

CHAPTER SIX

THE COURT AND COUNTRY PARTIES

Introduction

As has already been suggested, the country-city contrast was much used as a motif in the political writing of the period during which Henry Fielding lived and wrote. Just as the contrast proved useful to conservatives protesting at social change, which was most visible in the cities so, too, it proved useful to individuals and parties out of power at the centre of government, the Court. Those out of power had long censured the Court as a centre of greed, ambition, treachery and danger, and idealised the country, where they were often obliged to live, as a world of innocence, simplicity, honesty and security. Maren-Sophie Røstvig observes that the *beatus ille* and related conventions reached their peak in English literature, during the civil strife of the seventeenth century.¹ Fielding himself used the Court-country motif for political purposes, giving it varying degrees of prominence and according it different levels of seriousness depending on the aim and nature of the work in which it was being used, and the place of the motif in that work. It has been noted by critics that Fielding's relationships with the political factions of his day were characterised by tergiversation.² Bertrand Goldgar describes Fielding as a "popular playwright, cautiously seeking his advantage wherever it lay".³ In *The Jacobite's Journal* 17, March 26, 1748, Fielding actually defends political and party writing as a valid professional occupation.⁴ Throughout his career, he never changed his basic Whig ideology, but he often changed factions within the Whig alliance. Whilst he remained a staunch supporter of the House of Hanover, he often

¹M. Røstvig, *op.cit.* I, p 23.

²See, for example, M.C. Battestin, "Fielding's Changing Politics and *Joseph Andrews*", *PQ* 39, 1960, pp 39-55.

³B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 115.

⁴Coley, p 214.

changed his attitude towards the Court in Westminster, where various Whig administrations held office during the years in which he wrote. During the late 1720s and early 1730s, he made many attempts to secure the patronage of Sir Robert Walpole, Prime Minister to George II. Failing to win Walpole's patronage, he joined with the Opposition in censuring the Court as a centre of vice and debauchery. His position within this Opposition, which comprised two main factions, the Tories and the "disaffected" or "patriot" Whigs, did not commit him to the Tory ideal, that the long-standing possessors of the soil were the best qualified to govern the nation. Hence, whilst satirising the Whigs in power at Court he also satirised the Tories in the country, but less severely, thereby implicitly giving them the preference. Naturally, he felt that the ideal government would be one composed of the "patriot" Whigs. Nevertheless, his allegiances during the 1730s were with "The Country Party", as the Opposition groupings denoted themselves. The Country Party represented themselves as possessing all of the traditional rural virtues, which qualified them to form an alternative government to Walpole's allegedly corrupt administration in Westminster. In 1741, however, Fielding became disenchanted with the Opposition and went over to Walpole. He satirised the Country Party as abandoning their great country ideals in the scramble for places at Court. When Walpole fell from office in 1742, many of Fielding's friends did not gain places in the new Whig administration, and so Fielding, along with them, continued to censure the Court as a centre of ambition and treachery. With the formation of Henry Pelham's broad-based ministry in 1744, however, Fielding's friends did gain places, and thereafter Fielding vigorously supported the administration in power at Westminster. He was no longer obliged to tread lightly on the Tories in the country, who remained in opposition, and throughout the 1740s he satirised them as ignorant, boorish, drunken Jacobites, enemies to their own and the national interest. His relationship to the Court-country dichotomy of the age then, in its political sense, was largely determined by the political fortunes of those whom he supported within the Whig groupings.

Section One: The Walpole Era

When Fielding began writing in the late 1720s, the major political division was that between Sir Robert Walpole's Whig administration, and a vigorous Opposition which consisted, not of a unified party, standing on a platform of unified policies, but rather of a loose confederacy of factions. The two main factions, as noted above,¹ were the Tories, led by Lord Bolingbroke, and the "disaffected" or "patriot" Whigs, who had broken away from Walpole in the early 1720s, and who were led by William Pulteney. This was the alliance known in contemporary terminology as "The Country Party".² It was supported by a vigorous literary Opposition, comprising many writers, working either as individuals or in groups, some of whom, such as Pope, Gay, Swift, Thomson and Fielding, had tried, unsuccessfully, to gain Walpole's patronage.³ Whilst some of these, including Fielding, continued to make overtures to Walpole, they joined with the Opposition in censuring his administration. One of the major rhetorical strategies used in their campaign was the conventional contrast between Court and country. They represented Walpole and the courtiers at Westminster as systematically undermining traditional English values with modern corruption, and represented the old standards as being retained by the Opposition and their supporters on their country estates, remote from London.⁴ They thus used the *beatus ille* and related conventions to portray the Opposition as possessing the virtues necessary to form an alternative government, and return England to the *status quo*, to the glory which it had known in the Elizabethan Age. Naturally, the Tories, who championed the traditional landowners in the country, were more comfortable with this strategy than were the disaffected

¹p 291.

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

³B. Goldgar, *op.cit.* p 47 *passim*.

⁴Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, p 115f.

Whigs, who had allegiances to the City of London, and who championed economic progress. The position of these Whigs was made easier, however, by the fact that the City of London largely opposed Walpole. Walpole drew his support from the mercantile community, mainly from the great bankers and traders, who, since the turn of the century had been moving out of London into Westminster.¹ Many of the disaffected Whigs effected a compromise. They eulogised economic progress as exemplified in the City of London, whilst often idealising the traditional values retained in the country.² Nevertheless, the Court-country contrast was mainly used by Lord Bolingbroke and his circle, most notably by Pope, who describes as being virtuous the "Chiefs, out of War, and Statesmen, out of Place"³ on their country estates. In his poetry of the 1730s, Pope cultivated a pose of elegant rusticity. He presented himself as a socially responsible satirist by cultivating the *persona* of a wise, independent and virtuous *beatus vir*, shunning the vices, intrigues and luxury both of Walpole's Court and the City of London, which he also censured as being responsible for the age's alleged degeneracy. Other elements in the Opposition adopted a similar stance, Lord Bolingbroke on Dawley Farm,⁴ and Lord Cobham at Stowe.⁵ The Court-country contrast became so commonplace in their campaign, that it provoked Walpole's supporters to a counter-attack. In *The Daily Gazetteer*, April 11, 1738, there is criticism of the concept that men out of power on their country estates are innately virtuous:

Does St[owe]'s pure air, or Dawl[e]y's, in an
hour, Cleanse just like soap; like purgatory
scour?⁶

¹ M. D. George, *op.cit.*, p 16.

² James Thomson effects this compromise in his political poem, *Liberty* (Canto V).

³ Satire II, i, l 126. (J. Butt, *op.cit.*, p 617). For Pope's use of the *beatus ille* convention for political purposes see M. Mack, *The Garden and the City*, *passim*.

⁴ See Goldgar *op. cit.* p 124 for Dawley Farm.

⁵ B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 139.

⁶ Cited B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 172.

This, then, was the state of the Court-country contrast when Fielding began his writing career.

When Fielding came to London in the late 1720s, like most aspiring writers of the day he tried to win Sir Robert Walpole's patronage. In three cantos of verse, probably written in 1729,¹ he tried to secure Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu's, and possibly Walpole's, patronage, by ridiculing Pope and other anti-Walpole writers, using their own satirical weapons. Two verse epistles, dedicated to Walpole, probably written in 1730 or 1731,² but not published until *The Miscellanies* in 1743, possibly represent a direct bid for the Prime Minister's patronage. Walpole did not respond, so Fielding flirted with the Opposition. In *The Author's Farce*, produced in March, 1730, at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, there are conventional Opposition statements attributing an alleged degeneracy in London's cultural world to Walpole's supremacy. This play will be fully examined in our next chapter. In *Tom Thumb the Great* produced in April, 1730, at the Little Theatre, there is satire against the concept of "the great man", as the Opposition derisively called Walpole. Fielding published these plays under the pseudonym of Scriblerus Secundus, thereby allying himself with Pope, Swift and Gay. Whilst he has been seen as making definite overtures to the Opposition,³ what he in fact was doing was largely mouthing their conventional phrases.⁴ His satire is sufficiently general to keep his options open. He avoids affronting Walpole⁵ without committing himself to the Opposition.

In *The Author's Farce* and *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb*, the Court-country contrast is not used. This contrast is the main

¹Isobel M. Grundy, "New Verse by Henry Fielding", *PMLA* 87, 1972, p 214.

²I. Grundy, *op.cit.*, p 215. One critic claims the poems to have been written in 1738, and to be totally ironical. H. Amory, "Henry Fielding's *Epistle to Walpole* : A Re-examination", *PQ* 46, 1967, pp 236-247.

³Sheridan Baker sees political allusions in *The Author's Farce*. See Sheridan Baker, "Political Allusion in Fielding's *Author's Farce*, *Mock Doctor*, and *Tumble-Down Dick*. *PMLA* 77, 1962, p 221ff. Cross sees political allusions in *Tom Thumb the Great* (Cross I, p 103).

⁴B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 102ff.

⁵Walpole was present at three performances of *Tom Thumb the Great*. See C.B. Woods, "Fielding's Epilogue for Theobald" *PQ* 28, 1949, p 423f.

satirical strategy of another play which more directly satirises Walpole, *The Welsh Opera*, produced at the Little Theatre in April, 1731, and expanded and published by Scriblerus Secundus as *The Grub Street Opera*.

The play is written in the manner of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. There is no Court-country contrast in *The Beggar's Opera*, but John Loftis argues that the play's exposure of the vices of Walpole's London implies a corollary idealisation of the country.¹ The contrast is more explicit in many ballad operas written in imitation of *The Beggar's Opera*. *The Grub Street Opera* uses the antithesis to satirise Walpole, not by contrasting the Court and the country, but by portraying the easy emulation of the Court by the country. Just as *The Beggar's Opera* runs up a parallel between Westminster and London's criminal underworld, so *The Grub Street Opera* runs up a parallel between the Court, and a country household in Wales. In his introduction, Scriblerus Secundus warns that the play's design is "very deep", being "to instruct the world in economy".² The management of Sir Owen Apshinken's country household is an allegorical representation of the government of England. Sir Owen Apshinken, addicted to his pleasures and leaving the running of the house to his wife, represents King George II. Lady Apshinken, tyrannical, parsimonious and intellectually pretentious, represents Queen Caroline. Their son, the foppish and reputedly impotent Master Owen, represents the Prince of Wales. Robin, their butler, who uses his position of responsibility to plunder the household, represents Sir Robert Walpole. John, the groom, who neglects his own duties to perform Robin's, represents John, Lord Hervey, an adherent of Walpole. Thomas, the gardener, represents Thomas Pelham-Holles, another Walpole adherent. William, the coachman, formerly Lady Apshinken's favourite, until supplanted by Robin, represents William Pulteney, formerly Queen Caroline's favourite, until supplanted by Walpole.

¹ J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, p 116.

² Henley IX, p 210.

The struggle between William and Robin to be head of household represents the struggle between Pulteney and Walpole to be head of government. In his campaign against Robin, William mouths many of the charges which the Opposition levelled at Walpole, such as this one; "for whilst thou art here, /no merit must e'er/expect to find any reward, sir."¹ The use of country in this play to satirise the Court by emulation, precludes the Opposition's conventional idealisation of the country as an alternative to the Court. The conventional contrast, however, is present. The clash between Mr Apshones, a tenant on Sir Owen's estate, and Master Owen, dramatises the contrast between traditional English plainness and honesty and modern vice and debauchery, which the Opposition conventionally drew between themselves and those at Court. The conversation between Lady Apshinken and Susan, the cook (cited above in the chapter on manners),² in which Lady Apshinken replaces the traditional abundance of the English dinner table with the parsimonious politeness of French and Italian *cuisine*, dramatises the Opposition's accusation that Walpole and the Court were undermining traditional English manners with foreign sophistication.³ The song with which Susan defends the old ways against the new, "The Roast Beef of Old England", served the Opposition's campaign in this connection throughout the 1730s.⁴ Walpole suppressed the performance of the revised version of the play, scheduled for June, 1731.⁵ He may, however, have been chiefly angered by a more satirical play, *The Fall of Mortimer*, scheduled for the same night. Whilst satire against Walpole in *The Grub Street Opera* has been seen as being explicit,⁶ it is general, being levelled at the place-seekers and plunderers in the Opposition as well, as summed up by Puzzletext, the parson, at the end:

¹*The Grub Street Opera* II, iv (Henley IX, p 244f). For the political allusions in the play, see Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 106f.

²p 88.

³Fielding makes this point often throughout his writing. See, e.g. the description of Beau Didapper, a satirical representation of the courtier John, Lord Hervey, in *JA*, IV, ix (Henley I, p 355f) and also the portrayal of Bellarmine, *JA*, II, iv (Henley I, p 129).

⁴*The Grub Street Opera* III, iii (Henley IX, p 258ff).

⁵Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 110ff.

⁶*Ibid.*, I, p 104.

... if Robin, the butler, hath cheated more than other people, I see no other reason for it, but because he hath had more opportunity to cheat.¹

As discussed previously, in *The Grub Street Opera*, Fielding avoids making a total commitment to the Opposition.² When Walpole moved against the Little Theatre in mid 1731, Fielding was able to go to the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, which was under Court patronage. Here, he made an unmistakable bid for Walpole's patronage by dedicating to him the published version of *The Modern Husband*, which was produced at the Theatre Royal in February, 1732. This dedication, with its condemnation of Walpole's enemies,³ provoked the wrath of the Opposition, with whose paper, *The Grub Street Journal*, Fielding waged war for months afterwards.⁴ Walpole, however, did not take Fielding into his camp. For the next few years, Fielding produced regular farce and comedy in some of which he echoed Opposition satire against Walpole.⁵ He then unmistakably allied himself with the Opposition.

In 1734, he offered to their campaign *Don Quixote in England*, which was produced at the Little Theatre in April of that year. The play's political significance consists not so much in its content, as in its dedication to the Earl of Chesterfield, who had been dismissed from the ministry for failing to support the controversial Excise Bill of 1733. Fielding dedicates the play to "one who hath so gloriously distinguished himself in the cause of liberty".⁶ He allies himself with the same cause, "to which the corruption I have here endeavoured to expose may one day be a very fatal enemy",⁷ and offers his services as a dramatic propagandist:

¹*The Grub Street Opera* III, xiv (Henley IX, p 273).

²See B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 111 for a discussion of this issue.

³Henley X, p 8.

⁴Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 114ff.

⁵See Sheridan Baker, *op.cit.*, p 126ff. *The Mock Doctor* was produced at Drury Lane in 1732.

⁶Henley XI, p 7.

⁷Henley XI, p 7.

"I fancy a lively representation of the calamities brought on a country by general corruption might have a very sensible and useful effect on the spectators".¹ In the play, the "calamities brought on a nation by general corruption" are alleged malpractices in country boroughs. In the play, the mayor and aldermen of the country borough, Guzzledown, invite Don Quixote to stand for the Court Party against Sir Thomas Loveland and Mr Bouncer of the Country Party. These party affiliations, however, are not clearly delineated, nor is the contest between the Court and the Country dramatised. The satire consists in the exposure of the corruption of the rural voters, as in this conversation where they discuss Don Quixote's candidature:

MAYOR. I begin to smoke a plot. I begin to apprehend no opposition, and then we're sold, neighbour.

VOTER. No, no, neighbour; then we shall not be sold, and that's worse: but rather that it should come to that, I would ride all over the kingdom for a candidate ...

MAYOR. I like an opposition, because otherwise a man may be obliged to vote against his party; therefore, when we invite a gentleman to stand, we invite him to spend his money for the honour of his party; and, when both parties have spent as much as they are able, every honest man will vote according to his conscience.... I never gave a vote contrary to my conscience. I have very earnestly recommended the country interest to all my brethren; but before that I recommended the town interest, that is, the interest of this corporation; and, first of all, I recommended to every particular man to take a particular care of himself....²

In the play, there is no partiality towards Court or country. The weight of the satire falls against the rural voters, who display few of the rural virtues idealised by the Tories in their campaign. To some extent, Fielding was following convention. The corruption of rural elections had long been presented on stage.³ As a "patriot" Whig, however, Fielding was able to go beyond propaganda to comedy, and satirise both Court and country.

¹Henley XI, p 7.

²*Don Quixote in England* I, viii and I, ix (Henley XI, p 28, p 30).

³J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, p 115.

Nevertheless, the comedy is sufficiently pointed to serve the Opposition. The Opposition's idealisation of traditional English manners, allegedly being eroded by foreign influence, is offered once again in a re-use of the song, "The Roast Beef of Old England".¹ The play, along with its dedication, was a definite contribution to the Opposition's campaign.

In 1736, Fielding again served the Opposition, which was becoming increasingly virulent in its campaign. Particularly vocal were the poets in George Lyttleton's circle. Fielding had been at Eton College with Lyttleton and also with William Pitt, another Walpole-opponent, so, not surprisingly, he became more heavily involved with the Opposition than before.² His next contribution, *Pasquin*, produced at the Little Theatre in March, 1736, is more explicit in its criticism of Walpole than his earlier dramatic satires. Using the technique of Butler's and Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, *Pasquin* portrays two plays under rehearsal at the Little Theatre, with fictitious authors and critics commenting upon the action. The first play, produced by Trapwit, is a comedy entitled *The Election*, which portrays corruption in rural electorates. The second play, produced by Pustian, is a tragedy, entitled *The Life and Death of Queen Commonsense*, which portrays cultural corruption in London. This latter play will be discussed in the next chapter. *Pasquin*, then, provides a comprehensive survey of the Opposition's allegation that Walpole was corrupting the entire English nation. Like *Don Quixote in England*, *The Election* portrays a campaign in a country borough. In this, the mayor and aldermen choose between the Court candidates, Lord Place and Colonel Promise, and the Country Party candidates, Sir Henry Foxchace and Squire Tankard. As with his earlier plays, Fielding here satirises both parties. In his prologue, Trapwit informs us that he:

Brings a strange group of characters before you,
And shows you here at once both Whig and Tory;
Or court and country party you may call 'em:³
But without fear and favour he will maul 'em.

¹ *Don Quixote in England* I, vi (Henley XI, p 25).

² Cross, *op.cit.*, p 179.

³ *Pasquin* I, i (Henley XI, p 170).

Lord Place bribes with gold, and promises of places at Court, after his election to parliament. Sir Henry Foxchace bribes more subtly, but no less effectively, with venison, produce and promises of business to the tradesmen-voters. Sir Henry displays none of the rural virtues which the Tories represented as characterising the English country squirearchy. He is also used to satirise the Tory habit of representing the Court as debauching traditional English plainness with foreign foppery:

SQUIRE TANKARD. (*drunk*) A man that won't get drunk for his country is a rascal.

MAYOR. A man that won't drink is an enemy to the trade of the nation.

SIR HARRY. Those were glorious days when honest English hospitality flourished; when a country gentleman could afford to make his neighbours drunk, before your dammed French fashions were brought over; why, Mr Mayor, would you think it? there are many of these courtiers who have six starved footmen behind a coach, and not half a hogshead of wine in their house; why, how do you think all the money is spent? ... Why, in houses, pictures, lace, embroidery, knick-knacks, Italian singers, and French tumblers; and those who vote for them will never get a dinner of them after the election is over.¹

As in his earlier political satires, then, Fielding satirises both Court and country. The comedy, however, is less bi-partisan than in the earlier plays. Rural corruption is portrayed with great gusto and enjoyment. The weight of the criticism falls against the Court. Satire against the Court Party is reinforced by Fustian's comments on the action, as, for example, when he notes that Lord Place bribes without gold in his hand: "upon my word the courtiers have topped their part; the actor has out-done the author; this bribing with an empty hand is quite in the character of a courtier."² If the Country Party is not positively recommended as an alternative administration, it is made clear that the Court Party is not fit to govern.

¹*Pasquin* II, i (Henley XI, p 186).

²*Pasquin* I, i (Henley XI, p 174).

Fielding's most audacious satire against Walpole is in *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*, produced at the Little Theatre in May, 1737, at a time when the Opposition, strengthened by the defection of the Prince of Wales from the Court, was more virulent than ever before. Like *Pasquin*, *The Historical Register* uses the technique of *The Rehearsal*. Medley presents to critics and commentators, a series of scenes, each of which constitutes an entry into an historical register. Each scene dramatises a conventional Opposition allegation of Walpole's supposed corruption of England: excessive taxation, decline in public morals, loss of public virtues, the decay of the arts, and bribery and corruption. Again, Fielding satirises both government and opposition, the Opposition being represented not so much by the Tories of the country, however, as by the "patriot" Whigs. In the play's first scene, the government are satirised for excessively taxing the people. In the play's last scene, the "patriot" Whigs are satirised for accepting bribes from Walpole. Walpole is represented by the character Quidam, a character whom Fielding, in the play's dedication, identifies with the devil.¹ In the play, the Court-country contrast appears in only one scene, in the allegorical "auction" scene, in which the old English virtues are offered to sale. Lot Two, "a most delicate piece of patriotism", proves to be singularly unpopular:

1 COURTIER. I would not wear it for a thousand pounds.

HEN. Sir, I assure you, several gentlemen at Court have worn the same; it's quite a different thing within to what it is without.

1 COURTIER. Sir, it is prohibited goods, I shan't run the risk of being into Westminster Hall for wearing it.

HEN. You take it for the Old Patriotism, whereas it is indeed like that in nothing but the cut; but alas! sir, there is a great difference in the stuff - But, sir, I don't propose this for a town-suit, this is only proper for the country; consider, gentlemen, what a figure this will make at an election.²

¹Henley XI, p 236.

²*The Historical Register* II, i (Henley XI, p 253).

Lot Three, "a considerable quantity of interest at Court", is sold, after brisk bidding, for one thousand pounds. Whilst the Opposition are portrayed as being self-interested, the weight of the satire falls against Walpole's government. Walpole reacted angrily to the play, and to other contemporary plays satirising him, and silenced Fielding and the Little Theatre with the Stage Licensing Act of June 1737, which effectively curtailed Fielding's dramatic career.

With his dramatic career at an end, Fielding continued to contribute to the Opposition's campaign against Walpole. The Opposition was particularly virulent against Walpole in 1738-1739, capitalising on the unpopularity of his war policy with Spain. To assist this campaign, Fielding, along with others, established *The Champion*, in November, 1739. Most of the political essays in *The Champion* were written by James Ralph. Fielding concentrated on social and cultural issues. His only significant treatment of the Court-country contrast as run up by the Opposition is in the issue of *The Champion*, February 14, 1739-40, in which he conventionally criticises the Court for impoverishing the country by drafting their rents to London to pay for luxury and vice.¹ Fielding also served the anti-Ministerial campaign in other ways. In a mock-heroic Scriblerian poem, entitled *The Vernoniad*, published in January, 1741, he indicts Walpole's war policy with Spain. In his moral epistles *Of Liberty*, *Of Good Nature*, and *Of True Greatness*, published in *The Miscellanies* in 1743, he eulogises members of the "patriot" Whigs, George Lyttleton, the Duke of Richmond, and George Dodington respectively. *Of True Greatness*, which had been published separately in January, 1741, conventionally describes the precarious position of the Court favourite, but there is no specific allusion to Walpole. The poem then cancels out the other extreme, the solitary life of the recluse, but again there are no political allusions.² Thus, while Fielding models this poem (and his other verse epistles) on those of Pope, unlike Pope, he does not represent

¹Henley XV, p 198ff.

²Henley XII, p 249f.

the country as being a viable alternative to the Court. Fielding's poem is in the tradition of Whig panegyric, that of celebrating conspicuous public figures, but whilst he asserts that "to no profession, party, place confined,/True greatness lives but in the noble mind",¹ he posits true greatness in the minds of conspicuous "patriot" Whigs, such as George Dodington. In all these various *genres* in which Fielding contributed to the Opposition campaign after the curtailment of his dramatic career, the Court-country contrast, such as it is, is extremely conventional and dull, displaying none of the vitality which it had done in his plays.

In mid 1741, Fielding became disenchanted with the Opposition. It had made great gains in the general election of June, 1741, in which Walpole was returned with a reduced majority. Fielding saw many members of the Opposition as being intoxicated with the prospect of power, and as abandoning their old ideals in the scramble to gain government. By June, 1741, Fielding had ceased writing for *The Champion*. There is evidence that late in 1741 he went over to Walpole's side.² Fielding's distressing circumstances at this time may have prompted him to sell his pen for Walpole.³ It is interesting that *Joseph Andrews*, a much more complex work than a mere political tract, also has its highly topical political aspects. In *Joseph Andrews*, written late in 1741 and published in February, 1742, Fielding satirises the Opposition. Although there are conventional gibes at Walpole, particularly in the description of Beau Didapper, a representation of Lord Hervey, one of Walpole's supporters,⁴ the satire is mainly directed against the Country Party. Through the character of Bellarmine, Fielding censures those members of the Country Party who accepted places at Court and abandoned their old English ideals in favour of foreign foppery and egocentricity.⁵ The treachery of the Country Party is most

¹Henley XII, p 256.

²See M.C. Battestin, "Fielding's Changing Politics and *Joseph Andrews*", *PQ* 39, 1960, p 40f.
B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 200ff.

³M.C. Battestin, "Fielding's Changing Politics", p 40.

⁴*JA*, IV, i (Henley I, p 355).

⁵*JA*, II, iv (Henley I, p 129).

extensively portrayed in Adams' narration of his political adventures to a country squire.¹ Adams enjoyed some political prestige by virtue of influence which he had over a nephew, who was a voter in a corporation. Adams' ecclesiastical superior instructs him to influence his nephew on behalf of the Court Party. Adams, a staunch supporter of the Country Party, advises his nephew, on three different elections, to vote for members of the Opposition: Squire Fickle, Sir Oliver Hearty and Sir Thomas Booby. According to Adams' story, all candidates, once elected, neglected the Country Party platform and served their own interests. Adams himself fared little better. Squire Fickle abandoned him. Sir Oliver Hearty restored him to the curacy which he had lost by supporting Fickle, but Sir Thomas Booby, who had promised him a living, found, when Adams' nephew died "about a month before the incumbent"² that it was suddenly impossible to give it to him. Adams' own innocent honesty brings out the self-interest, the worldliness and the corruption of these members of the Country Party. The satire is continued in the behaviour of the country squire to whom Adams tells his story. The patriotic cant of this squire, who declares himself ready to sacrifice everything for his country, identifies him with the Opposition. His flight on hearing Fanny's cries for help can be seen as allegorically representing the Country Party's abandonment of their ideals when given the opportunity to put them into practice.

Fielding's most extensive arraignment of the Opposition for their alleged treachery during this period is in *The Opposition: A Vision*, published anonymously late in 1741.³ In this paper, Fielding reverses the old Court-country contrast as run up by the Country Party in their campaign against Walpole. He claims, in a vision, to have seen a waggon, a symbol of the Country Party, proceeding with a group of arguing passengers whose high ideals and public spirit are revealed to be no more than avarice, ambition, envy, malice, disaffection, pride, disappointment and revenge.⁴

¹JA,II, viii (Henley I, p 153ff).

²*Ibid.*

³For the discussion of the allegory of this pamphlet, I am indebted to M.C. Battestin, "Fielding's Changing Politics", p 43ff.

⁴Henley XIV, p 328.

As the waggon proceeds, passengers leap on and off, delivering contradictory instructions to the driver, and haranguing the mob following behind. The waggon itself is pulled by ill-fed asses, (presumably hard-working supporters of the Opposition, amongst whom Fielding numbered himself) who are reinforced by asses from Scotland and Cornwall,¹ where the Opposition made great gains in the election of June, 1741. The waggon becomes stuck in the mud, and is met by a gentleman in a coach and six, travelling from London towards the country. This gentleman is Walpole. He is abused and threatened by the driver of the waggon. The waggon-driver is overheard and rebuked by one of the asses, presumably Fielding:

O thou perfidious driver! dost not thou profess
thyself a driver of the country waggon? Are not
those words written in large characters upon it?
Have not thy passengers taken their places for
the country? What will their friends who sent
them, and bore the expense of their journey, say,
when they hear they are come up on their account,
and neglect the business of those who sent them?
Will it be a sufficient excuse that thou hast
mislead them? And hast thou no more humanity,
than to endeavour to trample on an honest gentleman,
only because his coach stands in your way?²

After this, the gentleman representing Walpole turns the two starved asses out to graze. He then follows the great country road which the waggon itself had professed to follow, whilst the waggon itself heads straight for St. James and the Court. Thus, at the end of the long struggle against Walpole, Fielding represents the Country Party, who had bitterly censured the Court, as abandoning their country road to take up positions at Court, once events there turn in their favour.

Fielding's most extensive political satire of the Walpole era is in *Jonathan Wild*, published in *The Miscellanies*, 1743. As with *The Beggar's Opera*, one of its major models, *Jonathan Wild* satirises the Court, not by contrasting it with the country, but by running up a parallel between it and London's criminal underworld. The argument is that small rogues in this underworld are hanged for

¹Henley XIV, p 329.

²Henley XIV, p 330.

committing crimes which are committed with impunity on a grand scale at Westminster. Fielding himself presents this thesis in the preface to *The Miscellanies*:

... without considering Newgate as no other than human nature with its mask off ... I think we may be excused for suspecting, that the splendid palaces of the great are often no other than Newgate with the mask on. Nor do I know anything which can raise an honest man's indignation higher than that the same morals should be in one place attended with all imaginable misery and infamy, and in the other, with the highest luxury and honour. Let any impartial man in his senses be asked, for which of these two places a composition of cruelty, lust, avarice, rapine, insolence, hypocrisy, fraud and treachery, were best fitted; surely his answer must be certain and immediate; and yet I am afraid all these ingredients, glossed over with wealth and a title, have been treated with the highest respect and veneration in the one, while one or two of them have been condemned to the gallows in the other.¹

This point, without the moral conclusion, is constantly made throughout the work, by Jonathan Wild himself,² and members of his gang.³

Since the early 1720s, it had been conventional for the Opposition to use Jonathan Wild's career to satirise Walpole.⁴ Fielding has been seen as having used the parallel as early as 1725, in two papers in *Mist's Weekly Journal*, May 12 and 19, 1725.⁵ This claim has been refuted⁶ but, whether he wrote them or not, Fielding was probably familiar with these articles.⁷ Fielding's use of Wild to satirise Walpole is thoroughly conventional.⁸ Wild's organisation

¹Henley XII, p 243.

²See, for example, I, xiv (Henley II, p 48f).

³For example, I, v (Henley II, p 17f).

⁴W. Irwin, *The Making of Jonathan Wild*, Connecticut, 1966.
p 21f.

⁵See Alfred Robbins, *NQ* 11 series, II, 1910, pp 261-63.

⁶J.P. de Castro, *NQ* 12 series, III, 1917, pp 441-43.

⁷W. Irwin, *op.cit.*, p 24.

⁸J.E. Wells, "Fielding's Political Purpose in *Jonathan Wild*", *PMLA* XXVIII (1913), pp 1-55.

and manipulation of his gang, and his activities as receiver of stolen goods, robber of the public, and thieftaker, allegorically represent Walpole's organisation of his ministry at Westminster, his alleged use of arbitrary power, receiving graft, misappropriating public funds and his disposal of those no longer useful to him. Wild himself makes the connection between "prig" and prime minister explicit,¹ as does Fielding.² In *Jonathan Wild*, Fielding not only satirises Walpole. He also satirises the Opposition. The struggle between Walpole and the Opposition is rendered in terms of a contest between the inmates of Newgate prison. In the election which takes place between the inmates, Fielding satirises the general election of 1742. Newgate is divided into two parties, the prigs and the debtors. The former group, under the leadership of Roger Johnson, prey upon the latter under the leadership of Jonathan Wild. Jonathan Wild campaigns for leadership of Newgate, campaigning on a platform of restoring the liberties of Newgate.³ After winning the election, he becomes more insatiable and tyrannical than his predecessor. The debtors then unite under a "very grave man"⁴ who upbraids them for having exchanged one tyrant for another. The allegory behind this story is easily deduced.⁵ Roger Johnson represents Walpole, Wild, the "patriot" Opposition. The election of Wild, and his subsequent betrayal of his supporters represents the election of the "patriot" Whigs to power in February, 1742, and their alleged betrayal of their supporters. The "very grave man" represents the remnant of the "patriot" Whigs who remain in opposition to the new government. In *Jonathan Wild*, then, Fielding uses London's criminal world to satirise political behaviour in general. This concludes his treatment of politics in the Walpole era.

¹I, xiv (Henley II, p 48f).

²II, v (Henley II, p 73).

³IV, iii (Henley II, p 152f).

⁴IV, iii (Henley II, p 155).

⁵For the political allegory of the Newgate election, see W. Irwin, *op.cit.*, p 40.

Section Two:

The 1740s

The situation of the political parties in the 1740s was more complex than that of the 1730s, and can only be briefly summarised here. The government which was formed after Walpole's defeat in February, 1742, was composed mainly of two Whig groups, one led by John Carteret (later Lord Granville), which had a minority in the cabinet, little parliamentary support, but the backing of King George, and one led by Henry Pelham, Thomas Pelham Holles (the Duke of Newcastle), and Lord Hardwicke, which had strong parliamentary support but little backing from His Majesty. Those whom Fielding favoured amongst the "patriot" Whigs, Chesterfield, Dodington, Lyttleton, Pitt and others, did not gain places in this administration. They remained in opposition, and Fielding supported them against the government. Late in 1744, Henry Pelham's group forced the resignation of Carteret, and founded a new administration which included some Tory representation and many of the Whigs whom Fielding favoured. The Pelham group, however, were unpopular with King George. They opposed measures whereby King George and Carteret, in 1742, had granted English support to the Hanoverian forces involved in the war on the Continent. In February, 1746, under royal pressure, the Pelham ministry resigned, but the new administration, formed with royal blessing by Carteret-Granville and his group, did not survive. King George was forced to recall the Pelham group, and in their new cabinet, which had strong parliamentary support, they included William Pitt. Fielding gave vigorous support to the government formed by Henry Pelham late in 1744. He gave unbounded support to the ministry formed in February, 1746.

The major political event which precipitated Fielding's writing for the Pelham administration was the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. To arouse the English against the Jacobites, Fielding began *The True Patriot*, in November, 1745, and continued this journal until June, 1746. Although he declared in the first number, "I am

of no Party",¹ the very urgency which he attributed to the Jacobite Rebellion made him a ministerial writer. King George and Carteret-Granville and his circle played down the importance of the Jacobite Rebellion in favour of English involvement in the war on the Continent. Henry Pelham and his ministers gave the rebellion first priority. In arousing the English from their lethargy about the rebellion (lethargy encouraged by King George and his adherents), Fielding was serving Pelham's government. After the threat of Jacobitism was largely removed from England, early in 1746 (when Pelham formed his new cabinet, incorporating Pitt), Fielding emerges in the journal as an outspoken and unqualified ministerial writer. In every number of the journal, from *The True Patriot* 17, February 18-25, 1746, he endorses the administration against its opponents. His attitude toward the Court, and courtiers, then, is one of unqualified encomium. He eulogises Pelham's government at Westminster, as being incapable of the corruption which had allegedly characterised Walpole's administration. The following statements are typical:

the Administration is in the Hands of Men who esteem Power and Preferment of no Value any longer than they can be preferred with a strict Adherence to the true Interest of their Country ...¹

It is indeed the rare Blessing of the Public, in the present Age, to be convinced that their Friends are in Power; that the greatest Men in the Kingdom are at the same time the honestest...²

It is now therefore, that Opposition is really and truly Faction; that the Names of a Patriot and Courtier are not only compatible, but necessarily conjoined; and that none can be any longer Enemies to the Ministry, without being so to the Public. All malicious and invidious Insinuations against such an Administration ought to be discouraged, and the Persons who forge or promote them, should be³ detested as the most dangerous vermin to Society.

¹TP, 17, 18-25 February 1746 (Locke p 153, column 3).

²TP, 17, 18-25 February 1746 (Locke p 154, column 2).

³TP, 17, 18-25 February 1746 (Locke, p 154 column 3).

In censuring the government's opponents, Fielding seems to be directing his criticism towards Carteret-Granville and his circle. Although Miriam Austen Locke sees the Tories as featuring in Fielding's concept of the Opposition during these years,¹ through *The True Patriot*, there is no explicit treatment of those Tory country squires who did in fact oppose many ministerial policies. With the exception of the ridiculous "Oliver Oldcoat" of Gloucestershire,² there is no significant satire against Tory country squires. Indeed, in those sections of *The True Patriot* dealing specifically with the Jacobite Rebellion, Fielding points out that Charles Edward Stuart did not find the support which he expected from the country squires in the northern counties of England.³ Throughout *The True Patriot*, Fielding represents country-dwellers in England as being loyal to the government and to the House of Hanover.⁴ In supporting the Court in *The True Patriot*, then, Fielding does not represent the country as being infested with Jacobites, as he does in *The Jacobite's Journal*.

After the Jacobite Rebellion and its aftermath, Henry Pelham's administration faced a growing opposition. A major bone of contention was its endorsement of English subsidies to Hanoverian forces involved in the war on the Continent. This measure was strongly opposed by many country squires, who regarded the government as sacrificing England to foreigners, whom they dubbed the "Hanoverian rats". John Carteret had introduced the measure in 1742, and the faction whom Fielding favoured in the Opposition had opposed it. Fielding himself wrote against the measure in 1744 in *An Attempt towards a Natural History of the Hanover Rats*.⁵ When the faction whom Fielding favoured were incorporated into the new ministry late in 1744, they came to approve of the measure, and Fielding became its staunch supporter and opponent of its critics, who were particularly vociferous amongst the squirearchy.

¹ p 172 n.

² *TP*, 29, May 13-20, 1746 (Locke p 231).

³ *TP*, 7, December 17, 1745 (Locke p 82).

⁴ *TP*, 18, February 25-March 4, 1746 (Locke p 161).

⁵ See G.E. Jensen, "A Fielding Discovery"; *Yale University Library Gazette*, 10 (1935) pp 23-32.

As part of his campaign to discredit the Opposition, Fielding began *The Jacobite's Journal* in December, 1747, and continued it until November, 1748. A major propagandist tactic of *The Jacobite's Journal* is to represent the Tory country squires opposing the government as being involved in a new "epidemical madness" of Jacobitism, allegedly sweeping England.¹ There were some Jacobite activities occurring at the time, such as disturbances at Oxford University² in February, 1747, violence in Staffordshire during the elections of June, 1747,³ and riots at the Lichfield races in Staffordshire, in September, 1747.⁴ In these disturbances, the government, and Fielding, claimed to see evidence of a new Jacobite Rebellion. Thus, whilst the country squires of *The True Patriot* are represented as giving no significant support to the Pretender, those of *The Jacobite's Journal* are represented as being determined to replace a Hanoverian with a Stuart reign. Throughout the journal, then, country squires who oppose the administration's domestic and foreign policies are represented as being Jacobites. Part of the propaganda is to represent the Tory country squirearchy as being easy prey to Jacobitism, because of their allegedly characteristic ignorance, boorishness and drunkenness. In portraying the squirearchy, then, Fielding draws on stage conventions, as well as on earlier journals. *The Jacobite's Journal* is partly modelled on Addison's *The Freeholder*, which was published during the Jacobite uprising of 1715-1716.⁵ Several numbers of Fielding's journal are devoted to outlining the arts and mysteries of Jacobitism, and the rustic qualifications necessary to practise them.⁶ Accordingly, Jacobitism is represented as consisting in wearing plaid waistcoats, drinking to "the king over the water", abusing the government, as well as swearing, drinking and brawling

¹ *JJ*, 49, November 5, 1748 (Coley, p 424).

² Coley, lv.

³ Coley, xxxvi.

⁴ Coley, lxiii.

⁵ Coley, lvi.

⁶ *JJ*, I, December 5, 1747 (Coley, p 93), *JJ*, 6, January 9, 1748 (Coley, p 121), and *JJ*, 23, May 7, 1748 (Coley, p 267).

at hunting-matches, horse-races and cock-fights. The following statement is typical:

Ignorance is the Mother of Jacobitism. Hence the rural Sportsmen and Foxhunters will fall an easy Prey; and the Country will afford sufficient Plenty of younger Brothers, whose Eyes their good Mothers have kept betimes from poring on *Greek* and *Latin* Authors; those *Greek* and *Latin* Authors, which have been the Bane of the Jacobite Cause, and inspired Men with the Love of *Athenian* Liberty and old *Rome*, and taught them to hate Tyrants and arbitrary Governments.¹

In the journal, Fielding represents the main infestation of Jacobitism as being in Staffordshire, particularly around Lichfield, where there were disturbances in 1747, which seemed to alarm the administration. The contest between Whigs and Tories in the elections of June, 1747, had been particularly bitter in this area. At the Lichfield races in September, 1747, some members of the Court were allegedly insulted by the squires.² Contemporary reports testify to the outward show of Jacobite sympathies in this area at that time.³ By publishing numerous letters, ostensibly sent in by inhabitants of Staffordshire, Fielding ridicules all of these activities.⁴ In *The True Patriot*, Staffordshire is not portrayed as a hotbed of sedition. The stiff opposition which it gave to the administration in the elections of 1747 may have been responsible for ministerial alarm about its Jacobitical sympathies. Throughout *The Jacobite's Journal*, Fielding directs his harshest satire against those country squires and farmers who oppose ministerial policies, particularly English subsidising of Hanoverian forces on the Continent. The following letter from George Trott of Hampshire is typical:

Varmer *Hogsworth*, who is a Government Man, and always votes on that Side, cannot help shaking his Head at this Matter. He zays, that the great

¹ *JJ*, 15, March 12, 1748 (Coley, p 192f).

² *JJ*, 28, June 11, 1748 (Coley, p 307); also see Coley, p 93 n.

³ T. Smollett, *History of England, from the Revolution to the Death of George II*, III, i, 18, cited Coley, p 93 n.

⁴ *JJ*, 5, January 2, 1748 (Coley, p 116ff) and *JJ*, 38, August 20, 1748 (Coley, p 369ff).

Volks at Court pay no Consideration to the Good of the Land; and that, provided they can get Money in *London*, they care not a Brass Varden what becomes of all the Varmers in the Country. This he spoke last *Sunday* at Vestry; but a Squire in the Naighbourhood, who is a Man of great Learning and Parts, told me privately that the true Reason why we must not be zuffered to zell our Corn into *France*, is, that it may be all saved in order to buy it afterwards cheap, and zend it to *Handhover*.¹

In *The Jacobite's Journal*, then, Fielding does not treat the country squires in opposition with the genial tolerance that he had done in his dramatic satires, which were written at a time when his own Whig friends were in opposition with them. In *The Jacobite's Journal*, the country squirearchy are thoroughly ridiculed. Although Fielding supports the administration and the Court throughout the journal, he does not represent London as being devoid of fault. Those parts of the metropolis not under the control of the Court are portrayed as being endangered by Jacobitism:

London too has all Sorts of Game for the Net ...
How many disappointed out-of-Place poor Rogues
do we every Day meet? And what universal
Ignorance, attended with complicated Impudence?²

Citizens of London who oppose ministerial measures are also satirised.³ In *The Jacobite's Journal*, as in *The True Patriot*, Fielding is thoroughly with the Court.

Fielding's most extensive treatment of Court-country opposition during these years is in *A Dialogue Between A Gentleman From London ... And An Honest Alderman of The Country Party*, published in June, 1747, as part of the ministerial campaign for the general election of that month. The names of the Court candidates in this pamphlet, Sir John Protestant and Mr English, display a different attitude towards the Court from those of Lord Place and Colonel Promise in *Pasquin*, but the names of the country

¹ *JJ*, January 30, 1748 (Coley, p 144); see also *JJ*, 11, February 13, 1748 (Coley, p 157f) and *JJ*, 14, March 5, 1748 (Coley, p 182).

² *JJ*, 15, March 12, 1748 (Coley, p 193).

³ *JJ*, 9, January 30, 1748 (Coley, p 142f).

candidates, Sir Thomas Leadenhead and Mr Toastum display the same attitude to the country as those of Sir Henry Foxchace and Squire Tankard. It is not so much these characters, who are hardly more than mentioned, which indicates Fielding's revision of the Court-country contrast since the Walpole era, as the characters of the "gentleman from London" and "an honest alderman of the country party" between whom the debate takes place. The gentleman from London is honest and patriotic. The alderman of the country is ignorant and self-interested. The alderman is ridiculed for charging the Court with corruption, as Fielding had done in the Walpole era. Pensions and places given to courtiers are now represented as rewards given for service to the nation.¹ Through his spokesman, the gentleman from London, Fielding even asserts that corruption in the right hands, that is, those of the present administration, is beneficial to the nation.² At the end of the debate, the country alderman is won over by the gentleman from London, and abandons the Opposition for the government.

The Court is not so victorious in a more heated dialogue about Court and country between Mrs Western and Squire Western in *Tom Jones*, which was written during this period. Mrs Western, who had lived about the Court, supports the administration and the House of Hanover. Squire Western of Somersetshire is a Tory, having stood twice for the country interest. He is also an incorrigible Jacobite, bearing resemblances to the squires of *The Jacobite's Journal*.³ His first toast is always "The king over the water".⁴ He constantly denounces the Court as "a parcel of Roundheads and Hanover rats",⁵ and looks forward to their downfall, "I hope the times are a coming that we shall make fools of them, and every man shall enjoy his own".⁶ The dialogue between Squire

¹Coley, p 17.

²Coley, p 31f.

³*TJ*, VI, ii (Henley III, p 274).

⁴*TJ*, VII, iv (Henley III, p 345).

⁵*TJ*, VI, xiv (Henley III, p 329).

⁶*Ibid.* For the political debate between Squire and Mrs Western, see also VI, ii (Henley III, p 276f).

Western and his sister, however, is not introduced for propagandist purposes, as both characters and their viewpoints are satirised. It is introduced for the purpose of comedy.¹ Nevertheless, *Tom Jones* is not unbiased in its political content. George Lyttleton and the Duke of Bedford are complimented in the novel's dedication.² Other members of the administration are complimented in the novel.³ Fielding is silent on Allworthy's politics, but he represents Tom Jones as being a staunch Hanoverian Protestant, who is prepared to fight with the Duke of Cumberland against the Pretender⁴ in the rebellion of 1745, when the action of the novel takes place. Contrary to his assertions in *The True Patriot*, Fielding, in *Tom Jones*, represents rural England at the time of the rebellion as being infested with Jacobites.⁵ Jacobitism is allegorically satirised in Tom's meeting with the gypsies.⁶ Martin Battestin observes that Fielding, in depicting the primitive polity of the gypsies, runs up an ironic parable of government, exposing the Jacobite ideal of civil happiness under an absolute monarch, as being a dangerous and alluring dream.⁷ In *Tom Jones*, then, his last major work before becoming a magistrate, Fielding continues to support the House of Hanover and the government of Westminster. Indeed, Fielding's encomiums on Westminster during the 1740s are amongst the few exceptions to his general denunciation of London. Whilst he continues to censure London during these years, he does not represent the powers that be as being responsible for its vices, as he had done in the Walpole era. Unlike the situation in the 1730s, however, where his

¹ See discussion, p 283 above.

² Henley III, p 9f.

³ Lord Hardwick is complimented. *TJ*, IV, vi (Henley III, p 164). Henry Pelham and George Dodington are complimented in *TJ*, XI, ix (Henley IV, p 293f). William Pitt is complimented in *TJ*, XIV, i (Henley V, p 91f).

⁴ *TJ*, VIII, ix (Henley IV, p 102).

⁵ See *TJ*, XII, vii (Henley IV, p 331ff) and XI, ii (Henley IV, p 255).

⁶ *TJ*, XII, xii (Henley V, p 11ff).

⁷ M.C. Battestin, "Tom Jones and his Egyptian Majesty : Fielding's Parable of Government", *PMLA* 82, 1967, pp 58-77.

allegiance to the Country Party had obliged him to tread lightly on the squirearchy, in the mid 1740s he was able to satirise Tory country squires without restraint, and did so. There is no evidence in *The Jacobite's Journal* that the rural environment could produce an Allworthy. Nevertheless, when he takes the Court-country rivalry into his imaginative writings, as in the debates between Mrs Western and Squire Western in *Tom Jones*, he uses it for comic, rather than propagandist purposes, as in his dramatic satires. Thus, whilst often being an outspoken political writer, he knew how to keep his politics in their proper place.

Section Three: After 1749

In 1749 Henry Pelham's administration was weakened by a split in its own ranks. William Pitt and the Duke of Newcastle broke away from Henry Pelham and the Duke of Bedford. Fielding remained loyal to the Pelham faction. His duties as magistrate, however, prevented his writing for them as extensively as he had done earlier. Although opposition writers represented him as being a ministerial writer in his final journal, *The Covent Garden Journal*,¹ this journal, unlike *The Champion*, *The True Patriot* and *The Jacobite's Journal*, was not founded with any specific political intent. In the journal's first number, he declared his neutrality from party politics,² and on the whole, he kept his word. Although there is some support of the ministry, *The Covent Garden Journal* is mainly concerned with moral, social and cultural issues. As magistrate, Fielding was more concerned with broad social issues, rather than narrow party issues. In his social pamphlets, he continues to use the town-country contrast for political purposes, but in the interests of broad social philosophy, rather than narrow party politics. There is one political episode in *Amelia* in which a noble peer attempts to corrupt Dr Harrison, but as the action of the novel takes place in 1734, this episode does not refer to the political situation of the 1750s.³

¹ For a discussion of this issue see Jensen I, p 47ff.

² *CGJ*, 1, January 4, 1752 (Jensen I, p 135).

³ *Amelia* XI, ii.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CULTURAL DIMENSION

Introduction

A major target in Augustan and in Fielding's urban satire was an alleged debasement of traditional cultural standards in London, which, as the nation's capital, made immediately visible the cultural changes accompanying socio-economic change in contemporary society. Increasing economic prosperity meant that leisure and taste for cultural activities spread more widely throughout the middle classes than ever before. On the whole, these people had not received a traditional Classical education, and they demanded new art forms which reflected their lifestyle and expressed their values. Amongst the new forms which arose to meet these demands were the journal and the novel. Thus literature was no longer the exclusive property of the well-born, who themselves were no longer exclusively neo-Classical in their tastes. The old system whereby writers were supported by aristocratic patrons was rapidly giving way to one in which they wrote for the theatrical-managers and the booksellers, who increasingly monopolised the output of literature. Whilst some of these men encouraged high standards, others were more concerned with immediate profit and catered to the lucrative sections of the market-place, with little regard for high standards, traditional or otherwise. Many conservative writers were alarmed at these changes. They denounced the age as one of artistic degeneracy, and represented London as a chaotic centre in which traditional English literature was being debased by unscrupulous *entrepreneurs* and nonsensical literary practices. In their satires, they represented many features of London's literary scene as being symbolic of this alleged degeneracy, such as Grub Street, the theatres, the booksellers, the theatrical-managers, the Poet Laureate Colley Cibber, and many of the new forms themselves. Subscribing to the traditional principle that all art should instruct, the satirists represented the debasement of traditional literature in

London as being symptomatic of more fundamental moral disorders in the nation at large. It was conventional for them to represent cultural change in London as heralding the collapse of traditional English civilisation. At the end of *The Dunciad*, Pope renders the alleged destruction of the old by the new cultural order in terms of an apocalyptic vision of a *fin du monde* on a cosmic scale. This was an exaggerated response to the situation, as the satirists themselves must have known. For, whilst they censured the age as one of cultural decay, many also celebrated it as one of great cultural growth which, in fact, it was, with excellent standards being reached in both the sciences and the arts. In neither satire nor panegyric did writers present the whole picture, but manipulated the evidence to support a single viewpoint. They did, however, satirise the age more vigorously than they celebrated it. We can only surmise the reasons for this, which must have been varied and complex. For one thing, satire against an alleged debasement of literature was part of the literary heritage which the Augustans were trying to preserve. The Roman satirists who denounced their age as one of cultural anarchy were greatly imitated by the Augustans, amongst whom such denunciations became conventional, almost obligatory. Also, in condemning the age, many writers were responding to personal pressures placed upon them by a system in which they could no longer depend upon aristocratic patronage, but had to meet the demands of the market-place. In London, writers blamed many elements for the alleged artistic debasement, particularly Sir Robert Walpole, whose deafness to their overtures for patronage inspired many to write for the Opposition which represented Walpole as deliberately undermining traditional English culture in order to spread ignorance and facilitate arbitrary government.¹ The writers' alternative to Walpole's London was, of course, the country. In the "country house" ideal, the poet had occupied an important position within the communal life of the country house. It was his function to idealise the estate, to represent it as symbolic of traditional English civilisation, and to censure the forces which threatened its continued existence.²

¹B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 14ff.

²G.R. Hibbard, *op.cit.*, p 159.

In the Walpole era, figures such as Pope at Twickenham, Bolingbroke at Dawley Farm and Cobham at Stowe were used to represent this ideal of the poets and politicians in opposition to Walpole living in rural communities governed by the values of traditional English society, this thereby qualifying them to form an alternative government, and return traditional English culture to the *status quo*.¹ It was conventional in Augustan literature for writers, regardless of political allegiance, to represent the country as the best place to cultivate literature in peace and tranquillity.²

This, briefly, is the background to the cultural dimension of the town-country contrast which is so prominent in Fielding's writings. Throughout his career, Fielding constantly denounced "this Gothic leaden age,/When wit is banish'd from the press and stage".³ Although much of this satire is rhetorical in nature, its ubiquity in his writings suggests that he sincerely believed England to be in a state of artistic degeneracy. He had personal reasons for feeling this way. Like most writers, he could not find permanent patronage, and so was obliged to meet the demands of the market-place. Although artistically conservative, he scored his greatest successes in such modern forms as the dramatic burlesque, the journalistic essay and the novel, forms which departed radically from the old principles of neo-Classicism. This must have driven home to him the fact that the traditional culture, which he revered, was on the decline. Although he constantly lamented this decline, there is no evidence to suggest that he did not like writing in the new forms. He was something of an opportunist, ready to give the public what it wanted. He did not abandon his principles, but effected a compromise between the old and the new, being a Modern with the spirit of the Ancient. In his denunciations of the age, however, there is no suggestion that he was willing to make any compromise with it. He was probably disturbed by the fact that many of the new

¹ See previous chapter.

² G.G. Williams, *op.cit.*, p 600.

³ Henley XII, p 254.

forms were not didactic in nature. He subscribed to the current analogy between art, taste and morals:

... there is a strict analogy between taste and morals of an age; and depravity in the one always induces depravity in the other. True taste is indeed no other than the knowledge of what is right and fit in every thing. It cannot be imagined therefore, that one capable of discerning this in all lesser matter, should be unable to perceive it in that highest and noblest object the human mind. When therefore we see false taste prevail in all things else, we may naturally conclude it exists here likewise.¹

He did not, however, attribute the same catastrophic cosmic significance to cultural degeneracy as did many of his contemporaries and, in his later writings, he portrays traditional English artistic standards as being largely preserved in the country, as discussed later.

In my previous chapters I have argued that Fielding's use of the town-country contrast to express his views on contemporary issues became less literary or less prominent in his writings as his career progressed. These tendencies are not so marked in his use of the conventions for analysis of cultural issues, a highly literary and conventional treatment of which remains throughout his writings. This is not surprising, since he was dealing mainly with literary issues. Nevertheless, certain developmental trends can be discerned. In his early writings, his satire against London's alleged cultural degeneracy is highly rhetorical and derivative and, at times, trivial. His only successes are in his dramatic burlesques. In these he displays much originality, combining themes from Pope's *Dunciad*, Hogarth's paintings, and other Augustan satires with the techniques of Butler and Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, to present highly vigorous and telling satire against the alleged cultural transgressions of the age. When the stage-licensing act, which he had done much to provoke, curtailed his dramatic career, he turned to censuring the town's taste in other forms, firstly, in the journal and then in the

¹*Familiar Letter* XL (Henley XVI, p 28f).

novel. In *The Champion*, *The True Patriot*, *The Jacobite's Journal*, *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, the cultural satire is vigorous, but thoroughly conventional, and not as impressive as in the dramatic burlesques. After his appointment as magistrate, Fielding was mainly concerned with social issues. There is little treatment of culture in the social pamphlets or in *Amelia*. There is, however, one final burst of enthusiasm, in *The Covent Garden Journal*, which contains some of Fielding's most powerful writing on artistic matters. The satire is sharper and more brilliant than in the dramatic burlesques but there is a new element not present in the early writings, that is, a severity, and even bitterness, of tone. The war against Grub Street loses much of the early good-humour, and is often harsh. When Fielding threw down his pen in disgust after writing the last number, he realised that the war had been lost, and that it had cost him a great deal, for he himself had descended to using the very scurrility against which he had battled throughout his career.

Section One: The Early Writings

Fielding's poetical denunciations of London's alleged cultural degeneracy are imitative and unimpressive. His most original and successful contribution to the current satirical campaign is in his dramatic burlesques, the first of which was *The Author's Farce*, containing the puppet show "The Pleasures of the Town", produced at the Little Theatre in March, 1730, and revised, expanded and produced at Drury Lane, in February 1734.¹ *The Author's Farce* tells the story of Harry Luckless, a young man trying to earn his living in London's literary world. Although he is a hack writer, we are meant to take him and his story seriously. Luckless tries unsuccessfully to obtain an aristocratic patron,² in which episode Fielding dramatises the current charge that the upper classes in London were neglecting the arts. Luckless tries to have his play published by Bookweight,³ a London bookseller of the type satirised by Pope in *The Dunciad*.⁴ Bookweight has reduced literature to a commodity for the market-place: "books are only bought to furnish libraries, as pictures and glasses, and beds and chairs, are for other rooms."⁵ In portraying Bookweight's factory,⁶ in which the illiterate, poverty-stricken hacks, Dash, Quibble, Blotpage, Index and Scarecrow churn out their literary wares, Fielding portrays Grub Street, as satirised by the Augustans. In his two verse epistles to Sir Robert Walpole, Fielding playfully represents himself as being a Grub Street Hack but, whilst he was probably introduced to Grub Street by James Ralph,⁷ he moved in more reputable literary

¹The 1734 version is in the Henley edition and will be used in this chapter.

²*The Author's Farce* I, iv (Henley VIII, p 203).

³*The Author's Farce* I, vii (Henley VIII, p 208f).

⁴*The Dunciad* II.

Bookweight could be a portrait of Edmund Curll, an infamous bookseller (Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 83).

⁵*The Author's Farce* II, v (Henley VIII, p 221).

⁶*The Author's Farce* II, iii-v (Henley VIII, p 216ff).

⁷Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 74.

circles, to which he was probably introduced by Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu.¹ His portrait of Bookweight's factory is thoroughly conventional, taking themes from Hogarth's "The Distressed Poet",² and Pope's *Dunciad*. The theatrical-managers are also satirised in *The Author's Farce*. Luckless tries to have his play produced by Marplay Sen. and Marplay Jun., satirical representations of Colley and Theophilus Cibber,³ who were often charged with using the theatre to serve their own interests.⁴ The Marplays thrust their own productions on the town, discourage writers of merit, encourage those of none, and tailor plays to suit current tastes, as Marplay Junior informs Luckless:

... my father and I, sir, are a couple of poetical tailors : when a play is brought us, we consider it as a tailor does his coat; we cut it, sir, we cut it; and let me tell you, we have the exact measure of the town; we know how to fit their taste.⁵

In Luckless's failure to have his play patronised, published or produced, Fielding dramatises the alleged neglect of literature in London. In the play, Witmore denounces this London to Luckless as it was constantly denounced by the Augustan satirists:

'Sdeath! in an age of learning and true politeness, where a man might succeed by his merit, there would be some encouragement. But now, when party and prejudice carry all before them; when learning is decried, wit not understood; when the theatres are puppet-shows, and the comedians ballad-singers; when fools lead the town, would a man think to thrive by his wit? If thou must write, write nonsense, write operas, write Hurlothrumbos, set up an oratory and preach nonsense, and you may meet with encouragement enough. Be profane, be scurrilous, be immodest; if you would receive applause, deserve to receive sentence at the Old Bailey; and if you would ride in a coach, deserve to ride in a cart.⁶

Luckless accepts Witmore's advice to pander to public taste, and produces a puppet-show entitled: "The Pleasures of the Town".

¹ Lady Mary assisted Fielding on his first entry into the literary world (Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 58).

² R. E. Moore, *op.cit.*, p 91.

³ J. Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p 39f.

⁴ J. Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p 40.

⁵ *The Author's Farce* I, vi (Henley VIII, p 207).

⁶ *The Author's Farce* I, v (Henley VIII, p 204).

The main business of "The Pleasures of the Town" is a contest between the reigning diversions of London for first prize in nonsense at the Court of Queen Nonsense in the Underworld. The puppet-show provides a comprehensive satirical survey of the alleged cultural transgressions of the age. Through Mrs Novel, Fielding/Luckless ridicules the current taste for romance novels. Through Count Ugly, he satirises Count Heidegger, who conducted the masquerades at the Opera House in the Haymarket. Through Dr Orator, he satirises Dr Henley, the notorious non-conformist preacher so disliked by the satirists. Colley Cibber, the Poet Laureate in London, also appears at the Court of Nonsense and is ridiculed. Most of the pleasures of the town represent alleged abuses on the London stage, which the Augustans regarded as being in a deplorable condition. Traditional tragedy and comedy were declining into rhetoric or farce, a decline which Fielding/Luckless dramatises in the puppet-show through the bombastic Don Tragedio and the capering Sir Farcical Comic. Through Sir Farcical Comic and Monsieur Pantomime, Fielding/Luckless satirises the pantomime entertainments, such as juggling, tumbling and rope-dancing, of Bartholomew Fair in Smithfield, which were becoming increasingly prevalent in the main theatres and proving so lucrative that many theatrical-managers gave them precedence over traditional drama.¹ The traditionalists dismissed these entertainments as serving no instructive function and, in prose, in poetry and in drama itself,² vigorously satirised their prominence on the London stage. In "The Pleasures of the Town" Fielding draws on, and contributes to, this campaign, ridiculing the entertainments through Sir Farcical Comic, Monsieur Pantomime, and Hurllothrumbo, a nonsensical entertainment by Samuel Johnson of Cheshire, produced at the Little Theatre in 1729. Through Sir Farcical Comic and Monsieur Pantomime, he also satirises Colley Cibber³ and John Rich,⁴ theatrical-managers whom the

¹ J. Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p 103.

² J. Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p 41f.

³ G. Sherburn, "The Dunciad, Book Four", *University of Texas Studies in English* XXIV, 1944, p 181.

⁴ Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 83.

Augustans blamed, amongst others, for the debasement of the London stage. The prize for nonsense is won by Signior Opera, who represents that particular pleasure of the town which Fielding considered to be chiefly responsible for what he saw as the degeneracy of traditional English culture in London. During the Augustan period, Italian Opera was extremely popular, particularly amongst the *beau monde*. The traditionalists censured it as serving no didactic function, as being effeminate and alien to the masculine spirit of England, and as diverting funds away from traditional drama. Fielding burlesques it in the ballad operas which he wrote in imitation of Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. He frequently censures town taste for Italian Opera, in his dramatic writings, in which the refrain: "English is now below this learned town,/None but Italian warblers will go down",¹ is often voiced. He denounces the nobility in London as being eager "to rival each other in distinguishing themselves in favour of Italian theatres, and in neglect of our own", and willing to "sacrifice our own native entertainments to a wanton affected fondness for foreign music".²

Fielding continues his attack on opera and the pantomimic entertainments on the London stage in "The Life and Death of Queen Commonsense", the mock tragedy rehearsed in *Pasquin*, produced at the Little Theatre in 1736. In this play, presented by Fustian, London becomes a battleground for an allegorical contention between ignorance and commonsense. Queen Ignorance lands "With a vast power from Italy and France/Of singers, fiddlers, tumblers, and rope-dancers".³ Traditional English tragedy and comedy are slain by her forces, and she is joined by Grub Street, Italian Opera, and the pantomimic entertainments of the London stage represented by Harlequin (John Rich), who comes as ambassador from the theatres

¹ Epilogue to *The Intriguing Chambermaid* (Henley X, p 321), see also, Epilogue upon the revival of *The Author's Farce* (Henley X, p 284) and Epilogue to *The Universal Gallant* (Henley X, p 162).

² Dedication to *The Intriguing Chambermaid* (Henley X, p 277).

³ *Pasquin* IV, i (Henley XI, p 209).

with a catalogue of their choicest nonsensical items as hostages.
Fustian voices the Augustans' main objection to these entertainments:

I have often wondered how it was possible for any creature of human understanding, after having been diverted for three hours with the production of a great genius, to sit for three more, and see a set of people running about the stage after one another, without speaking one syllable; and playing several juggling tricks, which are done at Fawks's after a much better manner; and for this, sir, the town does not only pay additional prices, but loses several fine parts of their best authors, which are cut out to make room for the said farces.¹

Shortly after *Pasquin* was produced, John Rich retaliated against this satire on him, with a production satirising Fielding.² A few weeks later, Fielding came back with *Tumble Down Dick; or, Phaeton in the Suds* which he ironically dedicated to Rich, crediting him with the prominence of the pantomime on the London stage.³ In the play, which is presented in rehearsal, by Machine, Fielding ridicules the antics of Harlequin and the extravagant stage machinery of *The Fall of Phaeton*, as entertainment produced by Rich and others at Drury Lane. In so doing, he brings his satire on the London stage, begun in "The Pleasures of the Town" and *Pasquin*, to its climax. The satire in "The Life and Death of Queen Commonsense", however, covers a wider area than that in "The Pleasures of the Town" or *Tumble Down Dick*. The contention between Queen Commonsense and Queen Ignorance represents a contention between forces of traditional English civilisation, and those of chaos. As well as being deserted by the arts, Commonsense is deserted by religion, law, physic, the Royal Society, the colleges and the universities. Like Queen Dullness in *The Dunciad*, Queen Ignorance extends her reign over all of London. As in *The Dunciad*, cultural transgressions in London are portrayed as being symptomatic of more fundamental moral disorders in society at large. This is made clear by Queen Commonsense's dying speech:

¹*Pasquin* V, i (Henley XI, p 222).

²Cross: *op.cit.*, I, p 191.

³Dedication to *Tumble Down Dick* (Henley XII, p 7).

Henceforth all things shall topsy-turvy turn;
 Physic shall kill, and Law enslave the world :
 Cits shall turn beaus, and taste Italian songs,
 While courtiers are stock-jobbing in the city.
 Places, requiring learning and great parts,
 Henceforth shall all be hustled in a hat,
 And drawn by men deficient in them both.¹

The last item in Commonsense's prophecy points directly to Sir Robert Walpole.² Much of the urban satire of the period had political significance. There are political undercurrents in the satire of the three plays which we have thus far considered.³ These political meanings become explicit in the urban satire of Fielding's last two dramatic burlesques.

As discussed in our previous chapter, most of the leading *litterati*, having failed to secure Walpole's patronage, wrote for the Opposition. Satire against Walpole's alleged corruption of London's cultural world became an Opposition commonplace.⁴ It permeates *The Dunciad*, in which the conquest of England by Dullness at the end of Book Four is directly attributed to Walpole.⁵ Important in the arraignment of Walpole's London was the prominence of Colley Cibber, whose appointment as Poet Laureate in 1730 represented to the Opposition a deliberate policy on Walpole's part to destroy traditional English culture. As Poet Laureate, Cibber became a symbol of the alleged corruption of Walpole's London.⁶ He became the second hero of *The Dunciad* and is satirised in Fielding's *The Author's Farce* and *Pasquin*.⁷ Fielding parodies Cibber's

¹*Pasquin* V, i (Henley XI, p 224).

²J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, p 122f.

³For a discussion of the political allusions in *The Author's Farce* and *Tumble Down Dick*, see Sheridan Baker, *op.cit.*, p 221ff. In *The Author's Farce*, Fielding has satirised *Hurlothrumbo*, a nonsensical piece produced at the Little Theatre in 1729 and patronised by Walpole's son, Horatio, representing to the Opposition the kind of art encouraged by the Walpoles. (J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, p 104f.)

⁴B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 11ff.

⁵M. Mack, *The Garden and the City*, p 150ff and B. Goldgar, *op.cit.*, p 214ff.

⁶J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, pp 104 and 147.

⁷*The Author's Farce* III, i (Henley VIII, p 231) and III, i (Henley VIII, p 251).

notorious odes in the opening scene of *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*. In explaining the parody in the play's dedication, Fielding makes explicit the cultural significance which Cibber's laureateship bore to the age, and Walpole's responsibility for this:

"This is a day, in days of yore/Our fathers never
saw before;/This is a day 'tis one to ten,/Our sons
will never see again." Plainly intimating that
such times as these never were seen before, nor
will ever be seen again; for which the present age
are certainly obliged to their ministry.¹

Nevertheless, it is Cibber's role as manager of Drury Lane Theatre which has greatest political significance in Fielding's dramatic satires. To Fielding, Cibber's use of his considerable power as theatrical manager was arbitrary and self-interested. In his plays, Fielding runs up a parallel between Cibber's alleged use of arbitrary power in the theatre, and Walpole's alleged use of arbitrary power in government. This parallel was conventional in the Opposition campaign.² It first appears in Fielding's plays in *The Author's Farce*, where Colley and Theophilus Cibber are introduced as the theatrical dictators, Marplay Senior and Junior, respectively.³ It becomes more prominent and politically audacious in Fielding's later satires, *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*, and *Eurydice Hissed*, both produced at the Little Theatre in 1737. In dedicating *The Historical Register* to the public, Fielding draws the analogy between theatrical and political corruption by speaking of the threat to the constitution of the British theatre, presented by current managerial and ministerial policies.⁴ The play's fictitious author, Medley, makes this satirical connection explicit, noting:

a strict resemblance between the states political
and theatrical; there is a ministry in the latter
as well as the former; and I believe as weak a
ministry as any poor kingdom could ever boast of;
parts are given in the latter to actors, with much
the same regard to capacity, as places in the former
have sometimes been, in former ages I mean, and

¹Dedication to *The Historical Register* (Henley XI, p 234).

²J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, *op.cit.*, p 135.

³J. Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p 40.

⁴Dedication to *The Historical Register* (Henley XI, p 232).

though the public damn both, yet while they both receive their pay, they laugh at the public behind the scenes; and if one considers the plays that come from one part, and the writings from the other, one would be apt to think the same authors were retained in both.¹

Once again, the satirical connection is dramatised through Colley and Theophilus Cibber, who appear as Ground-Ivy and Pistol respectively, and are more harshly satirised than in *The Author's Farce*. Again, they are satirised as corrupting the theatre and promoting only those who serve their own interests, as Walpole was alleged to do in government. The analogy is drawn more pointedly in the after-piece to *The Historical Register*, *Eurydice Hissed*, a play devoted entirely to this theme. In this play, a poet, Pillage, a representation of Walpole, as his name suggests, succeeds with a mighty farce entitled *Pasquin*, and is surrounded by flatterers and dependents, all soliciting favours, which are granted according to interest rather than merit. Pillage then fails with *Eurydice*, an allegorical representation of Walpole's excise bill, and is immediately deserted by his attendants and falls from power. Throughout the play, the analogy between the theatrical and political corruption of Walpole's London is dramatised through character, action and dialogue, with much emphasis on the debasement of traditional values, championed through Honestus.² Walpole tired of all this and brought in the Stage Licensing Act of June 1737, which prohibited all plays except those licensed by the Lord Chamberlain and all theatres except those under royal patronage. It effectively silenced Fielding at the Little Theatre. To the Opposition, the Act represented Walpole's final assault on the independence of English literature.³ In October, 1737, the Lord Chamberlain gave license to a group of French players to perform at the Little Theatre. Many saw Walpole as bringing over the hated French to provoke his enemies.⁴ The government took extraordinary measures on the opening night to protect the French players. At one point the audience rose

¹ *The Historical Register* Scene II (Henley XI, p 257f).

² J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, p 135f.

³ J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, p 142ff.

⁴ Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 234.

and sang Fielding's "The Roast Beef of Old England", which, as we have seen, had served in the Opposition campaign to maintain traditional English values allegedly debauched by Walpole.¹ So ended Fielding's career as dramatic satirist in which one of his major themes had been the corruption of London's cultural world by ignorance, poor taste, and lack of artistic encouragement from society's leaders.

Amongst all his writings, Fielding's most successful and original presentation of this theme is in his dramatic satires. Although original, these are not totally independent. In them, Fielding combines materials from many sources with realistic observations on London's cultural world, and welds all these into vigorous satirical vehicles for expressing his own viewpoints on the issue. As noted above, he drew motifs from Hogarth's many paintings on the subject. *The Author's Farce* and *Pasquin* are extremely Hogarthian in their portrayal of London's cultural scenes.² He also took motifs from seventeenth-century dramatic satire, such as Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fayre*, the influence of which is immediately visible in "The Pleasures of the Town". He took his technique mainly from Butler and Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, of which more will be said later. He drew heavily on Augustan urban satire, particularly on that of the Scriblerians, who were at the height of their power when he began his career in the late 1720s. Being socially and artistically conservative he had many affinities with them, but did not fall immediately under their spell. In three cantos of verse, probably written in 1729, and possibly designed for Walpole's patronage, he uses the satirical techniques of *The Dunciad* to represent the Scriblerians as being responsible for the alleged cultural degradation of the age.³ For the next few years he played a double hand, angling for Walpole's patronage, but publishing dramatic satires under the pseudonym of Scriblerus Secundus, thereby allying himself with the Scriblerians. In these

¹Cross, *op.cit.*, I, p 234.

²R. E. Moore, *op.cit.*, pp 91 and 103.

³I. Grundy, *op.cit.*, p 214ff.

plays, Fielding drew most heavily on *The Dunciad*, the culminating urban satire of the period. Fielding hits out at many of *The Dunciad*'s targets. He also uses Pope's tactic of ridiculing London's cultural transgressions by bringing them before mock goddesses and queens to contend for prizes in ignorance and nonsense, a tactic which was commonplace after Colley Cibber's elevation to the position of Poet Laureate.¹ There was, indeed, a strong relationship between Fielding's dramatic burlesques and Pope's *Dunciad*. Fielding's plays are largely dramatisations of Pope's poem,² and Pope seems to have drawn on Fielding's plays for the fourth book of that poem.³ Fielding, however, early emancipated himself from Pope and the Scriblerians. By the time he published *Pasquin* he had dropped the name of Scriblerus Secundus. Even in his early plays, he asserted his independence. His Whiggism led him to attribute different socio-economic causes to London's alleged cultural decay to those argued by the Tory satirists. In *The Dunciad*, Pope attributes London's cultural degradation to the increasing power of the mercantile classes. The action of *The Dunciad* consists in the conquest of the traditional cultural world of Westminster by the "Smithfield Muses" from the City of London.⁴ Fielding summarises the action and judgement of *The Dunciad* in "The Pleasures of the Town", where a poet in Hades reports on events in London: "My lord mayor has shortened the time of Bartholomew Fair in Smithfield, and so they are resolved to keep it all the year round at the other end of the town."⁵

¹ J. Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p 39.

² J. Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p 39ff.

³ G. Sherburn, "*The Dunciad*, Book Four", p 179ff.

⁴ For an analysis of the geographical movement of *The Dunciad*, see, A. Williams, *Pope's Dunciad: A Study of its Meaning*, London, 1955, pp 33ff.

For Fielding's use of this movement in *The Author's Farce*, see J. Loftis, *Comedy and Society*, p 41.

⁵ *The Author's Farce*, III, i (Henley VIII, p 235).

In *The Author's Farce*, however, there is praise of the mechanical classes in Witmore's speech:

I know none that thrive by profiting mankind, but
the husbandman and merchant: the one gives you
the fruit of your own soil, the other brings you
those from abroad; and yet these are represented
as mean and mechanical, and the others [nobility]
as honourable and glorious.¹

These ambiguities recur in *Pasquin*. When Queen Ignorance lands at Covent Garden, she fears she has ventured too far towards the West End: "Too near those theatres where Common-sense/Maintains her garrisons of mighty force."² This suggests that East Hendon is already in the control of ignorance, but when Queen Commonsense is slain, Ignorance decrees that she will lie in state in Goodman's Fields, implying that East London is the true realm of commonsense.³ Despite these ambiguities, Fielding's social judgements are clearly dramatised throughout the dramatic satires and the genteel comedies. He places the responsibility for London's alleged cultural degeneracy squarely on the shoulders of the upper classes.⁴ Fielding draws the analogy between corrupt artistic taste and corrupt morals, as in this conversation from *The Historical Register*:

SOURWIT. ... They are such men as your lordship,
who must reform the age; if persons of your
exquisite and refined taste will give a sanction
to politer entertainments, the town will soon be
ashamed at what they do now.

LORD DAPPER. Really this is a very bad house.

SOURWIT. It is not indeed so large as the others,
but I think one hears better in it.

LORD DAPPER. Pox of hearing, one can't see - one's
self I mean; here are no looking glasses. I love
Lincoln's Inn Fields for that reason better than
any house in town.

SOURWIT. Very true, my lord; but I wish your lordship
would think it worth your consideration, as the morals
of a people depend, as has been so often and well

¹*The Author's Farce* I, v (Henley VIII, p 205).

²*Pasquin* IV, i (Henley XI, p 217).

³*Pasquin* V, i (Henley XI, p 225).

⁴For examples of culturally irresponsible members of the aristocracy, see Lord Formal in *Love in Several Masques* I, v (Henley VIII, p 27, Lord Richly in *The Modern Husband* II, v (Henley X, p 32) and Lord Place in *Pasquin* II, i (Henley XI, p 179).

proved, entirely on their public diversions, it would be of great consequence that those of the sublimest kind should meet with your lordship's and the rest of the nobility's countenance.

LORD DAPPER. Mr Sourwit, I am always ready to give my countenance to anything of that kind, which might bring the best company together; for as one does not go to see the play but the company, I think that's chiefly to be considered, and therefore I am always ready to countenance good plays.¹

The implications for society of corrupt aristocratic taste and morals are made explicit in the long conversation between Lord Richly and Mr Bellamant in *The Modern Husband*.² Fielding represents France and Italy as being responsible for the aristocracy's corruption. He always considered England superior in culture to all other countries:

Can the whole world in science match our soil?
Have they a LOCKE, a NEWTON, or a BOYLE?
Or dare the greatest genius of their stage,
with SHAKESPEARE, or immortal BEN engage?
Content with nature's bounty do not crave
The little which to other lands she gave;
Nor like the cock a barley-corn prefer³
To all the jewels which you owe to her.

Fielding frequently portrays this foreign corruption as spreading from the City of Westminster into the City of London:

English is now below this learned town,
None but Italian warblers will go down.
Though courts were more polite, the English ditty
Could heretofore at least content the city:
That for Italian now has let us drop,⁴
And Dimi Cara rings through every shop.

By portraying Westminster as being the major corrupting influence in London's cultural world, Fielding demonstrates his early emancipation from the Scriblerians, particularly Pope. In his satires, he also departs from his Scriblerian models on a fundamental issue which has implications for his mature writings. This is in his

¹*The Historical Register* Scene I (Henley XI, p 247f).

²*The Modern Husband* II, v (Henley X, p 32).

³Epilogue to *Pasquin* (Henley XI, p 228). In this play, France and Italy are chiefly blamed for England's cultural degeneracy (*Pasquin* IV, i (Henley XI, p 217).

⁴Epilogue to *The Intriguing Chambermaid* (Henley X, p 321).

tolerant and good-humoured portrayal of the alleged cultural degeneracy, exemplified particularly in his attitude to Grub Street.

In *The Dunciad*, Pope takes to its logical conclusion the analogy between corrupt artistic tastes and moral degeneracy, by representing London's alleged cultural degradation as heralding the collapse of English civilisation. Thus, Pope represents Grub Street writers as being a social menace, and satirises them mercilessly with such scatological material as the diving contest into Fleet Ditch. Ian Donaldson points out that Pope uses London's physical pollution to suggest pollution in intangible values.¹ In satirising Grub Street, Fielding does not use scatological material. His references to London's pollution are scattered and do not support a main satirical design. This is partly because he found scatological material distasteful, and partly because he was too tolerant in his attitudes to use it, writing not only under the influence of the Tory satirists, but also of the more benevolent Whig satirists such as Addison and Steele. Fielding's satire against Grub Street is even sympathetic. He represents their illiteracy and their poverty as being pathetic rather than despicable, as in the scene in Bookweight's house in *The Author's Farce*. Unlike Pope, Fielding throws the weight of his satire on the system, rather than on the hacks themselves.

Fielding's more tolerant treatment of artistic abuses is also demonstrated by his use of that other great symbol of the age's alleged cultural degeneracy used in *The Dunciad*, the London stage. In *The Dunciad*, Pope presents the stage as an emblem of the world, according to a long-standing tradition whereby human life was represented as a dramatic poem, created by God, who allocated roles and manipulated the action according to the laws of cosmic harmony. He therefore represents the non-rational juggling, tumbling, rope-dancing and pantomimical entertainments on the London stage as abnegations of the function of dramatic art to express universal truth. He represents the grotesque terrestrial and cosmic scenery created by elaborate stage machinery as being violations of both

¹I. Donaldson, "The Satirists' London", *passim*.

art and nature. Thus he describes John Rich, creating an anarchical universe out of his anarchical stage practices:

In yonder cloud behold,
Whose sarsenet skirts are edg'd with flamy gold,
A matchless Youth! his nod these worlds controuls,
Wings the red lightning, and the thunder rolls.
Angel of Dulness, sent to scatter round
Her magic charms o'er all unclassic ground:
Yon stars, yon suns, he rears at pleasure higher,
Illumes their light, and sets their flames on fire.
Immortal Rich! How calm he sits at ease
'Mid snows of paper, and fierce hail of pease:
And proud his Mistress' orders to perform, ¹
Rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm.

Rich's attempts to imitate God's creating faculties are here represented as being impious. Pope uses Rich's creation as a fitting emblem of the kind of chaos which would result from a triumph of Dullness on the London stage and in the nation at large.² The eventual collapse of the universe at the end of *The Dunciad* is rendered in terms of the ending of a play:

Lo! thy dread Empire, CHAOS! is restor'd;
Light dies before thy uncreating word:
Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;
And Universal Darkness buries All.³

Hogarth, in his final painting, "Tail Piece", also presents an apocalyptic vision of a *fin du monde* rendered in terms of current stage practice.⁴ We cannot know how seriously the Augustans took this vision of a *fin du monde*. There is obvious delight in the exaggeration.⁵ Fielding often used the rhetoric, but never took the idea seriously. Whilst he represented artistic degeneracy as being symptomatic of moral and social degeneracy, he did not represent it as heralding the collapse of the cosmos. He did emphasise the

¹*The Dunciad* III, pp 253-264 (J. Butt, ed., p 760f).

²For a discussion of this theme in *The Dunciad*, see A. Williams, *op.cit.*, p 94ff and I. Donaldson, *The World Upside-Down*, p 185ff.

³*The Dunciad* IV, pp 653-656 (J. Butt, ed., *op.cit.*, p 800).

⁴According to R. E. Moore, Hogarth led the way in satire on the current stage practices (*op.cit.*, p 89f).

⁵I. Donaldson, *The World Upside-Down*, p 187.

significance which John Rich's practices on the London stage bore to the age. In *The Champion*, May 3, 1740, he describes Rich as the "impious, long-successful sorcerer" who "turns all nature topsy turvy, subverts the order of nature".¹ In *Tumble Down Dick*, he describes Rich as having "turned all nature topsy turvy".² Although making explicit their significance, Fielding does not attribute the same cosmic import to Rich's practices as Pope. Although in *Tumble Down Dick*, Fielding burlesques an entertainment inspired by Rich, entitled, "The Fall of Phaeton", he does not seize upon the mythological significance of this event, which presaged the end of the world, as Pope would have done, but keeps his play within the realms of comedy. Indeed, Fielding follows this practice in all his dramatic burlesques. *The Author's Farce* and *Pasquin*, like *The Dunciad*, present London's cultural world as being in a state of chaos. Fielding's conclusions, however, are not pessimistic. Fielding's satire always merges into comedy.³ At the end of *The Author's Farce*, satire merges into farce, when Luckless is discovered to be heir to the Kingdom of Bantam and sails off with the pleasures of the town to divert the Antipodes. The same is true of *Pasquin*. At the end of *Pasquin*, Commonsense is slain, and in her dying speech predicts the widespread negation of order portrayed in *The Dunciad*: "henceforth shall all things topsy-turvy turn".⁴ In *Pasquin*, however, Fielding does not fulfil the prophecy as does Pope. In a comic conclusion, the ghost of Commonsense rises and frightens Ignorance and her retainers back to their native realm. In all this, Fielding does not suggest that life is farcical or absurd but that it is presided over by a Divine Providence which will always intervene and turn chaos into order. Thus, Fielding emancipates himself from the pessimism of the Tory satirists and develops these optimistic comic principles which become so important in his major novels.

¹*The Champion*, May 3, 1740 (Henley XV, p 300).

²Henley XII, p 28).

³For these ideas on the comic conclusions in Fielding's dramatic burlesques, I am indebted to I. Donaldson, *The World Upside-Down*, p 191ff.

⁴*Pasquin* V, i (Henley XI, p 224).

Much of the humour in the dramatic burlesques is created by the use of the rehearsal technique. The rehearsals of the various plays are constantly interrupted by humorous comments from fictitious authors and critics, by the failure of stage machinery and props, the incompetence of theatrical staff and the personal mishaps of the actors and actresses. The effect is one of lively comedy. This muffles the satire. The satirical edge is also muffled by the comic ineptitude of the fictitious authors themselves. Luckless, Fustian, Medley, Machine and Spatter are Fielding's spokesmen, and their statements on London's alleged cultural degeneracy are meant to be taken more seriously as the plays progress, but they are all nevertheless hack writers themselves, part of the alleged cultural degradation which they censure. The same is true of their plays, which are also meant to be taken as serious statements on the theme of degeneracy but which are themselves cast in the degenerate forms of the age, such as farce, burlesque, puppet-show and pantomime. Their degeneracy is constantly pointed out by the critics and onlookers, who are nevertheless themselves, representatives of the new age. All this raises the question; how serious are Fielding's criticisms of this alleged cultural degeneracy? On one level, it can be argued that Fielding had no great distaste for the debased theatre, to which he arguably contributed by writing successfully in the age's degenerate forms. There is certainly much fascination with the relish for the chaotic dramatic world being depicted. But Fielding's constant criticisms of London's cultural debasement suggest sincerity. He obviously delighted in writing in the new forms, but did so mainly for the purpose of ridiculing them. Indeed, casting his criticisms of the alleged cultural degeneracy into its own degenerate forms proved to be his most effective satirical vehicle. By writing in the forms themselves, he was able to parody and ridicule every aspect of them. His use of the rehearsal technique enabled him to achieve multi-dimensional satire, as the plays, the playwrights, and the critics all give different perspectives on London's cultural world. All this gives the satire in Fielding's dramatic burlesques, which together constitute the culmination of dramatic criticism on London's alleged cultural degeneracy,¹ much

¹J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, p 130.

breadth and scope, and whilst it is not as profound as that in
The Dunciad it is nonetheless stimulating, original and effective.

Section Two:

The 1740s

The Stage Licensing Act stifled the promise of the 1730s, displayed in writers like Fielding, and led to increased production of non-rational entertainment on the London stage.¹ Fielding continued his criticism of London's cultural world in other forms, turning first to the journal. He established (with others) *The Champion*, in November, 1739, and contributed to it until mid 1741. In *The Champion*, he followed the conventions established by Addison and Steele. He wrote many essays censuring the moral, social and cultural transgressions of the age in their light, satirical manner. He imitated many of their strategies. Like them, he adopted a *persona*, his being that of Captain Hercules Vinegar, the champion of traditional values. Like them, he projected himself into many minor *personae*, the most frequent being other members of the Vinegar family, and he used the device of fictitious correspondents to present multiple viewpoints on his theme. In *The Champion*, he censures alleged artistic transgressions by using the allegory of the dream vision. In *The Champion*, December 13, 1739, he allegorically represents Walpole as corrupting literature.² In *The Champion*, May 24, 1740, in a Lucianic vision, Colley Cibber is satirised as Poet Laureate.³ Cibber is a constant target of satire throughout *The Champion*.⁴ The most memorable strategy used in *The Champion*, one used to great effect in *The Jacobite's Journal*, and less effectively in *The Covent Garden Journal*, is the Court of Censorial Inquiry, in which the various cultural transgressions of London are tried and sentenced. Colley Cibber is a frequent defendant. His most conspicuous appearance is that before the inaugural sitting of the court, on May 17, 1740, in which he is tried and sentenced for having murdered the English language.⁵ Although

¹ J. Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, p 149f.

² *The Champion*, December 13, 1739 (Henley XV, p 97ff).

³ *The Champion*, May 24, 1740 (Henley XV, p 319).

⁴ See, for example, *The Champion*, April 22, 1740 (Henley XV, p 290) and May 3, 1740 (Henley XV, p 299).

⁵ *The Champion*, May 17, 1740 (Henley XV, p 311ff).

Fielding uses allegorical strategies throughout *The Champion*, his major statements on London's alleged cultural degradation are direct. Colley Cibber, Sir Robert Walpole, John Rich, Grub Street and the London stage are all used as symbols but they do not add up to a major satirical design as in the dramatic burlesque. In *The Champion*, Fielding makes less use of London as a symbol of cultural chaos and concentrates more on its personalities. In fact, the London satire of *The Champion* leaves little lasting impression. There are few of the high points which we find in Fielding's later journals. This is partly because Fielding was writing in a *genre* which was new to him. He was experimenting and finding his way. Whilst displaying some fine writing, the urban satire of *The Champion* lacks the vigour and confidence of that in the later journals.

In *The True Patriot*, which he conducted from November 1745 to June 1746, Fielding hits out at all the old targets at Grub Street and abuses in the literary world,¹ at Italian opera,² at the ignorance and capriciousness of the town,³ and at the neglect of Classical education for the young.⁴ In satirising the old targets, Fielding uses the old satirical techniques, again following the conventions established by Addison and Steele. *The True Patriot*, however, is a more mature journal than *The Champion*. The quality of the writing is finer and the satire is more pointed. The most frequent and effective satirical device used in the journal is that of the fictitious correspondent, the most memorable correspondent being Parson Adams of *Joseph Andrews* who, after having visited London, denounces its degeneracy in Old Testament terms.⁵ Conspicuously absent is the mock court of *The Champion*, *The Jacobite's Journal* and *The Covent Garden Journal*. Indeed, whilst the urban satire of *The True Patriot* is more vigorous and telling than that in *The Champion*, there is less of it. It is outweighed by the

¹*TP*, 1, November 5, 1745 (Locke, p 35).

²*TP*, 9, December 31, 1745 (Locke, p 97).

³*TP*, 18, February 25–March 4, 1746 (Locke, p 159).

⁴*TP*, 13, January 21–28, 1746 (Locke, p 127).

⁵*TP*, 7, December 17, 1745 (Locke, p 81) and *TP*, 13, January 21–28, 1746 (Locke, p 127).

political content of the journal, which was founded to support the Pelham administration and the House of Hanover against the threat imposed by the Jacobite Rebellion. The tone of *The True Patriot* is urgent. Fielding probably felt that he had little time to indulge in diverse satirical techniques.

This is not the case with *The Jacobite's Journal*, which was founded in late 1747 and conducted till late 1748 to combat what the Pelham administration saw as a new threat of Jacobitism. Although representing this new threat as a matter of political urgency, Fielding, in *The Jacobite's Journal*, spends more time on cultural issues than in *The True Patriot*. He represents Grub Street as being united in a conspiracy to overthrow the republic of letters: "to the utmost Abuse, Disgrace and Discouragement of Literature, and, lastly, to the great Scandal of this Nation".¹ He, therefore, represents Grub Street as being more of a social menace than he had done in his previous writings. In satirising the hack writers he continues to use the journalistic conventions of Addison and Steele, but returns to the *Dunciad* material which he had used in his dramatic burlesques. Whilst he again writes many leading articles on the subject using a *persona*, this time that of John Trott-Plaíd, and again uses the device of fictitious correspondence to give different views on the subject, his main weapon in satirising Grub Street in *The Jacobite's Journal* is the mock court, which he had used in *The Champion* and left off in *The True Patriot*. Over this Court of Criticism, which is established in *JJ*, 6, January 9, 1748, and conducted from *JJ*, 7, January 16, 1748 to *JJ*, 33, July 16, 1748. Fielding presides, like Pope over *The Dunciad*. Although in establishing the court, Fielding declares that the satire will be general rather than personal,² *The Jacobite's Journal* is a ministerial paper and, in the court as in the leaders, he satirises ministerial artists and writers, such as Samuel Foote,³ Dr Henley,⁴ and Porcupinus Pelagius, the editorial *persona* of *Old England*.⁵ In the court, Fielding uses the *Dunciad*'s device of

¹*JJ*, 6, January 9, 1748 (Coley, p 128). See also *JJ*, 29, June 18, 1748 (Coley, p 308ff).

²*JJ*, 6, January 9, 1748 (Coley, p 128f).

³*JJ*, 22, April 30, 1748 (Coley, p 261ff).

⁴*JJ*, 7, January 16, 1748 (Coley, p 133).

⁵*JJ*, 11, February 13, 1748 (Coley, p. 159ff).

representing Grub Street writers as being poverty-stricken labourers, as he had done in his dramatic burlesques. In *JJ*, 26, May 28, 1748, all hacks are ordered to return to their menial trades.¹ To some extent, Fielding is sympathetic about their poverty as he had been in his dramatic burlesques, claiming that "Men who are obliged to rake their Bread out of the Dirt of *Grub-street* and *Billingsgate*, are rather to be pitied than detested".² One such unfortunate, Catchpenny, is treated leniently by the court.³

Some of the causes brought before the court are treated humorously, such as that between the Corporation of Grub Street, plaintiff, and the Corporation of Billingsgate, defendant, concerning the ownership of an anti-ministerial pamphlet, which Grub Street claims because of its low scandal and invective, and which Billingsgate claims because of its opprobrious terms of abuse. The case concludes when Grub Street re-reads the pamphlet and, ashamed of owning it, withdraws.⁴ Whilst the court abounds with such humour, the satire in it is more biting than ever before in Fielding's writings. Fielding draws not only on the general themes of *The Dunciad*, but also on its sharper satirical weaponry. In the court proceedings reported in *JJ*, 7, January 16, 1748, we even catch a glimpse of the scatological material which he had not significantly used before. In the case between the paper-manufacturers and the pastrycooks and trunk-makers, he uses the traditional emblems of the fate suffered by Grub Street writings.⁵ Again reminiscent of Pope, the city satire of *The Jacobite's Journal* is far more personal than in Fielding's previous writings. As a ministerial writer, Fielding was subjected to many scurrilous attacks. In *JJ*, 28, April 16, 1748, Fielding claims that his patriotism has "drawn on myself all the Scandal and Scurrility, which the blackest Degree of Malice could rake out of the Kennels of *Grub-street* and *Billingsgate*."⁶ Fielding did not reply with scandal and scurrility,

¹*JJ*, 26, May 28, 1748 (Coley, p 194f).

²*JJ*, 31, July 2, 1748 (Coley, p 327f).

³*JJ*, 26, May 28, 1748 (Coley, p 293f).

⁴*JJ*, 11, February 13, 1748 (Coley, p 159).

⁵*JJ*, 7, January 16, 1748 (Coley, p 134f).

⁶*JJ*, 20, April 16, 1748 (Coley, p 237).

but his satire becomes more personal. He uses Pope's tactic of associating his enemies with disreputable areas of London. In the court proceedings reported in *JJ*, 22, April 30, 1748, Samuel Foote, who ridiculed the ministry in mimicry at the Little Theatre and sometimes at Covent Garden, and whom Fielding satirised in his puppet-show in Panton Street (conducted early in 1748), is represented as being a labourer at St. Giles.¹ In the court proceedings reported in *JJ*, 15, March 12, 1748, Porcupinus Pelagius, the editorial *persona* of *Old England*, is committed to Bridewell for various misdemeanours.² This Popean tactic of associating personal and political enemies with Grub Street, and other disreputable areas of London society, is frequently practised in *The Jacobite's Journal*.³ In this journal, then, we see important developments. We see Fielding's city satire becoming more personal and more scathing. Elements of *The Dunciad* not seen in Fielding's previous writings are used. The use of the mock court to satirise London's alleged cultural degeneracy is more extensive, elaborate and effective than in *The Champion*. *The Jacobite's Journal* is a more mature journal than *The Champion* or *The True Patriot*. The satire is more vigorous and more pointed. All this anticipates the city satire of *The Covent Garden Journal*. Before turning to Fielding's final works, however, we must examine one or two further developments in his treatment of cultural issues in the 1740s.

During the 1740s, Fielding, for the first significant time in his writings, represents the country as the only stronghold of traditional cultural standards. He had introduced this concept in his genteel comedies. Wisemore of *Love in Several Masques* and Bellamant of *The Modern Husband*, both country gentlemen, recommend traditional cultural standards and censure the artistic degeneracy of London.⁴ These two commendations of the cultural integrity of the country, however, are largely undercut by the presence of many

¹ *JJ*, 22, April 30, 1748 (Coley, p 261).

² *JJ*, 15, March 12, 1748 (Coley, p 200).

³ *JJ*, 39, August 27, 1748 (Coley, p 375ff). See also *JJ*, 40, September 3, 1748 (Coley, p 382).

⁴ *Love in Several Masques* I, ii (Henley VIII, p 19) and *The Modern Husband* II, v (Henley X, p 32).

boorish country squires, whose tastes are even more vulgar than those of the town-dwellers. Moreover, there is no significant idealisation of the cultural superiority of the country in those plays dealing with cultural issues, the dramatic burlesques. The contrast between town and country taste is briefly introduced in *Shamela*, in which the ignorant Parson Tickletext of London is infatuated with Richardson's *Pamela* and the sensible Parson Oliver of the country is angered by it and reveals the real story of Pamela. The contrast is more extensively dramatised in *Joseph Andrews*. In *Joseph Andrews* there is nothing new in the portrayal of London's alleged cultural degeneracy. Italian opera still flourishes.¹ The theatres are still manned by poor poets and players.² The upper classes still neglect the arts.³ The booksellers still use literature as a market commodity.⁴ Many old targets such as John Rich⁵ and Colley Cibber⁶ are ridiculed. The cultural superiority of the country is mainly established through Parson Adams who, although not widely read in English literature, is thoroughly learned in the Classics, which Fielding regarded as the necessary foundation of all good artistic taste. Throughout the novel, Adams constantly displays his erudition, most notably in his long dissertation on Homer to Mr Wilson.⁷ His learning and integrity are contrasted to the cultural degeneracy of the age in his encounters with the London bookseller⁸ and Beau Didapper.⁹ In *Joseph Andrews* the town-country contrast is chiefly focused on cultural issues in the story of Mr Wilson. During his town career, Wilson moved through most of London's cultural scenes. As a prosperous young gentleman, he

¹JA,I, iv (Henley I, p 14).

²JA,III, x (Henley I, p 294ff).

³JA,IV, ix (Henley I, p 355f).

⁴JA,I, xvii (Henley I, p 93ff).

⁵JA,I, vii (Henley I, p 46).

⁶JA,I, iii (Henley I, p 30).

⁷JA,III, ii (Henley I, p 224ff).

⁸JA,I, xvii (Henley I, p 93ff).

⁹JA,IV, ix (Henley I, p 355f).

cultivated the current artistic tastes and pursued all of the aristocratic activities to which Fielding generally attributed the alleged cultural degeneracy of the age. As a penniless young gentleman, hoping to earn his living in letters, he experienced all of the difficulties generally encountered by such young hopefuls in the town. Like Luckless in *The Author's Farce*, he fails to win an aristocratic patron, or the support of the theatrical-managers, because he has no interest. Reduced to earning his bread by hack-writing for the booksellers, he suffered all of the indignities traditionally associated with Grub Street writers, as dramatised in the scene in Bookweight's house in *The Author's Farce*. After having renounced the town for the country, he acquired a taste for traditional literature and read widely in the ancient and modern authors, particularly Alexander Pope. Like many a *beatus vir* in contemporary literature then, he found the peace and tranquillity of the country environment a more conducive environment than the town for cultivating a taste for literature. This cultivating the arts in rural retirement looks forward to the portrayal of Mr Allworthy in *Tom Jones*. Like Wilson, Allworthy has a taste for fine literature but, in this connection, he has a more important function to perform in the novel. As a member of the great gentry, it is Allworthy's responsibility to encourage good artists. He does so:

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

Above all others, men of genius and learning shared the principal place in his favor; and in these he had much discernment: for though he had missed the advantage of a learned education, yet, being blest with vast natural abilities, he had so well profited by a vigorous though late application to letters, and by much conversation with men of eminence in this way, that he was himself a very competent judge in most kinds of literature.

It is no wonder that in an age when this kind of merit is so little in fashion, and so slenderly provided for, persons possessed of it should very eagerly flock to a place where they were sure of being received with great complacence; indeed, where

they might enjoy almost the same advantages of a liberal fortune as if they were entitled to it in their own right; for Mr Allworthy was not one of those generous persons who are ready most bountifully to bestow meat, drink, and lodging on men of wit and learning, for which they expect no other return but entertainment, instruction, flattery, and subserviency; in a word, that such persons should be enrolled in the number of domestics, without wearing their master's clothes or receiving wages.¹

Allworthy, then, fulfils his cultural obligations, unlike the great in London who neglect the arts to pursue their own activities. Throughout *Tom Jones*, Fielding portrays London's cultural scenes as being in the same state of degeneracy as those in *Joseph Andrews*. In both novels, the country, despite its boorish squires, is the only stronghold of traditional artistic standards. This contrast between town and country taste is interesting when we consider that Fielding was writing in the new *bourgeois* form of the novel, which was currently undermining traditional forms. The reading public of the novel was mainly centred amongst the middle classes in London.² It was the London bookseller, Andrew Millar, who greatly encouraged the success of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. As in his dramatic burlesques, then, Fielding censures the new cultural age in a new cultural form, but he does not make the same satirical capital out of this as he had done in the plays. This is partly because satire against London's cultural degeneracy is a minor theme only in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, being incorporated as one motif in the general presentation of London as a symbol of disorder. In the novels, however, in which he combines the neo-Classical spirit with the new form, Fielding more effectively uses this new form to defend the old cultural standards.

Another important development of the 1740s is Fielding's offering legislation as a possible means of correcting London's alleged cultural degeneracy. This occurs in the *Familiar Letter* XL, of his sister Sarah Fielding's *Familiar Letters Between the Principal Characters of David Simple* published in April, 1747,

¹*TJ*, I, x (Henley III, p 47f).

²I. Watt, *op.cit.*, p 42ff.

at a time when Fielding was satirising London's cultural scenes in miscellaneous writing and two years prior to his appointment as London magistrate. In a severe magisterial manner, Valentine in London, writing to David Simple in the country, castigates the alleged cultural degeneracy of London, hitting out at all the old targets: the aristocracy's neglect of the arts, Grub Street, Italian opera and pantomimical entertainments being produced by the theatrical-managers of Covent Garden and Drury Lane theatres, who allegedly debauch the stage for their own profit. Referring to the current analogy between artistic taste and morals, he invites the government to legislate, as a matter of national urgency:

It is pity, I think, that the legislature do not interfere, and put the conduct of this so noble, so rational, and so useful a diversion, into hands more capable of conducting it; by which means the public entertainments and example might be rather considered in theatrical performances, than the acquiring immense fortunes to private persons who will make it more their business to indulge, than to correct a vicious or bad taste, when such prevails.¹

This anticipates Fielding's approach to the issue as magistrate.

¹*Familiar Letter* XL (Henley XV, p 30).

Section Three: The Final Works

As magistrate, Fielding considered the need for cultural reform in London as being more urgent than ever before. In *A Charge Delivered to the Grand Jury*, presented in June, 1749, he describes London's newspapers as debauching the minds and morals of the people, and urges legislation to prevent this corruption.¹ In his legal and social pamphlets, however, Fielding is more concerned with socio-economic than with cultural issues. His deep concern, during these years, for the social consequences of cultural degeneracy is clearly expressed in his final novel, *Amelia*. William Booth, a country gentleman, of good Classical education² and sound literary tastes, is shocked at the cultural degeneracy of the age, as presented to him through his meeting with a Grub Street hack in a London sponging house.³ Booth's anger at Colonel James' encouraging this hack expresses Fielding's concern for the moral and social consequences of such cultural irresponsibility amongst the great:

"By propagating the subscriptions of such fellows, people are tired out and withhold their contributions to men of real merit; and, at the same time, you are contributing to fill the world, not only with nonsense, but with all the scurrility, indecency, and profaneness with which the age abounds, and with which all bad writers supply the defect of genius."⁴

As in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, in *Amelia* those who have true artistic taste are country-dwellers, possessing all of the social and moral virtues : Amelia, Booth and Dr Harrison.

Although as magistrate, Fielding, during these years, generally sought legislative solutions to all problems, he did

¹Henley XIII, p 214f.

²*Amelia* VIII, v (Henley VII, p 83).

³*Amelia* VIII, v (Henley VII, p 87f).

⁴*Amelia* VIII, vi (Henley VII, p 91).

return to satirising London's alleged cultural degeneracy, with his old literary weapons, in his final journal, *The Covent Garden Journal*, which ran from January to November, 1752.

As with *The Champion*, *The True Patriot* and *The Jacobite's Journal*, *The Covent Garden Journal* is cast in the convention established by Addison and Steele. This time Fielding uses the pseudonym of Sir Alexander Drawcansir, from *The Rehearsal*, thereby continuing his use of that play in satirising London's cultural scenes. Sir Alexander is a more complex character than Captain Hercules Vinegar or John Trott-Plaid. He has flashes of brilliant wit and rhetoric yet, on the whole, is direct and soberly didactic. He has moments of exuberance, but is generally pessimistic. He is sometimes tolerant, but is mostly severe, harsh and even bitter. In him, we see Fielding the magistrate, continuing his programme for reform. With the magisterial sternness displayed in *A Charge Delivered to the Grand Jury*, he warns that lewd books and prints will corrupt the morals of the people.¹ In Drawcansir, Fielding the magistrate and Fielding the satirist combine to censure all the old targets: Colley Cibber,² John Rich,³ the irresponsibility of the upper classes,⁴ the vulgar tastes of the middle and lower classes,⁵ the London stage,⁶ and Grub Street.⁷ In all this, there is much magisterial sternness, but Fielding the satirist often returns to his old rhetorical strategies with the same energy as formerly. Once again, he makes good use of fictitious correspondents, such as the writer from George's Coffee-House, who demands to know the meaning of the word "town", having heard such phrases as

¹ *CGJ*, 10, February 4, 1752 (Jensen I, p 197), *CGJ*, 11, February 8, 1752 (Jensen I, p 204), *CGJ*, 12, February 11, 1752 (Jensen I, p 212) and *CGJ*, 13, February 15, 1752 (Jensen I, p 218).

² *CGJ*, 15, February 22, 1752 (Jensen I, p 225).

³ *CGJ*, 12, February 11, 1752 (Jensen I, p 208).

⁴ *CGJ*, 27, April 4, 1752 (Jensen I, p 296).

⁵ *CGJ*, 1, January 4, 1752 (Jensen I, p 138).

⁶ *CGJ*, 26, March 31, 1752 (Jensen I, p 286ff).

⁷ *CGJ*, 1, January 4, 1752 (Jensen I, p 137).

"the *Town* would not bear it; the *Town* did not like it; the *Town* was offended; the *Town* damn'd it; the *Town* was the best judge; the *Town* was out of humour", concluding that "the *Town* knew every Thing; and to succeed in any Thing, a Man must please the *Town*."1

Another technique used with much vigour is that of satirising Augustan London, under the pretext of celebrating it. In *CGJ*, 2, January 7, 1752, Drawcansir ironically eulogises London as a centre of great cultural progress, as manifest in the aristocracy's encouraging all aspiring writers, particularly bad ones.² This tactic is often used throughout the journal, to good effect.³ Drawcansir often combines it with that of projecting himself into the future, and satirising London's cultural world through an historical perspective, again, to good effect.⁴ In another equally effective rhetorical strategy, Drawcansir satirises London's artistic degeneracy by re-defining cultural terms according to modern standards. The following examples, from the "Modern Glossary" in *CGJ*, 4, January 14, 1752, are typical:

TASTE. The present whim of the Town, whatever it be.

AUTHOR. A laughing stock. It means likewise a poor Fellow, and in general an Object of Contempt.

DULNESS. A Word applied by all Writers to the Wit and Humour of others.

WIT. Prophaneness, Indecency, Immorality, Scurrility, Mimickry, Buffoonery. Abuse of all good Men, and especially of the Clergy.

KNOWLEDGE. In general, means Knowledge of the Town; as this is, indeed, the only Kind of Knowledge ever spoken of in the polite world.⁵

Fielding's use of these, and other rhetorical strategies, is good-humoured and witty, but there is a darker side to the urban satire

¹*CGJ*, 7, January 25, 1752 (Jensen I, p 177).

²*CGJ*, 2, January 7, 1752 (Jensen I, p 140).

³*CGJ*, 12, February 11, 1752 (Jensen I, p 209).

⁴*CGJ*, 12, February 11, 1752 (Jensen I, p 209), *CGJ*, 15, February 22, 1752 (Jensen I, p 229) and *CGJ*, 17, February 29, 1752 (Jensen I, p 240ff).

⁵*CGJ*, 4, January 14, 1752 (Jensen I, p 155ff).

in *The Covent Garden Journal*. In the opening words of the journal, Fielding represents the need for cultural reform as being more urgent than ever before, since "The World, it is certain, never more abounded with Authors, than at present."¹ He announces that his satire against these scribblers is partly inspired by Juvenal.² Accordingly, the satire in the journal is often severe. In this, we see the continued use of the more scathing aspects of *The Dunciad*, which had appeared in *The Jacobite's Journal*. Pope's satirical technique, however, is not accepted without question. In *CGJ*, 23, March 21, 1752, Fielding censures Pope for having reigned autocratically over the world of letters and for having placed all writers, apart from the Scriblerians, into *The Dunciad*.³ In *CGJ*, 59, August 15, 1752, he censures Pope for having "raked many out of the Kennels to Immortality, which, tho' in somewhat a stinking Condition, is to an ambitious Mind preferable to utter Obscurity and Oblivion."⁴ Despite censuring Pope, Fielding, in this paper, hints that he will do the same justice to the scribblers of his own day in a prose *Dunciad*. Taking his cue from the prophecy delivered at the end of Book Three of *The Dunciad*,⁵ he represents Augustan London as collapsing into chaos.⁶ As in *The Jacobite's Journal*, he uses Pope's technique of satirising Grub Street writers by locating them amongst the trading classes and in disreputable parts of London. In his projected *Dunciad*, he proposes to include the names of

all those Apprentices and Journeymen of Booksellers and Printers who at present entertain and instruct the Town with their Productions. I have besides a very able and industrious Person who hath promised me a complete List of all the Hands now confined in the several Bridewells in and about this City, which carry on the Trade of Writing, in any of the Branches of Religion, Morality, and Government; in all which every Day produces us some curious Essay, Treatise, Remarks, &c. from those Quarters.⁷

¹ *CGJ*, 1, January 4, 1752 (Jensen I, p 133).

² *CGJ*, 1, January 4, 1752 (Jensen I, p 134).

³ *CGJ*, 23, March 21, 1752 (Jensen I, p 273f).

⁴ *CGJ*, 59, August 15, 1752 (Jensen II, p 82).

⁵ *The Dunciad* III, p 123ff.

⁶ *CGJ*, 59, August 15, 1752 (Jensen II, p 82).

⁷ *CGJ*, 59, August 15, 1752 (Jensen II, p 82f). He uses a similar tactic in introducing the Robin Hood debating society, which comprised mainly tradesmen and mechanics, in *CGJ*, 8, January 28, 1752 (Jensen I, p 181).

As in *The Jacobite's Journal*, he continues to satirise Grub Street by using scatological material from *The Dunciad*. In *CGJ*,5, January 18, 1752, he actually represents himself, in his rôle as censor of the age, as Hercules, cleansing the stables of Augeus.¹ In *CGJ*,6, January 21, 1752, he introduces again those destructive engines which demolish the productions of Grub Street : the paper-manufacturers, the trunk-makers and the privy.² When compared to his usage of this *Dunciad* tactic in *The Jacobite's Journal*, however, a new element is immediately visible, that is, the introduction of the privy. Although introduced with much delicacy, it is dwelt on at great length. This is symptomatic of the more scathing nature of the urban satire in *The Covent Garden Journal* when compared to that of the earlier journals. The increasing severity of the urban satire in *The Covent Garden Journal* when compared to that of the earlier writings, is most clearly demonstrated in the fact that Fielding often begins a particular satirical device on a light-hearted, buoyant note, and then descends into sarcasm. This is the case with the mock war and the mock court.

The mock war, a satirical strategy derived from such works as *The Battle of the Books*, *The Dunciad* and *Pasquin*, is conducted throughout the first four numbers of *The Covent Garden Journal*. It is a war between traditional cultural standards, headed by Sir Alexander Drawcansir, and the "Army of Grub Street",³ led by Dr John Hill who, from March, 1751, had written the leaders for *The London Daily Advertiser*, as the Inspector. His headquarters were in Covent Garden, at the Bedford Coffee-House, before which he had erected a large wooden lion's head, for the reception of contributions to his paper. Throughout 1751, relations between Hill and Fielding, who also frequented the Bedford, seem to have been good.⁴ Although the attack on Grub Street is serious, the journal of the war in *CGJ*,1, January 4, 1752, in which Sir Alexander

¹*CGJ*,5, January 18, 1752 (Jensen I, p 164).

²*CGJ*,6, January 21, 1752 (Jensen I, p 168f).

³*CGJ*,1, January 4, 1752 (Jensen I, p 137).

⁴Jensen I, p 39. For the treatment of the paper war, I am indebted to Jensen's introduction.

marshals his army, comprising the Greeks and the Romans, some French and English forces, under Major-General A. Millar, and marches against the army of Grub Street, is good-humoured and good-natured. So too, is that in *CGJ*,2, January 7, 1752, in which Sir Alexander's forces take several strategic cultural positions in the Strand and in Covent Garden, and set down before the Bedford. In *LDA* January 8, 1752, Hill replied with good-humour, but on January 9, became abusive, accusing Fielding of treachery in the war. He claimed that he was to be exempted from attack, and that Fielding had included him only to prop up a failing newspaper. On January 10, he presented a scurrilous portrait of Fielding as magistrate. In *CGJ*,3, January 11, 1752, Fielding expresses surprise at Hill's attack, and claims that the war was betrayed by Hill. In reporting the war in this number, he discards his earlier humour and abuses Hill as a "paultry DUNGHILL", "*his lowness* the Prince of Billingsgate", "among the meanest of those who ever drew a Pen" and "absolutely the vilest Fellow that ever wore a Head".¹ In *CGJ*,4, January 14, 1752, he concludes the war by drawing up a treaty which returns London to the *status quo*, and promises to continue his campaign against cultural degeneracy, in a court of Censorial Inquiry.² Although he attempts to conclude the war in a conciliatory manner, it did get out of hand. The mock war had descended into a war in earnest, displaying little of the humour which had characterised his earlier battles for the cultural supremacy of London. He tried to revive the war with his old good humour, at the end of the year, when, as magistrate, he became involved in the quarrel between Covent Garden and Drury Lane theatres, a quarrel which broke out when David Garrick burlesqued one of John Rich's pantomimical entertainments.³ Fielding sided with Garrick against Rich.⁴ In *CGJ*,71, November 18, 1752, he describes the battle for possession of "the town" between the forces of Drury Lane, under David Garrick and those of Covent Garden, under John Rich.⁵

¹ *CGJ*,3, January 11, 1752 (Jensen I, p 152f).

² *CGJ*,4, January 14, 1752 (Jensen I, p 158ff).

³ Jensen I, p 84 ff).

⁴ *CGJ*,71, November 18, 1752 (Jensen II, p 135ff).

⁵ *CGJ*,71, November 18, 1752 (Jensen II, p 138ff).

Despite some flashes of wit, this war makes little impression. Indeed, from the very beginning, the mock war for the cultural supremacy of London has little satirical impact. Fielding had little heart in it. To him it was a device which had lost its vitality. He could not galvanise it into new life. This is also true of his use of the "Court of Censorial Inquiry", inaugurated in *CGJ*, 5, January 18, 1752, and continued throughout fifteen numbers of the journal. As in the mock courts of *The Champion* and *The Jacobite's Journal*, Fielding sits in judgement on the cultural transgressions of London, which remain essentially the same as in the earlier journals. In most of the court's sittings, he ridicules his literary and political enemies, with whom he was involved in a particularly virulent journalistic struggle throughout the year.¹ The satire here is more personal and caustic than that in *The Jacobite's Journal*, but despite some flashes of humour and wit, it is not as effective. In *The Covent Garden Journal*, Fielding seems to have had little interest in his court. It was designed to meet weekly, but met fortnightly, and then, often to adjourn. As with the mock war, it was a worn-out rhetorical device which he could not galvanise into new life.

In *The Covent Garden Journal*, then, Fielding continues his campaign to reform the cultural transgressions of the age. In this aim he sometimes expresses optimism:

However vain or romantic the Attempt may seem,
I am sanguine enough to aim at serving the noble
Interests of Religion, Virtue, and good Sense, by
these my Lucubrations.

To effect so glorious a Purpose, I know no readier
a Way than by an Endeavour to restore that true and
manly Taste which hath, within these few Years,
degenerated in these Kingdoms. A Degeneracy which
hath been greatly owing to those base and scurrilous
Writings, which the Press hath lately poured in such
a Torrent upon us, that the Name of Author is, in the
Ears of all good Men, become almost an infamous
Appellation.²

¹ Jensen I, p 28ff.

² *CGJ*, 5, January 18, 1752 (Jensen I, p 163).

Despite this assertion, the atmosphere of *The Covent Garden Journal* is not optimistic. In general, the tone is pessimistic. There are flashes of the old brilliant wit and exuberance, but these resemble the flickering of a candle before it goes out. Some of the old rhetorical devices are used effectively, but are not sustained for long periods as in the earlier writings. They are generally abandoned, or allowed to degenerate into personal satire or sarcasm. Whilst there is nothing new in the city satire of *The Covent Garden Journal*, the old humour and tolerance give way to magisterial sternness, harshness and even bitterness. As *The Covent Garden Journal* draws to its close, we get the impression that Fielding is tiring of the battle. In the final number of the journal, *CGJ*, 72, November 25, 1752, he declared that he would have no further communication with the literary arts.¹ As far as he was concerned then, the war against London's alleged cultural degeneracy had been lost. As noted above, he probably realised that this war had cost him a great deal personally. It had led him to descend into using the kinds of scurrility and personal abuse which he had always deplored and attempted to correct. In his dramatic burlesques and major novels, then, we have seen Fielding campaigning against the new cultural standards, in the new cultural forms themselves. His success in these works had largely depended on his humour, tolerance and optimism. In the case of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, he had successfully infused the old spirit into the new form, thereby implying that a compromise between the old and the new cultural standards could be achieved. In *The Covent Garden Journal*, he continues to battle the new cultural age with its own weapons but, with regard to the scurrility and personal abuse, they are the weapons which he had always scorned to take up. This factor, coupled with the general pessimism of this journal, leaves the impression that a compromise between the old and the new artistic standards could not be effected or maintained.

¹*CGJ*, 72, November 25, 1752 (Jensen II, p 142).