inheritance was the genteel comedy which, since the Restoration period, had presented highly stylised portraits of the country and the town, satirising the former and celebrating the latter, conventions which, despite some modifications, continued to prevail in the dramatic atmosphere of the early eighteenth century. Fielding wrote extensively in the *genre*, modelling his comedies most closely on those of Congreve, and although he made some attempt to express important ideas through the form, his portraits of town and country therein, as stated above, are extremely rhetorical and derivative in nature. When he moved into the field of the novel he continued to use the conventions of genteel comedy to portray town and country characters, but with increasing didactic importance and consistency.

A more flexible dramatic *genre* in the contemporary scene was the ballad opera, which was inaugurated by John Gay with *The Beggar's Opera*, 1728, and which absorbed country-city motifs from many older forms. Fielding wrote many ballad operas, which are fresher and more original than his genteel comedies. Their portraits of town and country are more vital and realistic, because directed towards more specific satirical goals in contemporary society, but they are nevertheless still very much part of the current literary atmosphere. Also currently abroad were prose forms portraying low-life characters and *milieux*, for example, Newgate histories, and catch-penny pamphlets, which Fielding drew on for his highly stylised picture of London's

criminal underworld in *Jonathan Wild*, a work mainly inspired by the political and social satire of the day. Artistic sources outside literature also presented Fielding with rural-urban themes, for example, the paintings of William Hogarth, whom he greatly admired. The urban *milieu* of his ballad operas and novels is obviously influenced by Hogarth's "The Harlot's Progress" and "The Rake's Progress" and his general portrayal of the country is extremely Hogarthian. In short, the country-city contrast was so pervasive in Augustan art that it was impossible for Fielding to avoid it, and his literary conventionalism is a major reason for his using it so extensively.

Another rhetorical reason for the prominence of the contrast in Fielding's writings is his use of the antithetical sentence, with which the Augustans habitually polarised human and social experiences into sharp oppositions. When discussing contemporary issues, Fielding frequently makes sharp distinctions in this way: in the country, people do so and so and, in town, they do such and such. For example, in discussing contemporary folly in *The Champion*, April 15th, 1740, he writes: "Hence it is, that in the country many gentlemen become excellent fox-hunters, or great adepts in horse-racing and cock-fighting; and in the town an admirable taste is discovered in dress and equipage".¹ This style of writing and the way of thinking it conveys is ubiquitous in Fielding's works.

Prominent amongst the reasons for Fielding's widespread use of the country-city contrast was the fact that it facilitated discussion of abstract issues. The main issues addressed were what constituted the value of life and what constituted the ideal, the happy life. Thus the real, yet increasingly symbolic, contrast between rural and urban life was used to debate intangible oppositions in human experience, such as the relative merits of such issues as the ideal, happy life, and whether it could be found in contemplation or action, obscurity or greatness, independence or servitude, moderation or prodigality, and natural or artificial surroundings. The opposition was also used to indicate those moral qualities which were to be cultivated or avoided, such as wisdom and

¹*The Champion*, April 15, 1740, Henley XV, p 280.

folly, honesty and hypocrisy, humility and ambition, generosity and avarice, frugality and extravagance, temperance and lust, and virtue and vice. At its most profound level the rural-urban dichotomy was used to assess human aspirations and limitations. Writers represented the relative simplicity of country life as the manner in which Mankind should live, the manner in which he did live in the "Golden Age of Arcadia" and the "Garden of Eden", before his Fall, while they represented the relative complexity and sophistication of city life as the manner in which Mankind was condemned to live since that Fall. Thus the wish to escape from the city to the country became symbolic of the quest to regain the earthly paradise, something which could never be done. Encouraged by its simplicity to regard the country as the superior part of society, writers were nevertheless repelled by its ignorance and brutality, those primitive traits which the city, for all its sins, had replaced with enlightenment and learning, qualities which attracted the artistic mind in its thirst for civilised achievement.

The perpetual journey between country and city in literature, then, dramatised the vanity of human wishes, Mankind's unsuccessful quest for the ideal life. This capacity, to provide concrete illustrations for abstract issues, largely accounts for the pervasiveness of the rural-urban antithesis in Fielding's writings. Fielding was fundamentally a moral writer, continually assessing the value of life and the best way to realise it. For him, virtue consisted of innocence, honesty, Christianity and benevolence, and needed the assistance of prudence. Throughout his writings, the rural environment, although not idyllic, is the only source of these virtues while the urban environment, a dangerous wilderness for the innocent and unwary, is almost completely devoid of them. He dramatises these moral oppositions by sending his virtuous protagonists on a journey, a symbolic quest for happiness, from the relatively innocent country to the vicious city. Here they triumph over the machinations of evil and are rewarded with a permanent retirement to the country, which, despite its shortcomings, is still the earthly paradise, in which virtue and reason can fashion the ideal, happy life. It was perhaps its capacity to serve his didactic ends in the above ways that provided a major reason for Fielding's so extensively using the country-city contrast as he did.

To what extent did Fielding, like other writers, use the contrast for the purposes of self-dramatisation and self-justification? In order to achieve success in the cultural centres of the city and the court, those writers migrating from the country, where most of them were born and bred, undoubtedly had to temper their rural attitudes with more worldly values. Unwilling to find the source of their corruption in themselves, they projected it onto the allegedly dishonest urban environment, thereby making the city the scapegoat for the self-righteous rejection of values by which all men live but which could hardly be celebrated by poets and philosophers. Many writers were obliged by circumstances to remain in the towns and this only sharpened their memories of rural happiness and intensified their yearnings for it. Many did look back nostalgically on the simple rural life which they had abandoned, and painted it as a refuge from the corruptions of civilisation.¹ Undoubtedly some did return, but for most there was no going back; committed to the town, they consoled themselves by idealising the country. Many justified their continued participation in city life by looking forward to a virtuous retirement from it, good intentions shrewdly summed up by Joseph Addison in *The Spectator* 549 : "I BELIEVE most People begin the World with a Resolution to withdraw from it into a serious kind of Solitude or Retirement, when they have made themselves easie in it".² It has been noted that much Augustan poetry of rural retirement was written by young poets, who, possibly being unable to maintain themselves financially in London, consoled themselves like the fox in the fable by crying "sour grapes" to the city, and representing the country as superior,³ self-consolatory practices perhaps

¹Theocritus, Virgil and Horace were all court writers who had their origins in the country, which they represent as superior to the court. Most Renaissance and seventeenth-century writers who idealised rural life were courtiers, who presumably came from country estates. Most of the major Augustans idealising the country came to London from the rural areas.

²D.F. Bond (ed.), *op.cit.*, No. 549, November 29, 1712.

³For a discussion of this issue, see M. Reynolds, *The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry*, Chicago, 1909, pp 329-331.

summed up in this exchange from George Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem*:

DORINDA: But, pray, Madam, how came the Poets and Philosophers that labour'd so much in hunting after Pleasure, to place it at last in a Country Life?

MRS SULLEN: Because they wanted Money, Child, to find out the Pleasures of the Town: Did you ever see a Poet or a Philosopher worth Ten thousand Pound? If you shew me such a Man, I'll lay you Fifty Pound you'll find him somewhere within the weekly Bills.¹

Personal factors may have contributed to Fielding's vigorous condemnation of urban life at the expense of a rural ideal but to what extent, we can only conjecture. Fielding was a countryman but, being left without a substantial independent income, was obliged to earn his living, which he chose to do in the literary world of London. A staunch neo-classicist, he found that in Augustan London he had to compromise his artistic ideals and meet the demands of the marketplace in which traditional standards were being displaced by modern forms independent of classical influence. The fact that he scored his greatest successes in modes currently undermining neo-classicism, like the dramatic burlesque and the novel,² coupled with the difficulty which he encountered in obtaining patrons,³ and the necessity of sometimes selling his political pen to the highest bidder,⁴ probably contributed to his condemnation of London as an insecure centre of cultural chaos, and his idealisation of rural England as a stable stronghold of traditional values. That some of this may have been a rhetorical stance is indicated by the fact that he showed little inclination to practise what he preached, for when the Stage Licencing Act of 1737 curtailed his dramatic career, instead of renouncing the town for the country, he sold his small estate in East Stour (an estate which had depreciated through neglect),⁵ to take up a legal career in London. To what extent his personal circumstances influenced his writing we can only speculate.

¹Eric Rothstein, ed., *The Beaux Stratagem* by George Farquhar, New York, 1967, p 19.

²See M.R. Zirker, Jr., *Fielding's Social Pamphlets*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966, p 138f.

³See "An Historical View of the Principles, Characters, Persons etc. of the Political Writers in Great Britain (1740)", p 50; Henry K. Miller, *Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies, A Commentary on Volume One*, Princeton N.J., 1961, p 129.

⁴See B.A. Goldgar, *Walpole and the Wits. The Relation of Politics to Literature, 1722-1742*, Lincoln and London, 1976, chapters on Fielding, particularly Ch. 7.

⁵Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 240.

Certainly, although he used the rural-urban antithesis to assert his own moral integrity, by interpreting the country as the seat of virtue and recommending it, and by projecting vice onto the city and censuring it, Fielding seldom used the town-country antithesis for the purposes of self-dramatisation and self-justification, as did Pope, who offered his credentials as a responsible satirist by posing as a rural recluse, lashing out at London's aberrations from the ideal society, the values of which he at Twickenham claimed to represent.¹ In so far as Fielding adopted a *persona*, it was that of the urbane "man of the world", one who moved easily through town and country; one who could cope with, and keep his distance from, both. Strong personal convictions were, however, involved in Fielding's use of the country-city contrast, in which we can detect a somewhat nostalgic idealisation of a lost rural past. Fielding's most profound motivation for using the contrast was to protest against the disintegration of traditional English society, disintegration which he felt was most visible in the capital and less so outside it.

The country-city motif could be used by conservative writers to protect the supremacy of the landed classes, who were increasingly challenged by mercantile power, based in London; and it could easily be used by defeated political factions, driven out of government, and back to their country estates, to censure the alleged treachery, greed and ambition of their rivals at court. This ease of application largely accounts for the prominence of the antithesis in English literature from the late sixteenth to the mid eighteenth centuries, and in Henry Fielding's writings.² In economic and political

¹For a discussion of Pope's use of himself at Twickenham as an emblem of moral and social order, see M. Mack, *The Garden and the City*, *passim*.

²The following critics have examined the use of the country-city contrast for protesting against social change: R. Williams, *op.cit.*; G.R. Hibbard, "The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century", *JWCI*, XIX, 1956, pp 159-174; J.L. Duncan, *op.cit.*, pp 517-535. The following critics have pointed out the use of the country-city contrast for political purposes: M-S. Røstvig, *op.cit.*, I, p 108; B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 40ff; M. Mack, *op.cit.* (see particularly Ch. 6). The following critics have remarked on Fielding's use of the country-city contrast for social reaction and political protest: John Loftis, *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England*, Oxford, 1963, p 115f; Ian Donaldson, *The World Upside-Down. Comedy from Jonson to Fielding*. Oxford, 1970, p 205; Ian Watt, *op.cit.*, p 191ff; J.L. Duncan, *op.cit.*, Section II; M.R. Zirker, Jr., *op.cit.*, p 138ff.

In economic and political principle, Fielding was a Whig. He championed mercantile activity and its political representation; but in social principle, he was conservative.¹ Born of the gentry, he regarded the ideal society as the traditional stratified system, with the long-standing landowners dominant. In his writings, imaginative and non-imaginative, his economic progressivism, coupled with his social conservatism, often led him to treat the old rivalries between the moneyed and landed classes in an ambivalent way.² He frequently eulogises trade, in the manner of the Whig panegyrists:

Behold the merchant gives to thousands food,
His loss his own, his gain the public good.
Her various bounties Nature still confines,
Here gilds her sands, there silvers o'er her mines:
The merchant's bounty Nature hath outdone,
He gives to all, what she confines to one.³

¹In the years from the late 1720s to the early 1740s he supported the 'opposition' or 'patriotic' Whigs against Sir Robert Walpole's Whig ministry, sometimes offering his services to this latter group. After 1744 he supported Henry Pelham's Whig administration. He was also socially conservative. Fielding's family, based in Leicestershire and Warwickshire, probably emerged from the yeomanry in the time of Edward III, and thereafter became firmly established in the squirearchy. In 1622 it was elevated to the nobility with the creation of the Earl of Denbigh, the second earl deriving the family genealogy from the House of Hapsburg in Austria, a false derivation accepted by Fielding (Cross, *op.cit.*, I, 1-5).

²Some have seen Fielding as an egalitarian social saboteur, e.g. Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr Colley Cibber*, ed. R.W. Lowe, London, 1889, I, p 287; F.T. Blanchard, *Fielding the Novelist*, New York, 1966, pp 546, 576, 579-580.

Others have seen Fielding as being conservative: Leslie Stephen, *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1904, p 168; M.R. Zirker, Jr., *op.cit.*, p 135.

Some have noted Fielding's ambivalence on class issues; e.g. J. Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p 115.

³*Of True Greatness*. Henley XII, p 253.

During the early eighteenth century, debate between the Tories, who supported the landed classes, and the Whigs, who supported the mercantile classes, was vigorous. After the Whigs' 'political victory' of 1713-14, praise of trade and London's merchants became commonplace. (See C.A. Moore, "Whig Panegyric Verse, 1700-1760 : A Phase of Sentimentalism", *PMLA*, XLI, 1926, pp 362-401) Celebration of mercantile activity penetrated most forms, even poetry of rural retirement which traditionally represented trade as the ultimate in human corruption. (See J. Thomson, *The Seasons* ("Summer"), ll. 1442-1467.) It entered the drama, being expressed by Mr Sealand of Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers* and Mr Thorowgood of George Lillo's *The London Merchant*. Praise of the city of London (as distinct from Westminster) is heard throughout Fielding's poem *The Vermoniad* (1741), a poem celebrating Admiral Vernon who became the City's hero as a result of his early successes in the war with Spain, a war supported by the City of London

When he is writing in this vein he describes the City of London as "the head and heart of the nation", declaring, "The great esteem and regard which the people of England have ever shown to the conduct of their metropolis, (looking up to this great city always as to their *Alma Mater*) shine forth in your chronicles, but are brighter in no age than this".¹ He censures those who "treat those rich, powerful, and most useful members of the commonwealth as knaves and beggars",² and throughout his writings vigorously defends the middle and lower classes against unjust treatment by the upper classes.³ Nevertheless, he frequently voices the conservative judgement that the mercantile

whose ships were being harassed by the Spanish fleet. See particularly, "The Vernoniad" ll. 99-104, and Fielding's note. (Henley XV, p 44f.) For further praise of London's merchants, see "Letter XLI", *Familiar Letters between the principal characters of David Simple* (Henley XVI, p 33), and *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (Henley XVI, p 208f.).

¹*The Champion*, December 18th 1739 (Henley XV, p 109 and 108). *The Champion* was a journal founded in November 1739 to assist the political campaign against Sir Robert Walpole whose Whig party drew its main support from the large financial interests which had been increasingly leaving the City of London for the City of Westminster since the late seventeenth century. The smaller traders remaining in the City of London tended to support the "disaffected Whigs" against Walpole. Thus praise of the City of London throughout *The Champion* is largely propagandist, as in December 18th 1739, where Fielding congratulates the city for having defeated Walpole's party in an election. A more conventional praise of the City of London occurs in *The Champion*, November 17th 1739.

²*The Champion*, December 18th 1729 (Henley XV, p 110).

³Fielding satirises Walpole's courtiers' tendency to ridicule the merchants in the character of Lord Place of *Pasquin*: "...I hope we have no such people as tradesmen shortly; I can't see any use they are of; if I am chose, I'll bring in a bill to extirpate all trade out of the nation" (Act II, i) (Henley XI, p 180). Fielding defends the middle and lower classes against upper class snobbery in *JA*, I, ii (Henley I, p 27f.); *Amelia* III, vii (Henley VI, p 139); *Amelia* VII, x (Henley VII, p 61); *Amelia* V, ii (Henley VI, p 236); *CGJ*, XVII February 29th 1752; *CGJ*, XXVII April 4th 1752. Fielding presents exemplary London merchants in the characters of Goodall from *The Intriguing Chambermaid*, and most notably, Heartfree of *JW*.

W.R. Irwin sees the character of Heartfree as being partly modelled on the Whig stereotype of the worthy London merchant (*op.cit.*, p 73). Fielding frequently presents the lower classes sympathetically, for example, Joseph, Fanny, the Postilion, Betty the chambermaid, and the pedlar of *JA*, and old Mrs Atkinson, and Sergeant Atkinson of *Amelia*. (Joseph and Fanny, of course, turn out not to be lower class.)

classes enrich themselves at the expense of the landed, and actually advocates compensation for those gentlemen deprived of their estates by middle-men: "In short, all estates which have been gotten by plunder, cheating, or extortion, which would include most prime ministers, scriveners, pawnbrokers, stockjobbers and petty attorneys".¹ Fielding believed that the middle and lower ranks had their place, but should remain in it. He believed that hierarchy was essential to civilisation, describing society without hierarchy as being "inconsistent with all government, ... [befitting] only that which is sometimes called the state of nature, but may more properly be called a state of barbarism and wildness".² For him, the ideal society was a stratified system, governed by the long-standing landowners, who were responsible for promoting the national welfare by setting high standards in the public and private spheres. Below them came the mercantile, trading and professional groupings, who were responsible for providing society's more practical services; and at the bottom came those responsible for providing the labour.³ He considered that this stratified system could only be maintained if all its members were satisfied with their ranks and fulfilled their obligations, but although he was conservative, Fielding did not regard the boundaries between the classes as being impassable; his admiration of Ralph Allen, who rose from humble origins to social prominence by commercial enterprise, indicates that he approved of the "self-made" man.⁴

¹*The Champion*, February 16th 1739-40 (Henley XV, p 207). Rivalry between the upper, middle and lower classes is a common theme throughout Fielding's writings. See "An Essay on Conversation" in *The Miscellanies*; *JA* II, xiii; *CGJ*, XLIII May 30 1752; *CGJ*, LXI August 29th 1752, and *The Inquiry*, Section I. He portrays an avaricious middleman in the character of Peter Pounce of *JA*, a character probably based on Peter Walter, a wealthy businessman whom Pope and Swift regarded as the archetypal bourgeois predator. (M. Mack, *op.cit.*, p 183; Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 348). Fielding represents the lower classes as rebellious people who must be controlled. (*CGJ*, XLIX June 20th 1752, and in his *Inquiry*, and *Proposal*.)

²*Proposal* (Henley XIII, p 138).

³For Fielding's description of the ideal stratified system, see *Proposal* (Henley XIII, p 135ff.).

⁴Fielding was financially assisted by Ralph Allen. (B. Boyce, *The Benevolent Man. A Life of Ralph Allen of Bath*. Cambridge Massachusetts, 1967, pp 125-129.)

Above all, Fielding considered that a stratified society, with its enormous structural inequalities, could only be maintained if all classes were linked together with mutual love, respect and benevolence. This included concern for the common welfare, obedience to common moral and religious standards and a sense of duty and obligation to the social hierarchy. His ideal society then, was the traditional English feudal system, in its ideal form, represented by conservative writers for centuries as a natural and moral order, a terrestrial extension of the cosmic order ordained by God.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the traditional system, declining since the sixteenth century, was disintegrating rapidly in economic terms. Although the rural sector remained dominant, and although the long-standing landed classes still constituted the majority of the five thousand families who, amongst a population of seven or eight million, owned about half the arable land, the estates were organised not along feudal, but along capitalist lines, and were worked not by peasants, but by tenants and wage labourers.¹ Many landlords left the running of their lands to intermediaries, and lived in towns, thereby diminishing the importance which the country estate had had in the social, political and cultural life of the nation during the previous centuries.² In the eighteenth century, the estate came to be regarded not only as an inheritance, carrying a certain income, but also as an investment, carrying certain returns for the investing landed and moneyed classes. The disintegration of traditional society was most visible in the nation's capital, London. During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the growth in industrial and commercial activity, together with the migration of people from the English provinces and from overseas, greatly augmented the population and size of London, diversifying even further its great variety of peoples, environments and ways of life. The expansion of the City of Westminster towards the north-west, with the City of London stretching further towards the east, and the suburbs extending around the metropolis, and the increasing social and occupational segregation of the population, meant that something

¹R. Williams, *op.cit.*, p 60.

²G.R. Hibbard, *op.cit.*, p 171.

approaching the modern urban pattern was imposing itself on the more cohesive community of Elizabethan London. This made the contrast between London and rural England, where traditions changed more slowly, more vivid and remarkable than previously.¹ Broadly speaking, in London there were great alterations in traditional life-styles and customs, as well as a growing displacement of those traditional, cohesive, community mores and values, which had been maintained in the country by the network of relationships centred on the village, parish and estate, as the result of increased material wealth, and manifested by conspicuous expenditure. This ostentatious wealth greatly troubled the conservatives, including Fielding. For these conservatives, it was not so much substantial trade which jeopardised stratified society, as free-ranging, self-generating money and finance, which encouraged expenditure and consumption by all classes, encouraging and enabling the lower to emulate the tastes of the higher. In his most extensive statement to this effect, *An Inquiry Into The Causes Of The Late Increase Of Robbers*, 1751, Fielding argues that whilst idleness and extravagant consumption amongst the upper classes were nationally beneficial, in that they promoted trade and employment, they were socially destructive in that they encouraged the middle and lower classes to adopt the luxury of their superiors, to pay for which, many had to resort to crime and begging.² Throughout his writings he constantly represents extravagance amongst the gentry and nobility as being largely responsible for the breakdown of traditional hierarchical society: "It was against the vices of the fashionable that Fielding usually directed his criticism. On them, he placed responsibility for the general degradation of the age".³ Although in economic matters he reluctantly agreed with Bernard Mandeville's assertion, that idleness and luxury amongst the great were nationally beneficial, he found morally repugnant Mandeville's conclusion, that vice and debauchery were therefore necessary for the maintenance of a healthy

¹I. Watt, *op.cit.*, p 185ff.

For the segregation of the classes in London see fn. 2, above, p 22.

²*Inquiry*. (Introduction and Section I.)

³G.E. Jensen, "Fashionable Society in Fielding's Time", *PMLA* XXXI, 1916, p 79.

society.¹ He did not consider himself to be inconsistent in deploring the inevitable social consequences of the economic progress which he applauded, and sought to retain both the new mercantile prosperity and the traditional order which it was currently undermining.

Although an essentially benevolent man as a magistrate between 1748-1752, Fielding advocated repressive, reactionary, legislative measures to keep the lower classes in their traditionally subordinate position. Realising that the upper ranks would never be restrained by laws, however, he launched a vigorous satirical campaign against their alleged transgressions, urging them to reform the age and restore English society to the *status quo*. A major strategy in this campaign was the conventional contrast between the country and the city. Throughout his writings Fielding represents London's *beau monde* as a chaotic centre of moral and social degeneracy, the corrupting influences of which are spreading down through the lower orders of London society, as well as out into rural England, which, although not perfect, is the only place where traditional moral and social orders are maintained. Accompanying Fielding's didactic use of the country-city contrast then, is a retrospective idealisation of England's past, where the ideal system allegedly existed. Although he declared in *Tom Jones* that "from the expulsion from Eden down to this day" no "golden age" "ever had any existence, unless in the warm imaginations of the poets",² in lamenting the replacement of the courageous women of the past with the degenerate women of the present in his burlesque translation of part of Juvenal's *Satire VI*, Fielding conventionally uses England's "golden age", the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as a stick with which to beat the eighteenth century. The good old English virtues are portrayed as now being destroyed by folly and luxury, chiefly imported from Britain's enemies, France and Italy.

¹Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, ed. F.B. Kaye, 2 vols., reprinted, Oxford, 1957. Fielding accepts Mandeville's economic principles but rejects his moral conclusions in *Inquiry* (Henley XIII, xxviii). Fielding, like most Augustans, distinguished between trade which was beneficial to the nation and trade which was not ("Of True Greatness", Henley XII, p 253).

²*TJ*, XII, xii. (Henley V, p 19.)

Whence come these prodigies? what fountain,
 You ask, produces them? i' th' mountain
 The British dames were chaste, no crimes
 The cottage stain'd in elder times;

When the laborious wife slept little,
 Spun wool, and boil'd her husband's kettle;
 When the Armada frighten'd Kent,
 And good Queen Bessy pitch'd her tent.

Now from security we feel
 More ills than threaten'd us from steel;
 Severer luxury abounds,
 Avenging France of all her wounds.
 When our old British plainness left us,
 Of every virtue it bereft us:
 And we've imported from all climes,
 All sorts of wickedness and crimes:
 French finery, Italian meats,
 With German drunkenness, Dutch cheats.
 Money's the source of all our woes;
 Money! whence luxury o'erflows,
 And in a torrent, like the Nile,
 Bears off the virtues of this isle.¹

Fielding's authority for presenting Elizabethan and seventeenth-century England as a golden age was the literature of the period, in which socially conservative writers such as Ben Jonson in "To Penshurst" and "To Sir Robert Wrothe", Thomas Carew in poems like "To Saxham" and "To My Friend G.M. From Wrest", Robert Herrick in "A Panegerick To Sir Louis Pemberton" and Andrew Marvell in "Upon Appleton House" present an idealised vision of life on the country estates, where the exemplary landlords retain the traditional plain, practical, English lifestyle, and observe the feudal ideals of *noblesse oblige* as they demonstrate a warm, loving participation in the community life of their estates, extending hospitality to peoples of all classes. These poems were in some degree a protest against the breakdown of the traditional feudal structure, against a breakdown most apparent in seventeenth-century London, where increased political, administrative, legal and mercantile activity created

¹Henley XII, pp 341-343. It was conventional for the Augustans to idealise Elizabethan days as the "golden age" of England's glory. The Tories and "disaffected" Whigs often used this retrospective idealisation to censure Sir Robert Walpole's alleged corruption of the good old English virtues. See M. Mack, *op.cit.*, p 140, and B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 142. Fielding frequently idealises England's past, particularly Elizabethan days, as a means of criticising the present: e.g. *CGJ*, LIV, "A Dialogue In The Time Of Elizabeth".

in the hands of the conservatives the impression of a new disruptive system, dominated by corrupt, profligate courtiers, ambitious merchants and ruthless lawyers. They saw the system destroying the established order, as personified by the honest, long-standing landed classes.¹ Thus the "country house" poem of the seventeenth century, so influential on the eighteenth century, celebrates an idealised vision of life on the country estates and endorses the traditional feudal system, which is seen as ideally governed by such socially oriented moral values as a humanitarian concern for the common welfare, manifested in benevolence, charity and hospitality to peoples of all classes. The system also symbolised affection and respect for family and community; and a sense of obligation to hierarchy and religious authority. In this it was opposed to what was seen as London's new, ruthless, capitalistic reduction of human relationships to financial calculation. Raymond Williams argues that this antithesis does not provide accurate assessment of the contemporary situation. He argues that whilst London was growing more independent from rural England, and whilst real conflicts of interest did emerge between the moneyed and landed groupings as feudalism was displaced by agrarian capitalism, most of London's political, administrative, legal and mercantile activity, which was represented by the conservatives as undermining the interest of the rural society, was in fact generated by the demands of the dominant landed classes. Williams argues that the transformation of land ownership with the rise of agrarian capitalism, a transformation which was blamed by the conservatives on the purchase of estates by the "outsider", particularly the London merchant, was really a part of the continued process of the domination of the land by the traditional landed families: "as we read the abstract comparisons between rural virtue and urban greed, we must not be tempted to forget the regular, necessary and functional links between the social and moral orders which were so easily and conventionally contrasted".² By exploiting the illusion that time confers innocence and honesty

¹ Alexander Pope has been seen as continuing the tradition in the eighteenth century in his "Epistle To Bathurst" and "Epistle To Burlington". According to the commentators, this "country house tradition" arose in reaction against social change. Raymond Williams claims that the dominant mode of socio-economic development throughout history, i.e. the growth of towns and cities out of primitive agricultural communities, occurred in England very early and very thoroughly. (Raymond Williams, *op.cit.*, p 2.) The "country house" poem was one response to these changes. (G.R. Hibbard, *op.cit.*, p 159ff.)

² *op.cit.*, p 48.

on established proprietors, rendering them morally superior to new ones; and by suppressing the hardships of life for the country labourers, the "country house" poets, Williams argues, present an unrealistic picture of contemporary rural life.¹ We must remember, however, that the poets are presenting not a picture of reality but a social ideal; the fact that the estates being complimented are seen as exceptions rather than the norm, effectively demonstrates what the reality of life in seventeenth-century rural England was.

Nevertheless, it was the idealised vision which was accepted by eighteenth-century writers as truly reflecting the "golden age" of old England. Although the "country house" poem as a literary *genre* declined with the Restoration Period after 1660, and agrarian capitalism, which had been developing for two hundred years, fully emerged, its rural ideal and scale of values were still used by conservative writers to protest against accelerating social change. The change was brought about by the growing importance of capital, which encouraged greater numbers of the gentry to leave the country and reside permanently in town, where they invested in the growing number of companies. It also enabled more rich merchants to move into fashionable Westminster and to purchase country estates, thereby on the one hand bringing about greater co-operation between the classes, but on the other greater economic, social and political rivalry between those gentry permanently dwelling in the country, those dwelling in the town, and the increasingly powerful mercantile groupings who were also buying into land. Thus Pope, who had Whiggishly celebrated London's political and commercial enterprise in "Windsor Forest", in his Epistles to Bathurst and Burlington, represents the age's increased capitalism as an infection from the city, a ruthless, new phenomenon penetrating the country, invading and destroying an innocent, traditional order. He sees this order as being maintained by Bathurst and Burlington on their estates, which, in the "country house" tradition, are portrayed as being part

¹*Op.cit.*, p 49f.

of the natural and moral order and are offered as patterns for the ideal civilisation, a society governed by the honest, benevolent, responsible, long-standing landed classes.¹ Again it does not bear close examination as a picture of the facts. As Raymond Williams shows, the landed families of the eighteenth century were as materialistic as their predecessors. Motivated by greed and calculation rather than benevolence and charity, they increased their hold on the land by those very capitalistic practices deplored by the conservatives as the products of ruthless new men.² We must, of course, remember that Pope, like his predecessors, is describing ideal estates which, being presented as exceptions rather than as the rule, show by implication the real situation in eighteenth century rural England. Although Pope and his conservatively minded contemporaries, (among whom we may list Fielding) knew the rural realities of their own day, they seem to have taken the "country house" ideal as the literal truth, and believed that a golden age of rural society actually prevailed in England's past, and constantly sought to return to it. Fielding wished to retain the old stratified social system which, with all its structural inequalities could, he believed, be maintained by the universal practice of love and benevolence, as it apparently had been in the past, when the dominant landed people had evidently exercised those principles of charity and hospitality which constituted the "natural" and "moral" economy of the feudal order. He conventionally represents this order as being destroyed in the eighteenth century, not so much by mercantile activity, as by foreign influences. Unwilling to join the Tories in ascribing the age's alleged degradation to the City of London, he attributes it to Britain's national enemies, France and Italy, who are condemned as corrupting England's traditional moral and social

¹Pope uses the values of the country house tradition, for example, "Epistle to Bathurst", ll. 219-226 and "Epistle to Burlington", ll. 177-190. This is pointed out by J. Butt, (*op.cit.*, pp 581 and 594). For Pope's place within the country house tradition, see M. Mack, *op.cit.*, Ch. 3, Section 6; R. Williams, *op.cit.*, p 60 ff., and G.R. Hibbard, *op.cit.*, p 172 f.

²R. Williams, *op.cit.*, p 60 ff. The country house poets were always careful to contrast the landlords complimented in their poems with the grasping landlords.

integrity.¹ Fielding constantly portrays the upper classes in London as abandoning traditional English manners and morals, and failing to fulfil their obligations to live and behave with the dignity appropriate to their exalted rank. He feels that they fail to provide strong social and political leadership, and to promote high moral standards in the public and private spheres; but pursue idleness, luxury, foreign foppery and debauchery. He sees London's upper classes as culpably abandoning traditional English culture, and as neglecting their responsibility to promote high artistic standards, preferring instead French pantomime, Italian opera and Smithfield farce. Fielding often joined with the political party in opposition, which was composed of the Tories and the "disaffected" Whigs, known in contemporary terminology as the "country party", in attributing this alleged lowering of standards to Sir Robert Walpole's administration at court.² In Fielding's writings the abandonment of traditional standards by the *beau monde* is seen as socially destructive and, by encouraging a similar attitude by the middle and lower classes, as contributing to the disintegration of the all-important boundaries between the social strata. It was the apparent insubordination of the lower classes which he considered to be the main threat to the old social order. The breakdown of the traditional agricultural economy in the country sent increasing numbers of labouring people to London, where many found work, but where many lived by begging and crime. Fielding, like his conservative contemporaries, failed to see these problems as the inevitable human consequences of current economic change and the incapacity of antiquated legislation to cope with it. He interpreted them as wilful insubordination on the part of the lower classes, whom he saw as apparently determined to destroy established society. All these phenomena in eighteenth-century London created for Fielding the impression of being at the chaotic centre of social instability

¹ See, for example, *The Grub Street Opera* III, iii. Air XLV (Henley IX, p 259); *The Fathers; or The Good-Natured Man*, Act I (Henley XII, p 165); *The Intriguing Chambermaid: An Epistle to Mrs Clive* (Henley X, p 277); the Epilogue (Henley X, p 321); *The Universal Gallant*, the Prologue (Henley XI, p 79), the Epilogue (Henley XI, p 161f); *JA*, II, iv (Henley I, p 129f) and *JA*, III, vii (Henley I, p 276).

² J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, p 116.

and disintegration, beyond the control of the traditional order, which seemed to remain stationary or at least change very little in the country. The fact that social change was more immediately visible in London than outside it, facilitated his idealised view of the rural areas as the only stronghold of traditional values. Thus, throughout his writings, he constantly portrays traditional English moral and social order as being preserved only in rural England. His ideal rural society, however, is not that of the boorish squirearchy, whose ignorance, drunkenness and brutality are censured for being as irresponsible as the vices of London, but rather, it is that of those responsible gentry who maintain the traditional standards idealised in the "country house" poems, and who live and behave with the dignity appropriate to their exalted rank. They are seen as both pursuing private virtue and promoting public welfare. Their estates and parishes are closeknit communities of mutual dependency. They are offered as ideal patterns for responsible social leadership, to which the English upper classes as a whole should return.

It is not the task of this thesis to question the accuracy of Fielding's diagnosis of current social problems, or to evaluate his proposed remedies. We know that these were conservative and reactionary and thoroughly orthodox in contemporary terms. Rather, the task is to assess, solely on the basis of the material in Fielding's writings, the extent to which he convinces us that the traditional social system being driven out of eighteenth-century London and retained only in provincial England, could be, as he recommends, re-established over the nation in general. In other words, it is our task to evaluate the success of Fielding's didactic use of the contrast between the country and the city. That his idealisation of a system in the rural environment (far from the chaos of the town) is not escapist, is evident in his portrayal of the harsh brutalities of country life. He advocates not a total abandonment of the city for a countryside which is not idyllic, but rather, that the feudal values of the rural ideal be re-instated over all society, including the city. Unlike Pope in "Windsor

Forest" and Thomson in "The Seasons", however, he never presents an idealised view of London, a vision of the ideal city, one reflecting the glory of the English nation.¹ Fielding's London is always a sink of corruption and iniquity, a disgrace to human civilisation. The cosmic benevolence which extends itself to the city in Thomson's "Seasons":

God is ever present, ever felt,
in the void waste as in the city full,²

never extends itself to London in Fielding's writings. For Fielding, as for Cowper, God made the country, man made the town and the town is largely left to its own vices. In the writings produced prior to his magistracy, most notably, in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, London's social chaos is always under Fielding's artistic control and, therefore, by extension, under the control of Divine Providence, whose moral and creative order Fielding seeks to imitate. We are therefore left with the impression that urban chaos can be defeated and that the traditional order idealised in rural England with the moral values enshrined in that order, far from being an escape from London's disintegrating social change, is a viable alternative to it. After being confronted as magistrate with overwhelming social turbulence, Fielding in *Amelia* finds that artistically he cannot control London's disorder, and bring it within the bounds of his cosmic vision. We are, therefore, left with the impression that this urban chaos will predominate and that the traditional order, still idealised in rural England within the novel, is no longer a viable alternative to it, but a mere refuge from it. Thus the conventional rural ideal becomes the means by which Fielding rescues his characters from the necessity of confronting social change in the capital (an escape which Fielding himself never made). Although his magisterial experiences, together with

¹Pope's "Windsor Forest", ll. 371-400. According to Maynard Mack, "always in Pope the thing that is being lost, or lost and recovered, or lost and recovered and lost again, is a vision of the civilised community, the City". See also Thomson's "The Seasons : Summer" ll. 1442-1467.

²James Thomson, hymn at the end of "The Seasons" ll. 105-106. J.L. Robertson (ed.) *The Complete Poetical Works of James Thomson*, London, 1968, p 249.

the difficulties which he encountered in earning his living as a traditional writer, must have convinced him of the irrevocability of London's changes, he remained in the town, but his idealisation of traditional English society in the country increasingly becomes a nostalgic bewailing of a lost order, which cannot be maintained.

Amidst all this moralising we must not forget that Fielding was also a comic writer; comic in the sense of apprehending and displaying, in the form of spectacle, the universal rather than the unique aspects of humanity and society; comic in the sense of portraying an ordered world in which the good can triumph over the evil and achieve happiness in this life; and comic in the sense of presenting the humorous sides of the human and social scenes. In realising these comic goals he made great use of the conventional contrast between the country and the city.

The two symbolic environments of country and city, the twin bases of his major works, enabled him to polarise human and social experiences and thereby achieve that universality characteristic of comedy. He presented a panoramic view of eighteenth-century England and of life in general. The two symbolic environments enabled him to dramatise the conventional comic triumph of order over disorder. The basic movement of his plays and novels, as was pointed out above, consists of a journey, a symbolic quest for the ideal life, of virtuous protagonists, from the relatively innocent country to the vicious city, where they triumph over persecution and are rewarded with permanent retirement in the country, in which they achieve greater happiness than was initially disrupted by the adversities in the city. This establishes the comic victory of good over evil, and the affirmative values within the comic vision of life. The conventional rural-urban antithesis also enabled Fielding to present the humorous aspects of human nature and contemporary society by providing him with a set of ready-made characters and situations with which to dramatise the clash between extreme exemplars of sophistication and boorishness: town and country manners. Interestingly, Fielding's comic practice in portraying the humours of the country frequently outstrips his comic precept. In the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, for instance, he defines the source of the ridiculous as consisting of the exposure of affectation, thus claiming for his comedy a corrective or

satiric function. His practice, however, often varies from his theory. In his novels, the source of the ridiculous in town manners is certainly affectation, which is satirised, but the source of the ridiculous in country manners is mainly eccentricity which, although mildly satirised, is generally portrayed as being lovable and enjoyable. Writing with the sobriety of a magisterial social reformer in *Covent Garden Journal*,¹ however, Fielding presents a comic theory closely matching his earlier comic practice, defining the source of the ridiculous as being eccentricity, but instead of dramatising such eccentricity, he advocates its total eradication in the interests of a more ordered society, a proposition doubtless repugnant to those who read his novels for their splendid portraits of the eccentrics of rural England, characters who have become Fielding's comic trademark.

¹*CGJ*, 55, July 18th 1752, and *CGJ*, 56, July 25th 1752.

CHAPTER TWO

FIELDING'S CHANGING ARTISTIC TECHNIQUES
IN PORTRAYING THE COUNTRY AND THE CITY

In the preceding chapter I have described the nature of the country-city contrast in Fielding's writings and his reasons for using the antithesis, demonstrating that these are thoroughly orthodox in contemporary terms. In this chapter I shall summarise my main argument: that the artistic techniques with which Fielding portrays the country and the city change throughout his career, in accordance with changes in the contemporary literary climate and with changes in his own literary purposes; and that these different artistic techniques largely determine the success of his didactic and comic use of the rural-urban dichotomy - an argument which will be demonstrated within the main body of this thesis.

It has been generally accepted by his critics that Fielding's literary career falls into three main stages. The first stage is the period from the late 1720s to the early 1740s, during which he produced dramatic and miscellaneous writing and *The Champion*. The second stage approximately spans the decade of the 1740s, during which he produced miscellaneous and occasional writing, *The True Patriot*, *The Jacobite's Journal*, *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, while the third stage occupies the period from 1749 to 1754, during which he produced his legal and sociological pamphlets, *Amelia*, *The Covent Garden Journal* and *The Journal of A Voyage to Lisbon*.¹ It has been demonstrated that within each of these stages Fielding used a different artistic procedure. In the first, his writings were those of a mainly derivative young neo-classicist, presenting

¹ Arthur Murphy was the first to make a tripartite division of Fielding's writings. ("An Essay on the Life and Genius of Henry Fielding, Esq"; prefixed to the *Works of Henry Fielding*. First published in London, 1762, p 58f, cited by Cross, *op.cit.*, III, p 133). Many modern critics have followed this practice. A typical instance is Ronald Paulson's study of Fielding's works in *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth Century England*, London and New Haven, 1967, Chs 2, 3 and 4.

stereotyped portraits of life in his dramatic and miscellaneous writings. In the second, he was an independent artist, creatively combining the new realistic techniques of the novel with the old formalising principles of neo-classicism, to present authentic and vital, yet predominantly schematic and allegorical, portraits of life in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. In the last stage he chiefly inclined towards the literal realistic modes, and aimed at presenting predominantly authentic and circumstantial portraits of life in *Amelia*.¹

Fielding's movement away from literariness towards literalism, away from an essentially fabricated and formalising concept of art to a more direct response to reality, generally reflects the artistic trends of the era. During the first half of the eighteenth century there was a shift in the fundamental orientation of literature from that of the previous century. With the expansion of the reading public into social classes which had not received a classical education, the neo-classical conception of art as being one in which the artist ideally apprehended and displayed the universal aspects of human experience by means of long-accepted literary conventions (which formalised the raw materials of life to serve pre-established artistic ends) was being gradually replaced by new creative principles. These were particularly suited to such new forms as the novel, which presented relatively authentic and circumstantially detailed portrayals of unique, individual experience.² This movement towards literalism in Fielding's writings is accompanied by a decreasing optimism and increasing pessimism of tone and outlook.

¹Many critics have pointed out that Fielding used different artistic techniques during different stages of his career. W.S. Rogers analyses Fielding's early methods ("Fielding's Early Aesthetic and Technique", *SP* XL, 1943, reprinted in R. Paulson, *Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New Jersey, 1962, pp 25-44). Robert Alter, amongst many, describes the different techniques used in *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones* and *Amelia* (*Fielding and the Nature of the Novel*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968). John F. Coolidge specifically analyses Fielding's new methods in *Amelia* ("Fielding and 'Conservation of Character'", *MP* LVII, 1960, reprinted in R. Paulson, *Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp 158-176). Robert E. Moore compares the three stages of Fielding's career and the different artistic techniques therein to the similar progress of William Hogarth's career. (*Hogarth's Literary Relationships*, Minneapolis, 1948, p 106).

²See I. Watt, *op.cit.*, Ch. 2.

This growing gravity and severity has generally been attributed to Fielding's increasing age, with its accompanying illness, financial distress and his depressing experiences as a London magistrate.¹

In his early writings, Fielding, although not slavishly imitative, was predominantly derivative in style.² He experimented with models and, like most Augustans, derived his inspiration from literary convention rather than from personal observation. Although

¹Many critics note Fielding's growing pessimism: F.R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, London, 1948, p 4; C.J. Rawson, "Nature's Dance of Death: Part II. Fielding's *Amelia*". *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 3, 1970, pp 491-522. Some claim that Fielding remained optimistic: "Fielding saw both the good and the bad in his contemporaries; and despite his close contact with the dregs of London society, he did not regard human nature as utterly depraved, and courageously went about doing good and attempting a reformation in which success seemed quite possible." G.J. Jensen, *CGJ*, New York, 1964, p 111. "As Fielding was then he had always been; only he was then less buoyant and less the animal than in his youth." Cross, *op.cit.*, I, xv. The severity and even bitterness in Fielding's later writings suggest pessimism and disillusionment.

²In his preface, Fielding tells us that most of the poetry was written during his youth (Henley XII, p 237). The moral epistles, "Of Liberty", "Of Good Nature", and *Of True Greatness* were all written before January 1741. See H.K. Miller (ed.), *Miscellanies by Henry Fielding, Esq*; Oxford, 1972, I, xlv. The date of composition of *Jonathan Wild* is disputed. Most assert it to be written by 1741. (Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 201; I.H. Dudden, *Henry Fielding, His Life, Works, and Times*, Oxford, 1952, I, p 480ff.) Cross claims that *Jonathan Wild* was written mainly after the February election of 1742. (Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 409ff.) During 1741-1742 Fielding produced many other writings of a miscellaneous nature, *Vernoniad*, *Shamela*, *The Opposition - A Vision*. The dramatic writings, *The Champion* and *The Miscellanies* have generally been designated as his early writings. W.S. Rogers, *op.cit.*, p 25f.

the moral significance of the rural-urban dichotomy emerges early in Fielding's work along with the ideal of the "benevolent man", which Fielding may have derived from the latitudinarian divines (in Fielding's works there is always a country gentleman who defeats town vice and establishes the ideal life in rural retirement) the early presentation of these themes is mainly rhetorical in nature.¹ In the relatively new and flexible forms of the dramatic burlesque² and the ballad opera,³ the rural-urban *milieux*, although superficially portrayed, are vital and are used consistently. In the genteel comedy, however, the *genre* in which Fielding chiefly focusses the country-city contrast on those profound moral and social issues which concerned him throughout his career, the rural-urban settings are dull and lifeless because they are derived from the conventions of the Restoration Comedy. With little attention being paid to that

¹Demonstrating the mainly rhetorical nature of the country-city contrast in his early writings is Fielding's presentation of opposing views on the contrast, inherent within the different models which he adopted. In his first play, *Love in Several Masques*, a comedy, a *genre* conventionally celebrating the town and satirising the country, a country squire, Sir Positive Trap is ridiculed for expressing the preference for country over town which Fielding himself voices, with generic appropriateness, in his first poem, "Part of Juvenal's Sixth Satire Translated in Burlesque Verse".

²In *The Author's Farce, Pasquin, Tumbledown Dick, The Historical Register For The Year 1736 and Eurydice Hissed*, Fielding draws on the conventions of dramatic satire, particularly Butler's and Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, as well as the conventions of urban satire, mainly from Pope's *The Dunciad*. These plays present a lively picture of life in the London theatres and country boroughs, but their topicality is at once their asset and their liability, the source of their vigour and their obsolescence.

³In *The Grub Street Opera, The Lottery, The Covent Garden Tragedy, The Intriguing Chambermaid, An Old Man Taught Wisdom* and *Miss Lucy in Town*, Fielding portrays low life in town and country according to the conventions of the ballad opera, particularly John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. These plays nevertheless portray low life vigorously, which is not the case with *JW*, in which Fielding draws not only on *The Beggar's Opera* but also the conventions of "Newgate biographies" and pamphlet literature, to present a highly stylised portrait of London's criminal underworld.

contemporary society which is the plays' ostensible subject, the country-city settings are unimpressive and unconvincing with regard to the moral significance assigned to them. Fielding's successful didactic use of the rural-urban division in genteel comedy is also hindered by the inherent condemnation of the country and celebration of the town which he was obliged to accept in the *genre*. His attempts to idealise the country and condemn the town in a form which conventionally did the contrary, result in a conflict between the urbanity of his medium and the rusticity of his message. This is a conflict which prevents his consistently polarising the two symbolic environments into sharp oppositions between good and evil and convincingly establishing the victory of the former over the latter which his didactic purpose demands.¹ With the exception of the translation of part of Juvenal's *Satire VI*, where the model provided the appropriate materials, the country-city contrast in *The Miscellanies* is insignificant. In the early writings, the contrast is extensively developed, according to the conventions of the journalistic essay, only in *The Champion*, February 26th, 1739-40;² and in general, it does not reach the proportions of the elaborate scheme for the analysis of character and society which it becomes in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*.³

¹In *Love in Several Masques*, *The Temple Beau*, *The Wedding Day*, *The Universal Gallant* and *The Fathers*, Fielding fails to use the country-city contrast consistently, succeeding in this *genre* only in *The Modern Husband*. Fielding failed in high comedy because he was writing in a form which had lost its vitality and relevance to contemporary issues and which, therefore, gave him no scope for the analysis of character or society. See A.D. McKillop, *The Early Masters of English Fiction*, Lawrence, 1956, p 99.

²Fielding modelled *The Champion* on the popular journals, particularly Addison's and Steele's *The Spectator*. In this form the country-city contrast suited his didactic purposes.

³Although some critics claim that Fielding modified his early *genres* to serve his didactic aims (e.g. Ian Donaldson, *The World Upside-Down*, p 195 f; J. Loftis, *Comedy And Society*, p 114f; W.S. Rogers, *op.cit.*), the reigning principle in the early writings is one of derivativeness.

Although, in the early 1740s, Fielding vowed to renounce literature, the 1740's were in many ways his most productive period.¹ During this time he produced many literary works, of an occasional and journalistic nature, as well as his miscellanies and the novels *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. In these works the country-city contrast still receives much rhetorical attention,² but is now mainly directed towards serious didactic and comic ends. In *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* Fielding is predominantly innovative in style.³

¹Preface to *David Simple*, Henley XIV, p 7f. Fielding probably intended devoting himself to legal writing. He planned to write a book on crown law from the notes of his grandfather, Sir Henry Gould. (W.B. Coley, "Henry Fielding's Lost Law Book", *MLN* LXXVI, 1961, pp 408-413.)

²During the 1740s Fielding produced many literary works featuring town and country, e.g.: *Ovid's Art of Love Paraphrased*, published in February, 1747, in which he paraphrases 772 lines of the first book of the *Ars Amatoria*, turning the follies of Ovid's Rome into those of eighteenth-century London; *Familiar Letters Between the Principal Characters of David Simple*, published in April, 1747, in which letters XL, XLI, XLII and XLIII, contributed by Fielding to his sister Sarah's novel, deal in the conventional manner with town and/or country. As 'Madame De La Nashe' he satirised the follies of the town in a puppet show in Panton Street, conducted early in 1748. (M.C. Battestin, "Fielding and Master Punch in Panton Street", *PQ* XLV, 1966, pp 191-208.) Several papers in *TP*, 1745-1746, and *JJ*, 1747-1748, deal with contemporary rural and urban issues. In *JA*, published in February, 1742, and *TJ*, published in February, 1749, the country-city contrast is very prominent.

³Some claim *JA* to be largely dependent on Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (e.g. A.B. Shepperson, *The Novel in Motley, A History of the Burlesque Novel in English*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1936, p 30).

According to M.C. Battestin, the novel has an original plan and design of its own (M.C. Battestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art; A Study of Joseph Andrews*, Connecticut (1959), p 85ff.) Whilst the sources and inspirations of *JA* are apparent throughout the novel, it is an original and independent work. *TJ*, however, was written with greater artistic experience, and is even more original and independent.

Declaring realism to be the defining characteristic of his new species of writing,¹ he uses the realistic techniques of the novel to portray the country, and to a lesser extent, the city, more authentically than before. He thereby renders these environments more vital, complex and three-dimensional than in his dramatic writings, and therefore more impressive and convincing in the moral significance assigned to them. Nevertheless, the reigning principle in these novels is still predominantly literary. Fielding continues to use the formalising and generalising procedures of neo-classicism to portray the country and, to a greater extent the city, as highly schematic and allegorical environments. Unrestricted by any attitudes towards country and city inherent in the novel form, Fielding consistently polarises these two *milieux* into sharp contrasts between good and evil and convincingly establishes the victory of the former over the latter. Greatly assisting this success is the general spirit of optimism. The novels are presided over by an omnipotent-omniscient creator-narrator who consciously imitates the Divine Providence by organising terrestrial reality into a harmonious artistic embodiment of cosmic order. Within this symmetrical artistic order, the major organising principle, thematic as well as structural, is the contrast between rural and urban England, the twin geographical and ethical bases of both novels. By manipulating the action in and between these environments, which are always under his artistic control, and by constantly assigning the victory to country-dwellers over city-dwellers, Fielding confidently assures us that traditional moral and social order, maintained in rural England, will prevail, despite the chaos of London. In *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* the happy union of realistic and formal artistic methods, together with the optimistic spirit, is also responsible for the presentation of the comedy of town and country life.

¹For example *JA*, Preface and Book III, i; *TJ*, VIII, i; XIV, i; XVII, i.

In his final works,¹ particularly in *Amelia*, Fielding, now somewhat disillusioned² by increasing age, illness and personal distress, and worn out by his experiences as a London magistrate, where he was increasingly confronted with the apparently irrevocable disintegration of traditional English society, changes his artistic methods.³ Broadly speaking, the realistic and stylising procedures successfully amalgamated in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, separate and become more extreme. On the one hand, faced with the breakdown of traditional standards, Fielding abandons the traditional strategies with which he had formerly advocated a return to the old values, in favour of the more direct creative principles according to which a valid artistic portrayal of life could best be achieved, by an authentic representation of human experience.⁴ This led him away from fiction towards fact, away from literature towards history. Fielding himself announces this radical change in the preface to *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, where he censures Homer and Hesiod for perverting the truth, and declares a preference for contemporary and historical authenticity, over his once favourite literary model, the epic:

¹In his legal pamphlets, *A Charge to the Grand Jury*, 1749, *A True State of the Case of Bosavern Penlez*, 1749, *A Clear State of the Case of Elizabeth Canning*, 1753; in his sociological pamphlets, *The Inquiry and Proposal*, 1751 and 1753 respectively, and in his *CGJ*, 1752, Fielding deals with the problems of eighteenth-century London. In *Amelia*, 1751, he deals with urban problems and idealises the country as an alternative to city living. Throughout the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, 1754, he makes observations on contemporary English society, town and country.

²For critics noting Fielding's pessimism during these years, see p 36, n.1. Throughout his writings Fielding had often presented a dark view of humanity and society; for example, *The Modern Husband*, *The Miscellanies*, *JA* III, iii, indicating that his comic vision of life was a hard-won victory over evidence to the contrary. The increasing personal and social problems which he experienced in later life diminished his confidence so that gravity, severity and even bitterness and disillusionment are apparent in his later writings, e.g., in the depressing portrait of Newgate Prison in *Amelia* and the pessimistic observations on human nature in *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, Henley XVI, p 200f.

³Many critics note Fielding's changing artistic techniques during this period. J.F. Coolidge, *op.cit.*; A.D. McKillop, *op.cit.*, p 140ff; R. Paulson, *op.cit.*, Ch. 4, parts 3 and 4; I. Watt, *op.cit.*, Ch. 8, part 4, and C.J. Rawson, *op.cit.*

⁴The critics cited in the preceding footnote remark this transition from literariness towards literalism.

They are not indeed so properly said to turn reality into fiction, as fiction into reality. Their paintings are so bold, their colours so strong, that every thing they touch seems to exist in the very manner they represent it: their portraits are so just, and their landscapes so beautiful, that we acknowledge the strokes of nature in both, without enquiring whether nature herself, or her journeyman the poet, formed the first pattern of the piece. ...

... and, for my part, I must confess I should have honoured and loved Homer more had he written a true history of his own times in humble prose, than those noble poems that have so justly collected the praise of all ages; for though I read these with more admiration and astonishment, I still read Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, with more amusement and more satisfaction.¹

On the other hand, conservative to the very end, Fielding strives to maintain traditional standards with traditional neo-classical artistic procedures. These two creative principles, the realistic and the formalising, do not sit comfortably side by side in *Amelia*, but exert great stresses and strains on one another as Fielding oscillates between the two, urgently advocating reactionary reform, in the face of increasingly irrevocable social change.² Thus the portraits of rural, and to a greater extent, urban England, in *Amelia*, when compared with those of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, are, on the one hand, even more literal and authentic, and on the other, even more formal and stylised, as a no longer confident Fielding attempts to harness and organise, in the manner of the Divine Creator, all aspects of terrestrial reality into a harmonious artistic embodiment of cosmic order. Whilst the country is under his artistic control,

¹Preface to *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* Henley XVI, p 182. R.M. Wallace observes that Fielding's taste for history, established by *The Champion*, increasingly becomes his favourite *genre*, serving as an equal model with the epic in *JA* and *TJ*, and in his final works supersedes the epic as defining *genre*. ("Fielding's Knowledge of History and Biography", *SP* XLIV, Chapel Hill, 1947, pp 90 and 103.)

²This is the argument of C.J. Rawson's article, "Nature's Dance of Death", Part II. See discussion below, p 259.

the city is not, and his attempts to harness and formalise London's brutalities with the old literary conventions with which he had formerly done so, only emphasize the intractability of the evils being confronted. Thus, in *Amelia*, we see a greater insistence on idealised rural order, alongside a more vivid picture of urban disorder, as these two symbolic environments are polarised even more than in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. In *Amelia*, however, Fielding fails to establish convincingly the victory of country over city, because of the many shocking realities of urban life which escape his organising grasp, leaving us with the impression that the chaos represented by London will predominate, and that traditional English society, represented by rural England, can never again be a paradigm for society in general. Not surprisingly then, in these later years, Fielding's earlier exuberant comedy of town and country gives way to stern, heavy-handed moralising.

The argument of this thesis then, is that Fielding progressed from confidently advocating the maintenance of traditional English stratified society, using the generalising neo-classical artistic procedures of that old order, to advocating the maintenance of the traditional order in the face of its irrevocable disintegration, using the more *direct* creative methods (concurrently undermining neo-classicism). It is not in his earliest writings, where he derivatively refines away obvious realism and relevance to contemporary society; or in his final works, where, in his disillusionment he fails to bring under his artistic control the harsh realities of contemporary society; but rather, in his middle years, when at the height of his creative powers in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, he successfully combines the old stylising and the new realistic artistic procedures. Fielding's use of the rural and urban environments convinces us that a compromise between the old and the new social orders could be effected and maintained. Naturally, this movement away from a highly artificial to a relatively authentic portrayal of country and city does not consist of one sweeping movement away from rhetoric to realism; rural and urban realities appear in the early works, and country-city conventions remain till the very end; but within the presentation of these environments throughout Fielding's complete

writings, a movement away from literariness towards literalism is discernible. As this movement generally reflects contemporary literary trends, it is hoped that this thesis will make some contribution to the general study of the country-city contrast in early eighteenth-century English literature. It is with Fielding, however, that I am mainly concerned. In the main body of the thesis, which now follows, each chapter deals with one issue or group of issues on which Fielding, for the didactic and comic purposes outlined in Chapter One, focuses the contrast between the country and the city. Chapters Three and Four, "Town and Country Manners" and "The Moral Dimension" deal with Fielding's presentation of an alleged degeneracy in these particular aspects of contemporary society. Chapter Five, "The Comedy of Town and Country" deals with his presentation of the comic spectacle of eighteenth century England. Chapter Six, "The Court and Country Parties" deals with his treatment of the political scene. Chapter Seven, "The Cultural Dimension", deals with his portrayal of an alleged degeneracy in traditional English culture. Chapter Eight, "The Rural and Urban Poor", deals with his presentation of an alleged insurrection by the lower classes of English society. Each of these chapters is divided into three sections; each section deals with Fielding's treatment of the relevant issues within each period of his career, and analyses the success of the different artistic techniques with which he portrays the rural and urban *milieux* within each stage. My approach to the topic is therefore thematic and chronological. In examining Fielding's selection, adaptation and partial rejection of literary conventions revolving around the country-city-antithesis, I shall not track to its source every motif which he used. With the exception of his early works he drew on general trends rather than specific models: he frequently borrowed without acknowledging his sources and the list of the books in his library gives an incomplete account of those sources.¹ Whilst I shall be

¹Fielding's library was one of the largest belonging to any of the eighteenth century *litterati*. (Cross, *op.cit.*, III, p 77.) In it there were many literary and factual works dealing with rural and urban England. Fielding used most of this material throughout his writings but he also used many materials not recorded as part of his library. Throughout this thesis I shall acknowledge any specific sources which were known to be in Fielding's library. I have taken information about Fielding's library from the catalogue

placing Fielding's use of the rural-urban dichotomy in the general context of Augustan literature, I shall be concentrating on his use of the contrast within his own prolific writings.

list of his library books appended to: E.M. Thornbury, "Henry Fielding's Theory of the Comic Prose Epic", *University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature* XXX. Madison. 1931, and from Cross, *op.cit.*, III, Ch. 29.