

Death in the Eighteenth-Century Novel, 1740 - 1800

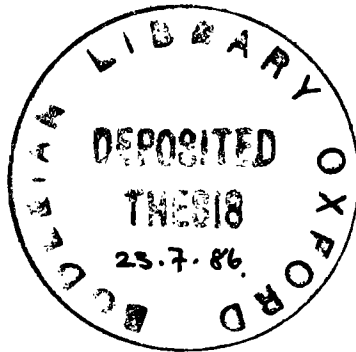
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This thesis examines the development of the novel in the eighteenth century in relation to changing attitudes to death, and looks at how far shifting notions of the moral purpose of the novel and subsequent changes in its treatment of deathbed scenes, murders, duels, suicides and speculations about heaven and hell reflect changing beliefs and the modification of strict Christian ideals to accommodate or combat new feelings and philosophies.

In establishing this background, the thesis draws upon popular devotional literature, sermons, minor novelists (such as Sarah Fielding and Henry Mackenzie), periodicals, plays, poetry, biography, paintings and funeral iconography.

Each chapter attempts to establish the typicality and individuality of a particular author in relation to the period in which he was writing. My starting-point is Richardson, who uses the novel to question both old and new attitudes, paving the way for the novel's predominantly emotional approach to mortality. Fielding's comic novels provide a striking contrast to this, whilst also revealing a concern for emotional comfort which is at once typical of the period and highly individual. Sterne is seen as questioning not only the ways in which we evade and find consolation for our mortality but also our self-indulgent response to death in fiction. The last two chapters deal with the closing decades of the century, when hopes and fears roused by revolutionary ferment led to fresh uncertainties concerning death and the afterlife. In Ann Radcliffe's sentimental-Gothic novels, religious uncertainty is exploited as a source of sublime terror, while the English Jacobins, Godwin, Holcroft and Bage, attempt to modify the conventions of death in the novel in order to communicate a wholly secular philosophy in which Clarissa's hope of heaven is replaced by the hope of man's perfectibility on earth.

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Dear, beauteous death! the Jewel of the Just,
Shining no where, but in the dark;
What mysteries do lie beyond thy dust;
Could man outlook that mark!

He that hath found some fledg'd bird's nest, may know
At first sight, if the bird be flown;
But what fair Well, or Grove he sings in now,
That is to him unknown.

And yet, as Angels in some brighter dreams
Call to the soul when man doth sleep:
So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted theams,
And into glory peep.

Henry Vaughan

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Preface

If the composition of Walter Shandy's Tristrapædia was at once an impossible, frustrating and yet satisfying occupation, then the same might well be said of a thesis on death in the eighteenth-century novel. The size of the subject is daunting, but the quest for background material permits one to canter hobby-horsically through almost any area of eighteenth-century life and letters. For this pleasure and privilege I am immensely grateful.

I would like to thank all those who have humoured my hobby-horse, and played Corporal Trim to my Uncle Toby: the staff of the Bodleian Library for uncomplainingly meeting my demands for books with gloomy titles, Paul Taylor for his infectious enthusiasm for literature, Philip Wheatley for his interest in my early ideas on this theme, and finally Rachel Trickett for encouraging and thoughtful supervision over the past three years.

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Paul Moore, Oxford, 1986.

Chapter One - Introduction

"The novel is the one bright book of life," wrote D.H. Lawrence.¹ Paradoxically, much of that life, particularly in the eighteenth-century novel, stems from the portrayal of death and the reactions of the living to the inevitable end of all earthly relationships and conflicts. The eighteenth century saw great changes in both life and literature. The rise of the novel coincided with changing ways of life, changing hopes and changing fears, which are often most obviously discerned in relation to attitudes to death. This thesis attempts to relate the development of the eighteenth-century novel to this background, and to examine how far shifting notions of the moral purpose of the novel and consequent changes in the novel's treatment of deathbed scenes, murders, duels, suicides and speculations about heaven and hell reflect changing beliefs and the modification of strict seventeenth-century Christian ideals to accommodate or combat new feelings and philosophies. .

A study of this kind raises several methodological problems as to how one should go about reconstructing the background and which novels one should then choose to examine in relation to it. Novels, like battles, can usually be dated, but changes in attitudes occur only

¹ "Why the Novel Matters," in Phoenix, ed. Edward P. McDonald (London: Heinemann, 1936), p. 535.

gradually over a period of time. Changes in religious belief, as Philippe Ariès has pointed out, are even more difficult to discern, since small but significant shifts of emphasis can pass unobserved within an orthodox tradition:

The historian must learn to decipher the hidden language of religions during those long ages bathed in the light of immortality. Beneath the statements of scholars and the legends of popular faith, he must rediscover the archetypes of civilization that both were translating into the only intelligible code.¹

Such an ability requires at least a lifetime's acquaintance with the period concerned. One cannot hope to consider more than a fraction of the evidence, and, as John McManners has observed, a constant sceptical caution must be exercised when using this "external evidence" to support arguments about the "secrets of the heart".² Zeitgeist is an elusive spirit, and supposed sightings can easily be the product of an over-heated imagination.

Bearing this in mind, my own observations on attitudes to death in the eighteenth-century have been based on evidence drawn from three main areas: literature, biography and the visual arts. In the area of literature I have largely confined myself to works which were generally popular or influential during the eighteenth century, or which a particular novelist is known to have read, including sermons and devotional works, periodicals such as the Spectator, poetry and plays. Biographical sources have been used in comparing fictional and real deaths, and the lives of particular novelists have often provided

¹ The Hour of Our Death, trans. Helen Weaver (London: Allen Lane, 1981), pp. 95-96.

² Death and the Enlightenment (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 2.

an additional insight into the reasons behind their very different approaches to the same theme. Further evidence of shifting attitudes is drawn from changing fashions in the iconography of death as seen in paintings, engravings, funeral invitations, tombstones and monuments.

The view of death in eighteenth-century England which emerges is generally concurrent with John McManners's similar study of France, although it would appear that the same shifts in emphasis occurred somewhat earlier on this side of the channel. In England, by the 1740's, death was already seen as a predominantly emotional rather than religious trial, and fear of parting, excessive grief and prolonged mourning were seen as normal, if not commendable. As we shall see, the emphasis was already shifting away from traditional religious consolations to what was to become the century's (and the novel's) supreme source of emotional comfort - the hope of a heavenly reunion of loved ones. McManners suggests that in France this idea of a reunion in a rather anthropomorphized heaven came to the fore through the influence of Rousseau, and that before he brought "his peculiar intensity of personal feeling into imaginings about the future life," the notion that earthly friendships would be renewed in heaven was a side-issue compared with the belief in the uniting in heaven of the Universal Church.¹ In England, however, the kind of speculations which Rousseau's Julie makes on her deathbed concerning the proximity of the dead to the living and the continuation of earthly relationships definitely have their source considerably earlier in the century.²

¹ McManners, p. 131.

² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, La Nouvelle Héloïse, in Oeuvres Complètes, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, Bibl. de la Pléiade (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1961), II, 726-28.

The responsibility for popularizing such ideas lies with a surprisingly eclectic but closely-related group of writers and divines, including the non-juror Bishop Thomas Ken, dissenting divines, such as Thomas Emlyn and Philip Doddridge, and the poetess Elizabeth Rowe.

It was, above all, Elizabeth Rowe's works which made the notion of a heavenly reunion common currency. A friend of both Thomas Ken and Isaac Watts, her own faith combined the mysticism of the former with the pietism of the latter. The result was a faith which condoned emotion, and which offered just the kind of consolation that the eighteenth century required in the face of changing attitudes to death and bereavement. Her works were read and praised throughout the century, and her best known statement of these ideas, Friendship in Death, went through twenty-two editions between 1728 and 1797, of which Richardson was responsible for printing two in 1740 and 1743, in addition to his publication of her Miscellaneous Works in 1738-39.¹ Her poem "To Thomas Rowe", with its hope of a reunion with her husband in heaven, was so admired by Pope that he appended it to his second edition of Eloisa to Abelard (1720).² Even Johnson commended her use of "the ornaments of romance in the decoration of religion," and while she is honourably mentioned by a wide range of writers - Richardson, Clara Reeve, Henry Mackenzie, Fanny Burney and Mrs Barbauld - her influence clearly extends to many others as well.³ Her predominantly emotional approach to death was readily embraced by the novel, where a

¹ Henry F. Stecher, Elizabeth Singer Rowe (Bern: Hubert Lang, 1973), pp. 68-72, 88-105, 235-38; William Merritt Sale, Samuel Richardson: Master Printer (New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1950), pp. 199-200.

² John J. Richetti, "Mrs Elizabeth Rowe: The Novel as Polemic," PMLA, 82 (1967), 522-29.

³ James Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. G.B. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), I, 312; Stecher, pp. 222-29.

similar emphasis was inevitably placed upon the value of earthly relationships. The way in which the hope of a heavenly reunion is championed, speculated upon, taken for granted, or used as an emotional catalyst by different novelists provides an insight into the popularity of this doctrine and the changing purpose of the novel during the eighteenth century.

However, one must not forget the individual characteristics of a particular novelist, and mistake the idiosyncratic for the typical. Accordingly, in each chapter I have concentrated upon one author (or a group of authors in the case of the Jacobin novelists), and attempted to establish the idiosyncracies and typicalities of that author in relation to the period in which he was writing. My starting-point is Richardson - a prime example of a novelist who uses death to bring the novel to life, questioning both old and new attitudes, not simply reflecting his times, but nevertheless tending to pave the way for the novel's generally emotional approach to mortality. To this Fielding's comic novels provide a striking contrast, and yet they also reveal a similar concern for emotional comfort, which is at once typical of the period and highly individual. Sterne, like Richardson, questions the prevalent attitudes of his day, but, ironically, he comes to be seen as the champion of emotion, his pathetic scenes becoming models for the affecting use of mortality in novels of the 1760's onwards.

Even the better-known authors of the later eighteenth century seem inferior when placed alongside these major innovatory novelists of the mid-century, and it is all too easy to accept Leavis's view that the torch which Richardson had carried to the back of the cave burnt with only a smoky and guttering flame during the last few decades of the

century, except when trimmed by Fanny Burney, and passed on to Jane Austen.¹ The later eighteenth-century novelist had at his disposal conventions which virtually obviated the need for originality in anything other than his novel's title, and even in this it was advisable to imitate some previously successful work.² The novel form, to which the theme of death had lent so much life, became moribund itself as affecting deathbed scenes were recycled without regard to religion, morality or plagiarism.

Nevertheless, there is significant development in the treatment of death in the novel during this period. This is evident if we compare the indulgent sensibility of Henry Mackenzie with Ann Radcliffe's sentimental-Gothic novels and the political novels of the English Jacobins. The hopes and fears roused by the revolutionary ferment of the closing decades of the century led to fresh uncertainties and speculations concerning death and the afterlife which in turn led to attempts to modify the conventions of death in the novel. Here, albeit briefly and less masterfully, the novel regains that lively interest in the complexities of mortality and the contradictions between belief and experience which characterizes the major novelists of the period, and, above all, the works of a pious middle-class printer, Samuel Richardson.

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¹ F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), pp. 4-5.

² See J.M.S. Tompkins, The Popular Novel in England 1770-1800 (London: Methuen, 1932), pp. 34-69.

Chapter Two - Richardson's Theology of Death

I - Richardson's Piety

It has been customary for critics to find Richardson a little too pious. Boas, for instance, finds Clarissa's obsession with her coffin and her use of it as a desk one of many "jarring notes" that he interprets as "old-fashioned touches of eighteenth-century evangelicalism".¹ Similarly, Ian Watt feels that while Richardson can perhaps be forgiven for reflecting "the complacent piety of his age", such an emphasis is nevertheless disturbing in a novelist who otherwise displays such dramatic skill and psychological insight.² Others excuse Richardson by dividing his unconscious artistry from his conscious morality. Thus Kinkead-Weekes writes of Richardson the novelist and Mr Richardson the printer, and praises and blames this schizophrenic creation accordingly.³ The novelist is praised for unconsciously writing a "damning indictment of his society", for revealing his own subconscious through his characters, or for

¹ F.S. Boas, "Richardson's Novels and their Influence," Essays and Studies, 2 (1911), 56.

² The Rise of the Novel (London: Chatto and Windus, 1960), p. 216.

³ Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist (London: Methuen, 1973).

accidentally hitting upon a perfect tragic form.¹ Whilst it is unlikely that any writer can be conscious of all the implications of what he writes, it is similarly improbable that an intelligent author, who revised his works so meticulously, and who was aware that the subtlety of his technique lay in its "minutiae", should be oblivious to all the ambiguities he was creating.²

Richardson knew well the power of his dramatically-conceived novels. His penchant for manipulating the feelings of his circle of admirers (in the teasing over possible endings for Sir Charles Grandison, for instance), shows that he knew exactly where this power lay - in the emotions evoked by problems of love and death. Richardson deliberately uses death to provoke, disturb and move the reader. A survey of his treatment of death in the novels reveals no pious preacher, unaware of ambiguity, but a skilful artist who continually questions beliefs, contrasting religious assumptions with experience, and investigating "the great doctrines of Christianity" (Clarissa, VIII, 308) in action in a surprisingly complex and disinterested fashion for one who purported to have "little time to read anything which I thought controversial or shocking to fundamentals".³

¹ Christopher Hill, "Clarissa Harlowe and her Times," Essays in Criticism, 5 (1955), 332; an example of the psychoanalytical approach is Morris Golden's Richardson's Characters (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1963).

² Richardson stresses the subtlety and hence the difficulty of his writing technique in a letter to Lady Bradshaigh, see Selected Letters, ed. John Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 289.

³ All references to Pamela and Clarissa refer to the Shakespeare Head Edition, 18 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1929-31) unless otherwise stated; references to Sir Charles Grandison refer to the Oxford English Novels edition, ed. Jocelyn Harris, 3 vols. (London: OUP, 1972); all references to the novels are given in parentheses in the text; for the quotation on controversial theology, see Correspondence, ed. Anna Laetitia Barbauld (London: 1804), II, 7); Richardson is referring, significantly, to David Hartley's Heaven Open to All Men (London, 1743).

Study of the period when Richardson was writing his novels overthrows the idea that he was merely acting as "a sounding board for the dominant notes of his age".¹ His "jarring notes", far from portraying eighteenth-century beliefs and practices, are in fact, as Margaret Doody has demonstrated, a deliberate return to seventeenth-century Protestant source material on death.² The arrival of Clarissa's coffin would have shocked a contemporary reader as much as it does a modern one, though the contemporary reader may have been better equipped to explain why the author had sought this effect. There is an awkward clash of attitudes between Clarissa's calm "intrepidity" in the face of death and the horror and emotional confusion of the onlookers (VII, 335). Both Richardson and Clarissa know that we will find these "shocking scenes!" Belford forgets to warn Morden that Clarissa's "House" is behind a screen in her chamber, with unfortunate results:

on casting his eye behind the Screen, he soon broke silence; for, struck with the shape of the coffin, he lifted up the purplish-coloured cloth that was spread out over it, and starting back, Good God! said he, what's here! (VII, 451).

Morden's revulsion at the practical trappings of death is typical of all the characters except Clarissa herself, be they good or bad:

Before I could speak, in came Mrs Smith: O Madam, said she, What have you done? - Mrs Lovick, entering, made the same exclamation. Lord have mercy upon me, Madam, cried I, what have you done! (VII, 334-35).

¹ Watt, p. 217.

² A Natural Passion (Oxford: OUP, 1974), particularly Chapter VII, pp. 151-87.

Even Mrs Lovick, representative of an older, more religious generation, who is said to have "given over all other thoughts of the world but such as shall assist her to leave it happily" (VI, 143), finds Clarissa's piety excessive. The emotional reaction of Richardson's characters is, as always, a guide to the reader as to how to respond. Richardson evidently sets out to shock us, but to what end?

First, one could argue that he is attempting to highlight the "Scepticism and Infidelity" of the age (VIII, 307) by contrasting Clarissa's "truly Christian behaviour in her last hours (VIII, 335) with the contemporary lapse from grace. Margaret Doody has shown how Clarissa, by ordering her coffin, writing her will, and disposing of her clothes, is literally following Jeremy Taylor's blueprint for "Holy Dying", a system of rules which her contemporaries no longer respected, even metaphorically.¹ This argument sees the novel as a cynical commentary on our "general depravity" (VIII, 307), on how far we fall short of that perfection which Clarissa exemplifies as she explains to the onlookers that there is nothing shocking in her behaviour apart from the "unusualness" of it:

Why may we not be as reasonably shocked at going to Church where are the monuments of our ancestors, with whose dust we even hope our dust shall one day be mingled, as to be moved at such a sight as this? (VII, 335).

•

She is answered with a guilty silence.

Clarissa's defence of her actions is not unlike that adopted by

¹ Doody, pp. 174-75.

Richardson in his Postscript. This cannot be the whole story, however, since the deliberate shock of the coffin also produces tears of pity for Clarissa. It is not simply used to jolt us out of our complacency, for the sympathy that we and the onlookers feel for her is clearly commendable. It is the hard-hearted Brandts and Harlowes, who do not even know of her sufferings, who are condemned. The power of Clarissa's piety to evoke sympathy is witnessed to by Belford, who wishes that Lovelace had been present at these scenes, since he believes not even he could have been "less affected" by them (VII, 335). To witness Clarissa's piety is to be shocked and moved to pity, and for Lovelace this would form a first step towards reformation. Clarissa's adherence to, and explanation of the strict Taylorian approach to death does not primarily convince us that she is right and we are wrong, rather it increases our amazement at her piety and our pity for her injured purity. We pity her for being better than us, and any sense of shame that we can never reach her level of faith is only a secondary response.

There is far greater complexity here than Richardson allows for in the Postscript. Even those readers who sought to agree with Richardson's apparent defence of religion display something of this dual response. Channing writes that many of the scenes are indeed shocking, but adds that "the reader who would be most shocked by them, has perhaps most need of them". Yet despite his praise of Richardson's didactic purpose, it is clear that Channing himself has been shocked into responding to Clarissa's death with "such emotions of soul, as every unsteemed reader must experience".¹ Although we all fall far short of Clarissa's example, because the emphasis in the novel is

¹ Correspondence, II, 333-36.

primarily emotional, the overall effect is far less moralistic than the Postscript would suggest. In wishing that Lovelace could see Clarissa's death, Belford is developing an optimistic view that if we can be emotionally affected by Clarissa's pious example, so that we feel pity for her and shame for ourselves, then we are in fact redeemable.

The "purplish-coloured cloth" covering the coffin is no idle detail, either, for it recalls the mockery that Christ endured prior to the crucifixion and the royal reward to which Clarissa is aspiring through her Christ-like death. This symbolism can be read in two ways: from a strictly religious point of view it emphasizes the fact that suffering is the path to glory (a devotional commonplace), and that we should follow this example, but from a more moderate and optimistic point of view it also indicates that although Clarissa's model death, like Christ's, defies imitation by ordinary mortals, it nevertheless acts as a channel of grace to weaker, less exceptional believers. The shocking aspects of Clarissa's seventeenth-century piety are used to reveal how far contemporary attitudes have changed, but Richardson is still confident that man can benefit from the example.

Richardson's investigation of "the Great doctrines of Christianity" reveals the pattern for Holy Living and Dying as more of a recipe for suffering on earth and a premature passage to heaven than a practical model for daily life, where a Grandisonian moderation must be exercised to allow for man's frailties. Clarissa is more than "a conduct book for death and burial", for Richardson goes beyond the conduct books with their over-simplified rules for marriage, and beyond the devotional writers with their strict rules for death.¹

¹ Watt, p. 217; Doody, pp. 86-90, 102-03.

Just as the conduct book code of the propriety of "female docility" is called into question by showing its debilitating effect in Clarissa's mother, so the devotional code of death is undermined by the experience of death in the novel. The contrasting of exemplary behaviour with "accepted" and "immoral" standards reveals conflicts and hypocrisies in eighteenth-century morality, clashes between theology and experience, between the way we feel and the way we think we ought to feel. The fact that the novel offers no simple solution to these problems is more a sign of man's complexity than a proof of his depravity. Richardson's interest in these issues reveals his ultimate moderation and optimism in religious matters.

This is perhaps a surprising view of the pious printer who accidentally wrote psychologically-profound novels which he then desperately revised to comply with his strict morality. Nevertheless, it is a view that gives Richardson more credit as an artist, and which explains more satisfactorily both the reactions of his early readers, and his responses to them in revisions, letters and defensive publications.

Early objectors to Richardson's novels can be divided into two camps. Those who find them too pious and moralistic, such as Mrs Bradshaigh and Colley Cibber, begged that some way might be found to spare Clarissa and marry her to Lovelace, or, like Hestor Mulso, they wished that Clementina might be allowed to pine away, rather than relinquish her love for Sir Charles, preferring their morality to match their emotions.¹ Those, on the other hand, who found Richardson too lenient, such as Edward Moore, wished that Lovelace's death were more obviously damning, or, like Charles Povey, objected to Pamela's earthly

¹ Correspondence, IV, 177-82, 194-201, 202-06, 207-17; II, 127-31; III, 191-97, 213-19.

reward as "Iniquity rewarded", because it seemed to suggest that shrewd servant girls could expect to win the hands of their seducing masters.¹

The fact that these widely varying opinions existed, and still exist in modern criticism, is perhaps sufficient evidence alone that Richardson's theology lies somewhere between these extremes. Contrary viewpoints abound for each of the three novels. Aaron Hill felt that a reduction of Pamela's excessive prayers and appeals to the deity would make her more acceptable to those who were "fashionably Averse to the Subject", and in fact some 85 mentions of "God" were either cut or altered to "Heaven" in Richardson's revisions for the second edition.² Povey, on the other hand, will allow no concessions to the impious, and objects to the way Pamela is judged equal to The Whole Duty of Man, complaining of the many "Scenes of Immodesty, painted in Images of Virtue" that bring the reader "within the Circles of Lewdness", like "Disguises in Masquerade".³ In his view, Pamela should have revealed her virtue by refusing to compromise.

Whilst there is no evidence to show clearly either way whether Richardson knew of Povey's indictment, it is possible to see the influence of complaints like Povey's in Richardson's defence of Pamela's marriage in the continuation of the novel, particularly since he employs a masquerade episode to do this.. Clarissa, we note, refuses

¹ T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, Samuel Richardson (Oxford: OUP, 1971), p. 288; Charles Povey, The Virgin in Eden (London, 1741), pp. 68-71.

² T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, "Richardson's Revisions of Pamela," Studies in Bibliography, 20 (1967), 65-66; in defence of the subtlety of Pamela's characterization, it should be noted that her simple piety is often indicative of her naivety: in the bundle scene, she is setting her house in order, like Clarissa, giving away her possessions as if she were about to die, not simply leaving her master's service, and it is not surprising that Mrs Jervis is inclined to "cry and laugh in a Breath" (I, 100-03).

³ Povey, pp. i, 68.

marriage to a rake as a solution to her problems, and seems to follow directly much of Povey's advice for persecuted virgins.¹ Clarissa's strict attitude to death, that those that live well die well, and vice-versa, is also shared by Povey, but it may equally be a result of Richardson's desire to meet the challenge of the various deaths portrayed in the bogus continuations of Pamela (in Pamela's Conduct in High Life (1741), her parents die, but she is somewhat consoled by reading Marcus Aurelius before her own exemplary death, while in Pamela in High Life (1741), Mr B dies first, followed by Pamela).² Whichever is true, Richardson's moderation can be seen in the way he responds to criticism from both sides. On the one hand, Hill persuades him to moderate Pamela's piety, while on the other, the reaction of readers like Povey leads him to stress Pamela's readiness for death in the continuation of the novel (IV, 105), and to attempt a stricter presentation of virtue in Clarissa.

One other response to Pamela is instructive here, that of George Cheyne, Richardson's pious and eccentric doctor friend. Despite his controversial medical methods, Cheyne was more strictly religious than Richardson. Hill, writing to Richardson of his own mixed feelings towards death, refers to "your friend, Doctor Cheyne's conception" that worldly suffering is but a preparation "for some more extended capacity of acting hereafter", implying that Richardson himself would not have openly expressed such pious opinions.³ Cheyne's characteristic blend of medical advice and religious exhortation can be seen in his letters to Richardson, where his patient's illness is said to be "one of the

¹ Povey, p. 70.

² Frank Gees Black, "The Continuations of Pamela," Revue Anglo-Américaine, 13 (1936), 499-507; Eaves and Kimpel, Richardson, pp. 139-42.

³ Correspondence, I, 32-33.

most effectual Means infinite Goodness could contrive to beget true Humility". Not surprisingly, Cheyne suggested several religio-medical themes for the continuation of Pamela: a dangerous fever for Mr B, a broken leg, and the death of a favourite child. He also offered to compile a library for Pamela "of sacred History Natural Philosophy Spiritual Divinity and innocent Trifles", so that Pamela could recommend to Mr B the "strongest Writers in Morality and Christianity", and convert him by degrees from rake to "true Spiritual Christian".¹ Unless we accept a more moderate view of Richardson's piety, the fact that Cheyne's suggestions were totally ignored will seem strange. Rather than leaping at the opportunity to be moralistic, Richardson merely defends what he has already written. "If I were too much spiritual," he explains, "I doubt I should catch none but Grandmothers."² While this could be read as a lament for the corruption of the age, particularly since he goes on to talk of the need to "mingle Instruction with Entertainment" in order to catch the youthful reader's attention, the fact that this draft reply was never sent perhaps reveals an unwillingness on Richardson's part to be seen to be shunning Cheyne's piety with such a lame excuse. After all, the bogus continuations made no scruple about exploiting the mortality of the characters for pecuniary rather than moral benefit. Contrary to Cheyne's hopes, Richardson was determined to keep the novel moderate and optimistic in its religion and morality. From the outset of his career as a novelist Richardson knew well how much religiosity his readers would bear. This is an important fact to remember when we find

¹ The Letters of Doctor George Cheyne to Samuel Richardson (1733-1743), ed. Charles F. Mullett, University of Missouri Studies, 18, No. 1 (1943), Letter LXIV, p. 100; Letter XLIII, pp. 67-70.

² Selected Letters, pp. 46-51.

him deliberately overstepping the mark to present a piety beyond both himself and his readers in *Clarissa*.

One possible explanation of the differences between the novels is that they follow a pendulum-like movement from Pamela's social morality to *Clarissa*'s piety, and back to a social morality in *Sir Charles Grandison*. At first sight this is an attractive view, since it allows us to explain the disparity between Pamela's earthly reward, *Clarissa*'s heavenly one, and Sir Charles's heaven on earth, but the religious emphasis in the novels does not fluctuate as much as this analysis would suggest. Ball finds the beginning of the *Clarissa* system of rewards and punishments in what he sees as the "painful" death of the harridan, Mrs Jewkes, following her conversion to Christianity in the continuation of *Pamela* (III, 112-14; IV, 265-66).¹ In fact this pattern can be found even earlier in the first part of *Pamela*, where the bad death of Mr Charlton inspires Mr B to consider his own end and make his will (II, 352-55). Admittedly, the episode is not central to the plot, but it reveals the same pattern for judging characters by their deaths that becomes so important in *Clarissa*. Nor is *Grandison* devoid of the same patterning, ending as it does with the conscience-stricken death of Harriet's abductor, Sir Hargrave Pollexfen (III, 461).

It is an over-simplification, then, to suggest that in *Pamela* and *Grandison* Richardson is rejecting the notion of man's "innate or inborn evil" that he holds to with such "Puritan" determination in *Clarissa*.²

¹ Donald L. Ball, "Pamela II: A Primary Link in Richardson's Development as a Novelist," *MP*, 65 (1968), 342.

² Cynthia Griffin Wolff, *Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character* (Hamden, Connecticut: Shoe String Press, 1972), pp. 203-04; Allan Wendt, "Clarissa's Coffin," *PQ*, 39 (1960), 481-95.

Clarissa's power to redeem those that come into contact with her during her final days (Belford supremely, but also Tomlinson, and, tragically, almost Lovelace himself), her power to raise them "out of the miry gulf" (VII, 275), is surely just as optimistically portrayed as Sir Charles's reconciling of warring friends and relations, such as Mrs Beauchamp and her son-in-law and Emily Jervois and her mother, or his generous aid to his rakish cousin, Everard (I, 232; II, 272-85, 308-13).

Religious themes are important to all three novels. Pamela, like Clarissa, has to learn to give up her pride, and "trust God rather than herself".¹ The whole action of the novel is triggered by the death of Pamela's mistress and her dying injunction to her son to "Remember my poor Pamela!" (I, 2). Mr B, as a representative of the younger, less pious generation, exploits the custom of giving the deceased's clothes to her bedside companion as a pretext for his first advances on Pamela's virtue (I, 12-13). In Grandison, the great religious event is Harriet's public marriage to Sir Charles (III, 218-229) - a deliberate contrast to Clarissa's public funeral. The church "full of people" at the wedding is far more unusual than the "crowded" church at the funeral (VIII, 95). Even after the 1753 Marriage Act had tightened up the regulations concerning private weddings, a quiet ceremony was still preferred in order to spare the bride's modesty. Funerals, on the other hand were elaborate public occasions.² By going against the fashion, Richardson is deliberately emphasizing the public and religious context of the marriage. In Clarissa this important religious element is denied by the property-seeking Harlowes, and by Lovelace's

¹ Kinkead-Weekes, p. 36.

² Dorothy Marshall, "Manners, Meals and Domestic Pastimes," in Johnson's England, ed. A.S. Turberville (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), I, 352-53.

cynical view of women. Death, therefore, is Clarissa's only means of expressing a love which has a religious basis. In Grandison, however, Clementina is advised against this extreme solution, and is told not to sequester herself from the world in a convent, since her religious feelings can be fulfilled "with much greater efficacy" within the "sacrament" of marriage (II, 619). In all three novels, marriage has the potential to fulfil a woman's earthly and religious ambitions, but in Clarissa, such marriages are exceedingly rare, and the heroine, deprived of her earthly role as a wife, can only pursue her heavenly role as a saint. Pamela and Harriet are engaged in the same religious quest, but unlike Clarissa, they find their fulfilment on earth. As Edwards writes to Richardson, the novels "teach us both how to live and to die. To live like Sir Charles, and to die like Clarissa, what a full complement of felicity that would be!"¹ In Pamela, God is always present as "a background determinant force", and it is only with her marriage that Pamela discovers how God has been behind all her trials.²

II - Tragedy and the Death of the Believer

Richardson's final revisions of Pamela, printed in the edition of 1801, provide further evidence that he did not simply return to a lenient and less religious attitude in his old age, for these revisions frequently increase the piety of the original.³ The aforementioned

¹ Correspondence, III, 72.

² Richard Cohen, "The Social-Christian and the Christian-Social Doctrines of Samuel Richardson," Hartford Studies in Literature, 4 (1972), 137.

³ Eaves and Kimpel, "Richardson's Revisions of Pamela," pp. 61-88.

death of Mr Charlton is expanded to include more typical detail of the dying man's agitation at his unprepared end. In the following quotation, the most substantial additions and alterations have been underlined:

Mr Carlton [sic], who so lately died in my arms, convinced me of this truth, that temporal concerns should not be left to the last debilitating hour, when the important moments ought to be filled up with other and greater considerations: he, poor man! had to struggle with, at once, a disordered state of worldly affairs; a weakness of body, and concerns of still as much more moment, as the soul is to the body. I had the happiness to relieve his anxiety as to the first: but the difficulties he had to contend with, and the sense he had of his incapacity to contend with them; the horror, the confusion he was sometimes in, as life was drawing to its utmost verge; so many things left undone. . . .¹

By making Charlton's death more obviously reminiscent of the unprepared deaths in seventeenth-century devotional literature, Richardson has made this the most strictly religious part of the novel, and yet elsewhere in the 1801 edition he avoids excessive piety, for instance by removing Pamela's speculations on the pain of death as a separation of loved ones (III, 16).²

The revision of Charlton's death is clearly not intended to clarify a possible misreading of the episode, for the original version makes his folly perfectly clear. Richardson seeks to make us feel more pity for the unfortunate man, and to realise, like Mr B, through our pity, the need to reform ourselves while there is still time. As in

¹ Pamela, (London, 1801), II, 309-10; cf. Shakespeare Head, II, 354.

² Pamela (1801), III, 14; for the pattern of the bad death of the unprepared, see Jeremy Taylor, The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying, 10th ed. (London, 1674), pp. 55-59; and for an extensive list of such deaths, see Jeremy Taylor, The Great Exemplar (London, 1649), Part III, p. 144.

the coffin episode, the gap between exemplary piety and the ordinary man's lack of religion produces an emotional response which can lead to moral reform.

The same principle complicates the death of Mrs Jewkes, whose conversion to Christianity is shown to have a beneficial effect upon the way she dies. Unlike Charlton, she repents in the approved manner, while she still has "Health and Strength", and thus can die resignedly and with a clear conscience (III, 112). Nevertheless, her death is surrounded by doubts and complexities that make it more than an exemplary pattern for us all to follow. Pamela wonders if the death will not look "discouraging" to those weaker believers who cannot appreciate the ways of Providence, or understand the pious commonplace that "a person is fittest to die, when worthiest to live" (III, 404). Some would argue that Pamela's doubts are a typical example of Richardson's tendency to reveal ambiguities in his novels by being too concerned to defend his morality, but surely this cannot be the case here. He would have had no reason for introducing Mrs Jewkes's death at all had it not been for a conscious desire to air some doubts concerning Pamela's platitude, thereby making the death more pitiful and sympathetic. The episode tests our faith in the platitude against the experience of death itself, and reveals it as an oversimplification. For as Pamela says, "When the poor Soul stands shivering, as it were, on the Verge of Death, and has nothing strong, but its Fears and Doubts", it is with reluctance that any of us can relinquish life, irrespective of whether we are believers or not (IV, 250). She tells Miss Darnford that it is a necessary duty to comfort all people on their deathbeds. There is no expectation of a joyful or good death even for the believer. The most we can do is give "comforting Advice", and hope for an "easy" end.

Death transforms the evil Mrs Jewkes into a representative of our common human frailty in the face of death. "I know you'll shed a Tear for the poor Woman," Polly Darnford writes to Pamela, as she weeps herself, making it doubly clear that this is no victorious Christian apotheosis, but the death of a weak mortal like ourselves (IV, 266). Through this death and Pamela's doubts, Richardson seems to be suggesting a new pattern of deathbed morality, a pattern which does not involve an exemplary death impressing us, or a horrific death frightening us into repentance, as in seventeenth-century devotional literature, but which instead exploits the pitifulness of death in order to convince us of our common sinfulness and weakness, and our need for sympathy and love. All deaths are emotionally painful, but they can also impart grace to the beholders through sympathetic tears. The pitifulness even of an exemplary death can be seen in Polly Darnford's sobbing, broken sentences, which strikingly prefigure Sterne: "---She made a very exemplary---Full of Blessings---And more easy and resign'd than I apprehended she would be" (IV, 265-66). Similarly, at Clarissa's death, the more emotional response of the onlookers is made to clash with Clarissa's ideal of the victorious Christian death.

To understand why Richardson deliberately created this tension between strict piety and emotion it is necessary to trace some of the theological developments of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Briefly, the strict seventeenth-century Christian attitude to death, based on the Church Fathers and St Paul, held that for the believer death is "swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15.54), being a joyful release from the inevitable sufferings of life in an imperfect and evil world, and from the weakness and wickedness of the flesh.

Conversely, for the wicked, death is a fearful prelude to judgement and damnation, exemplified by the torturings of a despairing and guilty conscience, the agony of wanting to repent, but being denied the grace to do so. All this can be found, for instance, in one of the devotional books sent to Clarissa by her brother, Bayly's The Practise of Piety.¹ Richardson need have gone no further to find all the elements of the good and bad deathbed pattern and much of his clothing and housing imagery.² Every stage of life is miserable, but the Christian can live joyfully, because God turns "all calamities of this life, death it selfe: yea his very sinnes vnto his good."³ At death, the ordinary believer has no fear merely "to goe home to his fathers house."⁴ Clarissa uses almost the same words in her innocently deceptive letter to Lovelace (VII, 189), but he is clearly unfamiliar with this pious notion, since it leads him to suppose that she is on her way back to Harlowe Place (VII, 190).

Clarissa also dies in Bayly's approved manner, praying the dying saints' prayer, "Come, Lord Iesus".⁵ To the onlookers, however, her death is an exception rather than the norm. They press around the bed, seeking to bathe in the redeeming influence that seems to flow from her:

She waved her hand to us both, and bowed her head six times, as we have since recollected, as if distinguishing every person present; not forgetting the nurse and the

¹ Lewis Bayly, The Practise of Piety, 11th ed. (London, 1619).

² Doody, p. 173.

³ Bayly, pp. 61, 106.

⁴ Bayly, p. 110.

⁵ Bayly, p. 112.

maid-servant; the latter having approached the bed, weeping, as if crouding in for the divine Lady's last blessing; and she spoke faltering and inwardly,--Bless---bless---bless---you All---And now---And now---(holding up her almost lifeless hands for the last time) Come---O come---Blessed Lord---JESUS! (VIII, 5).

The unusual happiness and piety of her death makes the onlookers weep all the more, as Richardson stresses by mentioning the detail of the nurse, whose "face was swoln with weeping (tho used to such scenes as this)" (VIII, 2). Clarissa has an old-fashioned attitude to death that makes her seem all the more exceptional and innocent. The idea that death is a joyful release had long been paid only lip-service, while in practice death had become a grievous event both for the dying and for the bereaved. Richardson was well aware of the ambiguities that this double standard had led to even in the devotional writers. Samuel Gardiner, for instance, writing in 1627, holds with the theory of St Augustine that "he never dieth ill, that lived well", and that a good man finds death a "ioy above all ioyes", while the wicked end in despair, but elsewhere he introduces a typical inconsistency by trying to explain why believers sometimes despair of their salvation. He is forced to concede that the "common conceit" that the style of one's death indicates one's eternal destination may not be maintainable, that a good man may die badly because of pain or disease without there being any reason to suppose him damned.¹

Ambiguity begins to creep into the theology of death at an early stage under the influence of emotional and experiential considerations. Gardiner wishes to comfort those whose relations have died in apparent despair, and to do so he undermines the strict moral pattern of the believing and unbelieving death: "For truly a man may

¹ Samuel Gardiner, The Devotions of the Dying Man that Desireth to Die Well (London, 1627), sig. $\pi 7^r$, pp. 138, 180-87.

die like a lambe, and yet go to hell; and another dying in most grievous torments and fearfull behaiours of the body, may easily go to heaven".¹ The same inconsistency continues in other devotional writers later in the same century. Jeremy Taylor frequently states that life is "so full of evils, that therefore death is no evil to them that have felt the smart of this, or hope for the joys of a better", and that evil men either die like animals, oblivious and without remorse, or in terrors like those of Mrs Sinclair.² Elsewhere, however, he denies this strict pattern, asserting that even the Christian must continually meditate on "the King of Terrors" in order to make him "safe and friendly", for it is almost expected that the believer will have fears and doubts.³ At one point, he specifically warns against judging people by the way they die:

Make no judgment concerning the dying person, by his dying quietly or violently, with comfort, or without, with great fears or a cheerful confidence, with sense or without, like a lamb or like a lion, with convulsions or semblances of great pain, or like an expiring and a spent candle: for these happen to all men, without rule, without any known reason, but according as God pleases to dispense the grace or the punishment, for reasons only known to himself.⁴

Taylor would agree with the onlookers at Clarissa's deathbed that her joyful death is quite exceptional. The most the ordinary believer can hope for is an easy death like Mrs Jewkes's, "gentle, and serene and without temptation". The notion of a "gentle" or "easy" death became a cliché in the eighteenth century: Richardson is informed that Cheyne's

¹ Gardiner, p. 187.

² Taylor, Holy Dying, p. 34.

³ Taylor, Holy Dying, p. 38.

⁴ Taylor, Holy Dying, pp. 233-34.

death was "easy", while Lady Echlin reports that "No mortal ever quitted this life with more apparent tranquility" than her husband.¹ We all fall far short of the martyr's joyful death.

The same distinction between the ordinary believer and the saint appears in Sherlock's popular work A Practical Discourse Concerning Death: a martyr is a "living sacrifice" and his task is "cheerfully to die for God", while the death of an ordinary believer is merely "a mark of dishonour" and "a punishment of Sin".² Clarissa's death displays more of the martyr's victory than the sinner's shame, despite her acknowledgement of her pride and her errors. There is some justification, therefore, for Daiches's view that Clarissa is "more closely related to the medieval saints' lives than to the novel".³ The saintly Clarissa can be certain and joyful about her salvation, but we ordinary mortals "must not expect wholly to conquer our natural Aversion to Death".⁴ Fear of death and religious doubt have become permissible features of the average Christian's faith, and St Augustine's phrase, "he cannot die ill that hath lived well", is reinterpreted as meaning that any apparently bad death of a good man is still "good" in God's sight.⁵

This theological compromise soon finds its way into secular literature, such as Dryden's Tyrannick Love (1670), where Catherine's

¹ Jeremy Taylor, A Sermon Preached in Christ-Church, Dublin (London, 1663), p. 42; Mullett, p. 130; Correspondence, V, 77.

² William Sherlock, A Practical Discourse Concerning Death (London, 1689), p. 67.

³ David Daiches, Literary Essays (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1956), p. 67.

⁴ Sherlock, p. 331.

⁵ Thomas Allestree, A Funeral Handkerchief (London, 1671), p. 151; the emergence of a similar permissible fear in eighteenth-century France is outlined in McManners, pp. 206-13).

martyrdom is contrasted with the newly-converted Berenice's permissible fear of death. Catherine herself acknowledges that "The wisest and the best some fear may show".¹ By the 1740's such a view was commonplace. Richardson clearly favoured the same compromise, but, unlike many of the devotional writers, he seems to be aware of the dangers and difficulties raised by such a comforting solution. Having persuaded Young to use the anecdote of Addison's "triumphant" death in his Conjectures, even wishing that "the contrast of Lord B's death, cursing and blaspheming, could be introduced", Richardson begins to wonder if the piece will be thought "laboured" and over-pious. Even worse, it may be "discouraging to surviving friends, to find wanting in the dying those tokens of resignation and true Christian piety, which Mr Addison was graciously enabled to express." Richardson cites further the example of Sir John Stanley, a good man, but who was reported by Young to have had a "hard and painful" death. Addison's triumph is "a glory granted to very few; nor is it of much consequence to the individual."² Far from making "Christians adore, and infidels believe", the good death of a good man tends to be ignored by the infidels, while it disturbs those believers who cannot approach death so fearlessly.³ Well aware that experience negates the strict deathbed pattern, Richardson would not have wasted time at Hume's deathbed, as Boswell did, awaiting a terror-stricken recantation.⁴

¹ John Dryden, Tyrannick Love, Act IV, Scene i, in Works, ed H.T. Swedenberg, Jr. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1970), X, 162.

² Richardson to Young, Letters cxxxix and cxi, Monthly Magazine, 46 (1818), 43-45; Edward Young, Conjectures (London, 1759); for details of Richardson's part in the writing and revision of this work, see Alan Dugald McKillop, "Richardson, Young and the Conjectures," MP, 22 (1925), 391-404.

³ Edward Young, Night Thoughts, Night II, line 682, in Complete Works (London: 1854), I, 30.

⁴ Roy Porter, English Society in the Eighteenth Century (London: Allen Lane, 1982), p. 170.

Clarissa is more strictly pious than her creator in believing that a joyful death should be the norm. Through her death, Richardson highlights this theological ambiguity, and suggests that theory and experience can only be reconciled through a more complex response that combines emotional and moral needs, so that as, like Belford, we weep, so we find ourselves morally improved. Richardson is not the strictly religious novelist that Sarah Fielding took him for when she described Clarissa's death as "the only Death of the Kind in any Story", for Clarissa's death is not simply a triumphant escape from a wicked world as it is for David Simple's family in Volume the Last of her David Simple. Sarah Fielding's novel is far less exploratory; hers is "an ideal moral fiction", rather than one that "strives to be moral by testing precept against 'real' experience."¹ In her defence of Clarissa's piety she is far stricter than Richardson, holding that Christians are wrong to "excuse introducing a Word of Religion into Company, as if it would be indecent to mention such matters."² To her, Clarissa is a welcome exception to this habit, but in fact Richardson holds exactly the opposite view. It is Clarissa's pious conversations with Lovelace that awaken her pride and lead her astray into thinking that she can reform the rake (IV, 338). Richardson knows that religious talk can often be cant, and sees it as highly commendable in Harriet Byron that she is unwilling to talk on religious subjects "except on proper occasions, and to proper persons" (Grandison, I, 96). Richardson's Christianity, even in his novels, rarely reaches Clarissa's "high, unworldly view".³

¹ Sarah Fielding, Remarks on Clarissa (London, 1749), p. 55; Malcolm Kelsall in his introduction to David Simple, Oxford English Novels (London: OUP, 1969), p. xiii.

² Remarks on Clarissa, pp. 32-33.

³ Eaves and Kimpel, Richardson, p. 550.

However, the complexity of Richardson's theology works both ways, for even his less overtly religious characters often show a surprisingly mixed attitude to death. Sir Charles, for instance, is usually felt to be free from any excess of religious feeling, but in fact many of his statements about death are just as strict as Clarissa's. His arguments against duelling, like Clarissa's, are based on the traditional notion that "the combatants who fall" are "self-murderers", and that the victors are guilty of sending their victims to hell without the opportunity to repent of their own murderous intentions (Grandison, I, 206, 266; Clarissa, VIII, 174).¹

Sir Charles is also pious enough to pray at the bedsides of the sick and dying, although here a degree of leniency is shown in his pity for any soul that perishes, especially a soul that is unprepared (II, 665). His attitude to suicide is typical of Richardson's own moderation. When the wicked Laurana kills herself in a melancholy fit of chagrin, Charlotte is somewhat surprised that her brother expresses "great Concern" for "so execrable a wretch" (III, 448). Her reaction is not unreasonable, considering the way Giacomo has avoided inquiring too closely into the nature of Laurana's death so as not to be "induced to show compassion" for one so cruel. Charles, however, meets her surprise with a rhetorical outburst in favour of human compassion:

Shall a human creature perish . . . and its fellow-creature not be moved? Shall an immortal Being fix its eternal state by an act dreadful and irreversible; by a crime that admits not of repentance; and shall we not be concerned? (III, 448).

Like the devotional writers, Richardson is careful to stress the folly of suicide. Pamela's thoughts of drowning herself are clearly

¹ cf. Sherlock, p. 276, and Richard Allestree, The Gentleman's Calling (London, 1660), pp. 143-44.

shown to be the result of an erroneous and excessive self-pity, as she imagines Mr B lamenting his former cruelty when her body is discovered, and the "young men and maidens" pitying her, but preferably not making her the subject of their "Ballads and Elegies" (I, 233-34). Many have found this episode unconvincing.¹ This is largely because Richardson has tried to fit too many of the conventional arguments against suicide into too small a space: the need to have patience, and trust in God, the fact that our lives are not ours to end when we please, that we must keep to our posts like faithful soldiers, the idea that despair is a sin deserving damnation, and the sobering thought that suicide will bring poverty and ignominy upon one's relatives (I, 234-36). In fact the eighteenth century saw the development of a much more lenient attitude to suicide. The sentence of "the dreadful Stake, and the Highway Interrment", and worse, the confiscation of all one's property, thus ruining one's dependants, was rarely carried out, since almost all suicides were declared insane acts, the result of a pardonable "distraction", as Charles describes Laurana's death (III, 448).²

Opposing this leniency, many divines held the view that a stricter adherence to the suicide laws would, by its fearful example, lead to fewer suicides. Such was the opinion of William Fleetwood, for instance, whose religious conduct book, The Relative Duties, was known and quoted by Richardson.³ For him, as for Richardson, suicide is the result of an "unlawful Passion", and our pity for the suicide's dependants should not lead us to excuse the crime as insanity, since

¹ For example, Wolff, pp. 157-58; Boas, p. 44.

² S.E. Sprott, The English Debate on Suicide from Donne to Hume (Illinois: Open Court, 1961); all Pamela's arguments are used by Isaac Watts in A Defence Against the Temptation to Self-Murder (London, 1726).

³ Selected Letters, p. 205.

ten to one cases are probably perfectly sane.¹ Richardson expresses the same opinion when he writes of a mad girl who drowned herself after prophesying disastrous earthquakes: many, he supposes, "more in their senses" than she, "have thrown themselves into the arms of death for fear of dying."² Pamela's despair is a forceful example of Fleetwood's "unlawful Passion" and Aaron Hill's dictum, in commenting on a family suicide, that "the force of the imagination, without some adequate temper in the judgment, is a ship with all sail and no rudder."³

In contrast to this strict attitude, the post-Restoration drama had long been advocating a more sympathetic attitude to the passions that lead to suicide. The loss of virginity, for example, in plays such as Otway's The Orphan, and Denis's Appius and Virginia, usually leads to madness and suicide, unless a father's hand puts the victim out of her misery first.⁴ Gardiner is clearly opposing this idea of female complicity in cases of rape, when he assures us that "the body is not stained but by the minds agreement."⁵ Richardson sets out to prove the same purity for Clarissa against Lovelace's maxim of "once subdued, always subdued" (III, 94), and he is careful to point out that suicide is not to be Clarissa's way out. Her constant iterations that she would rather die than marry Solmes or abscond with Lovelace, together with her clear understanding that suicide is a sin, make it clear to the reader that she is very different from a tragedy heroine (II, 280, 293).

¹ The Relative Duties (London, 1705), pp. 465-87.

² Correspondence, II, 95.

³ Correspondence, I, 24-27.

⁴ Sprott, p. 89; John A. Dussinger, "Richardson's Tragic Muse," PQ, 46 (1967), 30-31.

⁵ Gardiner, p. 193.

When she is tricked away by Lovelace, the rest of her family reveal their complete lack of knowledge of her true character by leaping to the conclusion that she has drowned herself in the cascade; the reader knows better (III, 273). Something of the same effect is produced by Sally's taunting of Clarissa for refusing to eat: "---Your Religion, I think, should teach you, that starving yourself is Self-murder" (VI, 276). The mere suggestion of suicide reveals how far Clarissa is above such an action.

Earlier, in the nosebleed scene, Richardson deliberately parodies the passionate, suicidal scenes of tragedy. Lovelace is made to look "an unmanly blockhead", when he draws his sword to dispatch himself, thinking that Clarissa has "stabbed herself with some concealed instrument" (V, 378). In the fire scene, Clarissa defends her honour with a pair of scissors (IV, 391), just as later she is prepared to kill herself with a penknife, justifying this suicide because it is "in defence of my honour", and believing that "God will be merciful to my poor Soul!" (VI, 69). Sarah Fielding accepts Clarissa's justification of her action in these scenes: "tho' her Hand had pointed the Knife, yet might he properly have been said to have struck the Blow."¹ There does seem, however, to be more ambiguity here than this explanation allows for. What Lovelace describes as her "extravagant passion" cannot simply be the product of his dramatic imagination. She is playing the tragedy heroine to his villain, calling on him to kill her, and "baring, with a still more frantic violence, part of her enchanting neck---Here, here, said the soul-harrowing Beauty, let thy pointed mercy enter!" (V, 375). After the rape, Clarissa goes through a period in which she loses her customary composure, and again behaves like a tragedy heroine. It is only gradually that she regains her

¹ Remarks on Clarissa, p. 43.

former patience, and, realising her purity before God, waits calmly for death. The argument against suicide in Clarissa is thus much more subtle than that of Pamela, because Richardson actually demonstrates the inadequacy of self-murder as a solution, as both Clarissa and Lovelace discover the folly of "unlawful Passion". Once again, a model of behaviour, this time drawn from tragedy, is proved wrong against experience.

In Grandison, the similarity of Clementina's suicidal folly is made explicit by deliberate echoes of the suicide scenes in Pamela and Clarissa. Clementina is intercepted in the garden, just as she is setting a ladder against the wall in an attempt to escape from her family, and this clearly is meant to remind us of Pamela's abortive escape bid shortly before her pond-side suicide debate. The girl is also narrowly prevented from throwing herself into the cascade to suffer the same fate that the Harlowes had feared was Clarissa's (II, 246). This neat cross-referencing encourages the reader to compare the three heroines, and to see that Clementina, like her predecessors, must rid herself of this impatient passion, and resign herself to Providence's plan, instead of wildly pursuing her own inclinations.

Nevertheless, as we have seen in the death of Laurana, Richardson's strict views on suicide are moderated, like Fleetwood's, by a deep pity for the victims. Whilst wishing that the laws against suicide were more rigidly enforced, Fleetwood has great compassion for the suicides of believers who think they are damned and criminals who take their own lives out of a sense of guilt, since "this is to die, for fear of Death". A Belford-like hope in God's mercy that goes beyond Fleetwood's strict theology is the final result.¹ Richardson expresses a similar pity for the suicide of the "thresher poet",

¹ Fleetwood, pp. 492-95.

Stephen Duck.¹ Like Charles, Richardson moderates his morality with a humane compassion, and this frequently produces what appears to be a strange mixture of old and new attitudes. Charles shows moderation in pitying Laurana, but when his father dies, he seems rather old-fashioned in his provision of an "elegant but not sumptuous monument", with a "modest" inscription designed as "instruction" for the living, rather than as "a panegyric on the departed" (I, 361). Charles's unusual piety is noted by Thomas Edwards, who confesses that although Richardson's novels have helped him to face death as a Christian, he still envies "that noble declaration of Sr. C. 'that as to himself it is equal whether his life be demanded of him now or forty years hence.'"² The strict Christian attitude is again beyond the ordinary man, "And yet is not this what every Christian should endeavour to be able to say?"

Edwards's shamefaced question is a typical expression of man's failure to live up to the morality and religion that the seventeenth-century devotional writers had preached. The same tone permeates the devotional writing itself, in Allestree's The Whole Duty of Man, for example, and Taylor's prayers and meditations. In The Great Exemplar, his devotional life of Christ, Taylor notes the sad fact that Christianity is ignored by the world as being "contrary in its principles, or in its precepts to that wisdom, whereby the world is governed."³ Richardson tries to create the same feeling of shame in his readers by contrasting the example of Sir Charles and Clarissa with our general failure. It is still beneficial for us to strive to imitate them, even if we never succeed, for, as Taylor notes, "He that strives to imitate another, admires him, and confesses his own

¹ Eaves and Kimpel, Richardson, p. 191.

² Thomas Edwards to Richardson in Bodleian MS 1012, p. 161.

³ Taylor, The Great Exemplar, Preface, sig b2r.

imperfections."¹ Christ's death is beyond man's imitation, as Clarissa's is beyond Belford, and Sir Charles's attitude is beyond Edwards, but this does not mean, as one early critic suggested, that Clarissa's exceptionality destroys "the moral, and any good effect that could be expected from the example."² Christ is an exception for Taylor, but he is still the model for man to follow by grace. Just as in the devotional literature we read of the way we should behave in order to discover our failings and then seek grace to improve, so the experience of Clarissa's death is designed to sadden us and make us aware of our weakness, so that with the onlookers we wish that our "latter end" may "be like hers".³

Sarah Fielding responded to Clarissa's death with tears of "Admiration and Compassion" similar to the "joyful pity" that Clarissa herself commends to Anna Howe (VII, 445).⁴ Our mixed joy and grief for the death of a believer should combine happiness for their departure with shame and grief for ourselves that we have been deprived of an example that we did not deserve. Thus Jeremy Taylor, in his Funeral Sermon for Lady Frances of Carberry, laments the fact that "The age is very evil and deserv'd her not", but for this very reason he stresses the need to preserve her memory and imitate her example. To every tear of grief we must add one of repentance for ourselves and "another of joy" for the blessings she now enjoys in heaven.⁵

¹ Taylor, The Great Exemplar, Part One, p. 5.

² Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa and Pamela (1754), ed. Alan Dugald McKillop, The Augustan Reprint Society, Series IV, No. 3 (1950), pp. 52-53.

³ Correspondence, III, 112; cf. Selected Letters, pp. 102-11.

⁴ Remarks on Clarissa, p. 31.

⁵ A Funeral Sermon Preached at the Obsequies of the Right Hon. and Most Vertuous Lady, the Lady Frances, Countesse of Carberry (London, 1650), sig. A2^v.

Richardson pursues the same theme in the "Concluding Note" to Grandison, quoting Tillotson to support his argument that an inimitable exemplum is still morally useful, because it gives man a higher mark to aim for, despite the fact that "he can never hope to equal the Examples before him" (III, 466). Similarly, in Young's Conjectures, Addison's death is an exceptional event, "a glory granted to few", but it is still useful, and was "granted, chiefly for the sake of the surviving world, which may profit by his pious example."¹ Clarissa's death is sad for those who are left behind, because, in words from one of Thomas Ken's funeral sermons, "it is our loss only we can bewail; we grieve for ourselves, not for her, she has a joyful deliverance."²

However, Clarissa's "joyful pity" is somewhat more ambivalent than is allowed for by Sarah Fielding's tears of "Admiration and Compassion". Clarissa expects Anna Howe to pity her, "to embalm a fallen blossom", rather than to grieve for the sins of the living (VII, 445). Even she, it appears, expects a different response to death from the traditional joy of the martyr. Early readers of the novel followed this lead, and mourned for Clarissa rather than themselves. Even Sarah Fielding responds with more emotion than she feels is quite justified, and is constrained to suggest that "the Tears we shed for Clarissa in her last Hours, must be Tears of tender joy!"³

In fact the real reason why our response to Clarissa's death is so mixed is that she is not simply a martyr. There is a duality in Richardson's conception of the character that makes her more complex than an exemplum. It is clear from Aaron Hill's suggested titles for the novel - "The Lady's Remembrancer: Or the Way of a YOUNG MAN with a

¹ Young, Conjectures, p. 100.

² Prose Works, ed. James Thomas Round (London, 1838), p. 127.

³ Remarks on Clarissa, p. 55; "tears of joy" are also requested for Addison's death in Conjectures, p. 109.

MAID," and "The Lady's Legacy" - that he did not consider Clarissa to be a model character like Pamela, but a realistic, flawed heroine.¹ In the Preface to the third edition, Richardson explains that she is both "an Exemplar" and a believable human being. She must have "some faults" so that she can show the need to "mistrust and blame" oneself: "As far as is consistent with human frailty . . . she is perfect. To have been impeccable, must have left nothing for Divine Grace and a Purified State to do" (I, xiii-xiv).

Johnson seems to be recalling this analysis when he writes of the utility of fictional models of perfect virtue in Rambler No. 4.² Like Richardson, he believes that they should not be "above probability", but be "the highest . . . that humanity can reach." The danger of such realistic characterization is that it may produce a less obviously clear-cut moral than romance, and may thus be "mischievous or uncertain in its effects". Richardson sees this danger too, but exploits it for emotional effect. At times Clarissa seems more like a real person; at others she is more like a saint. On the one hand, her very name suggests perfection, and in her death she is eulogized in the traditional manner as one of the elect whose sins have been forgotten.³ When taunted by the Sinclair whores and the Bible-quoting Harlowes, she reminds us of Christ suffering the ridicule of the soldiers, and at Mrs Moore's, her saintliness is indicated by the picture of St Cecilia over the door of her chamber (V, 283; VI, 289-90; VII, 113).⁴ On the other hand, her secret correspondence

¹ T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, "The Composition of Clarissa and its Revision before Publication," PMLA, 83 (1968), 416-28.

² The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, John H. Middendorf, gen. ed. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1958-77), III, 19-25.

³ Kinkead Weekes, p. 160; Wolff, pp. 163-64.

⁴ Doody, p. 232-33.

with Lovelace, her abduction resulting from her agreement to meet him in the garden, her pride in thinking that she can convert him, her impatient, almost suicidal desire for death, and her inability to forgive her persecutor immediately after the rape do tell against her saintliness. Before she can die her model death, she has to learn to be patient, forgiving, and resigned to God's timing: "GOD ALMIGHTY WOULD NOT LET ME DEPEND FOR ANY COMFORT UPON ANY BUT HIMSELF" (VII, 459). She cannot simply be a Christ-like figure, because she must also be an example of what Divine Grace can do in the life of a faithful believer. It is only in comparison to the "corrupt" that she seems more "angel" than "woman" (I, xiv). Strictly speaking, even these flaws in Clarissa's character do not make her death a tragedy, since they show the triumph of Grace over human frailty. Nevertheless, her death seems tragic, because of the sense we have of her innocence and weakness and of the wasted potential behind the seemingly remorseless way in which events have deprived her of the choice of a happy married life.

There has been much critical debate as to whether Clarissa can be called a tragedy, and whether it was written according to any tragic plan. The argument hinges on this question of Clarissa's status as an exemplum and our reaction to her death. Richardson's own rulings are contradictory: in 1747, he writes to Hill that he is inclined not to publish, because the "supposed Tragical (tho' I think it Triumphant) Catastrophe" will be misunderstood and disliked, but in 1748, he informs Hill that the novel is "of the Tragic Kind".¹ Hill agrees, adding that it is a better tragedy than any written "from Athens down to Otway!" because it has made him weep "tears enough to swim the volumes."²

¹ Selected Letters, p. 104.

² Aaron Hill, Works (London, 1754), II, 332-35.

Other correspondents who approve of the death also bear witness to this emotional response. Edward Moore compares the novel favourably to King Lear, the end of which "however undeserved or strongly painted, will affect an audience with no other Passion than Terror." Clarissa, on the other hand, evokes pity:

It is her noble forgiveness of Injuries, her Humanity, her Friendship, her Sweetness of Mind, and above all the praises that are bestowed upon her that compell Tears, and not that we have lost her.¹

Here we are not weeping for ourselves in the loss of an example, but actually pitying Clarissa, even though, strictly speaking, she has no need of our tears. Moore, like Sarah Fielding, feels the need to excuse these tears as a mixture of joy and sorrow, but Richardson evidently approves of his pity. He tells Lady Bradshaigh that it is his intention to evoke "Pity" on Clarissa's account and "Terror" on Lovelace's.² Her death is carefully contrived so that we feel a sense of waste while also acknowledging her triumph.

It is an over-simplification to see Clarissa as designed for heaven by her "denial of the flesh" right from the outset of the novel.³ There are, of course, hints of her fate throughout the early volumes - for instance, when she remembers her near-fatal illness at the age of eleven, and Anna reports her ambition of "sliding through life to the end of it un-noted", a wish which is echoed later as a desire to "slide quietly into my grave" (I, 2, 5; VI, 195). These

¹ Cited in Arthur Friedman, "Aspects of Sentimentalism in Eighteenth-Century Literature," in The Augustan Milieu, ed. Henry Knight Miller, Eric Rothstein and G.S. Rousseau (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 260-61.

² Selected Letters, p. 104.

³ Wendt, p. 485.

instances of her other-worldliness, her desire to be struck dead or buried alive rather than marry Solmes, should really be seen as the feelings of a girl who has not yet found the man to match her high ideals of marriage (I, 127; II, 207). These feelings are altered by the discovery of her love for Lovelace, and her incorrect assumption that she has the power to redeem him. The novel is tragic because marriage is a viable way of life of which Clarissa is cruelly deprived. As Hagstrum suggests, Clarissa's "angélisme" is a secondary role that she is forced to take on because she never meets a lover of the same spiritual stature as herself. Lovelace is only sexually attractive.¹ Under these circumstances, there is little that she can do apart from bedeck herself for a heavenly Bridegroom (VII, 406). The unhappy and ill-advised marriages of the novel, such as Mrs Norton's, serve as a contrast to the potential for a good and happy marriage that lies within Clarissa. Richardson is not advocating celibacy, as Wendt suggests. He clearly placed great value upon both his own marriages, and in the novels he continually stresses the religious side of such contracts. Richetti has suggested that Richardson learnt the "direct relationship between the desire to love purely . . . and salvation" from the poetess Elizabeth Rowe's depiction of virtuous love.² Richardson expands on her idea that the search for true love is also a spiritual quest, showing that marriage is an important spiritual experience. When such a view of marriage is denied by all, however, Clarissa is forced to curtail her spiritual development. She may lose an earthly father to find a heavenly one, and replace her earthly passions with heavenly love, but, in doing so, her ability to love on a human level is wasted. Theoretically, to "be with Christ" should be

¹ Jean H. Hagstrum, Sex and Sensibility (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 200-02.

² Richetti, p. 526.

"best of all", even when death separates a faithful wife from a beloved husband, because we then meet "a husband dearly beloved", but in practice there is still a "tragedy of personality" for those who are deprived of earthly love.¹ This tragic feeling is even allowed for in Clarissa's chosen funeral text:

Let not her that is deceived trust in vanity; for vanity shall be her recompence. She shall be accomplished before her time; and her branch shall not be green. She shall shake off her unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off her flower as the olive" (VIII, 123; cf. Job 15.31-33).

Richardson's use of this text is remarkable, since it rules out any simple reading of Clarissa's death as a victory. She humbly sees it as a punishment for her pride rather than a reward for her virtue. Like Taylor, she interprets the ordinary believer's death as a purgation of sin.² There is no sense of heavenly reward or joyful deliverance. The finality of "she shall be accomplished" is qualified by the images of failure to blossom and bear fruit. In one sense, Clarissa is "ripen'd for Glory", as Lady Davers describes Pamela on her childbed (IV, 105), and "upon a better preparation, than for an earthly Husband" (VI, 419), but behind this strictly religious approach there lies a personal tragedy of thwarted love that gives Clarissa's characterization its realistic appeal. A foreign reviewer, quoted in the Gentleman's Magazine, finds her death moving because she is a real person, "a virtuous character in the same station of life with ourselves", not a figure from romance, nor, we might add, simply a saint.³

¹ Richard Baxter, A Treatise of Death (London, 1660), p. 2.

² Taylor, Holy Dying, p. 90.

³ Gentleman's Magazine, 19 (1749), 245-46, 345-49.

To find Clarissa less than tragic, because her religious faith prevents her from displaying "that ultimate courage that is demanded of those that don't count on a life hereafter", is to ignore Richardson's deliberate blending of martyrdom with a more personal tragedy.¹ Brissenden, like Sarah Fielding, feels the need to explain away his mixed response of pity and admiration, declaring that although "defeated by the world the manner in which she copes with her defeat transforms it into a triumph."² Clarissa does cope triumphantly, but at a tragic price. She is the heir of heavenly rewards, but she is deprived of the opportunity to express her strong instincts of earthly love, familial and sexual. If we read the central scenes between Clarissa and Lovelace carefully, we see how tantalizingly near Clarissa comes to winning Lovelace's true love, except that his fear of losing her favour draws him deeper and deeper into plots and stratagems which she can never forgive. She is not wrong to pursue earthly love, but she is wrong to expect it from Lovelace's quarter. The fact that even the most commendable characters, including Clarissa's religious instructor Dr Lewen, press marriage as the best way of patching up the rape reveals both the "worldliness" of the contemporary attitude to marriage and the tragedy of Clarissa's enforced celibacy. Clarissa has not, as Hill suggests, lost her marketable virginity, for Richardson is careful to show that Mr Wyerly is still willing to take her as she is.³

The Harlowes with their property mentality cannot begin to understand Clarissa's idealistic and spiritual view of marriage. For

¹ Christina Van Heyningen, Clarissa, Poetry and Morals (Pietermaritzburg: Univ. of Natal Press, 1963), p. 3.

² R.F. Brissenden, Virtue in Distress (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 91.

³ Kinkead-Weekes, pp. 264-65; Hill, pp. 331-32.

the furtherance of the family, she must either die unwed, or suffer the living death of marriage to Solmes. Richardson highlights the perversity of property-based marriages by emphasizing their literal and symbolic links with death. The marriage talks between Uncle Antony and Anna Howe's mother hinge on the unasked question as to which of the two will die first. Anna reveals their mercenary motives by shockingly bringing this question into the open (IV, 175-77). Similarly, when Lord M threatens to marry and punish Lovelace by disinheriting him, he cautions himself with the proverb, "old men, when they marry young women . . . make much of death" (IV, 128-29). This accurate and cynical social observation emphasizes the sterility of economically-motivated pairings which deny the sacramental nature of marriage.

Clarissa's unfruitful death is the logical end-product of this sterility in society. As Sarah Fielding notes, we pity her with "melancholy tears", following the lead given by the more moderately religious characters, such as Anna Howe: "we accompany her in Horror, when she first impatiently pushes aside the Coffin Lid. In short, we sigh, we rave, and we weep with her."¹ We become "like the Harlowes' servant, when he spoke not; he could not speak; he looked, he bowed, and withdrew."² The servant's and Anna's view of the tragedy is very different from Clarissa's. The contrast between the views of Belford and the Harlowes, Lovelace and Anna, and so on, reveals some of the religious hypocrisies and ambiguities which had long lain unacknowledged at the centre of eighteenth-century, and even seventeenth-century attitudes to morality and mortality. Richardson's novels meet these problems face on in a way that few others had dared to attempt.

¹ Remarks on Clarissa, p. 45.

² Correspondence, II, 60-61.

George Jeffreys, an early reader of Clarissa, pinpoints this inconsistency between belief and experience when he writes to Joseph Highmore complaining that the novel is "too melancholy", since the only person who could approve of Clarissa's end would be "as much a saint as Clarissa was":

the majority of readers (not excepting the clergy themselves) can never be reconciled to the sufferings of Clarissa in this life, by the prospect of her happiness in another; though there may be many, both among the clergy and laity, who are hypocrites enough to pretend the contrary.¹

The novel sets out to explore this particular area of religious hypocrisy through the depiction of various possible responses to Clarissa's triumphant tragedy.

If there is a theory of tragedy behind Clarissa, it must be one that allows for "an especially moving kind of tragic experience."² Richardson does not make Clarissa's end unambiguously happy, as Warburton suggested that he should.³ However staunchly he defends the ending in letters and subsequent publications, he never alters the emotional reaction of the characters with whom we identify. Like them, we are allowed to feel both pity and awe.

A tragic theory close to this experience of the novel is to be found in Young's Conjectures, where a preference for an appeal to the emotions rather than the intellect leads to the denigration of Addison's Cato and the adulation of Addison's death. Tragedy should evoke both "terror and pity", and this emotional experience is at once

¹ Letters by Several Eminent Persons Deceased, ed. John Duncombe (London, 1772), II, 150.

² Sheldon Sacks, "Clarissa and the Tragic Traditions," Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture, 2 (1972), 207.

³ Correspondence, VI, Facsimile.

pleasurable and painful. Our enjoyable tears show us "the divine goodness", and prove that pain can be a beneficial part of the providential plan.¹ Here, as in Clarissa, we have the idea that another person's suffering can have a good effect on those who pity the sufferer. Young writes in a similar vein in 1744 in defence of Richardson's novel:

Is it contrary to the common method of Providence to permit the best to suffer most? No. When the best so suffer, does it not most deeply affect the human heart? Yes. And is it not your business to affect the human heart as deeply as you can? Yes.²

Richardson was clearly pleased with this letter, since he quotes it in his own defence in 1748.³ However, Young does not suggest that Clarissa's death is simply triumphant. Pity is the first response; it is only when we look "beyond death" that we find her "an object of envy as well as pity." Young criticizes those readers who fail to add this pious envy to their pity, either out of:

ignorance, or envy, or affectation of a delicate concern and a high zeal for virtue; or from such a degree of infidelity as suffers not their thoughts to accompany Clarissa any further than her grave.

Young sees misreadings arising, therefore, from both over-zealousness and impiety. Those who insist that virtue should be seen to be protected and rewarded on earth are clinging on to a pattern of morality that the devotional writers had found impossible to maintain in the face of experience. Morality cannot be shored up by naïvely

¹ Young, Conjectures, pp. 85-87, 93-95.

² Young to Richardson, Letter i, Monthly Magazine, 36 (1813), 418.

³ Selected Letters, p. 117.

insisting that good deeds bring worldly prosperity. Richardson attempts a far more complex portrayal of the ways of Providence that tries to avoid both extremes of over-simplification, the strictly religious and the worldly-minded.

Ultimately, it is better to see the tragedy as arising from this dramatic exploration of the religious issues rather than from some theory of "sentimental tragedy" derived from the stage.¹ Richardson does use elements from the drama, for instance in Belford's comparison of Clarissa to the heroine of Nicholas Rowe's The Fair Penitent (VII, 132-36), but these sentimental elements in the plays could also be traced back to devotional sources. It may be true, for example, that in the sentimental drama, the evil character is led to virtue "by an appeal to his emotions", but this is also the technique used by the devotional writers when they seek to move us to tears with the story of an exemplary life and death.

Clarissa's death is both tragedy and victory; she is "both an example and herself."² Her piety is used to produce an emotional response which in turn highlights the central religious and moral issues of the novel. To see Clarissa's faith as merely "a 'logical' reason for her doing what she was going to do anyway" is therefore to underestimate the novel's polemic.³ If Clarissa is only asserting her individuality against a world of cruel individuals, then she is no better than her brother James in his obstinate pursuit of worldly ends. Clarissa's struggle is all the more moving because it deals with faith in the unknown and uncertain, rather than faith in oneself.

¹ Ira Konigsberg, "The Tragedy of Clarissa," MLQ, 27 (1966), 285-98; Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel (Lexington: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1968).

² Gillian Beer, "Richardson, Milton, and the Status of Evil," RES, NS, 19 (1968), 262.

³ Eaves and Kimpel, Richardson, p. 279.

III - Mourning and Melancholy

Changing attitudes to the believer's exemplary death in the eighteenth century went hand in hand with a changing attitude to mourning, doubts as to whether religion should be essentially joyful or melancholy and whether man's piety could best be encouraged by emphasizing the love of God or the fear of hell. Here again, the protestant devotional writers seem always to be struggling to reconcile theory and experience.

Their strict attitude to mourning can be seen in Richard Baxter's A Treatise of Death, where we are told to be "ashamed to stand weeping over a buried friend, and never to weep over a sinning or ungodly friend." There is some purpose in lamenting the loss of a sinner, but we should rejoice with those who are "snatcht away" to heaven.¹ Baxter's rueful tone implies that we seldom follow this logic.

Slightly more eager to reconcile our feelings with our beliefs is Samuel Gardiner, who points out that modest mourning and decent burial are "lawful & commendable". However, like Sir Charles Grandison, he is opposed to any "mad magnificence" or "superfluous cost".² Taylor similarly allows for mourning as long as it is not "immoderate and unreasonable", but he tends to contradict the more lenient view that our "mournings" are "good expressions of our dearness to the departed" by his orthodox insistence that they have "no direct and proper uses in Religion."³

Wistful headshaking over our emotional weakness is typical of many of the devotional writers. Richard Allestree asks: "Why are we Clad in

¹ Baxter, pp. 70, 153.

² Gardiner, pp. 326-27.

³ Taylor, Holy Dying, pp. 246-48.

Black for them who walk in White? and so many Tears flow from our Eyes for them, who have all Tears wiped away from theirs?" His answer is a compromise, like that made by Sarah Fielding to justify her response to Clarissa: "as with one Eye we look on our Loss, and Weep; so with another Eye we must look on their Profit, and Rejoyce."¹ The question of how the mourner can focus simultaneously upon the temporal and the eternal had become even more problematical by the time Richardson came to dramatize it in his novels. The losing battle against the emotions is summed up in Charles Howe's Meditations (read by Richardson in 1753). Grief is a sinful opposition to God's will, but there is "a strong Propension in human Nature to lament the loss of any Person," which makes it almost impossible "to derive sufficient Power from Reason to oppose its Efforts."²

It might be thought that Richardson is fighting this same losing battle in his novels. This cannot be the case, however, since, as we have already seen, he makes his good deathbeds less than joyful, so that we weep with Anna and Belford. Richardson seems to be suggesting, as a new solution to the problem, that mourning itself can be a salutary experience. It can convert Belford, lead Mr B to write his will, and cause Harriet to pity her abductor. His characters display a wide range of attitudes to mourning, and it is often through these attitudes that we assess their moral stature. Those who mourn openly, even excessively, as in Anna Howe's "wild air" (VIII, 86), are more to be approved than Clarissa's hard-hearted parents, who even refuse to attend her funeral, ostensibly because they are too moved to appear in public (VIII, 94). Even allowing for their remorse, this refusal is yet another instance of their unwillingness to see Clarissa in any

¹ The Whole Duty of Mourning (London, 1695), pp. 150-51, 152-53.

² Meditations Devout and Philosophical (Edinburgh, 1751), pp. 131, 133; Correspondence, VI, 240.

religious context, or to confess their guilt publicly. Their burial of her body, the locking up of her rooms, and their avoidance of her favourite haunts can be seen as a continuation of their previous policy of ignoring her existence by taking down her picture and boarding it up in her "closet" (III, 283; VIII, 181). Not one member of the family follows the coffin into the vault, but Belford imagines that he does so with a vivid apprehension of the event that reminds us of Sarah Fielding's imaginative identification with Anna and the servant: "Now with the sacred Bier do I enter the awful Porch: Now measure I, with solemn paces, the venerable Eyle . . ." (VIII, 99). Belford's letter is a subtle mixture of the momento mori style used in meditations on the tombs in Westminster Abbey and a more personal and emotional farewell to Clarissa. As he descends into the "clammy vault", like Addison in Spectator No. 26, he contemplates:

the present stillness of so many once busy vanities, crouded all into one poor vaulted nook, as if the living grudged room for the corpse of those, for which when animated, the earth, the air, and the waters, could hardly find room.¹

These general observations are particularly applicable to Clarissa, who has been hounded out of life by the living. The mourners "press with their feet" the ground where they themselves will one day lie, but even this image recalls more specifically how Clarissa has been trodden into the ground by her persecutors. Those who mourn her death with the most open display of grief are seen as being the least hard-hearted, and hence the most redeemable characters.

The way in which different attitudes to mourning are carefully matched to the appropriate characters reveals Richardson's thorough

¹ cf. The Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), I, 108-11; Addison's Saturday papers inspired a whole corpus of such pious meditations in periodicals such as Aaron Hill's Plain Dealer, printed by Richardson.

understanding of the theological issues. It is Colonel Morden, for instance, who takes the rather detached view that sorrow is natural and must "have way given to it" until it has "exhausted itself" so that "Reason and Religion" can then "raise the drooping heart" (VIII, 92). Such is the typically moderate advice given in the last three model consolatory letters of Richardson's Familiar Letters, where he draws on such traditional consolatory themes as the remembrance of God's "other great mercies", and the idea that we should "shew an entire acquiescence to the divine will", since death is our common lot, and brings the benefits of heaven and security from any further lapse from grace (this last advantage particularly being stressed in cases of infant mortality), whilst at the same time warning against excessive grief, because it can lead to a pining death.¹

These ideas could have come from many sources, but in the novels these worn-out phrases are invariably shown to be ineffective as consolation for the bereaved.² The novels reveal a greater complexity in contemporary attitudes to mourning than the devotional and consolatory writers had allowed for. Richardson sees grief as unavoidable, but also beneficial. It is those who will not give free rein to their emotions who are to be suspected. James Harlowe is hard-hearted because he wishes his mother could be "prevailed upon" to dispense with the "shocking spectacle" of viewing Clarissa's corpse (VIII, 42). To a strictly religious mind, his wish is not unreasonable, since excessive grief damages one's health, but in the context of the novel, James's squeamishness is indicative of his general unwillingness to acknowledge any emotion of remorse or sorrow.

¹ Familiar Letters, ed. Brian W Downs (London: Routledge, 1928), pp. 241-46.

² See, for instance, Allestree, A Funeral Handkerchief, pp. 9-44.

He is as fixed against his sister as he was when she was alive. James and Arabella are condemned throughout the novel for not having "a very punctilious concern for Religion or Piety" (II, 85). They ignore the wishes of the dead in their Grandfather's will, and avoid attending church (I, 31; II, 184). Their avoidance of emotion is a symptom of the same impiety, for the religious man of the mid-century weeps at death; the stoic is a pagan.

Belford, quoting Shakespeare, outlines this approach to grief, assuring Lovelace that tears are signs of a "humane nature" rather than an "unmanly" one, since "they ease the overcharged heart, which would burst but for that kindly and natural relief" (VII, 172). On this basis, Grandison is free to weep plentifully over death, "tears of compassion . . . stealing down his manly cheek" (III, 665). In Belford's eyes, the rake Mowbray is "brutal" in his refusal to weep for Belton. Lovelace similarly refuses to give way to his heart, and this stoicism lies at the root of his tragedy. At one point he even sets himself above the "stoical tribe", since he is able to "laugh and be merry in the midst of the most soul-harrowing woes, when the heart-strings are just bursting asunder" (VII, 347). In his bravado, Lovelace reveals that he does have a softer side to his nature, which he refuses to acknowledge, dramatizing himself as the fearless rake.

Most importantly, Lovelace is afraid of death, and when people in his vicinity die, he takes refuge in humorous rallying. He shows no sympathy for the death of Tomlinson, waggishly finding "a ray of consolation" in the fact that his accomplice died without confessing to any of his stratagems (VIII, 158). Likewise, when Belford's uncle is dying, Lovelace urges his friend to "put him out of his misery" with an overdose of laudanum (IV, 137). He defends himself against Jeremy Taylor's strong words on death by ridiculing his "flowery style", which reminds him of a "Country Funeral, where the young women, in honour of

a defunct companion, especially if she were a virgin, or passed for such, make a flower-bed of her coffin" (VI, 171-72). A precedent for this irreverent wit is to be found in the model letter books. Among the traditional consolatory letters in The Young Secretary's Guide, for instance, appears one from one drinking companion to another on the loss of his wife, the style of which is remarkably similar to Lovelace's in its twisting of consolatory phrases to give them economic and sexual connotations.¹ Richardson adds a weight of irony to this comedy, since the country funeral that Lovelace mocks is of the very type that Clarissa herself will receive, no longer a virgin, but undefiled in her soul. Her corpse is brought home attended by a crowd of villagers, "Not a soul of them, it seems, with a dry eye", and is carried into Harlowe Place by six maidens (VIII, 76).

Lovelace, on the surface at least, finds all such displays of emotion ridiculous. To him, Belford's mourning for his uncle can only be play-acting "for decency's sake", a veneer that covers his real joy at the prospect of receiving a large legacy. The most that Lovelace will concede is that death may remind us of our own end, and thus keep down our "inward joy", giving an "air of sincerity to the wailings of lively Widows, heart-exulting Heirs, and residuary Legatees" (V, 243-44). Such a satirical approach to mourning was not uncommon. It forms the basis for Richard Steele's comedy, The Funeral, where the widow's mourning for her supposed-dead husband Lord Brumpton takes an outward form of hired mourners and black apparel, while inwardly she is exulting in her newly-won freedom.² As we shall see, the same form of hypocrisy is frequently found in Fielding's comic novels. Until the mid eighteenth century, it was usual to be suspicious of displays of

¹ The Young Secretary's Guide Completed (London, 1721), pp. 50-51.

² The Funeral, (London, 1702).

excessive emotion. Richard Brathwaite thus offers his elegy on his wife, Anniversaries upon his Panarete, as a "distilling Viall of Funerall teares obsequiously offerred," but expresses a preference for "passionate silence" rather than open weeping, since the former is less likely to prove false.¹ The same view is expressed by Charles Howe, who notes that the world's love, like Lady Brumpton's, "generally flows only from their Tongues and Eyes."² Lovelace is merely continuing a somewhat hackneyed joke based on a strict seventeenth-century attitude to mourning. Any validity which this may lend to his satirical letters is undermined by his obvious fear of death. He avoids Belton's funeral on the pretext that it is wrong to encourage the fashion for extravagant funerals with hired mourners (VII, 212-13). He continually denies that Clarissa is dying only because he secretly fears that she is; he shuns all mention of death because he knows that it is pursuing him.

That Lovelace is continually avoiding his true feelings becomes evident when he is forced to attend Lord M's sickbed. Prior to his visit, he writes to Belford speculating on the trouble it will cost him to deport himself fittingly at such a solemn scene. He exults in the fact that although he has a "tender" heart, "no man looking in my face be the occasion for grief ever so great, will believe that heart to be deeply distressed" (VI, 50).

Richardson shows us the weakness and inconsistency of such a stoical attitude in Lovelace's moments of sincerity before Clarissa and in his vain struggle to maintain the mask of rakishness while Clarissa lies dying beyond his reach. At Lord M's bedside he sees an unpleasant reflection of himself. The supposed-dying man prays one moment, then chuckles at accounts of Lovelace's exploits the next. "What a

¹ Anniversaries upon his Panarete (London, 1634), sigs. A2^r, C6^v-C7^r.

² Howe, p. 136.

preposterous, what an unnatural adherence to old habits!" exclaims Lovelace (VI, 216), shocked by the inconsistency of the old man's behaviour in the face of death, and yet this inconsistency is also the basis of Lovelace's own approach to life as a believer, who intends to "reform" one day, when he "can sin no longer" (III, 269), a mode of behaviour which had always been preached against as "a huge folly".¹ His life is full of the same kinds of perversities which he finds distasteful in his older relative. His habit of wearing mourning for those women who die bearing his bastards is not, as Kinhead-Weekes suggests, a "maudlin sentimentality", but a further denial of guilty feelings through a rakish joke.² He reduces the dying women to "pretty dears", who derive comfort from the knowledge that he will don mourning in honour of their willing sacrifice of themselves to Lovelace the god (III, 250).

Richardson shows consistently that such suppression of emotion is bad. The ability to weep for Clarissa soon came to be seen as a sure sign of a feeling heart, just as the desire for a happy ending became the "test of a wrong head, and a vain mind".³ Richardson's other writings reveal a similarly lenient attitude to grief. In his edition of Æsop's Fables he omits many of L'Estrange's versions on moral grounds as being "witty Conceits, facetious Tales" and "ludicrous Stories" rather than "instructive Apologues". Among these omissions are several satirical fables in which L'Estrange depicts the falsity of

¹ Taylor, Holy Dying, sig. A5^v.

² Kinhead-Weekes, p. 212; this passage is a restoration in the third edition designed to blacken Lovelace's character, but it is not wholly new material, for the same passage appears in abridged form in the first edition, indicating that it was originally cut to save space, see Clarissa (London, 1748), III, 233, and Clarissa, 3rd ed. (London, 1751), III, 229.

³ Correspondence, II, 334.

excessive grief: "The Inconsolable Widow" and "A Son Singing at his Mother's Funeral".¹

To Richardson, the insincerity of excessive emotion is an outdated issue. Sarah Fielding, by comparison, seems to be obsessed with it. All the commendable characters in her David Simple mourn privately and in moderation, like Brathwaite, so much so that Mrs Orgueil finds Cynthia's letter reporting her husband's death "cold" and "insensible", and she assumes that "Cynthia's love for her Husband was all Pretence, otherwise she could not have been unconcerned at his Death."² With her intense fear of dying, Mrs Orgueil is the opposite of her equally wicked, but stoical Husband. She over-reacts to any tearful occasion, lamenting "in full as pathetic terms" for the demise of her lap-dog as she had for "the imagined Death of her Husband". In this she closely imitates Steele's widow, who reveals her hypocrisy by weeping more sincerely for the death of her pet squirrel.³ Significantly, Richardson uses this well-worn device of the much-lamented pet only once, when Harriet criticizes Miss Darlington's poem "on the death of a favourite Linet" as being "a little too pathetic for the occasion" (Grandison, I, 21).⁴

Richardson's approach to mourning is far more lenient than Sarah Fielding's, despite the fact that she thought of herself as following in his footsteps. Unlike her, he does not commend a restrained form of

¹ Æsop's Fables (London, 1740), p. xiii; Fables of Æsop, ed. Sir Roger L'Estrange (London, 1692), I, 233-34, 273.

² David Simple, p. 380.

³ David Simple, p. 423; Steele, The Funeral, Act V, Scene i, p. 65.

⁴ The vogue for elegies on animals was a common subject for satire, as in the parody "On the Death of a Favourite Cow" in the Gentleman's Magazine, see John W. Draper, The Funeral Elegy and the Rise of English Romanticism (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1929), p. 3.

mourning, which the world might take as evidence of one's "Ill-nature" rather than one's "Philosophy and Religion".¹ He is intrigued by the emotional processes of bereavement and the religious questions which they raise. His curiosity in such matters can be seen in the way he asks Susanna Highmore to tell him how she bears the affliction of death "that I may form a judgment of your future equanimity."² When Lady Echlin reports her melancholy after the loss of her husband, Richardson advises her to take a holiday, like that taken by Sir Charles to abate his grief for his mother (I, 263). On her return, her old home will seem to have new charms, and her grief will have mellowed, so that "a tender sigh and a silent tear" will no longer "diminish, but rather exalt the joys of your meditation."³ Richardson sees prolonged mourning as a melancholy pleasure. Moderation is only necessary to mellow a "pungent grief" into Lady L's "sweet melancholy" (Grandison, I, 316). Time is the principle agent in this maturing process. Bereaved of her mother, Miss Wescomb is also told to take a holiday, after which "those scenes" which are "painful" at present "will give you pleasure". Richardson will then visit her when her grief has "mellowed".⁴

These private consolatory letters are a mixture of pious and melancholy reflections, and differ greatly in mood from the models provided among the Familiar Letters and from Aaron Hill's consolatory letter to Richardson on the death of his mother, which urges resignation and even stoicism.⁵ Typical of Richardson's more

¹ Howe, p. 134.

² Correspondence, II, 250.

³ Correspondence, V, 80-82.

⁴ Letters, xvii, xviii, European Magazine, 54 (1808), 97-98; Correspondence, III, 322-23.

⁵ Correspondence, I, 7-9.

sentimental approach is his enclosure of one of John Norris's pious and melancholy poems in a letter of sympathy to Andrew Millar.¹ Richardson is advocating a new pattern for mourning. The traditional comforts have been voiced so often that they either have no effect at all, or, as in Richardson's novels, they actually increase one's distress. The pieties voiced by Sarah Wescomb's mother have precisely this effect. Far from helping Sarah to resign herself to her mother's death, such words "serve to endear her more to me, and render me very reluctant to the thoughts of such a separation."² In consequence, consolatory letters in the eighteenth century tended to take two new forms, the first being the counterpart of the modern consolatory style that avoids pious commonplaces and shows its sympathy through restraint, and the second being Richardson's form, where, mixed with some pious reflections, we find an approval of grief as both melancholy and pleasurable.

Examples of both forms can be found in Thomas Edwards's correspondence: in his letters to Arthur Onslow and Mr Harvey, all conventional consolatory themes are taken for granted, while in reply to an account of another death he responds with "a thousand pleasing melancholy reflexions".³ Not surprisingly, Edwards's response to Clarissa's death is one of "distress", but he also sees a moral power in the "noble grief" that her death evokes. Exaggerating wildly, he claims that the novel has turned the appetite of the town from comedy

¹ Cited in Eaves and Kimpel, Richardson, p. 159, but not identified with John Norris, A Collection of Miscellanies (Oxford, 1687), pp. 106-07.

² Correspondence, III, 257-58.

³ Edwards to Onslow, Edwards to Harvey in Bodleian MS 1011, pp. 185-86, 305; Edwards to Wray in Bodleian MS 1012, pp. 7-9.

to tragedy, and "tamed and humanized many hearts."¹ It is, of course, through just such an emotional response that Belford is "tamed" and redeemed. Richardson justifies man's need to mourn by showing its beneficial results. Belford sees himself as being drawn "out of the miry gulf" through the influence of Clarissa's "beatified spirit" (VII, 275). Clarissa hopes that her death may also be "a means to reclaim and save" Lovelace (VII, 411), but, as we know from his ridicule of Belford's conversion in his letter mocking the tomb of Elizabeth Carteret in Westminster Abbey, Lovelace will not acknowledge the power of the emotions to raise man above his animal nature (VII, 331-32).

Richardson's presentation of a new theory of pleasurable grief is, of course, vitally important for the development of the eighteenth-century novel, where death is increasingly used as a pretext for indulgence in melancholy. Richardson's strength lies in the fact that he does not accept unquestioningly these newer attitudes, which later came to be associated with "sensibility", but rather tests them within the dramatic context of his novels. Thus, although grief improves Belford, we cannot be certain that it does the same for Lovelace. However, having said that Richardson is an experimental novelist, putting attitudes to the test, he was also rather inclined to defend his initial theorem too adamantly when the experiment failed to work as predicted. Those readers who wished Clarissa to live on were not only ignoring the fundamentals of the Christian faith, but they were also denying the moral power of grief; the experiment had not worked for them as it had for Belford.

Even in his defence of the novel's ending, however, Richardson avoids giving a traditional consolatory sermon. In arguing with Lady Bradshaigh, he uses the phraseology of a conventional consolatory

¹ Edwards to Richardson in Bodleian MS 1011, pp. 103-04 (printed with some variants in Correspondence, III, 1-3).

letter, but like Lovelace he parodies the form, using it to tease her for being so affected by mere fiction.¹ He delights in imagining all the possible woes of Clarissa's life if she had married - the "Perils of Child birth", the "Hazards of the Infantile State", the likelihood that her offspring would take after their father and make bad marriages. Thus he deliberately parodies the consolatory themes of his own Familiar Letters, particularly the comfort given to the bereaved father that had his son lived, "he might not always have been so hopeful; but might, as he grew up, many ways have administered bitterness to you."²

Delighted by the emotional impact that his novel has had, Richardson is only concerned that Lady Bradshaigh should realize that Clarissa's death can be at once moving, triumphant and morally improving. In response to her wondering how anyone can "think with Pleasure of parting with what they love, supposing their End ever so glorious", he confesses that he cannot do so himself. His own response to bereavement is intensely emotional, and he cherishes the melancholy memories of his first wife and the loss of eight children, from "every one of which" he parted "with great Regret".³ Like Lady Bradshaigh, he is "susceptible" to melancholy, and in Clarissa is eager to point out the positive side of such emotion, teaching fortitude through emotional release:

Tears you must consider as Reliefs from Grief, not as Grief itself. My story is designed to strengthen the tender Mind,

¹ Selected Letters, pp. 103-16.

² Selected Letters, pp. 106-08; Familiar Letters, p. 241.

³ Selected Letters, pp. 109-10.

and to enable the worthy Heart to bear up against the Calamities of Life.¹

Even Clarissa, who at first sight may appear saintly in her calm and joyful approach to death, on closer examination reveals a similarly complex, mixed attitude to grief. She urges Anna to weep ambiguous tears of "joyful pity" (VII, 445), allows her "a gentle tear" before calling on her to rejoice in her early release from suffering (VIII, 35), but finally begs her not to let her mourning delay her marriage to Hickman (VIII, 114). This inconsistency is found in all her dying injunctions. Her spiritual mother, Mrs Norton, is the only mourner provided for by Clarissa (VIII, 19) - a small but important detail which brings home the fact that Mrs Norton is the only one of the Harlowe circle who is not in any way responsible for her death. She is the only one who has not disowned her, and thus, as Mrs Harlowe says, is her "more natural Mother" (VIII, 92). Instead of telling her Godmother to be strictly religious, to avoid mourning and rejoice in her deliverance, Clarissa urges her to turn her grief into Richardson's approved form of pleasurable melancholy, "that sweetly-melancholy Regard to MEMORY, which . . . gives more pleasure than pain" (VII, 123). Perhaps it was such instances of Clarissa's religious moderation that led Robert Skelton (who considered Pamela over-pious) to find Clarissa's piety "somewhat too little, till towards her death."²

Skelton was probably equally dissatisfied with Mrs Norton's behaviour as the supposed representative of an older, more strictly religious upbringing. Far from complying with seventeenth-century standards of mourning, or even with Clarissa's sweet melancholy, Mrs Norton goes into a fit when she learns of Clarissa's death, and when

¹ Selected Letters, p. 116.

² Correspondence, V, 209.

she has been brought round by bleeding, she further indulges in "lamentations" for her spiritual daughter and "invectives" against Lovelace (VIII, 19-20). Belford excuses this behaviour by saying that her passion is "christianized", moderated to a degree suiting a person with religious persuasions. He sees it as quite acceptable for a religious person to mourn excessively. Mrs Norton's eagerness to see the corpse contrasts with James Harlowe's reluctance. Like Anna, she pushes aside the coffin lid with "trembling impatience", bathing the face with tears, and kissing it as though it were still alive (VIII, 20). In Allestree's The Ladies Calling, such "frantic Embraces and Caresses of a Carcass" are seen as "Tragical Furies", which in the case of husbands and wives "betray a little too much the sensuality of their Love."¹ In Clarissa, whether or not we detect any such sensuality, Mrs Norton's and Anna's displays of grief are primarily evidence of their tender-heartedness. Unlike Sarah Fielding, Richardson sees an outward emotional reaction to death as a necessary part of a truly Christian response. Anna and Mrs Norton would never have been misunderstood by Mrs Orgueil. This is not to say that Richardson devalues the traditional role of the calm, religious comforter. Later, when Clarissa's body is returned to her family, Mrs Norton controls her grief and attempts to "comfort the sorrowing Mother" (VIII, 90).

Both Clarissa and her Norton, however, find less comfort in traditional pious considerations than in "the sweet hope of meeting again" in heaven (VII, 124), an emotionally-comforting belief which is rarely given prominence in seventeenth-century devotional works, but which became the central consolatory doctrine of the eighteenth century, after being popularized by Elizabeth Rowe.² Her particular

¹ The Ladies Calling (Oxford, 1673), p. 211.

² See above, p. 4.

form of emotional consolation appears in all Richardson's novels. Sir Charles's mother expresses the same hope at her death (I, 318), and in her letter prepared for Mr B in case she should die in childbirth, Pamela begs permission to "indulge that pleasing, that consolatory Thought!" (IV, 13-14).¹ In Clarissa's posthumous letters, this hope of friendship beyond death is used rather clumsily as a way of judging the characters and indicating who is redeemable and who should be condemned. Her father, for instance, is told to rejoice at her death (VIII, 23), but unlike her mother, he is not specifically told to hope for a "happy meeting" in heaven, thus implying his greater culpability (VIII, 25). Similarly, Aunt Hervey, her Uncles, Anna, Cousin Morden, Norton and Belford are all given this comfort, but James and Arabella are offered only the hope of an agreeable earthly spouse and not an eternal relationship in heaven (VII, 444; VIII, 16, 25-35, 94).

A more subtle use of this doctrine is found in Clarissa's "Father's House" letter to Lovelace (VII, 189-90). He interprets her hint that he "may possibly in time" see her at her "Father's" as a hopeful sign of her restored health and favourable attitude to his marriage proposals. It is, of course, nothing of the kind. She is really saying that if Lovelace repents, he may meet her in heaven; if he does not, it will be his "own fault". This letter might be seen as a last vindictive stab by the pious and proud Clarissa at Lovelace's unworthiness and complete ignorance about higher matters, but her studious omission of any possibility of a heavenly reconciliation in her letters to her brother and sister suggest that she would not use such an idea as an idle threat. Her letter shows that she has forgiven Lovelace, and sincerely hopes that her death will redeem him. She is quite ready to meet him in heaven, if he will only accept that he is redeemable and needs redeeming.

¹ Further instances in Pamela are I, 229; II, 358; IV, 379.

Richardson's use of this notion of "Friendship in Death" is further evidence of his tendency to condone and make allowances for emotion. He even includes this idea among the more conventional philosophical and rational comforts of the Familiar Letters, where the bereaved father is reminded that he will one day "follow" his son "and enjoy him for ever".¹ In his own will, Richardson expresses a wish for "a happy Meeting in a better World."² Anna Howe, whose role in Clarissa is, as Kinkead-Weekes suggests, "to express a more normal reaction and act as a safety valve for our own less than ideal feelings" about religious as well as economic matters, clings even more fervently than Clarissa to this hope of a heavenly reunion: "O may we meet, and rejoice together, where no villainous Lovelaces, no hard-hearted Relations, will ever shock our innocence, or ruffle our felicity" (VIII, 87).³ Less forgiving than Clarissa in her exclusion of all who have been cruel, she nevertheless voices the reader's desire for this form of poetic justice.

Anna also expresses the reader's deeper feelings by disobeying Clarissa's injunction not to mourn. Unable to control her emotion, her question, "why do I thus lament the Happy?" (VIII, 88), succinctly sums up the problem of reconciling grief with religious faith which this part of the novel is exploring. Richardson attempts to reconcile the two in the combined emotional and religious comfort of heavenly reunion and pleasurable melancholy. Using Clarissa's own words, Anna declares that she will marry when her grief has been "mellowed by time into a remembrance more sweet than painful" (VIII, 202). The moral benefits of such melancholy are witnessed to by Belford, who vows to "reperuse"

¹ Familiar Letters, p. 242.

² A.L. Reade, "Samuel Richardson and his Family Circle," Notes and Queries, Series 12, 11 (1922), p. 342.

³ Kinkead-Weekes, p. 158.

Clarissa's story "with melancholy pleasure" throughout the rest of his days in order to hold firm to his new resolve (VII, 399).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Clarissa lies more in its presentation of these religious problems than in their attempted solutions. When writing about his novels, Richardson is rarely consistent in his statements on mourning and melancholy, but in the face of objections, he often denies the complexities of the novels in order to make them easier to defend. Thus he finds it simpler to insist that Clarissa's end is a triumphant martyrdom than to explain how the tragic and victorious elements combine to produce an emotional, yet redemptive death. In the Sentiments drawn from the novels, the religious and moral polemic is totally ignored, and contradictory statements are allowed to stand side by side as general principles. For instance, religion "never makes a good person sour, morose, or melancholy", and yet melancholy is commended as combining "pleasure as well as pain".¹

Both in his novels and in real life, Richardson seems uncertain whether religion should be essentially joyful or melancholy. He is strongly inclined to the latter view, and attributes his own nervous disorders throughout his life to the emotional strains of bereavement.² In letters defending Clarissa's death, however, he often ignores his own melancholy, as, for instance, when he attacks George Lyttelton, asserting that this man at least should have understood the religious purpose of Clarissa, since he "has known, by the Loss of an excellent Wife, that there cannot be an Exemption from

¹ Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions and Reflexions Contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison (London, 1755), pp. 289, 374.

² Selected Letters, p. 110; Skelton even goes so far as to suggest that Clarissa's death was inspired by the numerous deaths and disorders in the Richardson family, Correspondence, V, 201-02.

Calamity here below." Lyttelton's Monody on his wife's death "and his concluding Verses of it, should have convinced him, that his Judgment was not founded in the Nature of Things."¹

Not only does Richardson ignore his own feelings, but for the sake of his argument he also sets aside his real opinion of the Monody, a poem which he considers to be more emotional than religious: "How many soft souls have been made to sigh over the images here conveyed, and to pity the sensual lover, when they should have lamented with the widower or husband!"² Far from being a religious, consolatory poem, Richardson sees the Monody as somewhat unjustified indulgence in sensuality and melancholy, a judgement which is substantially correct, although the poem as a whole does not seem excessively emotional to the modern reader. The pious conclusion is rather contrived, however, as if it were tacked on merely to uphold elegiac convention. The clash between faith and experience is thus as much a theme of Lyttelton's poem as it is of Clarissa. Richardson may have a slightly less melancholy view of religion than the graveyard poets, who see "unhappiness as the norm of religious experience", but he is still inclined to favour that combination of piety and melancholy found in writers such as Young and Elizabeth Rowe.³

Richardson's remarks on Lyttelton's Monody, like his draft reply to Cheyne's letter about Pamela, reveal his keen apprehension of changing religious attitudes. A joyful or even a resigned attitude to death befits only "grandmothers" who still read Taylor and Sherlock, while the young find such devotional writings induce melancholy rather

¹ Selected Letters, pp. 99-100; George Lyttelton, To the Memory of a Lady Lately Deceased: A Monody (London, 1747), printed by Richardson.

² Selected Letters, pp. 190-91.

³ C.V. Wicker, Edward Young and the Fear of Death (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1952), p. 25.

than joyful calm. As a representative of this younger generation, Lady Bradshaigh is certain that she will never agree with Clarissa's death until she is old and pious, by which time she will have given up reading novels to concentrate on "Dr. Taylor, the Practice of Piety, or Nelson's Fasts and Festivals." Richardson retorts that Clarissa is really a devotional work, and should be shelved along with these other titles. It appears "in the humble Guise of a Novel only by way of Accommodation to the Manners and Taste of an Age overwhelmed with a Torrent of Luxury, and abandoned to Sound and senselessness."¹

Once again, this is an over-simplification. His purpose may have been to "steal in" and "investigate the great doctrines of Christianity under the fashionable guise of an amusement" (VIII, 308), but in doing so he produces a polemical novel, rather than a sugared devotional tract. The novel shows the decline of Clarissa's old-fashioned piety, and the rise of a new, more emotional emphasis. Clarissa herself draws attention to the difference between her faith and Anna's, pointing out that Anna will find her joyful desire for death a "melancholy" subject (VII, 254). Similarly, Pamela finds Mr B's making of his will a "melancholy Instance of his great Regard" (II, 352). The same contrast is carefully drawn between Clarissa's and Belford's reactions to the traditional iconography of death. To Clarissa, her coffin with its serpent, winged hourglass and urn is a symbol of hope, escape and peace (VII, 338), but for Belford, these emblems, which remained in use in funerary art well into the mid-century, inspire a nightmare of "flying Hour-glasses, Deaths-heads, Spades, Mattocks and Eternity" (VII, 335).²

¹ Correspondence, IV, 216; Selected Letters, p. 117.

² See, for instance, funeral invitations such as those in the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Belford's abhorrence of what he considers to be the morbid trappings of a previous age continues the idea that piety is the province of the older generation. Lovelace similarly associates Clarissa's piety and prudery with a bygone era, and playfully imagines the seduced girl idling away her days in an "old and penitential" environment: "reading old sermons, and old prayer books; and relieving old men, and old women; and giving old lessons and old warnings, upon new subjects as well as old ones" (V, 286).

Lovelace's mockery is vicious, but his view of extreme piety is not so different from that of Richardson's worthier characters. In Grandison, in a passage that pokes fun at such accounts of ghostly visitations as are found, for example, in Elizabeth Rowe's works, Harriet playfully imagines her Grandmother Shirley reporting Sir Charles's visiting her like a ghost. The ghost's arrival interrupts her reading of "Sherlock upon Death", which Harriet imagines her reading with "that chearfulness with which I always meditate the subject" (III, 15). Harriet, like Lovelace, finds laughable the older generation's ability to be cheerfully morbid. In fact, Sherlock had insisted that meditation on death should not make us "live under the perpetual fears of dying", but for Harriet, such excessive piety is inevitably conducive to melancholy.¹ Richardson has similar reservations about Hervey's popular Meditations Among the Tombs: "A serious and good divine of my acquaintance, sees him, as to his doctrines, too mystic; and I think him inclined to the enthusiastic part of Methodism."²

In the novels, Richardson tests a wide range of religious attitudes, and more often than not, the most pious principles have to

¹ Sherlock, p. 209.

² Correspondence, VI, 13; Hervey's Meditations went through several editions on Richardson's presses, see Sale, pp. 174-75.

be modified to include emotional considerations that render them palatable to the younger generation. He is investigating rather than promulgating the views of the devotional writers, and even undermines their strictness with humour. Sir Charles, for instance, makes a joke about women's souls at the expense of Allestree's The Ladies Calling, elaborating with Austen-like sharpness on Allestree's assurance that although women's minds are poorer than men's their souls are of equal value:

When sex ceases, inequality of Souls will cease; and women will certainly be on a foot with men, as to intellectuals, in Heaven. There, indeed, will you no longer have Lords over you; neither will you have Admirers: Which, in your present estimate of things, will perhaps balance the account (III, 250).¹

Richardson's ambivalent attitude to his seventeenth-century sources can also be seen in his various references to John Norris's poem, "The Meditation".² In Clarissa, this melancholy portrayal of death as "A dismal, and mysterious change", a frightening "unknown" into which both the believer and the infidel are scared to plunge, is used, along with similar lines from John Pomfret's A Prospect of Death, to increase the pitiful horror of Belton's deathbed (VII, 180-82). In Grandison, the poem is quoted again, but this time Charlotte facetiously applies it to the act of plunging into the unknown state of marriage (III, 199). This bold, even shocking, cross-reference cannot have gone unnoticed by Richardson's circle of enthusiastic readers. The joke at Norris's expense does not indicate a change in Richardson's attitude, for it is during the period of the composition of Grandison that he uses Norris in his consolatory letter to Andrew Millar.³

¹ The Ladies Calling, Preface, sig. b2^v.

² Norris, pp. 30-31.

³ Eaves and Kimpel, Richardson, p. 159.

While being a fine example of Charlotte's cheekiness, it also indicates that Richardson does not condemn the younger generation for seeing such religious writings as outdated, for there is still hope for them in a Grandisonian rather than a Sherlockian morality.

IV - The Death of the Wicked

The same willingness to modify strict seventeenth-century morality can be seen in the deathbeds of Richardson's wicked characters. Just as his exemplary deaths are complicated by emotional ambivalence, so his "bad" deaths are coloured by the onlookers' and the reader's pity. Belton, for instance, shows all the traditional signs of damnation - cursing his doctor, refusing to see a priest, clutching desperately at any vain hope of recovery, wishing for annihilation, and finally dying in horrible convulsions - and yet Belford still hopes that the man's sufferings may "expiate" for his offences, and make him "happy to all eternity" (VII, 209)

By holding out the hope that Belton's crimes are not "above the size of God's mercies", Belford is trusting in a more indulgent God than the devotional writers had portrayed. Tracts and pamphlets telling of the horrific deaths of apostates and infidels gained great popularity in the seventeenth century, first as fearful warnings against apostasy, and later as refutations of atheism through the supposedly agonizing deaths and suicides of its adherents. The model for these publications was A Relation of the Fearful Estate of Francis Spira. Subsequent editions and imitations added further examples of despair among contemporary infidels.¹ All Belton's despairing words

¹ A Relation of the Fearful Estate of Francis Spira, trans. Nathaniel Bacon (London, 1638); see also The Second Spira, 4th ed. (London, 1693), Thomas James, Spira's Despair Revived (London, 1694), and the many additions made under the original title.

and actions find their precedent here, as does Belford's role of bedside apologist.¹ New, however, is Belford's expression of pity and hope for mercy. In the Spira literature, where the sole intention is to frighten the believer away from atheism, there is no room for speculation as to the infidel's chances of salvation. In The Second Spira, the onlookers weep with the dying man, but their tears are not like those that Harriet bids the reader "join" with hers "on the awful exit of Sir Thomas Grandison" (I, 356), for unlike Harriet, the onlookers at the atheist's deathbed weep because they are convinced there is no hope for the infidel.² Harriet prays that "Poor" Sir Hargrave "May have met with mercy from the All-merciful" despite his "painful" exit from the world (III, 462), but there is no such hope for Spira and his associates. In fact, The Second Spira specifically warns against such leniency, confuting the ideas of "some Divines" who think that "He that desires to Hope, Repent, and Believe, in some measure does it." Belford's hope for Belton and Harriet's for Sir Hargrave is based on nothing but the "fruitless Wishing" of the dying, and such presumption warrants even "greater Damnation".³

Richardson deliberately avoids this strict, merciless view, emphasizing instead the redeeming power and the depth of God's love. Belton's sufferings may expiate for his sins, and his death leads Belford a step nearer to his reformation, not simply through fear, as in the Spira literature, but also through the pity he feels at the death of a friend. Anna Howe is similarly moved by the death of Mrs Larkin:

¹ Doody, pp. 157-68.

² The Second Spira, p. 20.

³ The Second Spira, p. 45.

I never saw the approaches of death in a grown person before; and was extremely shocked. Death, to one in health is a very terrible thing. We pity the person for what she suffers; and we pity ourselves for what we must some time hence in like sort suffer; and so are doubly affected (II, 139).

Despite its unbending strictness, the Spira literature itself had tended to encourage this "double" pity in its readers as they were made to identify with the despairing sinner in order to learn their own need for forgiveness. By the 1740's, this Spira school of literature had lost most of its power to terrify through over-repetition, and its unmerciful view of God had become unfashionable. Atheists ridiculed it as propaganda, denying that the apostate's guilty conscience had any other source than his upbringing and education.¹ The devotional writers had themselves opened the gates to this argument by placing too much emphasis upon the guilty conscience of the unbeliever whilst at the same time trying to excuse believers who died ridden with unexplained guilt. Under these new circumstances, Richardson saw that a bad death in a novel would only be morally useful if it evoked pity as well as fear, leading to hope in God's love as well as fear of his judgement. Thus James Harlowe's spiteful and insulting parcel of devotional literature, containing Francis Spira, is not only ironic because it is the Harlowes themselves who need to learn the lessons contained therein, but also because it shows the hard-heartedness of any vestigial religious beliefs that they may have. Their Spira-based religion matches their worldly system of morality, with its stern Heavenly Father demanding absolute obedience, and showing no mercy to

¹ Such is the argument of the atheist in John Smith, The Judgment of God upon Atheism and Infidelity, 2nd ed. (London, 1704), pp. 19-22; this account was used in later eighteenth-century editions of Francis Spira, but most of the atheist's argument was omitted, see Francis Spira (London, 1770), pp. 99-112.

his earthly children. Clarissa's faith, by comparison, is one of love and hope, even for the weak and sinful. Not only does she not need the books to teach her how to die, but her beliefs actually go beyond their narrow theology of fear to a religion of hope, love and mercy. Of the three volumes sent to her, only The Practise of Piety places any significant emphasis on the love of God.¹ The parcel is designed to frighten Clarissa, just as the Spira school sought to "scare men from Atheism and Debauchery".²

Richardson never unthinkingly adopts the moral stance of his source material; he is consciously selective and critical in his borrowings. In the pity and hope of his bad deaths, he is subscribing to a merciful view of God with which few devotional writers would have openly agreed. Charles Howe is still largely of St Augustine's and Gardiner's opinion that "the commination of hell fire commendeth the prouidence of God toward vs" more than "the promise of a kingdome" though he laments the fact that "base fear" prevails above "Reason", because "the Terror of Almighty Power over Man's degenerate Spirit" exercises a much stronger influence than the "charming Allurements of infinite Bounty and Goodness."³ Richardson's friend, Philip Skelton, is an unashamed supporter of the Spira school of fear, using the example of Rochester's death to support his argument against deism. Some libertines may appear to break the strict deathbed pattern by maintaining "the face of courage and cheerfulness to the last", but this is only a sham.⁴ The popular divines, South and Tillotson, on

¹ Bayly, pp. 54-57; Doody, p. 154.

² The Second Spira (Edinburgh, 1693), Part Two, p. 9; this account also contains a letter in Lovelace's death-mocking style, and significantly the friend it is addressed to is hailed as "Jack", Part Two, pp. 19-22.

³ Howe, p. 102.

⁴ Ophiomaches or Deism Revealed (London, 1749), II, 316-17.

the other hand, are more moderate, South regretting the fact that the fear of hell is a stronger motive than the joy of heaven, doubting whether "this ought to be so," and yet also acknowledging the truth of Tillotson's warning that to remove the fear of hell is to promote moral anarchy.¹ Richardson goes a step beyond what Tillotson sees as the "unpleasant" but "necessary" task of frightening men into belief, by suggesting that fear alone is not enough to redeem man.² Lovelace is shocked by Belton's death, but because he will not give way to his emotions and pity his companion, his fear does not lead to repentance, and is soon forgotten. Fear of hell is similarly ineffective as a deterrent in Pamela. Mr B can only be won over by Pamela's love, not by her descriptions of his dying "Remorse" (I, 263). In Mr B's flirtation with the Countess, it is Pamela's kisses and carresses that recapture his fidelity, rather than her "Motives of Religion" (IV, 195).

Surprisingly, Richardson's support for the power of love is also shared by Jeremy Taylor, who observes that "No repentance can be lasting that relies upon any thing but the love of God; for temporal motives may cease . . . and fears of Hell may be expelled by natural or acquired hardnesses."³ Fear and love are the two necessary steps towards repentance, and Lovelace, with his "acquired hardness", avoids taking both. Human and divine love are always closely linked by Richardson, and by denying love for Clarissa, Lovelace is also denying God's grace, as Richardson makes clear through his punning use of "grace" in the Postscript. Lovelace cannot expect to live a dissolute life, he explains, and then simply "hold out his hand" as "an act of

¹ Robert South, Sermons (London, 1718), IV, 273-76.

² John Tillotson, Works, 2nd ed. (London, 1717), II, 46.

³ Taylor, Holy Dying, p. 155.

grace and favour" and marry Clarissa; nor can he hope to be reformed by marriage if his heart "be not graciously touched by the Divine Finger" (VIII, 307).

By no means all of Richardson's readers appreciated this emphasis on love as a moral force. The writer of the Critical Remarks complains about the prominence given in Richardson and too many other authors - "the moral and ingenious authoress of David Simple" excepted - to a passion that needs no such encouragement among the young. The critic's argument is essentially deistic. He objects to Lovelace's and Morden's "contempt for the clergy" on the grounds that the cloth is "a venerable and necessary institution" insofar as it teaches "moral duties" and upholds moral order. Uninterested in the deeper religious argument of Clarissa, he exalts David Simple as "perhaps the best moral romance that we have". It is certainly better than Richardson's, because it follows a strict pattern of rewards and punishments for good and bad actions. It is hard to find a useful moral anywhere in Richardson. Even Sinclair's bad death is considered to be ineffective, because, like the Spira literature, it tries to frighten us into reformation by using propaganda that is "contrary to the truth".¹

In fact, Sinclair's death is part of Richardson's complex pattern of bad deaths, a deliberate exception, a return to the shocking and hopeless deaths of the Spira school. It is unsympathetic, and arouses "nothing but disgust".² Whereas Belford had been led to hope and pray for Belton, he soon gives up on the "old wretch" when her raving proves to him that all efforts to "calm her spirits" are vain, because she is "incapable of advice" (VIII, 54, 66).

In denying any hope for Sinclair and giving her a horrific death, Richardson calls into question the moral efficacy of such "shocking"

¹ Critical Remarks, pp. 8, 19, 48-49, 52-53.

² Doody, p. 164.

scenes (VIII, 69). It is significant, for instance, that he tells us that the old bawd's dying "Agonies" could only terrify the devilish prostitutes about her bed into a "transitory penitence" (VIII, 69). The implication is that because there is no hint of God's redeeming love amidst all this horror, then this particular death can have no redeeming effect. Deathbeds, be they good or bad, where our sympathies are enlisted are more morally improving than the traditional fearful death. For Richardson, pity and mercy are more important Divine attributes than unbending justice, and we are therefore meant to prefer Belton's death with its appeal to the softer emotions to the "painful disgust as well as horror" of Sinclair's end.¹ To omit the passage - as Prévost did in his French translation of the novel, deeming it "essentially English" and "repugnant" to French taste - is to lose the highly-effective contrast between the death of "all human excellence" in Clarissa, "inhuman libertinism" in Belton, and "diabolical profligacy" in Sinclair (VIII, 68).² Having given us these three very different cases, Richardson then leaves us to decide for ourselves on a phrase to describe the most ambiguous deathbed in the novel, that of Lovelace.

Much time has been spent by early and more recent critics in debating whether Lovelace's death is more like Belton's or more like Sinclair's, whether he is repentant and redeemed or unrepentant and condemned. Eaves and Kimpel believe that Lovelace's last words are "meant to leave the way open so that the reader can believe in his repentance if he chooses."³ This is more than a fortuitous effect,

¹ Correspondence, I, civ.

² Joseph Texte, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature, trans. J.W. Matthews (London, 1899), pp. 151-64, 178 (Texte's opinion differs little from Prévost's).

³ Eaves and Kimpel, Richardson, p. 255.

however, for the question of whether Clarissa's death has redeemed Lovelace is crucial to the interpretation of her triumph or failure. If Lovelace dies unsaved, then Clarissa's dying prayer has not been answered, and either man is more wicked and irredeemable than she thought, or her God has turned out to be more like the God of Spira's despair than Belford's hope.

Richardson's ambiguous presentation of Lovelace's end is therefore quite deliberate and vitally important. Even in the third edition of the novel, where so much of the complexity is removed, this particular scene is left unchanged. The account is brief and to the point in comparison to the other bad deaths. We are deliberately distanced from the events by the fact that they are narrated not by Belford, who is supposedly "too much engaged" with the details of Clarissa's will, but by the valet, de la Tour.¹ Belford would have been the obvious person to recount this death if the intention had been to proclaim Clarissa's further triumph through the terrible death of her persecutor, but he is kept out of the picture, and the reader is left for once without a bystander's emotional response to imitate. We are thus offered no help as to how we should fit this death into the pattern of deathbeds which the novel itself has revealed as an unreliable guide to eternal destinations.

Richardson wanted his readers to see complexity in Lovelace's death, but the problem was that too many found the villain's death preferable to the heroine's. Although he was prepared for people to pity Lovelace, Richardson could not allow this to be at Clarissa's expense. Exclusive approval of Lovelace implied that readers were ignoring the question of Clarissa's redeeming, triumphant death, and this "misreading" led Richardson to simplify the novel by insisting on Clarissa's victory and Lovelace's damnation. Adverse remarks on

¹ Selected Letters, p. 119.

Clarissa's prudery caused him to defend his heroine by blackening the villain in additions and footnotes. By ignoring the subtleties of the novel, his readers drove him "to take up a more intransigent and didactic attitude towards his novel."¹

Nevertheless, the novel survives the alterations, and although Richardson defends and explains Lovelace's end at great length, it is quite clearly designed to be ambiguous. Sarah Fielding, as always, takes the strictly moralistic line that his death is one of Spira-like despair, "full of Rage and Disappointment".² Mrs Barbauld, on the other hand, finds a "calm composure and self-possession" in the scene, which is rather worrying when placed alongside Belton's horror-struck death. Surely Richardson might have given "more of horror to the last scene of Lovelace's life." Another Sinclair-like deathbed would have strengthened the moral of the novel, and made us "turn with horror from the features of the gay, the agreeable seducer, when turned into the agonizing countenance of the despairing self-accuser."³ Worried by her own liking for Lovelace, Mrs Barbauld, like many others, would prefer a simplified version of the novel. Under the illusion that Richardson has taken his deathbed pattern of "merit or demerit" from Young, she is surprised and concerned when Richardson fails to adhere to it.

In the Postscript and the prefaces to the later edition of Clarissa, we can sense Richardson's disappointment at the public's failure to read the novel with sufficient care. Public response was always of great importance to him, and it is well known that before publishing his novels he passed the manuscripts around among his

¹ Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "Clarissa Restored?" RES, NS 10 (1959), 156-71.

² Remarks on Clarissa, p. 48.

³ Correspondence, I, xc, xci, xcvi.

friends in order to gauge the effect. When one such reader, a young lady, pitied Lovelace, and wished that "he had rather been made a Penitent", Richardson immediately set about making him "more and more odious".¹ This blackening process continued in revisions and letters throughout the remainder of Richardson's life. His most succinct and dogmatic statement on Lovelace's death appears in the "Sentiments" appended to the final volume of the third edition of Clarissa. Here, under the heading "Repentance", the traditional advice of a timely reformation is emphasized by an epitaph of five words set in large blackletter type: "Lovelace lived not to repent".²

That Richardson knew this to be a gross over-simplification is evident from the way he revels in the ambiguities of Lovelace's death in his full reading of the episode in a letter to Edward Moore. Moore, like Mrs Barbauld, considered the end too lenient, because "the triumphant Death of Clarissa . . . needed a more particular contrast than in the Deaths of Belton & Sinclair." In his reply to Moore, Richardson sets out to prove that the death is adequate as it stands, and that alteration is unnecessary. In doing this, however, Richardson cannot help delighting in the ambiguous effect that he has achieved. All the elements that he chooses to point out as "the marks of Signal and exemplary punishment," are things which he knows can be taken another way to imply a more hopeful death.³

He draws attention to Lovelace's lack of remorse by arguing that he shows sufficient evidence of this in the days leading up to the fatal duel, so that "there cou'd not be a necessity for persons giving an acct. of them after it was fought", but this lack of remorse could

¹ Selected Letters, pp. 73-74.

² 3rd ed., VIII, 384.

³ Selected Letters, pp. 118-22.

also be seen as proof that Lovelace has received the grace of forgiveness on his deathbed in answer to Clarissa's prayer. Similarly, Richardson sees proof of damnation in the fact that Lovelace is "very unwilling to die". He sees a vision of a "frightful spectre", and addresses his prayers to Clarissa instead of Heaven, but in the light of the other bad deaths in the novel, these "marks" of damnation cannot be accepted unquestioningly. At Belton's deathbed, and at Mrs Larkin's also, we have been shown that even the believer can be justifiably unwilling to die. The spectre of a former victim is a traditional element of the Spira deathbed (originally interpreted as devils tormenting the wicked at death, and later seen as the projections of a guilty conscience), but when Belton is haunted by such guilty visions this is not seen as ruling out the possibility of his redemption (VII, 174). In addition, Lovelace's vision is kept vague so that we wonder who the ghost is, our tendency being to hope that it is Clarissa, appearing to him in reality or in his conscience both as his "last reproach" and his "last saving grace".¹ Aware of this ambiguity, Richardson teases Moore, allowing him to "suppose it the ghost of Miss Betterton, of his French Countess, or of whom he pleases." The villain's last words are, according to Richardson, further proof of his continuing impiety, because he makes a "Goddess" of the "exalted Clarissa" and "hardly thinks of invoking the highest assistance and mercy!". Nevertheless, while it is true that Lovelace does not address Heaven directly, it is surely a good sign for him to acknowledge that redeeming power in Clarissa which the novel has demonstrated in Belford's reformation. That Lovelace should actually value another person more highly than himself is a step towards Christian love.

This ambiguity fills the entire episode, and culminates in

¹ See Francis Spira (1638), pp. 76-77, and James, Spira's Despair Revived, pp. 8, 12; Doody, p. 181.

Lovelace's final utterance, "LET THIS EXPIATE" (VIII, 277). According to Richardson, this is said "with his wonted hautiness of spirit", but the novel as a whole does not imply that it is presumptuous to hope that death may expiate for one's offences. Clarissa hopes this for herself, and Belford's hopes for Belton are based on the same expiatory principle, so Lovelace has a good precedent for his final wish. He may not openly repent his folly, but then neither does Belton. Every detail in this death scene is calculated to send us back to the other deathbeds in an attempt to resolve these ambiguities. "Have I not then given rather a dreadful than a hopeful Exit with respect to Futurity, to the unhappy Lovelace!" asks Richardson in the rhetorical close to his letter, revelling in the skill with which he has been able to turn each detail to support his argument, but equally proud that the ambiguity of the scene would allow him to argue the opposite case with equal felicity.

That Richardson is unfairly weighting the argument against Lovelace is unquestionably confirmed by his remarks on the rake's apparent calm and "ultimate composure", which de la Tour hopes "may administer some consolation to his honourable friends". Richardson claims that de la Tour is deliberately falsifying the facts "to comfort his surviving friends", and that we should not suppose that Lovelace really died with composure, but there is nothing in the novel to indicate to the reader that the valet is lying. The "ultimate composure" can only have been included to enlist the reader's sympathy and hope. Lovelace's repetitions of the word "Blessed" do "shew the Reader that he felt", and any such sign of real emotion is a cause for optimism.

Lovelace's death is the climax of Richardson's religious polemic. On the one hand it may just be another example of a bad death in that he is "unreclaimed by the most affecting Warnings and Repeated

Admonitions, he perishes miserably in the Bloom of Life, and sinks into the Grave oppressed with Guilt, Remorse and Horror" (Grandison, Preface, I, 4). On the other hand, it is equally possible to see Lovelace as saved by Clarissa's example. Boas sees Morden's sword as "an instrument not of punishment but of release" from a period of expiation.¹ A more moderate view is also possible, such as that of Dussinger, who sees the death as pitiful, because in it Lovelace recognizes the "analogy between Christ's sacrifice for mankind" and Clarissa's "personal atonement", but lacks sufficient will and time to repent.² This pity combined with a recognition of Lovelace's need to repent is perhaps the closest we can come to Richardson's original intention. The novel suggests that death has a redeeming power, but it is left uncertain whether that power suffices for Lovelace.

Richardson was naturally concerned not to appear an advocate of deathbed repentance. A bad death might not necessarily mean damnation, but, in Sherlock's words, "Who would venture the infinite hazards of a Death-bed-repentance?"³ It is better to be safe than sorry, and Lovelace's death demonstrates just how uncertain such delayed repentance can be. He ignores the conventional warning that "The longer our conversion is put off, the more God's grace faileth, and the more the devill preuailleth."⁴ The importance of grace for repentance is given extra emphasis in the third edition of the novel by the addition of several paragraphs to Sinclair's death in which Belford asks Lovelace if he realizes "what a portion of divine GRACE" is needed "to make a man a good husband" (VIII, 67-68). Once again, heavenly and

¹ Boas, p. 58.

² John A. Dussinger, "Conscience and the Pattern of Christian Perfection in Clarissa," PMLA, 81 (1966), 244.

³ Sherlock, p. 268.

⁴ Gardiner, p. 43.

earthly love are closely linked. God's grace is necessary in both worlds, and it is not in man's power either to marry or "to reform when he will". Lovelace's major mistake is in thinking that he can change his own nature, like an actor switching roles. We cannot be sure, therefore, that his remorse at death is not merely that "dying Sorrow" which, according to the devotional writers, does not constitute "saving Repentance".¹

V - Conclusion

By denying that remorse was proof of repentance, many divines were preaching a less merciful God than the one they actually believed in. They denied God's mercy in an effort to uphold moral standards, so that people would not feel confident enough to risk leaving repentance until the end of a life of ease. Taylor, for instance, denies that deathbed repentance is possible, and yet his prayers devised for use at deathbeds often "invoke God's mercy" and "his gratuitous grace and forgiveness". In defending Christianity from the lawlessness inherent in antinomianism, the divines of the "Holy Living" school replaced hope and mercy with what Allison describes as "moralism masquerading as faith".²

Richardson tends to do the same when defending Christianity against atheism, deism and worldly complacency, as can be seen from his response to David Hartley's ideas of universal salvation in Heaven Open to All Men. Lady Bradshaigh recommends the work to Richardson,

¹ Sherlock, p. 343.

² C.F. Allison, The Rise of Moralism (London: SPCK, 1966), pp. 184-85, 192-94.

declaring Hartley's hopeful message that "Mankind will all be finally made happy" to be "a thought that every Benevolent heart, must dwell upon with delight and satisfaction." Richardson replies with a scepticism informed by the public response to Clarissa that he "could hope that the Doctrine is true: but dare not presume to decide (so fearful am I of weakening foundations)."¹ The novels show that Richardson is not unsympathetic to Hartley's comforting views. Hartley, like Richardson, believes in the supremacy of love, that "the Desire of becoming Happy is ever a much more powerful Incentive than the Fear of being Unhappy."² Like the seventeenth-century divines, however, Richardson dare not risk the consequences of preaching such a doctrine. He does not delight in sending his characters to hell, but he takes care to avoid suggesting that they therefore gain an easy passage to heaven. His sympathy for Hartley's position is in marked contrast to Skelton's denunciation of Hartley's theories as "stupidity and profaneness".³ Significantly, this doctrine is also vigorously opposed in Drexelius on Eternitie, another of the books sent to Clarissa, and hence further evidence of the Harlowes' stubborn intransigence.⁴

Richardson's religious optimism and moderation are vital to his novels. He is not the over-pious product of his times, but a conscious investigator of beliefs, who sets out to unmask hypocrisy, and who is

¹ Selected Letters, p. 308 and footnote 42.

² Hartley, Heaven Open to All Men, p. 67; this essay formed the climax of Hartley's longer work, Observations on Man (London, 1749), printed by Richardson.

³ Skelton, Ophiomaches, II, 372-73; Richardson defends belief in heaven and hell as preserving moral order in The Apprentice's Vade Mecum (1734), The Augustan Reprint Society, Nos. 169-70 (1975), pp. 69-70.

⁴ Hieremias Drexelius, The Considerations of Drexelius on Eternitie, trans. Ralph Winterton (London, 1636), pp. 97-98.

concerned to provide a reappraisal of religious doctrine in the light of experience and emotion. He may prefer "A Quarles and a Bunyan" for their "Morality and Piety" to the writings of Pope and Swift, but this is largely because he can see the danger of moral laxity if his own moderate views are to be taken as licence to abandon good behaviour.¹ It is for this reason that he attacks Rowe's The Fair Penitent and Pope's Eloisa to Abelard, because of their exaltation of emotion to the exclusion of religious considerations, especially in their approach to death. In his novels, Richardson is seeking to steer a course mid-way between the seventeenth century's moralism and the eighteenth century's predominantly emotional approach to death. Far from having "at best a shallow notion of religion", in his dramatic investigation of the theology of death in the three novels, Richardson reveals a deeper appreciation of the religious and emotional issues than any of his eighteenth-century successors.² His legacy to them was a predominantly emotional approach to the deaths of both believers and unbelievers, where passion is always stronger than precept, and death is the final act of a human tragedy, rather than the penultimate act of a divine comedy.

¹ Selected Letters, p. 57.

² Watt, p. 216.

Chapter Three - Henry Fielding and the Consolatory Comic Novel

I - The Charge of Impiety

While Richardson delights in death as a subject for the novel, Fielding always tries to avoid or minimize it. Richardson seeks confrontation; Fielding seeks consolation. To Richardson, death is fascinating, and although in real life bereavement disturbs him deeply, in his novels he detaches himself from these emotions in order to recreate and examine them in detail. To Fielding, on the other hand, death is always a grievous parting of friends and relatives, and he can never separate himself sufficiently from his own experience of death to approach it with the same detachment. The result is a different kind of novel, comic rather than tragic, in which consolation and diversion from the afflictions of life are found in the confident demonstration of the providential pattern behind everyday events, upon which we ultimately base our hope of heaven, and where the distress of pain and bereavement is diffused and distanced by the narrator's assertive wit and comic irony. To hold back the tears, Fielding treats death as a divine witticism.¹

¹ For this view of Fielding as an artist presenting a providential view, see Martin C. Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art (Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1959) and The Providence of Wit (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974); Aubrey Williams, "Interpositions of Providence and the Design of Fielding's Novels," South Atlantic Quarterly, 70 (1971), 265-86; for a corrective, alternative view, see Leo Braudy, Narrative Form (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970).

Richardson was appalled by Fielding's apparent shallowness, and in complaining bitterly about the popularity of Tom Jones, he implies that it is the avoidance of the subject of death that lies at the heart of the novel's immorality. As long as the public taste is pampered with such comforting frivolity, Clarissa, "which is designed to make those think of Death who endeavour all they can to banish it from their Thoughts", is bound to be misread.¹ To Richardson's friend, Thomas Edwards, the light-heartedness of Fielding's Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon seemed like an impious postscript to an irreverent career: "that a man, who had led such a life as he had, should trifle in that manner when immediate death was before his eyes, is amazing."² To Arthur Murphy, Fielding's first and most injurious biographer, the same work suggested "a person, under sentence of death, jesting on the scaffold."³

Fielding may be jesting in the face of death, but his frivolity is rarely without a purpose. He sees the ability to laugh at the vicissitudes of life and death as a proper Christian response and the way to avoid excessive fears and sorrow. There are very few instances where Fielding can be accused of joking about death without some moral purpose, the mock epitaph of Merry Andrew at the beginning of Joseph Andrews and the irony directed at the innkeeper's sententious cliché being two such minor exceptions (Joseph Andrews, pp. 20, 50).⁴

¹ Selected Letters, p. 126.

² Richardson, Correspondence, III, 125.

³ Arthur Murphy, The Lives of Henry Fielding and Samuel Johnson, ed. Matthew Grace (Gainsville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1968), p. 270.

⁴ All references to Fielding's works are given in the text, and normally refer to the Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967-); where reference is made to works not yet included in this series, the appropriate volume and page number is given for the Henley Edition, 16 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1903).

Despite his love for Don Quixote, there is nothing in Fielding to match the black humour of Don Quixote's attack on the funeral procession or Sancho's raising of Altisadora. When Fielding deals with death, it is more often with the combination of humour and pathos that we see in Sancho's tears at the death of his master. Humour heightens and controls the pathos, and imparts a sense of triumph, even in defeat.

Nevertheless, it took more than a century for critical opinion to acknowledge the healthiness of Fielding's humour, so that Austin Dobson, reassessing Murphy's judgement, could find in the determined cheerfulness and will to entertain of The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon, "the courage of a hero and the dignity of a philosopher."¹ Far from being foolishly unmindful of religion at the time of his death, Fielding was actually engaged in writing a defence of orthodox Christianity in reply to Bolingbroke's essays.² The Journal narrator's "Shandean" flight from death is merely a comic pose.

However, Richardson's charge that Fielding is pandering to the public's distaste for anything serious is perhaps more justified. It would be absurd to deny that Fielding's morality places far more emphasis on this life than the next. This is partly a reflection of his times, typified by the practical, everyday Christianity preached by a wide range of popular Anglican divines of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, an ill-defined group, often referred to as the "Latitudinarians".³ Nevertheless, Fielding's worldly emphasis is

¹ "Editor's Introduction" to The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon, Henley, XVI, 175-76.

² See "A Fragment of a Comment on Lord Bolingbroke's Essays," Henley, XVI, 311-22; Wilbur L. Cross, The History of Henry Fielding (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1918), III, 18-21.

³ Since R.S. Crane's influential article, "Suggestions Towards a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling'," ELH, 1 (1934), 205-30, the term "Latitudinarian" has been used rather loosely to refer to the religious background upon which Fielding's morality is based. More recently, however, some doubt has been cast upon this usage: Donald Greene in

also a product of his own emotional make-up. Deeply affected throughout his adult life by the loss of sisters, wife and children, his novels are works of consolation and hope, where death can be tamed, distanced, or averted.

Any novel that purports to imitate "Nature", as Fielding's do (see Joseph Andrews, p. 4), must allow for the possibility of death in order to give an impression of realism, even if that possibility is restricted to only the most minor characters. In addition, as Shakespearian comedy repeatedly demonstrates, death (real, supposed or threatened) is an excellent catalyst for the revolutions, revelations and realizations which a comic plot requires. Therefore mortality cannot simply be avoided by the comic novelist, but its solemnity can be diffused in various ways. Fielding often diverts the reader's attention from potential pain and grief by intervening with laughter-provoking irony. Thus, in Tom Jones, when Doctor Blifil dies of "a broken Heart" caused by the cruelty and ungratefulness of his brother the Captain, the sentimental associations of broken hearts are kept under control by Fielding's witty but sad observation that this "Distemper" deserves "a Place in the Bill of Mortality" as killing "many more than is generally imagined" (p. 74). The narrator's worldly-wise banter on doctors and diseases enables Fielding to present

"Latitudinarianism and Sensibility: The Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling' Reconsidered," MP, 75 (1977), 159-83, quite rightly points out that many of Crane's "Latitudinarians" are nothing of the sort, and insists that the true Latitudinarians had little influence on eighteenth-century orthodoxy. Other church historians suggest that the name was in common use for any divine of practical and rational rather than mystical tendencies. In this study, I shall use the term in this broader sense. See Frans de Bruyn, "Latitudinarianism and its Importance as a Precursor of Sensibility," JEGP, 80 (1981), 349-68; Norman Sykes, Church and State in the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1934); Roland N. Stromberg, Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England (London: OUP, 1954); Gerald R. Cragg, Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1964); and H.R. McAdoo, The Spirit of Anglicanism (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1965).

his bleak view of man's cruelty - a view which is supported by the evidence of the many hearts broken by familial spite in his novels - whilst at the same time offering us the consolation of laughter.¹

Doctor Harrison in Amelia has the same comic approach to sorrow. His letter reporting the death of Mrs Harris is a curious mixture of humour and traditional consolatio (pp. 136-40). Hearty laughter is the best remedy for grief, and "there is no Calamity so great that a Christian Philosopher may not reasonably laugh at it." He clears himself from the charge of simply being unsympathetic to the sufferings of others by declaring that he has "always laughed" at his "own Afflictions", and so may laugh at the Booths' bereavement "without the Censure of much Malevolence". Doctor Harrison's theory is borne out when he meets the Booths in London, and successfully diverts their minds from their loss, keeping even Amelia cheerful with his "Wit and Humour" (p. 141). This form of Christian stoicism is ultimately based on the belief that the joys of heaven lie beyond our present pain and grief. Without Christianity, such laughter would be foolish and uneasy, hence Aristotle's failure to "resolve the Doubt which he hath raised in his Ethics, viz. How a Man in the Midst of King Priam's Misfortunes, can be called Happy?" (p. 137). Only from the standpoint of a firm belief in futurity can we laugh at our troubles in this life. This is why the theme of Providence is so important in Fielding.

¹ In Tom Jones, Mrs Miller's second sister also dies of a broken heart after being cruelly treated by her mistress (p. 757), Squire Western, we infer, is similarly responsible for his wife's demise (pp. 338-40), and Tom warns Nightingale not to desert Nancy and cause two more such deaths (p. 768); in Amelia, Miss Mathews's father dies neglected (pp. 57-58), Doctor Harrison shares the common view that his daughter's death was the result of her husband's ill-treatment (p. 137), and Betty Harris falsely blames Amelia's unfavourable marriage as the cause of her mother's death, only to die broken-hearted in exile herself (pp. 142, 532).

Failure to acknowledge this undercurrent in the novels led Richardson to see Fielding as pandering to the irreligion of the public. In fact, Fielding was equally worried by the apparent decline of Christianity, as can be seen from his more censorious articles in The Covent-Garden Journal, where "Religion" is sadly found to be "a Word of no Meaning, but which serves as a Bugbear to frighten Children with." In his legal writings, Fielding traces the increase in crime to "that general neglect (I wish I could not say contempt) of religion" (Henley, XVI, 115).¹ Similarly concerned, Doctor Harrison sees the hope of heaven and the fear of hell as essential spurs to public and private virtue. Ironically, his statement could almost be a summary of Richardson's view of Fielding's novels:

we are not Earnest in our Faith; at the best we think with too little Attention on this our great Concern. While the most paultry Matters of this World, even those pitiful Trifles, those childish Gewgaws, Riches and Honours, are transacted with the utmost Earnestness, and most serious Application, the grand and weighty Affair of Immortality is postponed and disregarded, nor ever brought into the least Competition with our Affairs here (Amelia, p. 138).

Miss Mathews demonstrates the truth of this generalization by her complete inability to grasp the consolatory purpose of the Doctor's letter. Instead she fixes on the injustice of Mrs Harris's will, by which everything is left to Amelia's elder sister. Her narrow concern for the very source of pain which Doctor Harrison had sought to alleviate shows how a lack of faith in Providence deprives us of the ability to smile at such misfortune. Fielding seems to share the pious wish of his sister Sarah that religion should be a topic of polite conversation in drawing-rooms and assemblies. Doctor Harrison laments

¹ The Covent-Garden Journal, ed. G.E. Jensen (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1915), I, 157; see also A Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor (1753), Henley, XIII, 183-87.

the fact that any parson who preached "a Discourse of Heaven in the Scenes of Business or of Pleasure" would be treated as a madman or a buffoon, a fate powerfully demonstrated when Doctor Harrison's letter on adultery is read and ridiculed at the masquerade (pp. 413-16). Here, at least, Fielding appears to be more pious than Richardson, for whom, as we have seen, religious topics had their proper time and place.¹

Nevertheless, Fielding's novels tend to help perpetuate Doctor Harrison's regretful view. Even the Doctor himself is afraid of appearing too pious, and wonders if his sermonizing letter has put Amelia and Booth to sleep, like Hogarth's famous congregation. Consolatory laughter must be based on Christian hope, but to gain a hearing one must be frivolous and apparently irreligious. Fielding is far less interested than Richardson in the actual process and theology of death, and the hope of heaven is only of importance for the confidence and consolation it lends to life in the here and now.

Fielding is therefore often guilty of the very crime for which he condemns the worldly host of Joseph Andrews - a lack of attention to "what shall be revealed hereafter":

The Host taking up the Cup, with a Smile drank a Health to Hereafter: adding, 'he was for something present.' 'Why,' says Adams very gravely, 'Do not you believe another World?' To which the Host answered, 'yes, he was, no Atheist.' 'And you believe you have an immortal Soul?' cries Adams: he answered, 'God forbid he should not.' 'And Heaven and Hell?' said the Parson. The Host than bid him 'not to prophane: for those were Things not to be mentioned, nor thought of but in Church.' . . . 'And dost not thou then tremble,' cries Adams, 'at the Thought of eternal Punishment?' 'As for that, Master,' said he, 'I never once thought about it: but what signifies talking about matters so far off? The Mug is out, shall I draw another?' (p. 100).

¹ See above, p. 28.

This scene displays again the truth of Doctor Harrison's assessment of the decline of religion, but the humour arises as much from Adams's pious expectations as from the host's worldliness. Against Adams's "hereafter" Fielding portrays the liveliness of the host's "present". The "Four Last Things" are only important as the ultimate authority for a practical Christian morality. Booth is thus shocked by the spectacle of three condemned prisoners "enjoying themselves merrily over a Bottle of Wine and a Pipe of Tobacco", but the point of the episode is not to show man's failure to think on death, but rather to demonstrate the inadequacy of a judicial system that fails to instil any sense of shame or fear into those who really deserve punishment (Amelia, p. 32). Similarly, in Jonathan Wild, Heartfree, with his confident hope in heaven, serves as a moral yardstick to measure the corruption of those around him, such as the Ordinary who tells Wild that there is "yet time enough to think of dying", and diverts Wild's apparently genuine interest in repentance with a vacuous sermon and a bowl of punch (Henley, II, 128, 135, 191-96). The momento mori theme is used to make a moral point, rather than to turn the reader's attention towards death.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Gide, in comparing Richardson and Fielding, termed the latter as "anti-religious". There is, after all, little difference between a clergyman toasting a condemned man in a bowl of punch and the hand of a dying novelist "trembling in almost its latest hour, . . . yet struggling for your entertainment" (Henley, XVI, 177). To Gide, Fielding's lack of religion is revealed in the way he never directly associates "good Nature" with piety, and whilst one might quibble about this point in connection with Allworthy and Doctor Harrison, it is a useful corrective to the view of Fielding as "a kind of Augustan gospel

singer".¹ In Fielding, as in the writings of the Latitudinarian divines, the doctrines of heaven and hell are seldom mentioned other than as an afterthought, despite the fact that they form the foundation upon which his practical morality is built. Whereas the stricter seventeenth-century divines, such as Jeremy Taylor, give over whole works to the contemplation of death in life, the more liberal preachers, such as Isaac Barrow, relegate this theme to an occasional paragraph in which they merely repeat the old arguments, but with a lack of conviction that betrays their shift of emphasis:

For whom doth not the sight of a coffin or of a grave gaping to receive a friend, perhaps, or an antient acquaintance; . . . of the mournful looks and habits, of all the sad poms and solemnities attending man unto his long home, by minding him of his frail condition, affect with some serious, some honest, some wise thoughts?²

These are unusual words for Barrow, and they are clearly the product of an occasional thought rather than a constant preoccupation with mortality. By concentrating on practical morality, Fielding's favourite divines contributed to the apparent dichotomy between everyday life and religion observed by Parson Adams. Doctor Harrison stresses the importance of a future life, but even here the choice of the correct religion seems almost arbitrary, as if the effect belief has on our lives can be dissociated completely from the question of what actually occurs after death:

If Men act, as I believe they do, from their Passions, it would be fair to conclude that Religion to be true which applies immediately to the strongest of these Passions, Hope and Fear, chusing rather to rely on its Rewards and Punishments, than on that native Beauty of Virtue which some of the antient Philosophers thought proper to recommend to their Disciples (Amelia, pp. 511-12).

¹ William B. Coley, "Gide and Fielding," Comparative Literature, 11 (1959), 1-15; reprinted in Henry Fielding und der Englische Roman des 18 Jahrhunderts ed. Wolfgang Iser (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), pp. 192-210.

² Works (London, 1741), III, 135.

Thus, although Fielding laments the fact that those "Doctrines" essential to Doctor Harrison's morality have "few if any Believers" (Tom Jones, pp. 665-66), in his novels, he makes little effort to restore in the reader an orthodox fear of hell. There is nothing, for instance, to match the horror of Mrs Sinclair's deathbed in Clarissa, nor is there any sense that religious experience can be valuable in itself, for to say as much would be to tread dangerously close to "enthusiasm", an enemy which, like death, must be kept at bay with laughter and ridicule.

II - Resurrection Comedy

That Fielding's comedy is consolatory, a form of defence against the real world of disease and death, can be clearly seen in the way mortality is presented in the novels, only to be swept away by a series of miraculous and unrealistic "resurrections" and happy endings, symbolic of heavenly immortality and joy. A false expectation of death - most frequently the result of an incorrectly diagnosed illness, as in the case of Allworthy's cold (Tom Jones, p. 241), or a wrongly assessed injury, as when Booth is wounded in action in Gibraltar (Amelia, pp. 114-16) - enables Fielding to precipitate a crisis in the plot that helps to move the action forward or reveal more clearly the attitudes of various characters towards the dying person. Robinson's deathbed confession in Amelia provides an easy way of initiating the chain of revelations that leads to the judgement of Booth's enemies, and the restoration of Mrs Harris's legacy to Amelia (pp. 515-18). Allworthy's "deathbed" shows us the real motives of the characters in his household, from Tom's sincere love to Blifil's selfish opportunism. These threatened deaths are merely tools for creating tension and revealing character, and it is thus unnecessary to pursue them to their

logical end. The reader can be given the insight or excitement, and yet be spared the final pain of a real death.

This pattern is most obviously repeated in the four averted deaths of Amelia. Hebberts's recovery after being stabbed and assumed dead by Miss Mathews serves to highlight the ridiculousness of Miss Mathews's theatrical passion (p. 94). Booth's attendance at Bagillard's bedside when the latter has been run through in a duel with Colonel Bath allows Fielding to demonstrate his hero's forgiving nature, whilst also showing a dying man at the mercy of his ruling passion, in this case a degree of "Vanity" which, even while he deplores his lust for Amelia, cannot "forbear running over the Names of several Women of Fashion who had yielded to his Passion" (pp. 133, 135). A further moral point is made here when Bagillard recovers, and Colonel Bath reveals his shallow notion of honour by expecting Booth to retract his former promise of forgiveness and challenge Bagillard to a further duel.

Atkinson's fever, brought on by a suicidal drinking bout after the quarrel between his wife and Amelia, marks the turning-point in the Booths' fortunes, and gives the initial impetus for the concatenation of events leading to Robinson's similar deathbed confession. Thinking that he is dying, Atkinson confesses his faithful love for Amelia that led him to steal her picture. He returns the miniature, which she will later pawn, accidentally awakening Robinson's guilty conscience. The averted death thus helps propel the novel to its conclusion, just as its conjectured parallel in the Aeneid, the death of Pallas in Book XI, spurs Aeneas on to the final battle with Turnus.¹ Atkinson's illness

¹ This parallel is suggested in Lyall H. Powers, "The Influence of the Aeneid on Fielding's Amelia," MLN, 71 (1956), 330-36, and Maurice Johnson, Fielding's Art of Fiction (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), p. 151; Fielding declared in the Covent-Garden Journal that Amelia followed the Virgilian model (I, 186), but it is the structural similarities which seem the most convincing and illuminating.

is also important for what it reveals about the nature of love, and the difficulty of distinguishing a virtuous from an illicit passion. Atkinson's love may appear commendable, since he has managed to keep his passion under control for several years without seeking to seduce Amelia, but on the other hand, his stealing of Amelia's picture can be seen as a form of violation, which, even if it does not lead us to condemn Atkinson, shows us that his passion is not that far removed from the lust of Colonel James and the Noble Lord. On Amelia's side, there is even more ambiguity, as she responds to Atkinson's declaration with blushes and considerable confusion:

To say the Truth, without any Injury to her Chastity, that Heart which had stood firm as a Rock to all the Attacks of Title and Equipage . . . was yet a little softened by the plain, honest, modest, involuntary, heroic Passion of this poor and humble Swain; for whom, in spite of herself, she felt a momentary Tenderness and Complacence, at which Booth, if he had known it, would perhaps have been displeased (pp. 482-83).

The contrast between the narrator's and Booth's probable view of the incident draws our attention to the moral problem. Is this, as Hunter suggests, Amelia's greatest moment of trial, the only one where she is offered no providential rescue, and where she discovers her own frightening impulses towards sin?¹ Our answer depends on how we interpret Booth's conjectural reaction. He, it must be remembered, is a firm believer in the theory that sees our "uppermost Passion" as determining our actions (p. 451), but at this stage in the novel, before his conversion, he does not appreciate that the Christian system of rewards and punishments, by appealing to our passions of hope and fear, can overrule the passionate impulse to sin. In other words, if Booth were witnessing the scene between Amelia and Atkinson, he would

¹ J. Paul Hunter, Occasional Form (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1975), p. 195.

expect Amelia to fall a prey to her passion, whereas in fact she still has her belief in heaven and hell to act as a moral restraint. She is safer than she herself feels, and her emotion is that "which any Chastity that is not hewn out of Marble must feel on so tender and delicate an Occasion." If we disapprove, then we reveal our own hearts of stone. Fielding clearly intends this to be an important scene in the novel, structurally and thematically, but, as always, his attempt to show a complex inner state of mind through external actions results in a somewhat clumsy series of blushes and near-faintings. Even so, it is perhaps not until Sterne that we sense again in the novel the difficulty of discerning and separating our virtuous and dangerous impulses.

Robinson's deathbed, by comparison, is much less complex, and lends final impetus to the plot through the revelation of the forged will. The providential aspect of the happy ending is rendered all the more obvious by Robinson's belief that the "Hand of Providence" caused him to see Amelia's miniature at the pawnbroker's, and then reduced him to his deathbed, forcing him to confess his part in Betty's plot. His recovery from the wound inflicted by the bailiff is symbolic of God's acceptance of his repentance, a sign that had Robinson remained true to his new resolve and not returned to crime, he would have been raised to heaven, not condemned to hell. The possibility of Robinson's death also serves to demonstrate Booth's conversion to a belief in moral absolutes, for when the bailiff responsible for the wounding claims that he will have a clear conscience even if Robinson dies, because at law he is innocent of murder, Booth replies that there is a higher authority than the temporal law (pp. 513-14).

Possible death followed by recovery or rescue is a hallmark of Fielding's novels, but, as we have seen from these examples, it is not simply a dull, mechanical device repeated without variation. It is

used to reveal character, to highlight moral issues, and to further plot in a variety of ways. One thing it never shows, however, is the true mental state of the dying person. As a result, the threat of death in these scenes never seems very serious to the reader. Thus, in the case of Allworthy, the lightness of the narrator's tone in his satirical remarks on the doctors who attend the sick man and the gentle humour and "ridiculous incongruity" of Allworthy's directing his Christian-stoic homily to Blifil suggest that death is only the most remote of possibilities.¹ Our attention is focussed on those around Allworthy, so that we have no opportunity to be anxious on his behalf.

Similarly, the possibility that Allworthy's adopted son is born for the gallows hangs ominously over Tom Jones like an awaiting noose. It seems certain to become a reality when Tom is imprisoned for slaughtering Fitzpatrick in the duel. Fielding teases the reader as to whether the final book will be comic or tragic, but although this (along with the additional grim possibility of incest) adds some tension to the closing scenes, the narrator's refusal to take the more difficult path of providing a believable escape for his hero, or to stoop to the use of "supernatural Assistance", is so playful that it reassures us that the narrator still has a better trick up his sleeve (pp. 875-76).² Robert Alter even goes so far as to suggest that Tom's crisis is a deliberate parody of a tragic situation.³ This, however, can only be partly true. Tom's realization that his misfortunes are the "Consequences" of his "own Folly and Vice" (p. 916)

¹ F. Holmes Dudden, Henry Fielding (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), II, 693.

² Henry Knight Miller, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones and the Romance Tradition, English Literary Studies Monograph Series, No. 6 (Victoria, B.C.: Univ. of Victoria, 1976), p. 35.

³ Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 18.

is a serious moment and the real turning-point of the novel. By acknowledging his mistakes he passes the test which wins him Sophia. The threat of death was a necessary device for precipitating this crisis, but although it is very real for Tom, for the reader it is rendered more bearable by the confidence of the narration. In referring us back to the scenes at Upton, the narrator reminds us of the superior position from which he sees and controls the entire shape of the novel. Once again, it suggests to us that he has a comic solution ready to spring upon us.

Another important factor in assessing the reader's anxiety over such threats of death is the way repeated recoveries and rescues raise an expectation of more of the same. Our sense that Tom is safe from the hangman's rope is strengthened, for instance, by the earlier scene where Lady Bellaston tests Sophia's love for Tom by pretending that he has been killed in a duel (p. 791). The reader, unlike Sophia, knows that this is untrue, and consequently her fainting fit seems comic, although it stems from real anguish. By the time we reach Tom's moment of testing, we may not be sure that the news of Fitzpatrick's death is a false report (p. 874), but the remembrance of Lady Bellaston's trick will tend to make us suspect this is so. In Amelia, the repeated recoveries lead to an even greater sense of predictability, and Fielding is never daring enough to follow Richardson's technique in Clarissa, and deny us the expected happy outcome. Anyone coming to Amelia from, say, Tom Jones, is unlikely to take the Doctor's opinion that Atkinson is dying at face value, for such diagnoses in Fielding's works are always unreliable. As if this were not enough, the narrator continues to offer hints that all is not lost. When Atkinson thanks Amelia for her goodness to "a dying man", Fielding makes it clear that he is not going to die by adding in parenthesis "for so he called himself" (p. 481). Similarly, when Atkinson has his dream of Colonel

James threatening Amelia with a naked sword, and attacks his wife in his sleep, Fielding hints to us, by the addition of one word (only a page before the episode naturally resolves into comedy with the discovery that the bed is soaked with cherry brandy and not gore) that Atkinson has not killed her, as he fears. The bed, we are told, merely "appeared to be all over Blood" (pp. 377-78, emphasis added). Finally, the surgeon's inability to give a definite opinion on the state of Robinson's wound convinces both Doctor Harrison and the reader that there is no need to remain by the bedside. The parson can safely abandon his pastoral duties, and set off in pursuit of the wicked Murphy (p. 518).

Morris Golden sees Fielding's comedy as essentially grim, since it implies through these averted deaths that goodness cannot survive without providential intrusion into the temporal, whereas in Jonsonian comedy, only the wicked and the foolish suffer. Golden sees the novels as offering a number of grim alternatives (Joseph Andrews would die, for instance, were it not for the postillion's charity), alternatives which in the later novels are increasingly rarely averted: Tom is seduced by Mrs Waters, and Booth by Miss Mathews, and Robinson lives to return to crime.¹ While it is true that more of the unpleasant possibilities actually occur in Amelia, there is also, as we have noted, a marked increase in the number of averted deaths. As a novelist of consolation, Fielding is attempting to confront and defeat this more realistic and grim view of the world. The darker the vision, the more the seemingly ultimate defeat of death must be balanced by the hope of resurrection.

In Atkinson's and Robinson's false deathbeds, the confession of a secret of vital importance to the plot is made possible without the

¹ Fielding's Moral Psychology (Amherst: Univ. Of Massachusetts Press, 1966), pp. 124-33.

need for death itself. In Joseph Andrews a similar device is used, which leads to the discovery of Joseph's true parentage (pp. 324-25). Here, however, the confession is made by the pedlar's mistress on a deathbed from which she does not rise to steal more children. Her exceptional, real death does not threaten the comic tone of the novel, however, because the character is introduced only for the purpose of revealing this secret. The reader is distracted from thinking of the pedlar's bereavement by the comic banter on marriage between him and Adams.

A minor character is similarly sacrificed for the sake of the plot at the very beginning of the same novel, where the death of Sir Thomas conveniently clears the way for his Lady to attempt her seduction of Joseph. The episode deliberately echoes the opening of Pamela, where the death of her mistress leaves the heroine at the mercy of Mr B. Richardson, however, makes much more effort to integrate the fuse into the firework by showing how Pamela's morality has been influenced by the education she has received at her late mistress's hands. There is no suggestion whatsoever that Joseph has imbibed the moral values of Sir Thomas Booby.

Fielding disposes of minor characters in the crudest of ways, safe in the knowledge that the reader does not care about their fate. In Tom Jones, the death of Mrs Partridge from smallpox liberates the unfortunate schoolmaster from one major source of persecution, but at a level of poetic justice more befitting a children's cartoon than a novel (p. 103). In Jonathan Wild, the Great Man reveals his callousness by betraying Thomas Fierce and Marybone to the gallows, but because they are little more than names to us, we are almost as unconcerned as their betrayer (Henley, II, 73, 105).

A further distancing element in the deaths of Fielding's minor characters is the use of narrative within the narrative. As in the

pedlar's account, deaths are reported as past events which no longer warrant grief. The technique is much used in Tom Jones and even more in Amelia. Mrs Miller's life-story, for instance, contains four deaths: those of her father, two sisters and a husband (Tom Jones, pp. 757-58). Mrs Bennet's narrative includes the deaths of both her parents, her sister, husband and son (Amelia, pp. 268-303).

Miss Mathews, likewise, relates to Booth the deaths of her broken-hearted father and the child she had by Hebbers, which "Heaven . . . hath been pleased to take to itself" (Amelia, pp. 57-58). Her apparent relief at the child's death spares the reader from a sorrowful monologue, but her resignation is clearly not the proper Christian form that sees early death as a privileged release from the sorrows of life. In her present tragic passion after her stabbing of Hebbers, this gladness at the death of the child is largely motivated by spite. The narrated death spares the reader pain, whilst at the same time illustrating a point of character. The same principle operates in her account of her father's death, which she says occurred within a few months of her leaving him after having worked herself up into a passion against him from a false sense of "Injury" at his hands. The implication is that Miss Mathews hastened the death of her father by her unjustified neglect, but any sense of her father's grief is distanced by her dispassionate narrative. Blind to her own cruelty, she assumes that her indifference is commendable, because it helped her show resignation in her bereavement, and "considerably lessened the Fury of that Sorrow which I should have otherwise felt for the Loss of so good a Father". Her story reveals much about her unsympathetic nature, whilst the shallowness of her words helps us to pass rapidly over the painful details. It is as if Fielding wishes to concede the reality of suffering and cruelty, but at the same time shield the reader from it. This can also be seen in the case of Squire Western's

cruelty to Sophia's mother, which again seems to hasten her death (Tom Jones, pp. 338-40). Golden offers this passage as an example of Fielding allowing the grim possibility to occur, but there can be few readers who remember this and continue to hold it against the Squire at the end of the novel.¹ His comic exuberance dispels any sense that he is a serious threat to Sophia's happiness. Even in this account of her mother, the Squire's cruelty is distanced by the formality of the language, and the witty structuring of the sentences. Her death is never more than a minor incident, and she is soon forgotten.

Only Fielding's most minor characters are allowed to die within the time-scale of the novel, and most of these observe the best classical theatrical form by doing so off-stage. Fielding, unlike Richardson, never confronts us with the corpse of a familiar character. The few bodies that are brought onto centre-stage are swiftly curtained off and forgotten, not transported around the country in emblematic coffins for the living to weep over. Captain Blifil's corpse is carried into Paradise Hall, and the efforts made to revive it are briefly described, but our attention soon returns to the living with all the haste of the two physicians swooping down to minister to the hysterical Bridget (Tom Jones, pp. 111-13). Bridget herself is taken off by the gout while conveniently off-stage at Salisbury, and although her body is returned for interment in Allworthy's chapel, there is no scene to match or mimic the arrival of Clarissa's coffin at Harlowe Place, amusing though it would certainly have been to depict the various reactions of the living on this occasion. The funeral is judged sufficiently unimportant to be left entirely in Blifil's hands without further narration (pp. 248-50). Even an event as thematically important as Square's conversion from deism to Christianity at his

¹ Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology, p. 125.

death is reported in the subdued form of a letter to Allworthy. The opportunity for a more immediate Richardsonian deathbed scene demonstrating Square's change of heart is deliberately shunned.

III - The Augustan or the Man of Feeling

Fielding's unwillingness to depict the internal crises of his characters has been viewed as part of an Augustan mistrust of the public rendering of emotion. His deathbed scenes are thus seen as parodies that thwart our expectations with fantastic resurrections and unlikely happy endings, rather than showing the internal growth of character.¹ Typical of this is the chapter describing Amelia's daughter's illness, which avoids any hint of sentimentality such as might be expected at the possible death of a child. Instead it provides an opportunity for a conventional satirical attack on the medical profession and a panegyric to the unconventional Doctor Thompson. Fielding was wary of sensationalism, and found it necessary, for example, to revise the melodramatic death of Dumont in his sister Sarah's novel David Simple, expanding the original in an attempt to make the motivations of the characters seem more realistic.² However, his concern here is not so much to avoid feeling as to shun its unnatural depiction. His distrust of the emotions is more a consequence of his interest in the workings of the passions and his concern to present natural patterns of behaviour than Augustan reticence. In fact there are episodes in all his novels where Fielding clearly seeks to move the reader to tears, and these suggest strongly

¹ Hunter, p. 163.

² David Simple, pp. xxi, 245-47.

that behind the Augustan, satirical narrator is a more sensitive man of feeling.

Booth's account of his sister's death, for example, is the closest we ever come in Fielding to a Dumont-like real deathbed. For once, although the episode is narrated as a past event concerning an unknown, minor character, Fielding gives us the actual words of the dying person and far more circumstantial detail than is his wont. Booth tells Miss Mathews how he endured the agony of hearing his sister call for him incessantly, only to mistake him in her fever "for a Highwayman who had a little before robbed her":

'Send for my dear Billy immediately,' she cry'd, 'I know he will come to me in a Moment. Will no Body fetch him to me? Pray don't kill me before I see him once more---You durst not use me so if he was here' (Amelia, p. 79).

No doubt Richardson would have objected that this scene has no religious significance. It is pure emotional indulgence of a kind not normally associated with Fielding, and it is tempting to suppose it has an autobiographical element, particularly as Fielding had been bereaved of a son and three sisters in the period before the publication of the novel.¹ Booth's genuine grief awakened by his story contrasts with Miss Mathews's lack of concern both for this and for her own pitiful story. Fielding condones the excessively emotional response, simultaneously attacking the hard-hearted and defending Booth against the charge of sentimentality in phrases that are to become clichés of the novel of sensibility: "the Sensations I felt are to be known only from Experience, and to you must appear dull and insipid." Those with feeling hearts can understand and congratulate themselves on their ability to sympathize; those who mock are outsiders, excluded from a proper understanding by their own emotional shortcomings.

¹ Cross, II, 248; Amelia, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

Behind Fielding's apparently Augustan passivity lies a belief in the superiority of feeling to reason. When Nancy dies in the midst of the wedding arrangements, Booth's first response is to be seized by a grief that makes him forget Amelia altogether. The arrival of a letter from Doctor Harrison warning Booth that he is about to lose her to another suitor reverses his passions with equal swiftness:

I now soon perceived how much superior my Love for Amelia was to every other Passion; poor Nancy's Idea disappeared in a Moment: I quitted the dear lifeless Corpse, over which I had shed a thousand Tears, left the care of her Funeral to others, and posted, I may almost say flew, back to Amelia (p. 80).

It has been suggested that Nancy's death is introduced for no other reason than to demonstrate how two uppermost passions can in turn determine Booth's behaviour.¹ If this were the case, however, then the details of Nancy's dying words would be superfluous. Booth's impulsiveness may lack a governing prudence, but in contrast with Miss Mathews, his passionate grief emerges as superior to her spiteful reasoning.

Nor should this approval of emotion be seen as an indication of a change in Fielding's approach in his last novel. The notion that passion is always stronger than reason, that in cases of bereavement it indicates the good nature of the mourner, is present in all the novels. We see it in Adams weeping for his son, for example, and in the Booth-like way in which Tom rushes from Sophia to the bedside of his uncle, whose illness "drove all Thoughts of Love out of his Head" (Tom Jones, p. 242). The portrait of Fielding as a detached Augustan satirist is contradicted by the exceptional scenes throughout his works where a more lenient and emotional attitude to death and grief is offered as part of a consoling, comic vision of the world.

¹ Tuvia Bloch, "Amelia and Booth's Doctrine of the Passions," Studies in English Literature, 13 (1973), 461-73.

Fielding is at his least interesting when he simply follows Augustan satirical formulae, as, for instance, in his approach to epitaphs and funeral orations. Captain Blifil's tombstone bears the customary set of lies concerning "a tender Husband" and "His inconsolable Widow", the only original twist being that the memorial is written and paid for by Allworthy, whose genuine sympathy and concern to conceal Bridget's lack of conjugal warmth introduces an element of pathos into his compliance with corrupt custom (Tom Jones, pp. 114-15).¹ Conventional satire on the equally common practice of bribing the parson to deliver a flattering sermon is used crudely by Fielding to indicate the moral shortcomings of Barnabas in Joseph Andrews and Parson Williams in Shamela. Barnabas, although he is due to be paid this "double Price", cannot be bothered to write a sermon, and tries to purchase one from Adams (Joseph Andrews, p. 77). A full understanding of this point is dependant upon prior knowledge of the conventional satirical view of funeral orations, and it is no surprise that Desfontaines felt the need to elucidate this point in the French translation of the novel.² In Shamela, Williams is arrested by Mr Booby while on his way to "my neighbour Spruce's Church . . . to preach a Funeral Sermon, on the Death of Mr. John Gage, the Exciseman."³ Since excisemen were universally hated and notoriously corrupt, we are led to assume that Williams was on his way to preach the type of sermon in which "flattery is so often introduced, that the simplicity of the

¹ For the satirical background, see Battestin's note in the Wesleyan Edition.

² Pierre François Guyot Desfontaines, "Lettre d'une Dame Angloïse," prefixed to Avantures de Joseph Andrews (Amsterdam, 1744), i-xxiv; reprinted in Ronald Paulson and Thomas Lockwood, Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 133.

³ Henry Fielding, An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews (1741), ed. Ian Watt, The Augustan Reprint Society, No. 57 (1956).

most obvious truth is ready to be suspected."¹ In parody, such satirical shorthand is useful, but in the novel it is less amusing than the demonstration of character through action - in this case the seriousness with which Barnabas addresses his mug of punch.

Likewise, in his portrayal of mourning in the novels, Fielding, like his sister, follows the satirical commonplace that "They make the most ado who are least concern'd".² In Amelia, Betty's deceitfulness is manifested in the artfulness of her excessive grief. She attends Amelia "in deep Mourning, with a Face, if possible, more dismal than her Dress, in which, however there was every Appearance of Art," her features "skewed up to the very Height of Grief" (p. 142). This is in sharp contrast to Amelia's genuine but less ostentatious emotion. Betty's deceitfulness over their mother's will is disguised by her solemnity, but only the Booths are taken in by this, since the narrator and the reader understand the conventional signs of affected grief. The same point is made when Allworthy appears to be dying, and Blifil pretends to show his concern by "blubbering" (Tom Jones, p. 242). Again, this grief is a cover under which he plans to deprive Tom of his position at Paradise Hall by concealing Bridget's deathbed confession that Tom is her bastard son.

Blifil's lack of real feeling at his mother's death is made obvious by the narrator's brusque, formal report of his speech of stoical resignation (p. 248). The fact that this speech contains no Christian consolation, and instead traces his sorrows to "Fate" and "Fortune" is another black mark against him. He is eager, against the

¹ Philip Doddridge, Works (Leeds, 1802), III, p. 346; Johnson defines "excise" as "a hateful tax levied upon commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but by wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid."

² A Latin saying quoted in Michel de Montaigne, Essays, trans. Charles Cotton, 3rd ed. (London, 1700), II, 660.

advice of the physicians, to inform Allworthy of this "Calamity", presumably hoping it will have a fatal effect, and as he tells his uncle the news, he reveals his hypocrisy again by wiping away non-existent tears (pp. 249-50).

This well-worn convention should automatically alert the reader to the possibility that some trickery is afoot. In Sarah Fielding's David Simple, Daniel's short-lived grief warns that he is a crook even before we learn that he has cheated his brother out of his inheritance.¹ Similarly, in her brother's Examples of the Interposition of Providence in the Detection and Punishment of Murder (1752), several instances are cited of murderers who feigned grief for their victims: Alphonso, who mourns the mother he poisons, and Alibius's pretended lamentations for his wife (Henley, XVI, 122, 127).

The falsity of women's mourning had always been a favourite subject for satire. Fielding follows the conventions closely, interpreting the tears which "a Widow sometimes so plentifully sheds over the Ashes of a Husband with whom she led a Life of Constant Disquiet and Turbulency, and whom now she can never hope to torment any more" as distress at the loss of the pleasure of hatred. This interpretation is borne out by Bridget's ostentatious but wholly mechanical grief for the Captain, which is captured in the rhetorical structure of the narration. She mourns:

with the strictest Regard to all the Rules of Custom and Decency, suiting the Alterations of her Countenance to the several Alterations of her Habit: For as this changed from Weeds to Black, from Black to Grey, from Grey to White, so did her Countenance change from Dismal to Sorrowful, from Sorrowful to Sad, and from Sad to Serious, till the day came in which she was allowed to return to her former Serenity (Tom Jones, p. 117).

¹ David Simple, pp. 10-11.

Her strict adherence to the prescribed periods for mourning mimics unconvincingly the natural course of Allworthy's sincere grief, in which time gradually heals the wound.

Widows were in fact expected to seclude themselves for six weeks, and debar themselves from amusements for a year, but satire often depicted women as unable to complete this course, even with Bridget's mechanicalness.¹ The six weeks are objected to in Steele's comedy The Funeral, where the widowed Lady Brumpton is eager to enjoy her newly-won freedom. Fielding continues the old joke in his play The Modern Husband (1732), where Lady Charlotte Gaywit declares that "a woman scarce stays at home a week for the death of a Husband" (Henley, X, 77). This exaggeratedly short period of mourning recurs in the description of Lady Booby's bereavement in Joseph Andrews:

During the first six Days the poor Lady admitted none but Mrs. Slipslop, and three female Friends who made a Party at Cards: but on the seventh she ordered Joey, whom for a good Reason we shall hereafter call JOSEPH, to bring up her Tea-Kettle (p. 29).

Not only is the prescribed six months telescoped into a working week, but a large portion of that period is whiled away in frivolity, albeit amongst only female company. It is clear that Lady Booby has long been contemplating a liaison with Joseph, and she begins her attempted seduction the moment her abbreviated time of confinement is over. She is a typical satiric widow, except that she is on the lookout for a lover, rather than the new husband which Montaigne sees most widows as endeavouring to catch by parading in their weeds.² Ostentatious mourning is an advertisement of availability, for as Wisemore observes

¹ John Ashton, Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne (London, 1882), I, 58-59.

² Montaigne, II, 660-61.

in Fielding's comedy Love in Several Masques (1728), funeral hatchments are hung outside widows' dwellings not to repel visitors, but to encourage new suitors, as if they were signs saying "Lodgings to Let" (Henley, VIII, 52). In this light, Joseph's resistance of Lady Booby's advances is all the more unexpected.

"Orbilius", the author of An Examen of Tom Jones (a pedantic and largely misguided attack on Fielding's novel), feels that this portrayal of false widows' grief has "more Satire than Truth in it", and for once he has a point.¹ Fielding's exaggeration of Bridget's and Lady Booby's behaviour is comic, but it is hardly true to nature. Fielding would have appreciated from his reading of Montaigne, "who of all men, except Aristotle, seems best to have understood human nature" (Henley, XIII, 124), that a widow's tears for a hated husband could be interpreted with much more subtlety according to the uppermost passion theory. Whilst Montaigne agrees with the satirical opinion demonstrated in Bridget that "women commonly reserve the publication of their . . . vehement affection towards their Husbands, until they have lost them. . . . by which they rather manifest that they never lov'd them till dead", unlike Fielding, he suggests that this delayed grief may indeed be sincere - the death of someone we hate may cause regret and love to usurp our dominant passion.² This subtler psychology allows for a mixture of good and bad in everyone, an idea normally close to Fielding's heart, but which he sacrifices here in order to indulge in an easy joke.

Fielding's personal and more complex attitude to mourning can be seen in his essay "Of the Remedy for the Affliction of the Loss of our Friends" in Miscellanies, where he deliberately omits this satirical

¹ An Examen of the History of Tom Jones a Foundling (London, 1750), p. 23.

² Montaigne, II, 660; I, 366-71.

view of mourning. Quoting La Rochefoucauld, he demonstrates that our tears can be selfish grief for ourselves at the loss of happiness, but he ignores the other two categories of mourners outlined in the Maxims, those who seek "Glory" by affecting a prolonged and excessive grief, and those who go through the motions "to gain the reputation of being Tender" (Miscellanies, I, 222-23).¹ In his consolatory essay, Fielding assumes, like Richardson, that all grief is genuine, even if it is mis-directed or self-deceiving. This refinement is often ignored in the novels for the sake of conventional humour.

Nevertheless, a comic approach need not rule out an emotional response to death. Humour and pathos can be combined, as in Jonathan Wild's death, where the Great Man gives a final display of his ruling passion by stealing the Ordinary's bottlescrew (Henley, II, 200). Rawson sees this action as a last defiant, consummate schoolboy prank, and a sign that Fielding has surrendered to the glamorousness of his ironic characterization by giving Wild a genial, comic exit.² To an eighteenth-century reader, however, such a brutish, wilful turning away from moral reflection would have provoked condemnation rather than admiration. Wild's schoolboy prank shows his lack of imagination, his ridiculousness rather than his heroism.³ In the final analysis, the Great Man's evil is shown to be harmless and pointless, for he is a puppet of his own passions under the ultimate judgement of Providence. Stealing the bottlescrew is as pitiful an action as his attempt to rape Mrs Heartfree in the middle of the storm at sea (Henley, II, 86). Thus, although there is a feeling of good-riddance in the demise of

¹ La Rochefoucauld, Maxims (London, 1706), ccxxxiii, pp. 97-99.

² C.J. Rawson, Henry Fielding and the Augustan Ideal Under Stress (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 184-86.

³ Marilyn Butler, "Fielding Now and Then," Essays in Criticism, 24 (1974), 295-300.

Wild, as in the death of Mrs Partridge, because he is rendered so harmless and ridiculous, a certain degree of pity for his shallowness can also be felt. However, the humour also prevents this from developing into more than just a hint of pathos, and the actual details of Wild's death are altered to avoid excessive pity. While Fielding's Thief-taker General gives the crowd a "hearty curse" before committing his last robbery, the real Wild, delirious from his overdose of laudanum, had barely sufficient strength to join in the Ordinary's prayers. The "unusual barbarity" of the crowd in its treatment of the historical Wild is described ironically by Fielding as if a minority of trouble-makers were trying to deprive him of his glorious end.¹ Reduced from "Greatness" to insignificance, Wild is finally contemptible and pathetic.

Even more pathos is allowed for in the death of Captain Blifil, who dies suddenly of an apoplexy while calculating how he will enjoy Paradise Hall after Allworthy's death (Tom Jones, pp. 108-09). By showing that he is a slave to his ruling passion, the potential evil of the character is diminished, and his folly becomes pitiful and ridiculous, worthy of Allworthy's genuine grief.

Fielding's model for such ruling passion deaths is, of course, that which he quotes here from Horace, but it is also coloured by Pope's use of the same pattern in his Moral Epistles². He uses this type of death as yet another way of avoiding excessive emotion without appearing hard-hearted and unsympathetic. In A Journey from this World

¹ For the actual details of Wild's end, see the Ordinary, Thomas Purney's account in The Ordinary of Newgate, 24 May 1725, reprinted in The Political State of Great Britain, ed. Abel Boyer, 29 (1725), 504-10; see also Defoe's account, The True and Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of the Late Jonathan Wild (1725), reprinted in Henry Fielding, Jonathan Wild, ed David Nokes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 257.

² See also Seneca, Ad Marciam, XI, 5: "he ponders upon everlasting and eternal things, and makes plans for his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, while meantime, amid his far-reaching schemes, death overtakes him." Moral Essays, Loeb Classical Library, trans. John W. Basore (London: Heinemann, 1932), p. 37.

to the Next, it lends humour to the deaths of those who accompany the narrator on his journey: one woman, fearful of smallpox, dies of a surfeit of mussels, another contracts a fever while dancing (Henley, II, 219-20).

Ultimately, Fielding sees susceptibility to a ruling passion as a pitiable human trait. His description of Sophia's unquenchable love for Tom directly relates her folly in thinking she can control her love to the self-deception of the ruling passion death. Fielding asserts that we are all slaves to our passions, citing the example of the man:

who had so far conquered Avarice, as to give away many a Sixpence, that comforted himself, at last, on his Death-bed, by making a crafty and advantageous Bargain, concerning his ensuing Funeral, with an Undertaker who had married his only child (Tom Jones, p. 198).

The folly of the miser who spends his last hours arranging a cheap funeral was proverbial. Fielding gives it a new slant by showing that love is a similar ruling passion, and that the miser's fault is worthy of compassion, since it is common to all men. While the stoics had described the passions as diseases to which only fools were subject, Fielding insists that the disease is universal. The miser's avarice is as much a sign of humanity as Sophia's love. Stoic indifference to death is impossible for Fielding, or, at best, is built upon shaky foundations, since our passions are so much stronger than our reason. As a result, all deaths are pitiful, and even the sacrilegious act of self-murder deserves our compassion.

Fielding mentions suicide far less than Richardson, and for the most part his attitude is strictly orthodox. Wild's cowardice is revealed in his two attempted suicides, first when he throws himself into the sea in despair, and secondly when he takes the overdose of laudanum (Henley, II, 90, 199). The second is, of course, a true detail, but it may also be intended as a stab at Walpole's dependance

on the same drug and increasingly heavy drinking to quell the pain of his protracted final illness.¹ Walpole's religious scepticism is also reflected in Wild. Cast adrift at sea, he thrusts aside his very real worries about the afterlife, and makes a pretence of being defiant and heroic, but by the beginning of the next chapter his courage has failed him, and he has climbed back into the boat. In taking the laudanum Wild hopes "to retire quietly off the stage" like the pagan heroes he mentions to the Ordinary (Henley, II, 192), but he only succeeds in making himself sick and pathetically weak. The moral is completely conventional: patient suffering, as seen in Heartfree, is far more heroic than the most stoical suicide.²

Fielding's good characters are rarely suicidal, even in the most extreme distress. Booth is briefly tempted to kill himself after a disastrous gambling session, and Atkinson tries to drink himself to death after the quarrel between his wife and Amelia (Amelia, pp. 433, 480), but Fielding shows no interest in the states of mind behind these instances. The suicidal impulse is merely shorthand for a vague state of excessive passion. In Tom Jones, Sophia's outburst that she would "plunge a Dagger" into her heart to avoid marrying Blifil (p. 349), whilst it shows her loyalty to Tom, has none of the tragic overtones of Clarissa's desire to be buried alive rather than marry Solmes (Clarissa, I, 127). Her maid, Honour, is shocked, but as she gabbles on about the dreadfulness of the suicide's highway burial and her fear of ghosts, the whole episode becomes comic, and Sophia's desperate threat seems unlikely to be carried out. Far from making a point about self-murder, Fielding takes a swipe at those clergy who

¹ The Political State of Britain, 29 (1725), p. 510; Cross, I, 423.

² See also Fielding's view in the Covent-Garden Journal, III, 111, that defiant suicide is mere habit of mind, as in the case of Indian wives contending for the honour of being burnt alive.

teach self-interest, the argument on which Honour bases her own opposition to suicide: "for certainly, it is less wicked to hurt all the World than one's own dear Self, and so I have heard said by more Parsons than one" (p. 350).

There is only one successful suicide in Fielding's novels, and it is an instructive exception. As Booth is taken on a tour of the prison in the opening pages of Amelia, one of the many cases of injustice that he sees is that of a man "committed for a small Felony", driven mad by the news that his destitute and pregnant wife has thrown herself from a window, destroying both herself and the child (p. 32). Here the reader is clearly encouraged to pity the plight of the madman. The despair which leads to his wife's death is no longer seen as a senseless and sinful passion, rather it is a natural consequence of a merciless judicial system which punishes an entire family for the smallest indiscretion of its breadwinner.

As always, Fielding the magistrate responds with compassion when dealing with individual cases of social injustice rather than general principles. On this level he shares the century's lenient attitude to suicide. His presentation contains little that is new, and shows scant concern for the theology or psychology of death, the one exception to this being the Man of the Hill's narrative, where some interest is shown in the ineffectiveness of moral arguments against self-murder. The Man of the Hill's misanthropy is not a little influenced by his experience of saving a gambling friend from suicide. All his preaching against the act as a "Heathenish, or indeed Diabolical Practice" has "very little Effect", but a gift of money immediately restores his friend's spirits (Tom Jones, pp. 473-74). Actions speak louder than words, as in Fielding's teachings on charity, but the Man of the Hill's benevolence turns sour when his friend proceeds to squander the gift in further gaming. Here, then, the suicide theme becomes part of

Fielding's concern with prudent and imprudent acts of benevolence. In this particular case, it would appear to be impossible to act prudently without denying one's compassion for another being, offering words but no concrete dissuasive from self-destruction.

In Tom's rejection of the Man of the Hill's retreat into self and in the pity evoked for the suicide case in Amelia, we catch a glimpse behind the satirical and orthodox façade, and discover a novelist who prefers mercy to condemnation, and who approves of those who pity rather than hate the wicked. The same attitude is characteristic of Doctor Harrison, whose pity for Betty in her cruel treatment of Amelia is said to be the "severest Resentment he ever expresses" (Amelia, p. 144). That "a wicked Soul is the greatest Object of Compassion in the World" is his constant theme and a lesson that he has taught Amelia, who considers the vices of others as "Objects of Pity, not of Contempt or Abhorrence" (p. 160). Doctor Harrison's leniency is demonstrated practically when he offers the hope of Divine mercy to the repentant Robinson, going against the orthodox insistence on the uncertainty of such deathbed professions of faith.¹

In the earlier novels, Fielding's approval of this merciful view is implied by his portrayal of the evil and inadequacy of those who are intolerant and condemnatory. The Ordinary in Jonathan Wild is the antitype of Doctor Harrison, eager to condemn Wild as a reprobate rather than offer any hope of mercy. This portrait of the Newgate Ordinary as a merciless drunkard was nothing new - although it was untrue in the case of the real Ordinary Thomas Purney - but Fielding shows great skill here in revealing his Ordinary's limited

¹ Taylor, Holy Dying, p. 145; Sherlock, pp. 268-69; even Isaac Barrow, whose sermons lead to Booth's conversion, is strict on this point (e.g. III, 136), as is Joseph Andrews (p. 46).

conception of God.¹ The parody of Purney's sermon style is accurate and amusing in itself, but it also highlights the way such sermons tended to over-emphasize damnation whilst skimping on their presentation of God's mercy. Indeed, as Rawson notes, it is Wild who is more "convivial", and who appears to have the more noble view of the Creator: "You XXX to frighten me out of my wits. But the good XXX is, I doubt not, more merciful than his wicked XX" (Henley, II, 192).² Wild argues that God must be better and hence more merciful than his creation. The Ordinary's God is a wicked tyrant, who hates all but those of his own narrow religious persuasion.

Blifil has a similar view of God as a wrathful father-figure, who denounces human pleasures, and constantly seeks to inflict suffering on his creatures. Such is the thinking behind his censure of Tom's joy at Allworthy's recovery (Tom Jones, pp. 253-54). This vindictive God is a projection of Blifil's own jealous hatred of others' pleasures and his perverse love of cruelty seen in his determination to marry Sophia. It is also a legacy from Thwackum, who, in contrast to the benevolent, merciful and God-like Allworthy, is always convinced of Tom's "Reprobacy", and is equally eager to condemn Allworthy for failing to confess his sins on his sickbed (pp. 216, 247). An illuminating gloss on this religious intolerance is provided by a remark made by Lyttelton, the dedicatee of Tom Jones and one of the models for Allworthy, that whoever "hated another for not being a Christian was himself not a Christian."³ It is a good sign in Square, therefore,

¹ William Robert Irwin, The Making of Jonathan Wild (New York: Colombia Univ. Press, 1941), Note 156, pp. 117-18; Thomas Purney, Works, ed. H.O. White, Percy Reprints No. 12 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1933), pp. xiv-xxiv; Daniel Defoe, Moll Flanders, ed. G.A. Starr, Oxford English Novels (London: OUP, 1971), pp. 277-78.

² Rawson, p. 182.

³ George Lyttelton, Memoirs and Correspondence, ed. Robert Phillimore (London, 1845), II, 445.

and a hint of a better nature, that the deist weeps sincere tears on the same occasion (p. 245).

Thwackum's use of the term "Reprobacy" is also coloured by contemporary theological controversy. Wild's argument for the goodness and mercy of God was a line frequently taken by orthodox defenders of Christianity against the threat of deism. The dispute often boiled down to the problem of reprobacy, a Calvinistic doctrine which suggested that if a sinner delayed repentance too long, then the Almighty might deny him the grace to repent at death. As we have seen, this idea was often used for its shock value in works of the Francis Spira school. Gilbert Burnet holds the same view in his Life of Rochester: "such as live, and still go on in their Sins and Impieties, . . . are, it seems, given up by God to a judicial Hardness and Impenitency." It is "much to be feared" that those who cannot be moved even by Rochester's example "are given up to a reprobate sense."¹ Many Anglican divines, however, could not square this notion of reprobacy with their view of a benevolent Creator and Man's moral freedom. Thus, they compromised by insisting that reprobacy was an inability to repent in man and not a denial of grace on God's part. As William Sherlock puts it, we sin so much that we become habitual sinners, and consequently we "despise repentance", or erroneously "think repentance is too late."² Fielding similarly compromises to be on the side of the merciful and sympathetic figures of authority, even if, like Allworthy, they sometimes fail to see the faults in others. Allworthy's often-foolish leniency is preferable to Doctor Harrison's blind cruelty to the Booths, when he starts to sound rather

¹ Some Passages from the Life and Death of the Right Honourable John Earl of Rochester (London, 1680), sig. A8^F, p. 160.

² Sherlock, pp. 206-07; see also South, Sermons, II, 175-76; Tillotson, Works, I, 545; and Samuel Clarke, Works (London, 1738), I, 195-96, 412-13.

like Thwackum in his angry denunciation of their worldliness. In actual fact, the Booths have good reason not to separate, even for the sake of an army commission, because of their fear of the advances of Colonel James and the Noble Lord upon Amelia's chastity. Unaware of these circumstances, Doctor Harrison becomes untrue to his sympathetic principles, and makes Amelia weep with his Blifil-like speech against the pleasures of human love:

As for Christianity, I see you have resigned all Pretensions to it: For I make no Doubt, but that you have so set your Hearts on the Happiness you enjoy here together, that neither of you ever think a Word of Hereafter (Amelia, p. 372).

More lenient than many divines, Fielding always prefers the more optimistic and emotionally-comforting view of divine justice. Despite his satire and irony, he is just as likely to appeal to the reader's emotions as to his reason when making a moral point. We judge Blifil both by understanding the ironies in the narrator's comments on his character, and by reacting against his lack of sympathy for Allworthy and Tom. The superiority of the emotional approach is seen in Parson Adams, whose groans, finger-snappings and impetuous actions are always a truer reflection of his good nature than his sententious conversation. On the rare occasions when Fielding does present real death in his novels, he expects an unqualified emotional response from his readers.

The episode of the death of the Wilsons' dog, shot by the cruel country squire (Joseph Andrews, pp. 228-29), for instance, is designed first to fill us with an impotent anger at the senseless cruelty which flaws even the "Golden Age" in which the Wilsons seem to live:

These good People were in the utmost Cheerfulness, when they heard the Report of a Gun, and immediately a little Dog, the favourite of the eldest Daughter, came limping in all bloody, and laid himself at his Mistress's Feet.

This is the only death in Fielding's novels that occurs before the reader's eyes, so to speak (that is within the time-scheme of the novel, and not as a second-hand narrative). It is remarkable on two accounts: first for its sentimental use of an animal's death rather than a human's, and secondly for its concentration on a child's bereavement rather than an adult's. Together these ingredients are calculated to increase the pathos of the scene, as the dog dies licking its mistress's hand, and her brothers and sisters cry in sympathy. Fielding sets out to show the hard truth that every earthly paradise is flawed by evil and that there is no assurance of happiness in this world. In doing so he is more than usually tearful, and offers no ray of hope to console the reader. The dog's death emphasizes the opposition between innocence and malice and between Man and Nature. It is thus more affecting, though less serious, than if the squire had demonstrated his cruelty by throwing the entire family out of the cottage in order to convert the building into kennels for his hunting pack. The child's helplessness in the face of injustice is even more striking. Adams responds with anger, and is ready to exact vengeance with his trusty staff until Joseph restrains him. Such vengeance, it is implied, would be imprudent considering the squire's superior authority, and there is an additional sense that Joseph has a fuller appreciation than the parson of the inevitable injustice of the world. As an idealist, Adams thinks heaven can be fought for and won on earth; Joseph is more practical, and knows that most wrongs will only be righted in the hereafter. The opposition of these two views in this episode reveals something of the struggle in Fielding's own mind between the desire to console us with a providential, comic view and the need to present a realistic picture of the world's injustice in order to accustom us to pain and help us to avoid being deceived by those more wicked than ourselves. The defencelessness of innocence is

a recurring and disturbing theme in Fielding's works, and whenever it occurs, as here, there is a sense of helplessness, agony and anger, not unlike the despairing passivity of Harley weeping over a similarly cruel squire's senseless destruction of the old school-house in The Man of Feeling.¹

In Fielding, as in Mackenzie, much pathos is extracted from the response of children to death and their powerlessness to defend themselves against the evils of the world. On several occasions in Amelia the children ask awkward questions about the causes of suffering in the world, and Amelia is forced to reply that the world's values are completely opposed to Christian principles. Everything is the reverse of what it ought to be, so that Booth is hated simply because he is "the best Man in the World" (p. 166). Such a realisation reduces Amelia to tears, and the only hope she can offer is that "there is one in Heaven who will love you; and his Love is better than that of all Mankind" (p.167). Her pessimistic conclusion is really only a re-working of the message of Jonathan Wild, except that there the ironic narration gives a certain distance and confidence to the otherwise painful observation, and the narrator's control suggests much more forcibly that the reversal of values is only a temporary one, and that right will eventually triumph. Amelia's view of the world is closer to that of the dying Clarissa, or Sarah Fielding's David Simple. Like the strict seventeenth-century divines, she sees this life as a vale of tears, not as a place for pleasurable, benevolent acts of "Latitudinarian" charity.

Amelia's self-pity is perhaps meant to reveal her failure to trust Providence, but against this it should be noted that these scenes also seem to demand an emotional response from the reader that one would

¹ Henry Mackenzie, The Man of Feeling, ed. Brian Vickers, Oxford English Novels (London: OUP, 1967), pp. 95-96.

not normally associate with Fielding. Hunter sees here a change of technique from Fielding's own comic mode to a sentimental Richardsonian one, a development which is self-defeating, first because Fielding cannot imitate Richardson with sufficient confidence, and secondly because the reader's expectation of comedy works against emotional involvement.¹ Hughes similarly views the sentimentality of Amelia as evidence of a new desire in Fielding to make moral points through an appeal to the emotions rather than through comic irony.² This is clearly not the case, however, for as we have seen in the death of the dog in Joseph Andrews, Fielding reveals a certain predilection for the pathetic in the earlier novels as well. The sentimentality of Amelia is not simply a result of the influence of Clarissa or a reflection of Fielding's experiences as a magistrate.³ Even Jonathan Wild contains a very similar sentimental conversation between Mrs Heartfree and her children, in which the question of their father's whereabouts causes the mother to burst into tears. That we are meant to sympathize with this emotional display is made clear by the narrator's ironic labelling of it as a "weakness" (Henley, II, 83).

Tom Jones, likewise, contains two important scenes in which Tom's goodness is demonstrated by his sympathetic response to suffering and death. In Mrs Miller's tear-jerking account of the poverty of her cousin Enderson's family, great emphasis is placed on the possible death of seven-year-old Tommy and his attempts to comfort his mother:

¹ J. Paul Hunter, "The Lesson of Amelia" in Quick Springs of Sense, ed. Larry S. Champion (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1974) p. 167; Occasional Form, pp. 201-03.

² Leo Hughes, "The Influence of Fielding's Milieu upon his Humour," Texas Studies in English, 24 (1944), 269-97.

³ For these views, see Murphy, p. 269; Cross, III, 310; Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology, p. 66; and T.C. Duncan Eaves, "Amelia and Clarissa" in A Provision of Human Nature, ed. Donald Kay (Alabama: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1977), pp. 96-110.

Indeed, Mamma, cry'd the Child, I shan't die, God Almighty, I'm sure wont take Tommy away; let Heaven be ever so fine a Place, I had rather stay here and starve with you and my Papa (pp. 719-21).

As Ehrenpreis has observed, this "anticipates the teariest moments in Dickens."¹ The child's trust in Providence is both naïve and heroic, and it is bound to prove vain unless Tom responds with practical charity as well as tears. Tom himself makes a similar appeal to the emotions when he describes what may occur if Nightingale refuses to marry Nancy:

see this poor, unhappy, tender, believing Girl, in the Arms of her wretched Mother, breathing her last. Hear her breaking Heart in Agonies sighing out your Name. . . . Paint to your Imagination the Circumstances of her fond, despairing Parent, driven to Madness, or perhaps, to Death, by the Loss of her lovely Daughter (p. 768).

These scenes, where we share Tom's emotional response to need, and therefore approve his action, have tended to be overlooked by those who see Amelia as a sentimental departure. There is, however, an obstacle in the way of our straightforward approval of all these tearful episodes. They are "meant to be an impressive representation of real distress", but because we are accustomed to Fielding's comic scenes of distress, such as Allworthy's sickbed or Sophia's swoon when she is told of Tom's supposed death, when we read of real grief in these passages, we often expect the pathos to be undermined by some delayed comic device.² We are not drawn into the action, because we have been taught to suspect all excessive emotion. The consolatory mode that instructs us to laugh at death proves a hindrance when Fielding

¹ Irvin Ehrenpreis, Fielding: Tom Jones, Studies in English Literature No. 23 (London: Edward Arnold, 1964), p. 68.

² Ehrenpreis, pp. 64-68; Hunter, Occasional Form, p. 201.

wishes to enlist our sympathy on the side of genuine suffering.

A prime example of this problem is Mrs Bennet's account of her mother's drowning in the well (Amelia, pp. 269-70). It is difficult to see how such an accident can be anything but comic, especially when the build-up to it is so reminiscent of Captain Blifil's sudden end. In both cases there is a period of anxiety before the body is discovered, during which the husband's genuine perturbation seems suspiciously like Bridget's histrionics. These similarities tend to make us expect a comic outcome, and one wonders, indeed, if Amelia, listening to the story, faints from the effort of restraining her laughter. Rawson in fact sees the episode as a parody of a Richardsonian sentimental story, which is marred by the way the irony jars against the real pathos of Mrs Bennet's past, and Amelia's present predicament under the threat of the Noble Lord.¹

The episode certainly jars, but not because it is deliberately humorous. Fielding cannot mean to undermine Amelia's sympathetic response, which forms such an important part of her good nature, and the consolatio that follows is certainly not a parody. Fielding's attempt to make the death of Mrs Bennet's mother moving fails because his method of presentation reminds us of Captain Blifil's death, makes us see irony where none is intended, and simply produces confusion in the reader, a confusion which Mrs Delaney saw in Amelia as a whole: "It neither makes one laugh or cry, though there are some very dismal scenes described".²

This uncertainty of response is clearly not limited to Fielding's last novel, though it is more of a problem there. Amelia represents a progression in Fielding's art from a predominance of humour to a

¹ Rawson, pp. 91-92.

² Cross, II, 310.

predominance of sentiment, but in all the novels there is a strong tendency to ally virtue with feeling.¹ It is as if the sentimental novelist, who had formerly been unprepared to risk ridicule, finally comes to the fore in Amelia, but still with some caution. Fielding attempts to assert the value of his own highly sensitive nature, raising domestic tragedy above the heroic as "a juster Motive to Grief and Tears in the Beholder, than it would be to see all the Heroes who have ever infested the Earth, hanged all together in a String" (Amelia, p. 359). Amelia, despite its unpopularity, was the novel Fielding preferred above all his other works, being the one that deals most closely with his deepest anxieties.² Scenes of distress leading to compassionate action, such as Tom assisting the Enderson's or Amelia weeping over her children and being comforted by Doctor Harrison, are vital elements of Fielding's consoling picture of the world, assurances that good nature can prevail and that the sympathetic soul is neither foolish and weak nor alone in a hostile world.

IV - Fielding's Sense of an Ending

As Morris Golden has shown, Fielding's sentimentalism ultimately boils down to a "faith in communication primarily through feeling rather than through the intellectual apprehension of words."³ He does not automatically assume that virtue is triumphant, that all men are good, or that character can suddenly be changed, and in this he is not far from the darker vision of Clarissa. The overall effect of the novels is very different, however, for whereas Richardson presents the

¹ Alter, p. 170.

² Covent-Garden Journal, I, 186.

³ Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology, p. 151.

destruction of the individual by society, Fielding always portrays the reassuring, successful adaptation of the individual to society at the end of the novel.¹ The scenes of distress reveal Fielding's awareness of the world's seemingly senseless injustice, but, like Amelia consoling her children with the hope of heaven, he always attempts to restore our confidence in the providential order by bringing about a happy ending, "a declaration of faith in reponse to a most pressing need". The grief and pains of life are alleviated by "that healing distortion of the truth with which fiction always rewards its creators."² Thus Tom's virtue is rewarded, and the satanic Blifil is banished from Paradise Hall. Such biblical parallels remind us that these endings are intended as assurances of a divine judgement at the end of time, and that we should not mistake them for demonstrations of a principle of justice acting in the real world. The miraculous discoveries that end Joseph Andrews remind us of the resurrection through Adams's echoing of John 20. 15.³ Similarly, Wild's hanging and Heartfree's reprieve form an allegory of "the ultimate and eternal justice of the universe", the creation of a perfect world in which Heartfree's good nature can survive. In Amelia, the restoration of the legacy is as arbitrary as the reinstatement of Job's fortune at the end of his trials.⁴ Fielding did not intend these endings as proof of a naïve belief that "Virtue is the certain Road to Happiness, and Vice to Misery in this World." This is a "very

¹ Watt, p. 270.

² Henry Knight Miller, "The 'Digressive' Tales in Fielding's Tom Jones and the Perspective of Romance," PQ, 54 (1975), 258-74; John Carey, John Donne (London: Faber, 1981), p. 38.

³ Hunter, Occasional Form, p. 177.

⁴ Allan Wendt, "The Moral Allegory of Jonathan Wild," ELH, 24 (1957), 310-13; and "The Naked Virtue of Amelia," ELH, 27 (1960), p. 134.

wholesome and comfortable Doctrine, and one to which we have but one Objection, namely, That it is not true" (Tom Jones, pp. 783-84). Not only is it untrue, but it also undermines Christianity by removing "one of the noblest Arguments that Reason alone can furnish for the Belief of Immortality," the notion that there must be an afterlife in which the injustices of this world are finally balanced.

Fielding objects to the way religion has been distorted and used as a cover for moral teaching by the "Set of Religious, or rather Moral Writers" who, like Richardson in Pamela, insist that virtue is rewarded and vice punished on earth. Pamela had to be ridiculed in Shamela, because of the danger that the happy ending might be supposed a logical and realistic outcome. Richardson avoids this problem in Clarissa by removing the assurance of justice to the next world. Fielding, on the other hand, stresses the fact that his endings are contrived reminders of the Day of Judgement. For him, death itself is too painful an experience to form part of a triumphant conclusion, and hence his wish for a "Happy Ending" to Richardson's novel.¹ Both authors are offering Christian assurance to balance their portrayal of a cruel world, but they have very different methods for expressing the relationship between the temporal and the absolute.²

Nevertheless, Fielding is aware of the difficulties which his providential endings raise. It may be wrong to teach morality through an over-insistence on earthly rewards and punishments, but on the other hand, it would be undermining morality and playing into the hands of deists like Robinson in Amelia to suggest that God never intervenes in his creation to bring sinners to justice. Fielding's belief that

¹ Richardson, Selected Letters, p. 99.

² Mary Poovey, "Journeys from this World to the Next: The Providential Promise in Clarissa and Tom Jones," ELH, 43 (1976), 300-15.

wickedness sometimes is punished on earth can be seen from his compilation of Examples of the Interposition of Providence in the Detection and Punishment of Murder (1752). Here he is in danger of sounding like the "Moral Writers" whom he decries in Tom Jones as he singles out murder as a crime particularly liable to detection and punishment in this world through ghosts, dreams, madness, and accidental revelations (Henley, XVI, 116). The same belief is held by Marybone in Jonathan Wild (Henley, II, 104), who refuses to commit murder because it is always "so immediately prosecuted by God's judgment" and never passes "undiscovered or unpunished". That Marybone's fear is commendable is clear from the way Wild mocks him for it. Wild playfully assumes that it is Heartfree's anxiety "lest he should make an additional example in that excellent book called God's Revenge against Murder" that prevents him from joining Wild in crime (Henley, II, 127).

Wild's hanging, therefore, can be both an example of exceptional justice on earth and an allegory of the eternal judgement. Heartfree's reprieve is an exceptional instance of correct justice by a good magistrate, and so is carefully differentiated from the arbitrary ending of The Beggar's Opera. Determined to be "as natural as delightful", Fielding would have preferred to hang "half mankind" rather than to have "saved one contrary to the strictest rules of writing and probability" (Henley, II, 163). The author's dalliance with the tragic here and in Tom Jones is a way of warning the reader not to see the exceptional judgements of the novel as a general principle on anything other than the eternal level. Doctor Harrison's comments serve the same purpose in Amelia, when he points out to Booth that "Providence hath done you the Justice at last, which it will one Day or other render to all Men." The restoration of the Booths to solvency and their retreat to the country is both an exceptional

example of the interposition of Providence in man's affairs that overthrows Booth's fatalism, and also a reassuring allegory of future judgement.

That exceptional "Deliverances of Good Men, and exemplary Punishments of the Bad" were warnings and assurances of what was yet to come was a point often made in sermons on Providence. Samuel Clarke calls them "remarkable Preludes" of God's judgement.¹ Fielding's happy endings similarly bear witness to a providential universe. The analogy between God's creation and "a Dramatick Poem" from Plotinus would have been familiar to Fielding from both Isaac Barrow's works and Ralph Cudworth's The True Intellectual System of the Universe. Both divines use it to prove that although the world may appear unjust and chaotic, providence is at work in ways which men cannot appreciate until the end of time:

wherefore as we cannot fully judge of an artificial work by its first draughts, nor of a Poem by some scenes, but must stay till all is finished and acted through; so we cannot so clearly discern the entire wisdom and justice of divine dispensations here.²

In his novels, Fielding consciously uses the same analogy, but with less confidence than these divines. Although Battestin sees Fielding as a confident Augustan defending Christianity against a new wave of philosophical scepticism in Amelia, the scenes of senseless injustice to be found even in the earlier novels seem to indicate that a certain degree of religious doubt, if not scepticism, was also

¹ Clarke, I, 107.

² Barrow, II, 106; Ralph Cudworth, The True Intellectual System of the Universe (London, 1678), pp. 879-80; both works were in Fielding's library, see Sale Catalogues of the Libraries of Eminent Persons, gen ed. A.L. Munby (London: Mansell, 1973), VII, 123-58, Items 452, 463.

aroused in Fielding himself, whenever he saw or experienced affliction.¹ The providential ending is a consolation both for the novelist and the reader. The stronger the sense of potential tragedy, the more comforting the comic ending will be.

Fielding was therefore concerned to present a more realistic and darker picture of life in Amelia, so that the happy ending could purge away an even greater burden of anxiety. The reduction of the part played by the narrator deprives us of the comfort of the analogy between the Creator and the novelist which makes Tom Jones's most potentially tragic moments seem comic.² Consequently, the reader's anxiety is much more acute, and, theoretically at least, our appreciation of the providential ending should also be increased. However, the number of critical objections to the ending of Amelia suggests that this is not the experience of reading the novel. Baker suggests that the lack of comedy leaves Fielding with nothing to bridge the gap between realism and romance, so that he is forced to fall back on Doctor Harrison's clumsy explanation of the miraculous.³

Certainly there are none of the allegorical hints that we have noted in the endings of Joseph Andrews and Jonathan Wild. In attempting to engineer an ending and at the same time be more than usually realistic, Fielding fails to link Booth's conversion as a turning-point, realistically and rationally motivated by his reading of

¹ Martin C. Battestin, "The Problem of Amelia: Hume, Barrow, and the Conversion of Captain Booth," ELH, 41 (1974), 613-48.

² Henry James, Preface to The Princess Casamassima (London: Macmillan, 1921), p. xvii; Ian Donaldson, "Fielding and the Ends of the Novel," Essays in Criticism, 32 (1982), p. 42; Robert Folkenflik, "Purpose and Narration in Fielding's Amelia," Novel, 7 (1974), 168-74; Eric Rothstein, Systems of Order and Inquiry in Later Eighteenth-Century Fiction (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975), pp. 154-207.

³ Sheridan Baker, "Fielding's Amelia and the Materials of Romance," PQ, 41 (1962), 437-49.

Barrow's sermons, with the miraculous events that restore his liberty, and which render his conversion "undemonstrable and largely unnecessary".¹ Had Booth subsequently succeeded in converting the Noble Lord, then Booth's restored freedom could have been linked more directly to his profession of faith, and the public and private themes of the novel would have converged in one solution.² As it is, the conversion and the restoration are only connected if we see the miraculous discoveries as symbolizing the fact that Booth can now, like Robinson, see the "Hand of Providence" at work in the world (p. 516), but there is insufficient indication at the end of the novel that this is really so.

One cannot imagine the newly-converted Booth's confidence lasting for long, were it not for his rescue and retirement to the country. Without this, the system of preferment which ignores merit would have left him in a state of poverty in which he would eventually have been forced to sell his wife's virtue in order to survive.³ The ending is thus an admission of failure on Fielding's part, an acknowledgement that the conversion cannot lead to a realistic happy ending.⁴ Fielding fails in the attempt to show an inner change, and the conversion thus seems, in Sarah Chapone's words, like "a mere botch to

¹ Michael Irwin, Henry Fielding the Tentative Realist (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 131-32; for similar views, see Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology, pp. 95-96; Alter, p. 165; Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "Fielding's Amelia: Private Virtue and Public Good," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 10 (1968), 37-55; Murial Brittain Williams, Marriage: Fielding's Mirror of Morality (Alabama: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1973), pp. 115-16; and Ronald Paulson, Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), p. 163.

² George Sherburn, "Fielding's Amelia: An Interpretation," ELH, 3 (1936), 1-14.

³ Dudden, II, 811.

⁴ Rothstein, p. 167.

save the author's credit as a moral writer".¹ It highlights the flaws in the novel, reviving anxieties which the ending was intended to dispel.

The ending is also rendered more sombre by the harsher, more realistic, poetic justice exacted on the evil characters. Betty Harris is banished, like Blifil, but we are also told of her "miserable" end; Murphy is hanged; the Noble Lord pays the penalty of his debauchery; Mrs Ellison is "a Martyr to her Liquour"; and even the relatively harmless Colonel Bath is killed in a duel over a minor difference of opinion (pp. 531-32). These judgements have an air of gloating triumph reminiscent of the delight Richardson takes in exacting vengeance on the wicked in his conclusion to Clarissa. There, as here, the novel is weakened by an insistence on earthly rewards and punishments which spoils the effect of Clarissa's death and Booth's rescue as demonstrations of the absolute justice of the next world. The deaths of the wicked may be appropriate to their respective vices, but the fact that they die without any sign of reformation rather undermines the theory of moral improvement through education that lies behind Booth's conversion and Doctor Harrison's optimism. Indeed, Fielding seems to be striking a deliberate note of pessimism in his account of Robinson's relapse into crime and his eventual hanging. Not only does this serve as a warning that some men are naturally evil and irredeemable, but it also brings into doubt whether Booth's conversion would be proof against a similar relapse should his circumstances change. The predominantly darker vision of Amelia prevents Fielding's providential ending from calming our fears, and leaves us with a more

¹ Fielding: The Critical Heritage, p. 318; see also C.H.K. Bevan, "The Unity of Fielding's Amelia," Renaissance and Modern Studies, 14 (1970), 90-110.

pessimistic view, one that lies behind the other novels, but which is balanced there by a reassuring affirmation of the ultimate divine comedy.

V - The Heaven and Hell of Conscience

While Fielding is careful not to suggest that virtue is normally triumphant upon earth, he nevertheless follows the lead of many seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century divines in asserting that a man's conscience is the most common "Prelude" and proof of the judgement to come. Even in his Examples of the Interposition of Divine Providence, much weight is placed on those cases where divine wrath is manifested in the torturings of a guilty conscience (Henley, XVI, 119, 146, 164). Thus virtue and vice can conveniently be their own reward without the need for divine intervention, since Providence "always annexes a bitter Anxiety to the Purchases of Guilt, whilst it adds a double Sweetness to the Enjoyments of Innocence and Virtue." A villain may sometimes acquire "some transitory imperfect Honour or Pleasure" from his crime, but Fielding believes that more often, like Wild, he "suffers the Punishment, without obtaining the Reward" (Miscellanies, I, 11).

This system of psychological rewards and punishments finds a place in all Fielding's novels, but it is particularly useful in Jonathan Wild, because it can give assurance that all will be well without upsetting the ironic reversal of values in the narration. In the midst of his worries, Heartfree's sense of innocence enables him to rest "undisturbed", while Wild is continually said to be "sleepless" (Henley, II, 136). Heartfree's peaceful rest deliberately echoes Plato's Crito, where Socrates is found sleeping "sweetly" in prison as

he awaits his death.¹ This image found its way into many a sermon on conscience. Isaac Barrow, for instance, sees the good conscience as a "brazen wall, and impregnable fortress against both external assaults, and internal commotions", which renders "a man's sleep sweet, and undisturbed with fearful phantasms."² Heartfree's calm is thus a passive and invincible defence. He receives the news that he must go to Newgate as calmly "as Socrates did the news of the ship's arrival, and that he was to prepare for death" (Henley, II, 102). Wild's guilty conscience, on the other hand, is made explicit by demonstrating how unlike Socrates he is in his preparing for death "not weakly and foolishly, like that philosopher, with patience and resignation", but with much recourse to false witnesses, laudanum and the bottle (Henley, II, 189).

The same signs of innocence and guilt are used in Amelia, where the heroine's period of religious doubt is signalled by "a miserable and sleepless Night, her gentle Mind torn and distracted with various and contending Passions" (p. 493). At other times she can sleep soundly in her "Innocence and chearful Hope", while Colonel James suffers from insomnia (p. 338). Freedom from the conflicting passions that keep one awake is a predominant feature of the good conscience. The same natural moral guide inspires Tom's initial loyalty to Molly Seagrim, but later the conflict between his love for Sophia and his sense of duty towards Molly results in another sleepless night (Tom Jones, pp. 171-76, 222).

For Fielding, as for most Christian teachers, a guilty conscience is a hell on earth, while the guiltless man derives strength and even joy - a foretaste of his heavenly reward - from the sense of his own

¹ Plato, Crito, trans. W.R.M. Lamb, Loeb Classical Library, 1953, p. 151.

² Barrow, I, 3.

innocence: "There is such a force, and vertue in the testimony of a good conscience, as is able to change the greatest suffering into the joyfulest triumph." So writes Richard Allestree in that most popular of devotional works, The Whole Duty of Man, a work familiar to Fielding from Sunday readings at Eton.¹ Accordingly, when Heartfree's death-warrant arrives, it is Wild's nerve that almost gives way, while Heartfree can take comfort in his innocence, just as Tom Jones does long before his name is cleared: "I thank Heaven, I know, I feel,---I feel my Innocence" (Henley, II, 157-58; Tom Jones, p. 659).

This self-sufficiency of innocence, or "virtuous self-enclosure", becomes a central theme in Amelia, where the reader is consoled by the observation that:

however few of the other good Things of Life are thy Lot; the best of all Things, which is Innocence, is always within thy own Power; and tho' Fortune may make thee often unhappy, she can never make thee completely and irreperably miserable without thy own consent (p. 320).²

The truth of this is demonstrated in the contrast between Amelia's calm and Booth's self-inflicted misery caused by his attempts to conceal his illicit relationship with Miss Mathews (p. 161). John Cleland, in his very favourable review of the novel, saw this theme as the chief moral of the work, the highly original purpose of which was "to inculcate the superiority of virtuous conjugal love to all other joys" and to prove that "the paths of vice, are always those of misery", while virtue, "even in distress", is happier than the successful sinner.³ With such an effective and apparently natural system of psychological

¹ Allestree, The Whole Duty of Man, p. 383; Cross, I, 47-48.

² Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology, p. 50.

³ Monthly Review, 5 (1751), pp. 510-15, reprinted in Fielding: The Critical Heritage, p. 305.

justice there is almost no need for a judgement after death, for conscience alone should be a sufficient moral spur, making it "the Interest of every Man to be either perfectly good, or completely bad" (p. 155).

However, by emphasizing the temporal reward of a good or bad conscience, Fielding is coming dangerously close to the earthbound system of the "Moral Writers" which he decries in Tom Jones. In "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men", he describes a similar ideal situation, where "Good-Nature" inspires us to virtue "without the Allurements or Terrors of Religion" (Miscellanies, I, 158). Through Doctor Harrison, on the other hand, he insists that a future life is vital to the upholding of moral order (Amelia, pp. 511-12). This inconsistency is typical of late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century theology, and is the result of a confused and anxious reaction on the part of orthodoxy to changing conceptions of the nature of man.¹

Fielding himself shows considerable uncertainty about man's natural goodness or depravity. He would like to think that we are naturally good, under the guidance of our God-given conscience, but experience seems to suggest to him that some men can ignore their conscience and become wholly evil like Blifil or utterly selfish like Colonel James. For Fielding, the conscience is a natural attribute, and not the product of education and cultural conditioning, but many thinkers, among them Fielding's favoured "mental Physician" Montaigne, had suggested that "the Laws of Conscience, which we pretend to be derived from Nature, proceed from Custom".² This argument was

¹ A key article on this topic is Paul C. Davies, "The Debate on Eternal Punishment in Late Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century English Literature," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 4 (1971), 257-76; see also Henry Knight Miller, Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 70-71.

² Montaigne, I, 158.

popular with deists and atheists such as Rochester, since it allowed them to ignore their own scruples, and ascribe the deathbed agonies of their libertine friends to "the Impressions they had from their Education".¹ Christians such as Fielding could only retort that wicked men, like Jonathan Wild, always fear death, even if they appear outwardly calm (Henley, II, 197). Conscience had clearly become too subjective a base from which to argue religious truth, and as a result most preachers, like Doctor Harrison, fell back on an appeal to fear of the life to come. Barrow thus adds to his idealistic view of the self-sufficient conscience God's "promises" and "threatenings", which allure us to good and deter us from evil.² The Whole Duty of Man combines the fear of hell and the torments of a guilty conscience into a composite misery:

when God and thine own conscience are thus against thee, thou canst not but be extremely miserable, even in this life, besides the fearful expectation of wrath, which awaites thee in the next.³

Fielding's approach in A Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor (1753) is much more practical than in his Miscellanies essay, and he stresses the importance of religion in the fight against increasing crime, "hope and fear" being "two very strong and active passions" which it is advantageous to engage in the cause of virtue (Henley, XIII, 186-87). Like Shaftesbury, Fielding the idealist would like to think that man can be disinterestedly virtuous, but in the light of experience he is forced to concede that for the majority of men an incentive appealing to their strongest passions is

¹ Burnet, Rochester, p. 68.

² Barrow, I, 310-11.

³ Allestree, The Whole Duty of Man, p. 95.

necessary.¹ This is demonstrated symbolically in Amelia by the way the presence and absence of Doctor Harrison as a reminder of providential order affects the behaviour of the Booths. It is while he is "dead" to them, away on the Grand Tour, that the couple first fall into debt (pp. 147-50).² Similarly, it is when he is not around to comfort Amelia that she has her sleepless night of despair. As Wendt observes, the need for the Doctor's continual presence, guiding and consoling, shows that "without the sanction of absolute values, imposed from above, human values cannot exist."³

Fielding's novels are of course full of episodes demonstrating how ideals and theories are incompatible with man's irrationality and imperfection. In the case of conscience, Fielding does not mean to deny the ideal of the natural beauty of virtue, but he casts doubt upon its practical relevance for the majority of mankind. Thus, although the reward of an innocent conscience is a comfort in the unjust world of the novels, such consolation must still be firmly anchored in a belief in the world to come.

VI - The Inadequacy of Consolation

Even greater allowances have to be made for human weakness when it comes to dealing with consolation in bereavement. Fielding's theoretical ideal is a form of Christian-stoicism, which he expounds in his consolatory essay "A Remedy for the Affliction of the Loss of Our Friends". As Miller quite rightly points out, the sources of this

¹ Davies, pp. 264-69; Wendt, "The Naked Virtue of Amelia," p. 146.

² Johnson, p. 144.

³ Wendt, "The Naked Virtue of Amelia," p. 146.

consolatio form the background to Fielding's "basic moral and religious convictions."¹ The a fortiori argument of the Christian-stoic is typically summarized by Doctor Harrison: if Cicero, doubting immortality, could be indifferent to worldly concerns, then how much more ought a Christian to "despise and deride all temporary and transitory Evils" (Amelia, pp. 137-38). As a "mental Physician" and divine, the Doctor embodies this "superiority of Christian thinking over ancient philosophy" which Fielding stresses in "A Remedy" (Miscellanies, I, 214, 225).² In fact it is possible to see the whole of Amelia as a demonstration of Christianity's improvements on the pagan codes of honour which operate in the Aeneid. The Christian novel avoids the duel ending that the pagan epic demands.³ The superiority of Christianity is similarly stressed in Square's letter of conversion, where "one Page of the Gospel" is said to be better than "all the Volumes of antient or modern Philosophers". Only Christianity enables us to face death with "Contempt", and even see it as "a real Good"; stoicism merely imparts a "stubborn Patience" (Tom Jones, pp. 925-26).

Fielding's novels would make dull reading, however, if they were nothing more than demonstrations of this belief. In fact they more frequently deal with situations where even the approved Christian form of stoicism is seen breaking down, and where the emotional crisis of bereavement proves too great for any Christian consolation to be effective.

At the death of Mrs Bennet's mother, for instance, her father's panic - "little short of distraction" - prior to the discovery of the

¹ Miller, Essays, p. 145.

² Sherburn, p. 8.

³ Powers, pp. 334-35.

body is not what one would expect from a sincere clergyman (Amelia, p. 269). After the funeral he calms down to a state more "becoming a Philosopher and a Christian Divine", and then preaches a traditional consolatory sermon to his two children, emphasizing the need for "Submission" to the divine will, the uselessness of tears, and the selfishness of our wish to deprive the dead of the joys of heaven. But these Christian-stoic commonplaces do not have the desired effect on either the children, who "retired from him very little the better for his Exhortations", or the preacher, who despite his resigned appearance "paid many a bitter Sigh in private to that Remembrance which neither Philosophy nor Christianity could expunge" (pp. 270-71). Such rational consolation, even when it is based on Christian revelation, is not necessarily strong enough to overcome our passions. As the poet Thomson wrote from his experience of George Lyttelton's protracted grief for his first wife, time, "the old physician", is needed to allow the medicine of consolation to take effect, and even then "there must always remain an inward smarting".¹

Fielding's portraits of bereavement and his consolatory essay are clearly based on his own experience. The death of his first wife "brought on such a vehemence of grief, that his friends began to think him in danger of losing his reason."² Parting from his family at the beginning of his voyage to Lisbon, and knowing that he is soon to die, Fielding dotes on his loved ones "with a mother-like fondness, guided by nature and passion, and uncured and unhardened by all the doctrine of that philosophical school where I had learnt to bear pains and to despise death" (Henley, XVI, 199). In less trying times of sickness and poverty, Fielding would always turn to his copy of Cicero de

¹ Lyttelton, Memoirs, I, 292.

² Murphy, p. 262.

Consolatione, but bereavement is a trial that reveals our inherent human weakness and the inadequacy of all consolation.¹

The supreme demonstration of this in the novels is the supposed drowning of Abraham Adams's son. Here, as in the case of Mrs Bennet's father, the clash between theory and experience is made more striking by its demonstration in a clergyman who fails to practise what he preaches. Adams, we are told, "was a great Enemy to the Passions, and preached nothing more than the Conquest of them by Reason and Grace," and yet he fails to see that he is himself a victim of those passions, against which his Christian-stoicism is a feeble defence. The impracticality of Adams's theory is given extra emphasis in the additions made by Fielding to the second edition of the novel. The episode now begins with Adams pontificating to Joseph on the evils of sexual passion in marriage, basing his ridiculous sermon on a gross distortion of an inappropriate biblical text.² He then goes on to preach against indulgence in grief and an improper affection for anything on earth that makes us reluctant to leave for heaven. Even love is "criminal" if it distracts us from the eternal. It is at this climax in Adams's pompous diatribe that he invokes his patriarchal namesake as a commendable example of love for God outweighing human passion: "Had Abraham so loved his son Isaac, as to refuse the Sacrifice required, is there any of us who would not condemn him?" As if in answer to this rhetorical question, a messenger now rushes in with the news that the parson's son has just drowned. Adams is stunned for a moment, but soon begins to "stamp about the Room and deplore his Loss with the bitterest Agony" (Joseph Andrews, pp. 308-11).

¹ Murphy, p. 272.

² Martin C. Battestin, "Fielding's Revisions of Joseph Andrews," Studies in Bibliography, 16 (1963), p. 92.

This emotional outburst is a surprise to nobody but Adams himself. What Joseph and the reader find strange is that Adams should be so keen on preaching Christian-stoicism when his every action seems to be based on the passionate impulse of the moment - groaning at immorality, snapping his fingers in excitement, and throwing his precious Æschylus on the fire. Fielding is not ridiculing Adams's grief, for Joseph is also "overwhelmed with Concern" for the child's fate. The real target is the misapplication of Christian-stoic principles.¹

In fact Adams is always close to tears, either of joy or grief, and he is not so much insensitive, as Golden suggests, as unaware of his own emotions. He can weep over scenes of suffering and bereavement in Homer, and then preach coldly that mourning is irreligious and that "Despair is sinful" (pp. 199, 217).² He laments the loss of his son with all the clichéd sentiments of the secular elegy, and is deaf to Joseph's repetition of his own consolatory arguments. When the dripping boy walks in, his joy is equally "extravagant". Moreover, he learns nothing from the episode, and even has the temerity to take Joseph aside and resume his former lecture. Later, at Booby Hall, he still persists in preaching "Platonic-Love" and the greater value of heavenly joys above worldly pleasures against all the evidence of Pamela and her husband's eagerness to retire for the night, and at the wedding, he rebukes the same pair for laughing during the service (pp. 330, 342). Adams is completely unaware of his own sympathetic nature, and it is his wife who interrupts his continued warnings against human love to point out that he is himself "a loving and a cherishing Husband". When Joseph objects to this inconsistency, Adams tries to

¹ Miller, Essays, p. 265.

² Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology, p. 64.

make out that his case is an exception to the general principle. The loss of a child is "one of those great Trials where our Grief may be allowed to become immoderate", but this does not mean that Joseph can be allowed to show the same level of concern for the loss of Fanny.

Adams is equally impractical earlier in the novel in the bed-post scene. Again, Fielding expands the second edition version to make Adams's sermon against Joseph's anxiety even more like a traditional consolatio.¹ Quoting liberally from classical philosophers, he stresses the folly of grief, and urges Joseph in a tone "a little severer than usual" to look to the providential pattern behind his loss (pp. 264-67). Adams is a Job's comforter, completely unaware that his description of the happiness that Joseph has lost will inevitably increase the hearer's anxiety.² As Miller observes, the consolatory arguments he uses are the very ones which Fielding omits as being impractical in his own consolatio, such as the idea that Fanny's death may be a punishment for Joseph's sins.³ In his words he is no better than Parson Barnabas, who attempts to prepare Joseph for death by telling him that by "Grace" he must "divest himself of all human Passion" and cease to love Fanny (pp. 59-60).

Adams has too great an interest in abstract morality. He objects to Joseph's quotation from Macbeth (a pure expression of passion, free from any moral implication), preferring the more obviously moral Cato and The Conscious Lovers. The impracticality of Adams's words is highlighted by the ironic chapter-heading, where they are said to be "calculated for the Instruction and Improvement of the Reader", a phrase found on the title page of many a moral work. The implication

¹ Battestin, "Fielding's Revisions," p. 92.

² Homer Goldberg, The Art of Joseph Andrews (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 113.

³ Miller, Essays, pp. 246, 251.

is that Adams is merely rehearsing conventional arguments, which he himself cannot live up to. Such rules for Christian conduct are utterly impractical in real cases of bereavement.

Although Fielding may be criticizing both Adams and Joseph here in their back-to-back extremism, ultimately the reader's sympathies are more likely to be on Joseph's side of the bed-post, since, like him, we are not aware that Fanny is shortly to be providentially rescued (p. 269). Joseph's lamentations "would have pierced any Heart but those which are possessed by some People, and are made of a certain Composition not unlike Flint." Unless we wish to be judged as hard-hearted, then we must side with Joseph and against Adams.

Later, the drowning episode confirms our suspicions that the parson is more commendably human than he knows. This parable of the failure of a philosophical theory is, of course, reworked in Johnson's Rasselas (1759), where the stoic philosopher who lectures on "indifference" to good and evil is discovered a few days later mourning for his daughter. Rasselas, like Joseph, finds his repetition of the philosopher's own arguments utterly useless.¹ Johnson's version, however, is a balder parable of man's vanity, since the daughter really has died, and there can be no comic resurrection. The stoic lacks Adams's Christian hope, and therefore has grounds for his despair. Dudden traces the sudden reversals in these scenes to Molière and Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, where the professor of philosophy declaims against anger and then falls into a rage.² Johnson and Fielding may also be deliberately modifying the classical story of the stoicism of Anaxagoras, who continued to lecture after being informed of the death of his child. This story is cited in Symon Patrick's consolatory work,

¹ Samuel Johnson, Rasselas, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson and Brian Jenkins, Oxford English Novels (London: OUP, 1971), p. 51.

² Dudden, I, 341.

The Hearts Ease, as an example of the pagan resignation which Christians should find even easier, and so it would have formed an ideal model for Fielding's demonstration of the impracticality of such Christian-stoicism and the fact that "rational systems fade before the exigencies of real human experience".¹ Battestin suggests that by showing us that Adams is weaker than his patriarchal namesake, Fielding "sharpens our awareness of his compassionate nature", and thus makes him a more believable and imitable exemplar.² The episode also tends to support Gide's view of Fielding as anti-religious, in that Adams's goodness is shown to be more closely allied to his instinctive sympathy than his rational piety.

To a contemporary reader, the episode may have been further coloured by the deistic controversy surrounding Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. Hunter has ably demonstrated how Fielding tricks the reader into seeing Joseph's behaviour at the beginning of the novel as a part of the deistic attack on the old-testament heroes, only to surprise us with his hero's strict chastity.³ Adams is less easy to interpret in this way, but the reworking of the Abraham and Isaac story clearly invites a similar comparison. Briefly, the deists' argument against Abraham (outlined here from Thomas Morgan's The Moral Philosopher) attempted to show that the command to sacrifice Isaac, an act contrary to "the Law of Nature", could not have come from a benevolent deity, that Abraham must have been deluded, and his hope that God would resurrect his son must have been "an irrational enthusiastic Persuasion." It was a small step from this to deny that the Jews had

¹ The Hearts Ease (London, 1660), pp. 110-11; Miller, Essays, p. 275.

² Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 109; see also Miller, Essays, pp. 269-70.

³ Hunter, Occasional Form, pp. 95-116.

ever received a unique revelation of God, thus undermining Christianity as a superior form of religion to rational deism.¹ The argument was a popular one, and provoked a considerable response from the orthodox who wished to maintain that Abraham was a supreme example of resignation to the divine will based on faith in heaven.²

Fielding reinterprets the biblical story from a human point of view, revealing the academic pointlessness of the controversy by showing us an Abraham who is neither rational nor deluded, but subject to real human passions. Despite his theoretical stoicism, he cannot give up his son to God. Similarly, the Pedlar's providential rescue of the child (equivalent to the timely provision of the ram in the biblical account), shows us that God is merciful, demanding neither human sacrifices, nor tearless resignation in bereavement. Fielding's version thus emphasizes man's need for mercy and the consolation of heaven, rather than the strong faith of Abraham, who "learns his Isaac to resign" and "Smiling" acknowledges God's voice in death.³ It thus reflects better on God's providential provision than man's faith, and shifts attention from the controversial aspect of Abraham's motivation in order to demonstrate Fielding's deeply-held conviction that man can only be reconciled to death through a very immediate apprehension of the Christian hope of the resurrection, symbolized here by the son's timely rescue.

Because the passions are the springs of man's behaviour, all forms of rational, stoical consolation are ineffective, even when they are based on Christianity. Fielding's objection is that the stoic ignores

¹ The Moral Philosopher, 3 vols. (London, 1738-42), I, 133-34; II, 126-30; III, 96-98, 269, 271-72.

² See, for example, Henry Stebbing, The History of Abraham (London, 1746); for a traditional view of Abraham's faith, based on Hebrews 11, see Barrow, II, 20.

³ Doddridge, III, 609.

experience. Booth thus tells the philosopher that however true it may be in theory that "Habit teaches men to bear the Burthens of the Mind", he still doubts "its Efficacy in Practice", because "we Reason from our Heads, but act with our Hearts" (Amelia, pp. 348-51). The truth of this is immediately demonstrated in the philosopher's distress at being told that he must move to Newgate without seeing his wife and children. This is simply a more pointed version of the scene between Adams and Joseph. Stoicism, like instinctive goodness, is an ideal beyond the ordinary man, and just as morality must be upheld by the appeal to the passions of the fear of hell, so in bereavement we must be consoled by the hope of heaven.

Fielding makes the same point in his consolatory essay: since we are unable to "cure" our grief "absolutely", we must look to the aid of a "mental Physician", like Doctor Harrison, who understands the workings of the passions, and so can help "to palliate and lessen" them (Miscellanies, I, 213-14).¹ The essay is selective and practical, and eschews many of the traditional themes of consolation in order to concentrate on the hope of immortality. A similarly practical approach based on experience is found in Philip Doddridge's Submission to the Divine Providence in the Death of Children (1737), "the minutes of my own sighs and tears" at the death of his four-year-old daughter.² Like Fielding, and unlike Adams, Doddridge does not attempt "to run through the common-place of immoderate grief", but selects only those themes "which I found particularly suitable to myself". Sensitive to the deaths of his friends, Doddridge would have made a good "mental Physician" according to Fielding's criteria. Most importantly, as Lyttelton notes, he speaks "to the heart, without which, even the best

¹ Miller, Essays, pp. 253-71; see also Miller's introduction to Miscellanies, I, xxiii-xxiv.

² Doddridge, III, 302.

instructions produce little effect, especially among the lower and grosser part of mankind."¹

Fielding's belief that stoic consolation is useless even to the Christian is shared by that earlier mental physician, Montaigne, for whom Socrates was the only example of true stoicism.² The ordinary man's inability to follow this lead is demonstrated in Tom Jones, where Square's speech commending stoic indifference to pain is cut short when he bites his tongue - an incident which echoes a traditional anti-stoic argument found in La Rochefoucauld: "He bites his own Tongue, for fear he shou'd own that pain was an Evil."³

Not only does Fielding share Montaigne's view that "Contempt of Pain" is folly, but he also implies in these episodes that a lack of emotion is a sign of inhumanity.⁴ Such is the conclusion Tom Jones draws from the Man of the Hill's account of his various bereavements. In his youth the Man studied "Philosophy" and "divine Wisdom" together in the way approved by the converted Square, but with the death of his father, like another Adams, he abandoned his books and gave himself up to "the Effects of Melancholy and Despair." With time, however, he returned to his studies, and when we meet him in the novel, he tells Tom proudly that he has at last achieved stoic resignation (Tom Jones, pp. 470-72). Instead of abruptly undermining this declaration, Fielding leaves the reader to discern the flaws in the Man's philosophy. We are alerted to these by the way Tom smiles at the Man's quotation from Horace:

¹ Lyttelton, I, 346, 366-67.

² Montaigne, III, 73-74.

³ Maxims, p. xiv.

⁴ Montaigne, I, 410-11.

Firm in himself, who on himself relies,
 Polish'd and round, who runs his proper Course,
 And breaks Misfortunes with superior Force.

Tom smiles because he sees from the quotation that the Man is utterly unaware of the precarious state of his confidence. His stoicism not only ignores the Christian hope of heaven, but it is also totally self-centred, brooding privately over grief, rather than forgetting it.¹ His lack of benevolence places him among the class of men hated by Montaigne because they "talk like Philosopher's, but do worse than the most slothful of men."² In this he is similar to Colonel James, whose "Mind was formed of those firm Materials, of which Nature formerly hammered out the Stoic, and upon which the Sorrows of no Man living could make an Impression" (Amelia, p. 331). Booth, by way of contrast, is always sympathetic to the suffering of others, and insists that "Tenderness" is proof of "a true manly Character", giving the examples of Brutus's love for Portia and Charles XII's grief for his sister (p. 130).

In fact, as Fielding knew well, stoicism did not necessarily rule out a modest display of grief. "We may weep, but we must not wail," says Seneca. Though he would prefer us not to grieve, he appreciates that this might have the appearance of a "lack of feeling".³ In presenting the supremacy of emotion to reason, however, Fielding usually uses the term "stoic" in its more popular and derogatory sense as implying complete opposition to emotion.⁴ Fielding is clearly in

¹ Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology, p. 40.

² Montaigne, I, 194.

³ Seneca, Epistolae Morales, LXIII. 1, and XCIX. 16, trans. R.M. Gummere, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1943), I, 429-31; III, 139.

⁴ Miller, Essays, pp. 253-59, and notes to Miscellanies, I, 214.

sympathy with the newer, more emotional approach to death which came to dominate the second half of the eighteenth century. In his consolatory essay, he again turns the stoic argument that our passions are diseases back on itself by declaring that sorrow is "the Distemper of a rich and generous Constitution" (Miscellanies, I, 214). Parting company with Montaigne, he asserts that the "calm Demeanour" of the stoic Stilpo on losing his children "hath no charms", for, as in the case of the Man of the Hill, it is more akin to "Ostentation or Obduracy" than virtue: "It is rather wanting the Affection than conquering it."¹ Fielding's sister makes a similar point when she contrasts the "Self-adoration" of Mr Orgueil's Senecan contempt for death with David Simple's humble faith in heaven, which calms his otherwise genuine fear.² Subject to strong emotions himself, Fielding insists that tears are not "Marks of Effeminacy", but rather the "Symptoms of a laudable Tenderness" (Miscellanies, I, 218). He is in agreement here with William Sherlock (whom he quotes at the end of the essay), that "to be unconcerned for the Death of our dearest Friends . . . is so far from being a Virtue, that such a man is incapable of ever being a friend."³

In the novels, this anti-stoicism is emphasized both by the negative examples of the Man of the Hill, Blifil and Colonel James, and by the sympathy of Allworthy, Tom and Booth. When Mrs Miller feels ashamed that she cannot think of her dead husband "without Tears", Tom assures her that this is not a "womanish Weakness", and adds that he would be ashamed of himself if he did not weep with her (Tom Jones, p. 758). Again this is typical of the newer attitude to mourning.

¹ Montaigne, I, 377; the story can be found in Seneca, Epistolae Morales, IX.

² David Simple, pp. 419, 432.

³ A Sermon Preach'd at the Temple Church, December 30, 1694 (London, 1694), p. 12.

Adams's excuse that God allows a "deeper Resentment" in the loss of a near relation rapidly became a licence for excessive grief, repeated without biblical authority in countless works of practical consolation. Thus Thomas Emlyn, in his Funeral Consolations (1703) on the death of his wife, speaks of God allowing grief, because He understands the unquenchable power of love.¹ This shift towards an approval of grief in the devotional writers can also be seen in the way Christ's tears at the death of Lazarus come to be seen as more of an expression of love for Lazarus than anguish at the thought of raising him to further suffering in this life, or distress for the unbelief of the crowd.²

As the scenes between Adams and Joseph show, to condemn grief is the way to increase it, and therefore Fielding commends it as a sign of humanity. Nevertheless, he is also eager to grasp at any effective means of moderating and reducing sorrow. Hence, while criticizing the resignation of Stilpo, he can still recommend Senecan anticipation of the deaths of one's relatives as an effective method of consolation (Miscellanies, I, 215-16). Reason may be insufficient to control our passions, but it nevertheless has a role to play in minimizing them. Such is the message of Heartfree's soliloquy in which he sees despair as sinful, but also recognizes that because he is controlled by his passions he cannot simply decide not to grieve. Reason "doth not foolishly say to us, Be not glad, or, Be not Sorry, which would be as vain and idle as to bid the purling river cease to run." Instead it moderates our passions by convincing us of the vanity of this world, and lifts our minds to the supreme comfort of heaven. Such reasoning

¹ Works, 4th ed. (London, 1746), III, 412-13.

² For the strict view, see Patrick, p. 177, and Allestree, The Whole Duty of Mourning, p. 151; for the more lenient view see Emlyn, III, 411; Doddridge, in his Meditations on the Tears of Jesus (London, 1751), attempts to combine the two approaches, Works, III, 382-403.

enables the condemned man to quit his children with "a tenderness which drew a tear from one of the keepers, joined to a magnanimity which would have pleased a stoic" (Henley, II, 99-102, 159-60).

However, despite such examples of moderation, Fielding is usually better at portraying the disease than prescribing the cure.¹ In the world of his novels there is an exception to every rule. Even grief is shown to be a passion that can easily be usurped by the awakening of new love, as in Mrs Bennet's father's swift remarriage. Mrs Bennet herself speaks of the remarriage of widows as if it were "Bigamy", but the ironic appositeness of her quotation of Dido's vow of faithfulness to her dead husband becomes clear a few pages later, when she falls for her own Aeneas, Atkinson (Amelia, pp. 256-58). Again, this is an aspect of Fielding's theory of the passions that also appears in his earlier work. In Jonathan Wild, the hermit's devotion to the memory of his dead wife soon turns to lust for Mrs Heartfree (Henley, II, 179-80). Despite his approval of sincere grief, Fielding did not believe that sorrow was incurable, and he would have seconded Thomson's words to Lyttelton that "to say that one cannot love twice, is utterly unphilosophical, and . . . contrary to my own experience."² Fielding sees the passions as potential friends as well as enemies, hence his tendency to approve emotion, whilst at the same time commending moderation. Seneca had suggested that with time grief could be reduced to a level where mention of the names of the departed would produce a pleasant "sting". Our loss, like old wine, becomes more palatable with age, so that our memories give us more pleasure than pain.³ This view was echoed by many of the more emotionally-inclined divines, such as

¹ Ronald Paulson, ed., Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962), p. 2.

² Lyttelton, I, 313.

³ Seneca, Epistolae Morales, LXIII. 4-7 (I, 431-33).

Doddridge, who sees a similar "tender sorrow" in Christ's tears for Lazarus, drawn from memories of the "places where they had taken sweet counsel together."¹ Richardson, as we have seen, clearly shared this Senecan approach.² To Fielding, however, indulging in memories, and keeping them alive with pictures, locks of hair and other mementoes of the deceased, is tantamount to "being Self-Tormentors, and playing with Affliction". It may appear to bring "some present Relief to a tender Disposition", but like the effect of water or air on one with a fever, it has "dreadful consequences", since it ultimately increases our sorrow, and impedes time's healing (Miscellanies, I, 218-19). This is shown to be true when Booth tries to cure himself of his love for Amelia by walking up and down outside her house each night. Even Miss Mathews can see that this is "a most preposterous Method to cure yourself", since the sight of Amelia's house could not fail to exacerbate his desperate passion. Booth agrees, and admits he was only deceiving himself in thinking that he could find relief that way. His words echo Fielding's disease imagery in the essay:

those know little of real Love or Grief, who do not know how much we deceive ourselves when we pretend to aim at the Cure of either. It is with these, as it is with some Distempers of the Body, nothing is, in the least, agreeable to us but what serves to heighten the Disease (Amelia, p. 76).

As in the passage describing Sophia's love for Tom, Fielding brings love and death together to prove that we are all at the mercy of our passions, and that therefore such weakness is not to be mocked. In the consolatory essay, he sees a tendency in us all to prefer Booth's "preposterous" cure: "Such is the Perverseness of our Natures" that "we

¹ Doddridge, III, 386.

² See above, p. 56.

are constantly endeavouring, at every Opportunity, to recall to our Remembrance the Words, Looks, Gestures, and other Particularities of a Friend" when we should "avoid all Circumstances which may revive the Memory of the Deceased" (Miscellanies, I, 219).¹ Lyttelton writes to Doddridge of his similar experience: the Senecan "delicious sweetness" of memory eludes him, and, against his will, his mind keeps returning to his wife's sickbed, "to her last tender terms, to her dying looks, words, and actions; and then all my fortitude dissolves in tears." Feeling that this repining is sinful, he wishes he could follow Seneca's pattern of remembering the dead with affection, but without renewed grief. In such circumstances, Fielding would have advised diverting the mind from the sources of grief, but Lyttelton sees further evidence of his own impiety in the fact that he is "forced to do violence to his mind", and "turn it to some other subject, instead of dwelling with complacency upon the idea of my dear saint exalted now to her proper state."²

As ever, Fielding is more concerned with practicality than piety. Two possible approaches to memory in bereavement are outlined by Seneca in his De Consolatione ad Marciam: Livia is commended for her ability to remember Drusus cheerfully, and Octavia is criticized for mourning excessively for Marcellus and avoiding mentioning him.³ Fielding clearly places himself in the second category as needing to control his tendency to mourn by avoiding memories of the deceased, but unlike Lyttelton, he does not consider himself a second-class citizen because of this. Indeed, he is convinced, as we see from Booth's experience in

¹ Miller, Essays, pp. 242-43; see also Miller's notes on this passage.

² Lyttelton, I, 373-74; Seneca, Epistolae Morales, XCIX. 24 (III, 145).

³ Seneca, Moral Essays, II, 11-15.

Amelia, that the world contains many more Octavias than Livias. Fielding's ideas on this theme owe much to Montaigne, who also uses the disease analogy to show how remembrance of past pleasures in times of affliction leads only to greater torment. Montaigne urges not the remembrance of past joys, but the appreciation of present blessings, a pattern of "shifting the thoughts from afflicting things to those that are pleasing", which he ascribes to Epicurus.¹ Similarly, Doctor Harrison uses "Art" to console Amelia, to "cast a Veil over the Idea of Grief, and raise comfortable Images" in her mind. Betty, on the other hand, like Adams, inveighs against the "Folly" of Amelia's grief, an action which Montaigne condemns, because it merely increases sorrow (Amelia, p. 103).

The devotional writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are rarely this practical. Perhaps the closest we come to a realization that grief should be diverted rather than consoled in a conventional manner is Jeremy Taylor's admission to Lord Carberry, in the preface to his wife's funeral sermon, that it would be better:

to bring something that might alleviate or divert your sorrow, then to dresse the hearse of your Dear Lady, and to furnish it with such circumstances, that it may dwell with you, and lie in your closet, and make your prayers and your retirements more sad and full of weepings.²

Tuvia Bloch has suggested that this "substitution of a pleasing image in the sufferer's mind for the one that induces the suffering" is another feature unique to Amelia, indicative once again of a shift in Fielding from a belief that reason can control the passions to Booth's predominant passion theory.³ Admittedly, it does appear with some

¹ Montaigne, II, 262; III, 70.

² Taylor, A Funeral Sermon, sig. A2^r.

³ Bloch, p. 473.

frequency in this novel, but it is clearly also an important idea in Fielding's consolatory essay and in A Journey from this World to the Next, where Julian the apostate tames his excessive grief for the loss of his fiancée by avoiding the places that recall her to memory (Henley, II, 308). On the other hand, this method for avoiding grief is not accepted unquestioningly by Fielding. Mrs Ellison helps Mrs Bennet to forget the death of her husband by taking her to St Edmundsbury, "the air and Gayety of which Place by degrees recovered her" (Amelia, p. 238). When we discover later that Mrs Bennet's husband probably died from a venereal disease communicated via his wife from the Noble Lord, and that Mrs Ellison is merely following the Lord's instructions in comforting Mrs Bennet, we seriously begin to wonder if diversion from grief does not imply an abdication of responsibility. Fielding is not so much undermining this method of consolation as showing how those with sensitive natures can easily be hoodwinked in their bereavement by the hard-hearted who use this consolatory technique as a front. As always, the evil characters, though they themselves lack feeling, have a greater understanding of the passions than the innocent.

It is in this darker, more realistic world of Amelia that Fielding shows his deepest understanding of the workings of the mind in bereavement, particularly in Mrs Bennet's account of the deaths of her husband, sister and father. The sister declines into ill-health soon after her mother's death, presumably because she cannot divert her mind into happier channels. Her death provides the opportunity for two general "Observations" on the processes of grief. First, that once we have been "violently hurt" we grow "callous" to "future Impressions of Grief". Secondly, that we are afflicted in proportion to the unexpectedness of our bereavement (p. 271). The truth of both these maxims is confirmed by Mrs Bennet's lesser grief at her sister's death

and her father's "complete Triumph" over this second, less sudden calamity. In making these practical observations without implying any moral judgement, Fielding shows a rare Richardsonian interest in the actual processes of bereavement and consolation.

Mrs Bennet's response to her husband's death, on the other hand, is perhaps Fielding's most serious use of death to present a moral problem, and his most complex example of the workings of the passions. We have already noted how Mrs Ellison and the Noble Lord attempt to console her for a death which is really their moral responsibility. At first, however, we are given only a few of the details: that Mr Bennet was a clergyman, that Mrs Bennet was left destitute by his death, and that she is still inconsolable some three years after the event. Amelia and the reader interpret this conjugal loyalty as a sign of Mrs Bennet's "uncommonly good" nature and the strength of her love (p. 237), but the truth, as we learn from her full account, is very different. Seduced and "polluted" by the Noble Lord, she passes the disease on to her husband, who soon dies, ostensibly from his rage and anguish at discovering his wife's infidelity. Mrs Bennet is eager to clear herself of responsibility for his death, assuring Amelia that the cause was "a Polypus in his Heart, and that nothing which had happened on Account of me was in the least the Occasion of it" (pp. 301-02). However, as Rothstein has pointed out, polyps were thought to be the result of the blood's standing still, an effect which could be brought about by violent passions such as the very anger Mr Bennet displays at his painful discovery.¹ It could be argued, therefore, that Mrs Bennet is responsible for her husband's death, and that the episode is intended to demonstrate one of the devious ways in which we appease our consciences in order to avoid an unpleasant truth. Not only does Mrs

¹ Rothstein, p. 162, note 5.

Bennet's insistence that she is innocent draw attention to the fact that she may indeed be guilty, but in this light her prolonged mourning begins to look like guilty self-abasement.

The death of her father further illuminates this episode, since it also displays the power of a predominant passion to blind us to an unpleasant truth. Prior to his death, Mrs Bennet suffers considerable cruelty from her father, who is under the bad influence of his second wife. When he dies, his former kindness returns to her memory, obliterating "all Thoughts of his latter Behaviour, for which I made also every Allowance and every Excuse in my Power" (p. 278). The fact that she is prone to take refuge from unpleasant memories in this way suggests strongly that she is also avoiding the truth about her husband's death. The episode is striking for its real unaverted tragedy of a kind which Richardson no more than hints at in the lives and deaths of his rakes. In Amelia, Fielding shows us the far-reaching consequences of corruption and the more sinister side of our human desire to be consoled and comforted.

VII - The Hope of a Heavenly Reunion

Consolation is only effective, in Fielding's opinion, if it appeals to the passions. Stoicism of the kind practised by Square is weak and impractical. Fielding would have agreed with the "Discourse" upon La Rochefoucauld's Maxims, that Seneca's stoic "Mastery" of the passions was merely a method of "concealing" them, and that in his "fine Reasonings on the Immortality of the Soul he sought only to drive out of his Head the fear of Death."¹ Ultimately, as Montaigne

¹ Maxims, p. xiii.

recognized, all philosophical speculations, and even the hope of heaven, can be seen as mere distractions from our fears.¹ To Fielding, the hope of heaven is the most important and effective consolation, since it depends not upon experience but upon revelation, and therefore can never prove false on this side of the grave. As Heartfree observes in his soliloquy, it is better to believe in heaven, even if it does not exist, solely for the comfort it gives in this life. Those who believe have nothing to lose and all to gain:

if the professors and propagators of infidelity are in the right, the losses which death brings to the virtuous are not worth their lamenting; but if these are, as certainly they seem, in the wrong, the blessings it procures them are not to be sufficiently coveted (Henley, II, 102).

This was the line of argument often taken in the fight against atheism, and Fielding uses it again in The Champion and The Covent-Garden Journal.² Elizabeth Rowe similarly clings to it in her Letters Moral and Entertaining: "let my plan of happiness be ever so visionary, 'tis noble . . . 'tis superior to all the luxury by which the greatest libertine ever proposed to gratify his desires."³

The hope of heaven is so vital to Rowe and Fielding not only because it promises the redressing of wrongs we endure in this life, but also because it offers us the sublime hope of a heavenly reunion with those whom we have lost. For Fielding, death is fearful only because it parts friends and relations. To Atkinson, the thought that he shall never see Amelia again is "worse than ten thousand Deaths" (Amelia, p. 482). Joseph Andrews, as we have seen, cannot stop thinking of Fanny, even though he appears to be dying (Joseph Andrews,

¹ Montaigne, III, 74-75.

² Henley, XV, 164-65; Covent-Garden Journal, II, 130.

³ Letters Moral and Entertaining (London, 1733), Part I, pp. 32-33.

p. 59). Friendly observes of the condemned Heartfree that his only "agonies" are those inspired by "thoughts of parting with your children", and in the storm at sea, Mrs Heartfree has "no other apprehensions of death but those of leaving her dear husband and children" (Henley, II, 145, 86). Booth experiences similar fear during the storm in Amelia, when the thought of never seeing his wife again is "a Dagger stuck in my Heart" (p. 110). There is no sense in the novels that death is a frightening mystery. Nor is there any of the doubt concerning one's salvation that we find in the deaths of Belton, Mrs Sinclair and Lovelace in Clarissa. The religious significance of death has become subordinate to the emotional experience of parting from one's family and friends. This is equally true for Fielding in real life, as he bids a tearful farewell to his children before boarding the ship for Lisbon. It is the circumstances of death, "the cries of mothers, wives, and children" and the "visits of astonished and afflicted friends", which make it dreadful (Henley, XIII, 124-25). In the novels, the believer's fear of parting is treated as a normal phenomenon, a sign of a sympathetic nature. Tom Jones commends young Betsy Miller's declaration that she is only afraid of dying if it means leaving her mother and sister (Tom Jones, pp. 764-65). In Amelia, Miss Mathews's unsympathetic nature is revealed through the way she mocks the "Gravity" of Booth's "Philosophy" that parting from friends resembles dying, and that "it is not Death but Dying which is terrible" (p. 109). Her inability to understand this commonplace idea warns us that she is utterly incapable of love. In his farce, Eurydice, Fielding makes a similar point that Eurydice is utterly self-centred by detailing how her tears at death were ones of genuine fear and not the normal outpourings of love being separated from its object (Henley, XI, p. 283).

This bias towards the emotional is typical of Fielding's time. As notions of heaven and hell became more remote from everyday life, it was quite natural for the emphasis to shift from what happens after death to the actual experience of dying. Strict seventeenth-century divines, such as Baxter, had seen the believer's reluctance to part with friends as a serious weakness, an "impediment" which God often frees us from by causing enmity to develop between companions, so that we are less reluctant to lose them. Montaigne shared the same apparently callous view of sorrow.¹ Even in the next century, the more emotional Philip Doddridge chastised himself because his "present happiness" lay so much in his friends, and, like Booth, "the only pain he felt in the thought of dying" was for his wife's "distress and grief".²

Despite the strictness of divines like Baxter, by the mid-eighteenth century, parting was always seen as the worst aspect of death, regardless of one's theological position. According to Isaac Watts, it is unpleasant, even for the firm believer, when "Children are torn away from the Embraces of their Parents, and the Wife is seized from the bosom." Bereavement is like "tearing the Flesh asunder of those whose Hearts are joined."³ Similarly, Aaron Hill's Plain Dealer speaks of the "one thing, which makes death terrible. . . . That we are torn from our Friend's Society." How can a husband expect to die a calm Clarissa-like death "when he is straining his dying Eyes, for the last, afflicting, Sight of a Wife?"⁴ Robert Blair, likewise, vents his anger against the "Invidious Grave!" that rends apart those "Whom Love

¹ Richard Baxter, The Divine Life (London, 1664), pp. 318-19; Montaigne, I, 106.

² Doddridge, I, 101, 199.

³ Watts, Death and Heaven, p. 17.

⁴ Plain Dealer, 79 (21 December 1724).

has knit, and Sympathy made one."¹ Following the example of Christ's mourning for Lazarus, the Christian is at liberty to lament such a separation. As Allworthy stresses (somewhat ironically, since he is addressing the unconcerned Blifil), this is the only and "most amiable Motive, from which we can derive the Fear of Death" (Tom Jones, p. 243)

The unbeliever is without any form of consolation in this inevitable grief, but the Christian, as Fielding states at the climax of his consolatory essay, has a comfort which is "the sweetest, most endearing, and ravishing, which can enter into a Mind capable of, and inflamed with, Friendship." This is "the Hope of again meeting the beloved Person, of renewing and cementing the dear Union in Bliss everlasting" (Miscellanies, I, 225), a comfort very appropriate to the novel, where there is inevitably a high value placed on human relationships. Whereas this doctrine is merely one further source of pious comfort to Richardson's characters, to Fielding's it is the one ultimate hope. Heartfree parts from his wife hoping that "we may presently meet again in a better world than this" (Henley, II, 162). Joseph offers the same comfort to the weeping and unheeding Adams (Joseph Andrews, p. 309). It is Allworthy's mainstay as a widower who has lost three children. He believes he is "still married", and that one day he will follow his wife on her "Journey" and rejoin her in heaven (Tom Jones, p. 35). The same belief is implied in Booth's statement that death is a parting after which we never meet "in this World, at least, again" (Amelia, p. 102). Even amidst the satire of A Journey from this World to the Next, the narrator meets and embraces his dead daughter (Henley, II, 245), a scene which Dickens praised for its demonstration of the way our "Christian hopes" endorse our

¹ The Grave (1743), The Augustan Reprint Society, No. 161 (1973), p. 7.

continuing natural emotions of "love and remembrance".¹ It is for precisely this reason that Fielding is so keen on this particular idea. More practical than any form of Christian-stoicism, it appeals directly to our passions, and does not point an accusing finger at our human weakness.

It has been quite wrongly assumed that this comforting hope of a reunion in heaven was common to all Christian consolatory writings.² The fact that it has no place in Mrs Bennet's father's consolatory sermon or Parson Adams's lectures on resignation should perhaps alert us to the possibility that Fielding is championing an idea, rather than merely repeating a universally-accepted one. That death was a gain for the believer was a commonplace observation, but the reunion of friends was not necessarily always included or implied as one of the benefits. Before the eighteenth century, descriptions of the joys of heaven invariably placed a greater emphasis on the communion of saints worshipping around the throne of the Almighty, as if previous earthly relationships have been superseded or forgotten, as in Augustine's description of heaven, quoted by Samuel Gardiner: "O happy ioyfulness, and ioyfull happinesse, to see the Saints, to bee with the Saints, to bee a saint".³

The same view of heaven as simply a company of believers was repeated by many later divines, including those most often associated with Fielding. Isaac Barrow, for instance, speaks of the believer meeting his Maker rather than a long-lost daughter, enjoying "the presence of his gracious Redeemer, embracing him with dear affection", and partaking of "the most delightful society of blessed Angels, and

¹ The Letters of Charles Dickens, ed. Graham Storey and K.J. Fielding (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), V, 297.

² Miller, Essays, p. 246.

³ Gardiner, sig. ~~rr~~r.

just Spirits made perfect."¹ In its original context, the quotation from Sherlock's A Practical Discourse Concerning Death at the end of Fielding's consolatory essay, with its description of "the melting Caresses of two Souls in Paradice", has none of the prominence that Fielding gives it (Miscellanies, I, 225).² The notion that the dead have merely "gone before" us on a journey, and that one day "we shall be united and brought together", was present in the Christian tradition as a borrowing from the classics, particularly Seneca and Cicero.³ The idea also found secular expression, for instance in Shakespeare's King John, where Constance is anxious as to whether she will be able to recognize her son in heaven. In seventeenth-century devotional literature, however, on the rare occasions when such a meeting of loved ones is mentioned, it is usually mixed with, or given a subordinate position to the idea of a wider communion of saints. Such is the case in Symon Patrick's The Hearts Ease, a work which Miller cites as proof of this doctrine's typicality. In fact, the hope that "we shall see our friends again" is inserted largely as an afterthought.⁴ Similarly in Jeremy Taylor, the idea of eternal relationships is given far less prominence in his teaching than in his emotionally-comforting prayers, an inconsistency between theory and practice reminiscent of Parson Adams. Heaven in Holy Dying is described simply in terms of holy conversation amongst the saints.⁵

¹ Barrow, II, 32; see also I, 333, 482; and Tillotson, II, 58-59; Clarke, II, 40; Watts, Death and Heaven, pp. 65-151.

² Sherlock, pp. 85-86.

³ Seneca, Epistolae Morales, XIII. 16 (I, 437); XCIX. 7 (III, 133); Ad Marciam, XIX. 1, XXX (Moral Essays, II, 65, 89-91); Ad Polybium, X. 9 (Moral Essays, II, 383); Cicero, De Senectute, XXIII. 84, trans. W.A. Falconer, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1923), p. 97.

⁴ Miller, Essays, p. 246; Patrick, p. 218.

⁵ Taylor, Holy Living, p. 47; Holy Dying, pp. 105-06; A Funeral Sermon, p. 12; Allison, pp. 82-90, 184-85.

During the eighteenth century, however, the emotional comfort of a heavenly reunion grew in importance until it came to dominate consolatory discourses, as it does Fielding's. Thomas Emlyn, in 1701, hails this doctrine as "the most effectual consideration in the world, from whence an affectionate mourner can receive full satisfaction; because it rather supports than suppresses his love to his deceased friend." Emlyn, like Fielding, reads rather more into his source (on this occasion the usually-strict Baxter) than was originally intended. He is also aware that there may be "other motives more weighty", that he is being rather unorthodox in placing so much emphasis on this particular belief.¹

Fielding, in his novels, is similarly defensive. Allworthy's belief that he will one day meet his wife is presented as unusual, a subject which he would often talk about "whimsically", causing his unfeeling neighbours to question his "Sense", "Religion" and "Sincerity" (Tom Jones, p. 35). Of the conjectured real-life models for Allworthy, Ralph Allen and George Lyttelton, only the latter seems to have believed in a heavenly reunion, and, as we have already noted, Lyttelton was far less ready than Allworthy to make such concessions to his emotions.² It is clear from his letters to Doddridge after Lucy's death that it was only gradually and reluctantly that he came to accept a theology which made allowance for his 'feelings, so that his continuing "affections" could be seen as "intimations and notices of a life to come".³ Montaigne considered such a belief to be too "earthly and finite"; to be worthwhile, heaven must be "inimaginable,

¹ Emlyn, III, 400, 441; Baxter, The Divine Life, p. 335.

² Allen never dwelt on the death of his first wife as Lyttelton did, see Benjamin Boyce, The Benevolent Man: A Life of Ralph Allen of Bath (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), p. 67.

³ Lyttelton, I, 407.

inexplicable, and incomprehensible."¹ Even in the mid-eighteenth century, to hold so firmly to a doctrine that appealed solely to the passions would have appeared rather like enthusiasm. Allworthy's belief in a heavenly reunion, therefore, tends to endorse Whittuck's view of him as a "quasi-mystic".² Fielding himself cannot be entirely cleared from the same charge. His belief in this doctrine may simply be a reflection of its growing popularity, but the conviction with which he puts it forward suggests a more direct influence, perhaps from his own reading of Elizabeth Rowe's works, or those of her friend, the non-juror Bishop Thomas Ken, both being represented in Fielding's library.³

VIII - Conclusion

It may seem strange that Fielding should be the champion of an emotionally-comforting doctrine that is so distant from the practical everyday morality of the Latitudinarian preachers with whom he is usually associated. His sister, despite her deeper interest in the Richardsonian approach to death in the novel, offers no such hope of reunion to the martyred Simple family. Henry, on the other hand, finds in this doctrine a supreme hope for his consolatory novels.

As Dryden remarks by way of preface to his translation of Lucretius:

we naturally aim at happiness, and cannot bear to have it

¹ Montaigne, II, 304.

² Charles Whittuck, The "Good Man" of the Eighteenth Century (London: George Allen, 1901), p. 77.

³ Items 350, 400.

confin'd to the shortness of our present Being, especially when we consider that vertue is generally unhappy in this World and vice fortunate. So that 'tis hope of Futurity alone, that makes this Life tolerable.¹

A similar understanding of human nature lies behind Fielding's novels, where the evil of the world is explained that we may be less readily exploited, tragedy is averted as an assurance of Providence, and the hope of reunion in heaven is offered as the only effective comfort in affliction. Fielding is interested in death only for what it can teach us about consolation. Far from merely reflecting the prevalent beliefs of his time, as Hazlitt thought, Fielding's view of death and bereavement is intensely personal and practical, an unusual mixture of concessions to emotion and attempts to divert the mind from sorrow and pain through comedy.²

Thus Fielding, like Richardson, contributed to the novel's predominantly emotional approach to death. While minor novelists of the second half of the eighteenth century, such as Henry Mackenzie, tended to make even further concessions to emotional indulgence, merely expanding upon the sentimental elements of their predecessors, in Laurence Sterne, an intense personal need leads to works that are as problematical and rewarding as Fielding's, and where the balance between laughter and tears is equally if not more precarious.

¹ Dryden, Works, III, 11.

² Dudden, I, 383. .

Chapter Four - The Jester in the House of Mourning:

Shandeism and Sentimentality in Laurence Sterne

I - The Jestng Parson

It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting.

---That I deny.

Thus Sterne characteristically begins the second of his Sermons of Mr Yorick published in the wake of the runaway success of the first two volumes of Tristram Shandy in 1760.¹ This opening must have shocked not a few, and confirmed the suspicions of many. The author of Tristram Shandy was revealed as a wolf in sheep's clothing, a jester in the guise of a clergyman, unashamedly flaunting his disregard for religion and morality, and cavorting with unseemly relish both in the pulpit and on the page. "I cannot conceive how it was possible for a divine of the Church of England to write so prophane a book," exclaims one methodist critic. Tristram Shandy was "penn'd by the hand of

¹ The Sermons of Mr Yorick, 7 vols. (London, 1764-69), I, 24; all further references to the Sermons are given in the text; references to Tristram Shandy refer to James A. Work's edition (New York: Odyssey Press, 1940), and are given in the text in the form of volume, chapter and page number; references to A Sentimental Journey refer to Gardner D. Stout's edition (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967).

Antichrist himself," and what little good there is in the Sermons is tainted by the name on the title page. Sterne preaches an "anti-gospel" of laughter and pleasure in the vanities of life which openly disregards the words of Solomon.¹

One can easily understand the confusion and outrage that the revelation of the authorship of *Tristram Shandy* caused. It was the duty of the clergy to remind men (at decent intervals and in the proper place) of the common end of all their vain pursuits and the need to look to the welfare of their immortal souls. For a divine not only to ignore this duty, but to preach an alternative doctrine of "Shandeism" in an indecent and apparently anarchic work of fiction was like the emergence of a new heresy. Of course, it was not expected that laymen should spend their lives in the house of mourning, pondering gloomily on death, judgement, heaven and hell. As one of the wittiest early critics of Sterne comments, "the Four last things are not much known in this age" and were undoubtedly so named "because they are indeed the very last things that People generally think of."² Sterne's apostasy is merely an extreme sign of a general trend. A clergyman only in name, Yorick is just a somewhat pathetic product of his times:

Thus to make your devotion
Assist your promotion
Your way is, with luscious romances ,
To tickle your patron's fancies;
To whom you will never do well
To talk about Heaven or Hell;
Unless by the way of digression
To vary the turn of Expression.³

¹ A Genuine Letter from a Methodist Preacher in the Country to Laurence Sterne, M.A. (London. 1760), pp. vii, 2; reprinted in Sterneiana, Vol. V (New York: Garland, 1975); for a full account of early criticism of Sterne see Alan B. Howes, Yorick and the Critics (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1958).

² Alas! Poor Yorick! (London, 1761), p. 16, reprinted in Sterneiana, Vol. V.

³ Tristram Shandy's Bon Mots (London, 1760), p. 50, reprinted in Sterneiana, Vol. III.

In fact Sterne caused offence not because he avoided the subject of death, like the host in Joseph Andrews (p. 100), but because he actually laughed in the face of the King of Terrors, jesting about his illness, and refusing to wear a gloomy countenance to match his black cassock. By introducing a sermon into the second volume of his novel, and publishing his Sermons under the name of a country parson related to Hamlet's dead jester, Sterne was not only demonstrating his commercial acumen, but also drawing attention to the apparent contradictions between his divine calling and his literary career. In Yorick, Sterne brings together opposites which orthodoxy would normally insist on separating: religion and ribaldry, wisdom and folly, mourning and feasting, our hopes of heaven and our fears of dissolution. While planning the publication of the third and fourth volumes of his Sermons, Sterne wrote to a friend that they were intended "to keep up a kind of balance, in my shandaic character", and to act as a "penance" for the seventh and eighth volumes of Tristram Shandy.¹ Balance there may be between the parson and the jester, but the facetious tone of this letter suggests that it is a deliberately uneasy one.

Whereas in the major novelists of the first half of the century the emphasis is always on the taming of the passions, moral education and poetic justice, there is a definite shift from this position in the closing decades of the century to the sentimental novel, where moral worth is measured by one's ability to feel benevolent, and where the innocent suffer without cause and often without reprieve.² Sterne, however, belongs to neither of these periods, for he jokes where Richardson and Fielding would draw a moral, and laughs where Mackenzie

¹ Letters of Laurence Sterne, ed Lewis P. Curtis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p. 252.

² William Park, "Change in the Criticism of the Novel after 1760," PQ, 46 (1967), 31-41; William Park, "Tristram Shandy and the New 'Novel of Sensibility'," Studies in the Novel, 6 (1974), 268-79.

and the sentimental school would invite the reader to cry.

It is somewhat ironic, therefore, that this jester in the house of mourning came to be seen as the supreme exponent of sensibility, particularly as Sterne's initial success with the first two volumes of Tristram Shandy was based largely on their novelty and wit. No one expected to find a moral in this work until it was revealed that the author was a clergyman. As yet, Sterne's talent for the pathetic went largely unnoticed. The Clockmakers Outcry was one of the few pamphlets of 1760 to comment on the emotional impact of Yorick's death in volume one, and even here the "well imagined and pathetically written" episode is seen as a complete contrast to the author's more usual "ridiculous and immoral bagatelles". The view of Sterne as a pleasure-loving parson, wasting talents that otherwise "properly employed, cannot fail of penetrating the heart", would become commonplace within a few years, but it is rare to find it expressed before the appearance of volumes five and six containing the death of Bobby and the story of Le Fever. Even The Clockmakers Outcry is reluctant to give Sterne credit for this "affecting" scene, adding a note to point out that the jester's earnest moments are all stolen, and that Yorick's death is a plagiarism.¹ No evidence is offered to support this charge (perhaps it is a reference to the similar inscription on the hero's tombstone in The Life and Memoirs of Mr Ephraim Tristram Bates, as noted by Mrs Thrale).² It is indicative of the change in Sterne's reputation between 1760 and the end of the century that while this early critic sees Sterne as a plagiarist in his serious moments, Ferriar, in his Illustrations of

¹ The Clockmakers Outcry, (London, 1760), pp. 27, 44, reprinted in Sterneiana, Vol. III.

² Thraliana, ed. Katherine C. Balderston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), I, 23-24; for discussion of this, see Edward Bensley, "An Alleged Source of Tristram Shandy," N & Q, 159 (1930), 84; and Helen Sard Hughes, "A Precursor of Tristram Shandy," JEGP, 17 (1918), 227-51.

Sterne, puts forward the opposite case, claiming that Sterne was "drawn aside from his natural bias to the pathetic" to become a "copyist" in his humour, while "in the serious parts of his works, he seems to have depended on his own force."¹

Both critics are attempting to explain away the puzzling mixture of jest and earnest which is the hallmark of Sterne's writing even before his full development of the pathetic scenes in the later volumes of Tristram Shandy. Yorick dies "quite broken hearted", according to popular opinion and that of both Eugenius and Tristram, but the evidence of the death scene seems to suggest the opposite, for while Eugenius weeps speechlessly at the bedside, Yorick dies with a final "Cervantick" jest upon his lips (I, 12, pp. 30-31). The mixture of the comic and the pathetic continues in the description of the grave, where passers-by, like budding actors, rehearse his Shakespearian epitaph in "a variety of plaintive tones". We become even more uncertain how we should react when this is immediately followed by the black page. Is it an emblem of chaos, nullity, the silence of the grave and Tristram's speechless sorrow, or perhaps a joke aimed at the reader's and Eugenius's taste for gravity - a visual parody of the black expanses of mourning clothes, funeral invitations and printed elegies?²

Sterne seems to delight in making the reader ask such questions, and we never feel quite at ease in reading his sentimental episodes, because we are always uncertain how we are meant to react - with tears or laughter, or perhaps both. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that critics like Ferriar and the pamphleteer tried to justify an approach which disregarded parts of the text as unimportant plagiarisms. They

¹ John Ferriar, Illustrations of Sterne (London, 1798), p. 7.

² Ferriar, p. 171, traces the black page to Dr Fludd's Utriusque cosmi Historia, where it is an emblem of chaos; on mourning clothes, see Nicholas Penny, Mourning (London: HMSO, 1981), pp. 15-16; on elegies, see Draper, The Funeral Elegy.

preferred to grasp only one of the Shandean handles, along with the readers of the expurgated and emasculated Beauties of Sterne, which, like Uncle Toby's wargames, combined maximum pleasure with minimum discomfort.¹ Sterne's piecemeal and episodic approach, using short chapters, forces us to make judgements about the way we are meant to respond to the text, and more often than not, at the end of the episode or in the very next chapter, our judgement is derided, and we suddenly find ourselves belittled and humiliated, like Doctor Slop thrown into the mud. The abruptness with which Le Fever's life-thread is cut introduces a disturbing note into our indulgence in the sentimental prolongation of the scene, and Tristram's moralizing speech to Jenny on the passing of time and approaching death is swept aside in the following chapter, as though it were merely a demonstration of his ability to imitate a particularly gloomy vein of writing (VI, 10, p. 426; IX, 8-9, pp. 610-11). Once we have learnt to expect these sudden transitions from the pathetic to the humorous, we tend to become even more cautious in our responses, and begin to discover disturbing ambiguities within the sentimental episodes themselves, as for example in Tristram and Yorick's sentimental meetings with Maria.

Sterne's works continually thwart our attempts to grasp them by one handle alone, unless we resort to Ferriar's tactics and those of The Beauties of Sterne. This same ruthlessly reductive approach is taken by Dilworth, who sees Sterne as a comedian, pure and simple, whose pathetic scenes become a series of private jokes at his audience's predilection for sensibility. Observing the humour that undercuts all Sterne's sentimental episodes, Dilworth concludes that the pathos must be a pose, and that the Sermons are mere exercises in

¹ The Beauties of Sterne, first published in 1782, reached a twelfth edition by 1790; the tenth edition of 1787 introduced some of the milder comic passages by way of balancing the utile and dulce, see the Preface, pp. v-vi.

piety, which might be utterly discounted were it not for the way the jester's scabrous wit threatens to break through the mask of self-imposed gravity.¹

Putney, like Dilworth, claims that Sterne was pandering to the demands of his readers by introducing sentimental elements into the later volumes of Tristram Shandy, and secretly laughing at their inability to notice the undercutting ironies. A Sentimental Journey was "a hoax by which Sterne persuaded his contemporaries that the humour he wanted to write was the pathos they wished to read."² The assumption is that the twentieth-century reader can join Sterne in laughing at the misreadings of the eighteenth century, but in fact, as we have seen from the comments on Yorick's death in The Clockmakers Outcry, the mixture of humour and pathos in Tristram Shandy was recognized right from the start. The deaths of Bobby and Le Fever merely brought this aspect to the fore. Later imitators of Sterne acknowledged this feature of the novel by writing thinly-veiled imitations of such sentimental and comic scenes as Tristram's dance with Nanette and his wish to end his days "and go to heaven with this nut brown maid" (VII, 43, p. 538).³

One imitator, in a bogus ninth volume of Tristram Shandy, implies that it is upon this mixture of comedy and sentimentality that Sterne's popularity rests, for having amused us with over a hundred pages of Shandean wit, the author declares that all that is now necessary is "a little affliction to make you completely happy." This is followed by an account of the death of Trim, where piety and pathos are combined

¹ Ernest N. Dilworth, The Unsentimental Journey of Laurence Sterne (New York: King's Crown Press, 1948).

² Rufus D. Putney, "The Evolution of A Sentimental Journey," PQ, 19 (1940), 349-69.

³ Compare the dance with Arabella in Miss C--Y's Cabinet of Curiosities (London, 1765), p. 34, reprinted in Sterneiana, Vol. V.

with the humour that naturally arises from the unchanging characters of Uncle Toby and the Corporal:

---My uncle begged to know where he would be buried,---"Throw me upon a field."---The birds of the air will devour you.---"Then lay a firelock by me."---"My dear Sir, you will have no power to use it."---Then they cannot hurt me."

Observing the king of terrors stalking towards him, he earnestly begged for my uncle's hand. He kissed it tenderly; and fixing his eyes upon him, expired without a groan.---He is gone.---¹

The general misconception that Sterne's pathos could be easily separated from his humour did not arise until after his death, assisted by the popularity of The Beauties of Sterne, the many pathetic imitations, and the tendency of illustrators to pick on such subjects as the death of Le Fever and Maria de Moulines, giving them a purely sentimental treatment which obscured the tone of the original text.²

Nevertheless, if Sterne's tendency to jest even in the house of mourning was recognized during his lifetime, it was rarely approved of by his early readers. Thus, while it was fashionable in 1760 to have read the first two volumes of Tristram Shandy and the Sermons, it was equally important to maintain reservations about their relative merits. Lady Bradshaigh informed Richardson that the novel, though indecent, had made her laugh, while the Sermons (of which she read only the first three) were "the worst that ever appear'd in print". The Monthly Review commended the Sermons as moral essays, but joined in the general censure of the use of Yorick's name. The Critical Review was the only early defender of Sterne's apparently cheerful, optimistic approach to

¹ The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, "Volume IX" (London, 1766), pp. 139-41.

² See Stout's "Note on the Illustrations" in A Sentimental Journey, pp. xii-xiii; on Lydia Sterne's projected plates for Tristram Shandy, see Wilbur L. Cross, The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1929), p. 509.

religion and life:

Let the narrow minded bigot persuade himself that religion consists in a grave and forbidding exterior and austere conversation; let him wear the garb of sorrow, rail at innocent festivity, and make himself disagreeable to become righteous; we, for our parts, will laugh and sing, and lighten the unavoidable cares of life by every harmless recreation.¹

This critic, at least, has taken to heart the opening of Sterne's sermon "On the House of Feasting and the House of Mourning Described", where the preacher questions the traditional view of the Christian as one who must "go weeping through" the pilgrimage of life in doleful self-abasement. Surely, Sterne argues, God, who is "infinitely happy", will not deny us what pleasures we can derive from observing "the natural or artificial beauties of the country we are passing through" (Sermons, I, 25-26). This same argument is the very basis of the "spirit of Shandeism", which, Sterne tells John Hall-Stevenson, "will not suffer me to think two moments upon any grave subject," and without which divine "consolation" he would "lay down and die---die."²

Tristram shares this philosophy in his flight from death in volume seven and his participation in the peasants' dance of joy - "VIVA LA JOIA!/FIDON LA TRISTESSA!" (VII, 43, p. 538). Yorick, who likewise travels for his health, is similarly determined to make the most of what lies along his path, unlike Smelfungus and Mundungus. In his Sermons, Sterne pities such "splenetick and morose" travellers, "whose natural pleasures are burthens, and who fly from joy . . . as if it were really an evil in itself" (IV, 29). As for Tristram, the climax of Yorick's journey is a dance of joy in which he beholds "Religion

¹ Sterne: The Critical Heritage, ed. Alan B. Howes (London: Routledge, 1974), pp. 90, 77, 76.

² Letters, p. 139.

mixing in the dance" (A Sentimental Journey, p. 284), but unlike Tristram, Yorick does not join in the dance himself. The parson in his black coat has no place amidst such gaiety, and can only observe it from the sidelines. Nor is Yorick averse to sorrow: he goes "in quest of melancholy adventures", seeking out Maria of Moulines "like the Knight of the Woeful Countenance", hoping that his sympathy will make him conscious of the existence of his soul (p. 270).

Sterne ridicules such behaviour in his sermon on "Penances", and denies that God has:

created us on purpose to go mourning, all our lives long, in sack-cloth and ashes,---and sent us into the world as so many saint-errants, in quest of adventures full of sorrow and affliction (VI, 88).

The use of the same knight-errant image here may incline us to view Yorick as a satirical portrait of that serious piety of which Sterne disapproves, but this would be to ignore the evident pleasure that Yorick derives from joyful experiences such as "The Grace" as well as from tearful ones such as his meeting with Maria.

Yorick, it appears, is equally at home in both the house of mourning and the house of feasting. In Sterne's Sermons, however, pleasure and sorrow are mutually exclusive, and no mention is made of the pleasurable form of sorrow that Yorick experiences with Maria. Despite his initial denial of Solomon's wisdom, Sterne soon concedes that even the most moderate of worldly pleasures are dangerous and ultimately vain. The only true happiness lies in religion and the "certain hopes of a better life", and the only road to this passes by the house of mourning. The contemplation of sorrow and affliction "forces the mind to see and reflect upon vanity,---the perishing condition and uncertain tenure of every thing in this world", and unless it has this moral purpose in view, sorrow "has no end, but to

shorten a man's days." Not only is Yorick's approach to the enjoyable in both houses forbidden, but the Shandean attitude of laughter in the face of death is also shown to be impossible. The jester has no place among the suffering or bereaved, for "the moment he enters this gate of affliction", his "busy and fluttering spirits, which in the house of mirth were wont to transport him from one diverting object to another," will be immediately laid low (Sermons, I, 22, 41-45).

How can we account for these apparent contradictions between Yorick, Tristram, Sterne and the Sermons? One possibility is to follow Dilworth, and say that the Sermons do not represent Sterne's real opinions. This then leaves us free to see Sterne either as a jester, pure and simple, or as a sad fool in an absurdist tragedy, laughing at the sad triteness of life in a world where man's fallen state is seen not in terms of his depravity, but in the fearful curse of solipsism. On the other hand, Cash and Stout seek to reconcile the Sermons with the novels to show that Sterne's "intrepid cheerfulness", like Fielding's, is in fact a higher form of seriousness, which is ultimately "rooted in his Christianity". New similarly assumes that the novels have a moral purpose, but therefore reads Tristram Shandy as a satire of which Tristram is the satiric butt, because he foolishly ignores his own mortality.¹

The problem with all these various approaches is that they depend upon largely intuitive and certainly very different ideas of the

¹ Dilworth, pp. 46-48; Ben Reid, "The Sad Hilarity of Sterne," VQR, 32 (1956), 107-30; William Bowman Piper, "Tristram Shandy's Tragical Testimony," Criticism, 3 (1961), 171-85; William Bowman Piper, Laurence Sterne (New York: Twayne, 1965); Battestin, The Providence of Wit, pp. 241-72; Arthur Hill Cash, Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 26-29; The Winged Skull, ed. Arthur H. Cash and John M. Stedmond (London: Methuen, 1971), Preface, p. vii; Gardner D. Stout, "Yorick's Sentimental Journey: A Comic 'Pilgrim's Progress' for the Man of Feeling," ELH, 30 (1963), 395-412; Melvyn New, Laurence Sterne as Satirist (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1969).

relationship between Sterne and his narrators. The fact that he enjoyed casting himself in the roles of Tristram and Yorick in real life complicates the matter further. Would Sterne have been pleased to be hailed as the exponent of Shandeism if his Tristram had really been intended as a satiric dunce in the tradition of the narrator of A Tale of a Tub? Would he have satirized Yorick in A Sentimental Journey and still continued to use the name to refer to himself? New's purely satirical reading suggests a deliberate anti-Shandean purpose behind Tristram Shandy, which does not seem to tally with Sterne's enjoyment of his Shandean role in London society in the 1760's or his letter to John Hall-Stevenson on the healthful effects of such cheerfulness. Nevertheless, having said this, can we take Tristram and Yorick at face value, or are they perhaps Sterne's mouthpieces at times and his targets at others, like Swift's Gulliver? Is Sterne parodying or championing Shandeism and sensibility?

The tension we have observed between Sterne's house of mourning, which all good pilgrims must visit, and the house of feasting, which lies off the road as a pleasant distraction and consolation, but which at best has no moral purpose, and at worst can make us forgetful of our heavenly destination, seems to indicate uncertainty in the preacher himself. In the sermon, Sterne is duty-bound finally to agree with Solomon that the house of mourning is the better place to be, but in doing so he is forced to contradict his opening remarks about the innocent pleasures which God allows the pilgrim to enjoy, and insist that even the simplest pleasures lead to sin. Through Tristram and Yorick, however, Sterne is free to investigate the relative merits of both these houses and the two forms of consolation they offer as a fence against the inevitable sorrows of life: Shandeism, which laughs at death because it would not cry, and sensibility, which comforts itself in its own sorrows by indulging in sympathy for the sufferings of others.

II - Shandeism

"I write of melancholy, by being busy to avoid melancholy," says Burton in his introduction to The Anatomy of Melancholy, taking the role of Democritus Junior, laughing at human folly.¹ Tristram Shandy is presented as if it were a similar form of consolation to its author, who lives:

in a constant endeavour to fence against the infirmities of ill health, and other evils of life, by mirth; being firmly persuaded that every time a man smiles,---but much more so when he laughs, that it adds something to this Fragment of Life (I, p. 3).

This philosophy is seen in action in volume one as Tristram writes of the eccentricities of the English character, which serve "to make us merry" when "the weather will not suffer us to go out of doors." This Shandean observation, we soon learn, has itself been "struck out" by Tristram "this very rainy day" (I, 21, p. 64).

Whereas Burton's laughter is that of the man who has grown weary of tears, the culmination of a lifetime's meditation on man's failure to "consider the mutability of this world", Tristram's gaiety seems to have far less connection with this Solomon-like wisdom and resignation. Tristram diverts himself from thoughts of illness and death by contemplating the follies of his family, but he does so with an affection which Burton's encyclopaedic study of mankind obviously lacks. He faces up to the vanity of life, but he prefers to laugh first and cry later. He acknowledges the mutability of all things, including himself, but still insists on finding death laughable. For

¹ Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy, 6th ed. (Oxford, 1651), p. 5.

Burton, death is only laughable because men ignore it, and, like Democritus, "he should have no cause of laughter" if men governed their lives "by discretion and providence."¹ To Tristram, on the other hand, man is always comic in death, regardless of the piety with which he approaches his end, because death is the supreme example of man's failure to command his own destiny. As we shall see when we come to discuss Walter and Trim, Sterne goes beyond Burton, and finds vanity and self-aggrandizement even in our apparently pious approaches to mortality.

At first sight, then, Tristram's laughter is less obviously Christian than Burton's, since its end seems to be his own and his readers' enjoyment of the inevitable vanities of life and death, not an awareness of the importance of living in expectation of the life to come. Tristram the invalid is more interested in the benefits of laughter as a temporary restorative than as an eternal perspective, and in this respect he is closer to Rabelais the physician than Burton the divine. It is in Rabelais's dedicatory epistle to book four of his Works, where he first signs himself as "Physician", that we are told of the "many languishing, sick and disconsolate Persons" who "have deceived their Grief, pass'd their Time merrily, and been inspir'd with new Joy and Comfort" through perusing the antics of Gargantua and Pantagruel. The Dedication to Tristram Shandy clearly recalls this and Rabelais's Prologue on the healthiness of "Pantagruelism" and his purpose as expressed in the verses to the reader:

To inspire with Mirth the Hearts of those that moan
And change to Laughter the afflictive Groan:
For LAUGHTER is Man's property alone.²

¹ Burton, p. 25.

² François Rabelais, Works, trans. Thomas Urquhart, revised John Ozell (London, 1737), IV, lxi-lxii, lxxiii-lxxi; I, cxxvi.

However, just as Tristram is always less serious than Burton, so he is also less emphatically cheerful than Rabelais. As Charles Nodier remarked in 1830, "the dominant spirit is a bitter consciousness of the deceptions of the heart, manifested now in laughter, now in tears, beneath which one always senses the poignant tortures of a concealed anguish."¹ Whilst Nodier quite rightly senses the difference in tone between Sterne and Rabelais, he tends to exaggerate the tragic element in the former. Tristram is neither Burton's Heraclitus, who "out of a serious meditation of men's lives, fell a weeping, and with continual tears bewailed their misery, madnes [sic] and folly," nor his Democritus, who "burst out a laughing" because man's "whole life seemed to him so ridiculous," but a combination of the two.² In the midst of his own apparently foolish attempt to escape from death in volume seven, Tristram actually compares himself to both of these philosophers, and while it is evident that he has more in common with Democritus (particularly from the fact that he cannot remember the weeping philosopher's name), he is also careful to point out that Democritus laughed "ten times more than I". His admission that Heraclitus had "more discretion" than either himself or Democritus reveals that Tristram is aware of the unfavourable interpretation that the reader may put upon his Shandeism (VII, 4, p. 483)

Although Addison supported the idea that laughter is a particular mark of man's superiority in creation in Spectator No. 249, seeing it, like Tristram, as "a Counterpoise to the Spleen", like many other moral writers, he tended to prefer the house of mourning to the house of feasting. In Spectator No. 163, for instance, Addison contrasts the consolations in affliction that are generally drawn from "Books of

¹ Sterne: The Critical Heritage, p. 419.

² Burton, p. 23.

Morality" with the consolatory regimen of Saint-Évremond, who "fancies Don Quixote can give more Relief to an heavy Heart than Plutarch or Seneca, as it is much easier to divert Grief than to conquer it," but then goes on to assert his own preference for the first type and for those authors "that give us Instances of Calamities and Misfortunes, and show Human Nature in its greatest Distresses."¹ Throughout the century there is a tendency to play down the consolatory value of laughter and insist instead on its more obviously moral application in reformatory satire, as in Spectator No. 249 and Fielding's very similar Preface to Joseph Andrews. In Amelia, Fielding's Doctor Harrison, a clergyman who uses humour to console and while away cares, is an unusual attempt to show the practical outworkings of a more Shandean approach to life of which many Christian moralists would have been suspicious.

New's satirical reading of Tristram Shandy assumes that Sterne shared this suspicion, and that the passages of pessimism or apparent doubt, such as the section on Democritus and Heraclitus, are evidence of Tristram's folly. New's Tristram is an unchristian fool, vainly seeking happiness through sensation and immortality through literary fame. In the final volumes, his worldly confidence degenerates into sickness and despair as he realises that he cannot escape death or hope to complete the projected story of his life.² Petrakis similarly sees Tristram as representative of the Pauline "old Man", who foolishly attempts to avoid death, and while he disagrees with New's judgement of Toby as a fool who is similarly unaware of death (preferring to see him as the opposite, a man of natural piety), he nevertheless shares New's view of Yorick as the Christian norm against which Tristram should be

¹ Spectator, II, 141-43, 465-69.

² New, pp. 171-205; see also Jean-Jacques Mayoux, "Variations on the Time-Sense. in Tristram Shandy," in The Winged Skull, pp. 3-18.

judged.¹

This would be an attractive argument were it not for two considerations: first, that Yorick's death is by no means a model of piety and resignation, and secondly, that Tristram's Shandean attitude to illness and death was clearly shared by Sterne and commended by some of his contemporaries. The writer of the "Occasional Verses on the Death of Mr Sterne", for instance, pays tribute to Sterne's bold attempt to "disarm" the forces of "Sorrow, Spleen and Care", and concludes that Death, fearing the end of his "reign" as King of Terrors, has exacted a cruel vengeance on the heroic author.² Yorick undergoes a similar martyrdom for the cause of wit when his opposition to affected gravity is mistaken for scurrility and disrespect. While both Cross and Curtis have been tempted to speculate on the biographical significance of Yorick's demise, detecting a note of self-pity in the episode which possibly reflects Sterne's disappointment at his failure to gain preferment after the scandal concerning his mother, Yorick's death can also be seen as a witty prophecy foretelling how the wit of Tristram Shandy would be misunderstood when the identity of its author was revealed.³

Yorick's attitude to humour is not sufficiently different from Tristram's to make him a Christian norm or exemplum. He jests in the face of death, just as Tristram does, and he offers no exemplary deathbed advice to Eugenius on the need to revoke worldly ambition and seek the lasting rewards of the next world. Indeed, his death seems to be a direct result of the disappointment of his worldly ambitions

¹ Byron Petrakis, "Laurence Sterne and the Tradition of Christian Folly," Ph. D. Univ. of Florida, 1968, DA, 30 (1969), 289-A; New, pp. 76-77, 150, 205.

² Sterne: The Critical Heritage, p. 419.

³ Cross, Sterne, p. 100; Lewis P. Curtis, The Politicks of Laurence Sterne (London: OUP, 1929), p. 121.

together with a fatal, Burtonian melancholy brought on by libel and scandal.¹ His death is not a triumph of Christian resignation in the tradition of Clarissa and Addison. Yorick's cheerfulness and his opposition to "gravity" are really no different from Tristram's fencing against his infirmities. Both favour a form of therapy which Sterne himself supports in his Sermons and letters, a therapy which finds support not only in Burton and Rabelais, but also in contemporary medicine. In George Cheyne's The English Malady, hobbies are recommended as innocent pleasures to purge away the spleen from which so many English illnesses are supposed to arise.²

Sterne sees it as perfectly justified to attempt to divert oneself from the sorrows of life in this way. "If there is an evil in this world, 'tis sorrow and heaviness of heart." All afflictions, including Tristram's loss of health and Yorick's disappointment in the area of "coronets and mitres" are "only evil, as they occasion sorrow". If we can laugh at them, he implies, and take comfort in the pleasures that are still available to us, then "the rest is fancy, and dwelleth only in the head of man" (Sermons, IV, 29-30). Through cheerfulness we can withstand the inevitable evils of life, and make the most of the Creator's beneficence. This is clearly the theory behind Tristram's flight from death in his travels and in his hobby of writing. Far from impiously ignoring his mortality, through Shandeism Tristram rises above it.

Sterne came to terms with his own lifelong illness in the same way. "I Shandy it more than ever," he writes to Garrick in 1762, "and verily believe, that by mere Shandeism sublimated by a laughter-loving

¹ Burton, pp. 150-51.

² Roy Porter, "Against the Spleen," in Laurence Sterne: Riddles and Mysteries, ed. Valerie G. Myer (London: Vision Press, 1984), pp. 84-98.

people, I fence as much against infirmities, as I do by the benefit of air and climate."¹ Even at the very end of his life, Sterne is to be found diverting himself by writing a "Romance", placing himself in the tradition of those great humorists who wrote in the midst of "melancholly" circumstances and "bodily pain", and hoping thereby that "quand Je serai mort, on mettra mon nom dans le liste de ces Heros, qui sont Morts en plaisantant."² The list he is thinking of includes not only Scarron, Rabelais and Vespasian - who "died in a jest upon his close stool" (Tristram Shandy, V, 3, p. 356), but also his own Yorick.³ Sterne may also be remembering a friend from the Crazy Castle days, William Hewett, who had recently earned a place among these others by emulating Pomponius Atticus, and cheerfully starving himself to death after learning that his illness was incurable, "entertaining his guests with music, joking and laughing until he died."⁴

Tristram clearly intends to entertain his readers until the bitter end. He promises twice in his first volume that he will continue "writing and publishing two volumes of my life every year" for "as long as I live." This period could be as long as "forty years, if it pleases the fountain of health to bless me so long with life and good spirits" (I, 14, p. 37; 22, p. 74). In volume four, he freely admits that "my OPINIONS will be the death of me," but this does not depress him. On the contrary, it seems to fill him with new energy and optimism (IV, 13, p. 286). The comfort he derives from the knowledge

¹ Letters, p. 163.

² Letters, p. 416.

³ Letters, p. 417, note 3; Rabelais, I, xx-xxi; Sterne's source for Vespasian was Bacon's essay "Of Death", see Francis Bacon, Essays, ed Geoffrey Grigson (London: OUP, 1937), p. 10.

⁴ Letters, pp. 202-03, note 3; Arthur H. Cash, Laurence Sterne: The Early and Middle Years (London: Methuen, 1975), p. 190.

that "Nature is all bountiful" is based not only on the certainty of a never-ending supply of goose-quills with which to write, but also upon the fact that he will never run out of material to write about. "I shall never overtake myself," he declares, with a sense of the freedom he has as a Shandean writer, rather than a sense of despair as death demands the right to put a final full stop to both life and opinions.

Shandeism, as McGilchrist observes, "is not a meaningless libertinism, but a freedom snatched from the strict limitations of mortality."¹ To Sterne and Tristram it is more important to die in the middle of a jest than to run out of lines before the final curtain. In a sense then, the silence after the end of volume nine is proof of the success of Tristram's philosophy. He has died without succumbing to death, without losing his cheerfulness, and without finishing his life story. He has successfully fenced against death until the very last pass. This apparent victory for Shandeism is unaffected by the question of whether or not the ninth volume completes the novel, since at whatever stage Sterne had decided to call a halt, earlier or later, Tristram's project inevitably would have remained incomplete.²

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that the implied death with which the novel ends carries no hint of tragedy or sense of the futility of Tristram's endeavours, and it would be equally erroneous to suppose that Tristram has no moments of doubt and fear. As Piper has pointed out, Tristram's references to his illness become more frequent in the later volumes, and the signs of approaching death increase from volume seven onwards, reaching a climax in volume nine in the apostrophe to Jenny and the admission that he is too ill to enjoy

¹ Iain McGilchrist, Against Criticism (London: Faber, 1982), p. 173.

² For a discussion of this point, see Wayne C. Booth, "Did Sterne Complete Tristram Shandy?" MP, 48 (1951), 172-83.

writing the "choicest morsel" of his story, *Uncle Toby's amours* (VII, 24, p. 520).¹ These elements lead Cook to take a tragic view of the novel, claiming that Tristram's "constantly asserted freedom to go into ever greater details, or to digress", actually increases our awareness of the threatening void of death and infinity, which in turn "qualifies the nature of the finite, revealing it as capricious, irregular, half melancholy, shoring up pitiable but lovable ideas and quirks to weather out its fond and foolish existence." Piper similarly sees the comic elements in Tristram Shandy as a thin veneer covering a tragedy, despite the fact that Tristram's spirits remain undampened.²

Nevertheless, such tragic readings of the novel always seem to result in exaggeration, as, for instance, in Park's assertion that all Sterne's characters have "a melancholy awareness of death".³ As Hartley has observed in commenting on Piper's reading, to see Tristram Shandy as a tragedy is to ignore "the obviously joyous qualities" which give the work its lasting appeal.⁴ In attempting to read the novel as an absurdist work, many critics have ignored Sterne's delicate balance of humour and pathos. Lockridge tends to do just this when he comments on the apparent contradiction between what he sees as the meaningless world of the novel, which is "devoid of hope", and Tristram's tremendous will to live. Sterne's vision becomes "a vision of the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it." Because Sterne and Tristram refuse to prepare for

¹ Piper, "Tristram Shandy's Tragical Testimony," pp. 182-83; New, pp. 190-92.

² Albert Cook, "Reflexive Attitudes: Sterne, Gogol, Gide," Criticism, 2 (1960), 164-74; Piper, "Tristram Shandy's Tragical Testimony," pp. 184-85.

³ Park, "Tristram Shandy and the New 'Novel of Sensibility'," p. 271.

⁴ Lodwick Hartley, Laurence Sterne: An Annotated Bibliography, 1965-1977 (London: Prior, 1978), p. 7.

death in a conventional Christian manner, Lockridge assumes that Sterne was a modern in his religion, and that his belief in heaven was weaker than his belief in life, an argument which ignores the concept of Christian cheerfulness which Sterne puts forward in his Sermons and in his letter to Garrick.¹

That this form of optimism is the real basis of Sterne's comedy is argued forcefully by critics such as Cash and McKillop. The latter suggests that while Sterne's mechanical universe of cause and effect may make man appear an insignificant fool, it is ultimately reassuring to be a single cog in a providential machine. To Cash, Sterne's vision of man is at once comic and orthodox, since man is ridiculous only because he fails to know himself, and not because he is under the curse of solipsism, and therefore cannot hope to do so.²

It could be argued, then, that it is Sterne's orthodox Christianity which frees him from the fear of death, and enables him to face his illness and joke about it in his letters. He knew that he was dying slowly from his Cambridge days onwards, and yet there is never any self-pity or fear of the end in his letters, a fact which has led Fluchère to wonder if Sterne was ever afraid of death.³ In his travels abroad, Sterne sees himself as emulating Tristram's defiant flight from the King of Terrors.⁴ While in Montpellier, he writes that the town has the reputation of being "the grave of consumptive people", and yet he prefers to remain there and "run hazards" rather than "dye by

¹ Ernest H. Lockridge, "A Vision of the Sentimental Absurd: Sterne and Camus," Sewanee Review, 72 (1964), 652-67.

² Alan D. McKillop, The Early Masters of English Fiction (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1967), pp. 198-202; Arthur H. Cash, "The Sermon in Tristram Shandy," ELH, 31 (1964), 395-417.

³ Henri Fluchère, Laurence Sterne, trans. Barbara Bray (London: OUP, 1965), p. 208.

⁴ Letters, p. 257.

Inches".¹ The lightness of the tone is all the more surprising when one considers that at the end of the previous winter Sterne had himself presided over the deathbed of a younger consumptive, George Oswald. He even attended the autopsy, a scene which he describes with almost scientific detachment, despite the fact that the sight of those disease-ravaged lungs must have been a grim reminder of his own inevitable fate.²

Critics have often attempted to explain Sterne's works by referring to his health. Tristram Shandy may have been revised during a period of great personal strain, as Cash suggests, but it goes against the character of Sterne as revealed in his letters to conclude, as a supposed acquaintance of Sterne did in the St James Chronicle, that the novel was "conceived and written under the greatest heaviness of heart." Cross's similar idea that A Sentimental Journey was written alongside The Journal to Eliza in a state of near despair has now been discredited. Sterne's illness is important, but not as a consciously tragic background to his comedy. The real significance of his consumptive state lies in the energetic and emphatically cheerful approach to life that it inspired.³

The same illness is shared by both his narrators, Tristram and Yorick, but neither character takes his illness very seriously. At the end of volume four (significantly after a passage on the healthful benefits of Shandeism), Tristram bids cheerful defiance to his illness in his promise to the reader to resume his story in a twelve-month,

¹ Letters, p. 200.

² Archibald B. Shepperson, "Yorick as Ministering Angel," VQR, 30 (1954), 54-66.

³ Cash, Sterne, pp. 286-87; Sterne: The Critical Heritage, p. 60; Cross, Sterne, p. 440; Putney, "The Evolution of A Sentimental Journey," pp. 350-54; Rufus D. Putney, "Sterne's Eliza," TLS (9 March 1946), 115; Peter Quennell, Four Portraits (London: Collins, 1945), p. 160; Reid, pp. 119-21.

"unless this vile cough kills me in the mean time" (IV, 32, p. 338). Yorick is equally light-hearted about his physical dissolution, choosing "to join in the laugh against himself" for his skeletal figure and matching horse, upon whose back, he would say, he could "meditate as delightfully de vanitate mundi et fugâ saeculi, as with the advantage of a death's head before him," and "compose" both his cough and his sermon (I, 10, pp. 19-20).

This tendency to make jokes using the very imagery and rhetoric of the kind of pious meditation on mortality which illness should inspire is common to both Tristram and Yorick, and is seen particularly in their witty treatments of the traditional image of the journey or voyage of life.¹ Tristram refuses to accept that his life's journey is over when Death knocks at his door, so he sets off on a new digression across Europe, parodying the traditional image in word and deed. As he hastens away from Boulogne like a fleeing criminal, he imagines the bystanders speculating upon what crime has caused him to flee. He defends himself against these imaginary charges: he is neither traitor, murderer, adulterer, nor debtor. In worldly terms he is innocent, but as he playfully remarks in the opening sentence of the chapter, the truth of the matter is that all men are "debtors and sinners before heaven". He is running from death because he refuses to pay "the debt of Nature" which fallen man must pay. Tristram thus combines an awareness of his spiritual state in orthodox Christian terms (he clearly believes it, too, since he finds the bystanders fools for failing to understand it) with a determination not to give way to conventional piety. Through punning and false wit he attempts to undermine the seriousness of the traditional imagery, reducing Death to a rude bailiff figure in the pay of a "hard-hearted" female

¹ For this image, see Sherlock, p. 34; Taylor, Holy Living, p. 113.

moneylender: "I want but patience of her, and I will pay her every farthing I owe her" (VII, 7, pp. 487-88). Since Tristram must inevitably pay this debt, his use of a typical debtor's plea for time is both witty and pathetic. Tristram does not want to die, but knowing that he must, his last defence is to enjoy the ridiculousness of his plight.

Yorick behaves similarly on his arrival in Calais at the beginning of A Sentimental Journey, airing his fears that he may die in France and forfeit all his possessions under the Droits d'aubaine (pp. 66-67). Stout questions whether this law, which formed a prime target for Smollett's splenetic attack on French "tyranny", was ever enforced as rigorously as Smollett implies, but in fact Sterne himself had to fight to rescue George Oswald's goods from a similar fate in 1763.¹ His use of the Droits d'aubaine here, then, contributes to the fine balance of pathos and humour in the episode, bringing home the injustice of death in depriving us of our identity and condemning us to be forgotten through the dispersion of those effects which lent us our identity in life, and through which we vainly hope to live on in the memories of our heirs. To Yorick, the loss of all his possessions is a particularly distressing fate to contemplate, since it would mean losing the picture of Eliza which he has vowed to carry with him to the grave. The French law highlights the futility of such a romantic gesture; death inevitably deprives us of both earthly love and its mementoes.

Nevertheless, Yorick continues to joke about his predicament, playing on the idea of the voyage of life, a commonplace going back to Seneca and the Church Fathers, in which the soul voyages through life in the ship of the body towards the safe harbour of death.² Yorick

¹ Shepperson, p. 60.

² Seneca, Epistolae Morales, LXX; Samuel Gardiner, A Booke of Angling or Fishing (London, 1606), pp. 10-11.

accordingly sees his consumptive body as a "wreck" which the French have lured to destruction on their coast, and thus he is able to reassure himself through wit that he is not going to die, because his vessel has not yet reached its appointed destination. The same playful mixture of literal and spiritual voyaging is found in Tristram's account of his channel crossing, where he asks the captain whether it is possible to be "overtaken by Death in this passage". His pursuer is, it seems, determined to wreck Tristram's body with sea-sickness before he can reach a haven on the French coast (Tristram Shandy, VII, 2, pp. 481-82).

As one might expect, Sterne makes similar Shandean capital out of religious themes during the course of his own travels: "I was . . . as I thought, journeying on to the other world," he quips after miraculously surviving a fever which had claimed the lives of many in Toulouse. A couple more of these lucky escapes "will make me believe I shall leave you at last by translation, and not by fair death."¹

In fact Sterne had good reason for believing that he led a charmed life. The account of his early years is full of miraculous escapes and near disasters, most notably his falling through a mill-race.² In later life, Sterne was fully aware of the risks he was running, and Yorick and Tristram are equally conscious of the dangers they face. As Cross notes, when Death knocks at Tristram's door, the consumptive shows none of the signs of fear depicted in Thomas Patch's painting and engraving of the scene.³

Sterne, Tristram and Yorick are quite happy to find consolation in their illness by laughing at their own ridiculousness, despite the fact that Sterne's contemporaries would, for the most part, have considered

¹ Letters, pp. 185-86.

² Letters, pp. 1-2.

³ Cross, Sterne, p. 401.

such behaviour as unchristian. Sterne himself expresses doubt about it in the same letter where he voices his desire to die jesting. His will to live makes him feel "something like revelation . . . which tells, I shall not dye" (he frequently speaks of his survival in this prophetic vein), and yet he freely admits the novelty and irresponsibility of such an attitude, since "any other man w^d set his house in order---".¹ Despite his calling, Sterne's unwillingness to retire from the stage of life in order to prepare for death is typical of the eighteenth-century layman's reaction to the seventeenth-century pattern for holy living and dying.² Also typical is the idea expressed in his sermon, "The Case of Hezekiah and the Messengers", preached in Paris in 1763, that "thousands of good men with all the helps of philosophy, and against all the assurances of a well spent life" have "still leaned towards this world, and wanted spirits and resolution" when facing death (Sermons, III, 32-33). Sterne seems to number himself among this majority of men - the Belfords and Anna Howes - rather than among the Addisons and Clarissas who die according to the old pattern, willingly and without fear. Even "after we are most prepared", death is still "a terror to human nature" (Sermons, VI, 40).

The same layman's attitude can be seen in Sterne's behaviour at George Oswald's deathbed. Since health depends on "cheeriness of heart", Sterne felt it was his duty to keep the dangerous nature of Oswald's illness hidden from the patient "so long as there remain'd the least probability of life." While Rabelais would have commended this, to many seventeenth-century divines such diversion of a dying man from the all-important task of making himself right with his Creator was a serious crime.³ The dying Oswald comes across in the letters as the

¹ Letters, p. 416.

² See McManners, pp. 84-86; Sherlock, pp. 152-55; Taylor, Holy Dying, pp. 59-119.

³ Rabelais, IV, lxiv; Bayly, p. 718; Gardiner, Devotions, pp. 125-26.

more pious of the two men, finally receiving the news of his approaching end "without any emotion but that of religion". It is Sterne who finds it a "dismal task" to be "the messenger of death to one we love."¹ His Shandeism seems to be a symptom of an inability to face death responsibly and seriously. The consolation thus gained is only temporary, and, as the asthma brought on by Tristram's "skating against the wind" in Flanders and the haemorrhage caused by his fit of laughter "on seeing a cardinal make water like a quirister" show, Shandeism may actually endanger health rather than improve it (VIII, 6, p. 545).

"Sterne could not reconcile himself to a life which prepares for death," but gave an honest picture of his predicament in Yorick, who has "all the apprehensions of a man suspended between the need to set his house in order and the need to 'exist'."² Nonetheless, we should not assume that Sterne had no Christian faith, and that all his sermons and occasional pious reflections are mere platitudes. The letters to John Mill and those to George Oswald's father are really not as different as Thomson suggests.³ The description of Oswald's piety is admiring without being sentimental in both accounts, but in the letters to Mill, Sterne reveals slightly more of the tension within himself between the resignation he would aspire to and the love of life which makes him flee from death. There is a similar conflict within Tristram between an intense desire for life and a feeling that he should cease travelling and prepare for his end. At the inn at Abbeville, this conflict leads him to act in direct contradiction of his own words. At first he seems inclined to seek a pious and peaceful

¹ Shepperson, p. 59.

² Cash, Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments, p. 89.

³ David Thomson, Wild Excursions (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1972), pp. 222-23.

end as he talks of the comfort of dying in an inn, away from the distress and attention of one's friends - an idea stolen from Gilbert Burnet's account of Bishop Leighton.¹ This mood soon passes, however, as his will to live reasserts itself. He decides that the inn at Abbeville is an unsuitable setting for his last scene, and as if to lessen the chances that he will die there, he orders the horses for four in the morning, with the significant threat that if they are not ready on time, he will "raise a clatter in the house, shall wake the dead" (VII, 12, p. 492). Tristram associates feverish activity with continuing life, while "to stand still, or get on but slowly, is death and the devil" (VII, 13, p. 493). This is why it is important to keep on writing and travelling. Both activities express "Tristram's unwillingness to accept that he too is subject to chronological time, and to the process of ageing and death."²

On the surface, Sterne's Shandeism appears to have been rooted in a naturally cheerful disposition, but we can never be certain that this was not a mask. As he points out in his Sermons, it is impossible to gauge a man's happiness from his exterior: "even in laughter (if you will believe Solomon) the heart is sorrowful;---the mind sits drooping, whilst the countenance is gay" (VII, 124). This is the very interpretation that is put upon Yorick's cheerfulness: "though he kept up his spirits in appearance to the last,---he died, nevertheless, as was generally thought, quite broken hearted" (Tristram Shandy, I, 12, p. 30). Sterne has deliberately made it impossible to tell whether Yorick dies sad or cheerful. He is fascinated by "the borderline between the serious and the comic, tears and laughter, the real and the

¹ Ferriar, p. 175; Gilbert Burnet, Burnet's History of His Own Time (London, 1724), I, 589; see the similar idea in Montaigne, III, 321-22.

² Ian Campbell Ross, Introduction to Tristram Shandy, Oxford English Novels (Oxford: OUP, 1983), p. xxii.

fantastic."¹ His humour is undercut by hints of sadness, and his sentimentality is undercut by hints of humour. Hobby-horses, for example, are ridiculed for their vulnerability and respected for their "psychological protection against the harsher aspects of reality."² Tristram is not attempting to give his life tragic dignity, as Kernan suggests, for he is quite prepared to make capital out of his own ridiculousness.³ Yorick similarly makes fun of his own fears in the Droits d'aubaine section, revealing that it is at once humorous that a man should continue to ride his hobby-horse even to his death, and also sad that death should deprive him of the life and identity which that hobby-horse gave him.

This serio-comic treatment of personal identity is brought out most obviously by the parallels between Yorick and his Shakespearian namesake. The clergyman travels not only for his health, but also to gain a sense of his identity through observing and communicating with his fellow men. In fact his identity suffers a number of shocks during the course of his journey, especially over the matter of the passport that he failed to obtain before leaving England. In appealing to the Count de B**** for assistance, he imagines that it will be easiest to explain who he is by pointing to the grave-diggers scene in Hamlet, but this only leads to greater confusion, with the result that the passport is made out in the name of the king's jester. The speech in which he then tries to distinguish between the two Yoricks is at once appreciative of the absurdity of the situation and genuinely desperate

¹ W.B.C. Watkins, Perilous Balance (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1939), p. 124; Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953), pp. 97-98.

² Norman N. Holland, "The Laughter of Laurence Sterne," Hudson Review, 9 (1956), 422-30.

³ Alvin B. Kernan, The Plot of Satire (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1965), p. 96.

and distressed. By inadvertantly echoing Hamlet's meditation on the jester's skull and the levelling effect of death and decay, the clergyman's argument becomes self-defeating, and the Count, who has read his Shakespeare, is not convinced: "Good God! said I, you might as well confound Alexander the Great, with Alexander the Copper-smith, my lord---'Twas all one, he replied"(pp. 221-27). Yorick relates the episode with just sufficient detachment to make his feeble struggle against the inexorable, annihilating power of death seem sadly humorous rather than simply tragic or comic. This effect also depends upon the deliberate omission of all but the most tentative notions of an afterlife, and on the resulting tension between the irresponsible gaiety of the world which Tristram and Yorick would like to be a part of, and their awareness of their mortality. This tension is revealed in the contrast between motion and stasis, and above all in Sterne's colour symbolism - the black page of death versus the marbled page of life.

Black is of course the colour of Yorick's clerical garb, and a constant reminder to him of his proper role as a momento mori to men. Yet he hankers after the motley of his ancestor, and looks wistfully out of the hotel window at the vain activities of "all the world in yellow, blue, and green, running at the ring of pleasure" (A Sentimental Journey, pp. 155-56). This striking contrast to Yorick's "dusty black coat" is perhaps more important than the significance of the individual colours, but it is worth noting that in Chambers' Dictionary, yellow is associated with decay, blue with the happiness which the living hope the dead enjoy, while green is the colour of life, and thus completes this spectrum of life, death and heaven.¹ Addison associates green with the cheerfulness which

¹ See the article headed "Mourning" in Chambers' Universal Dictionary (London, 1728), II, 594.

contributes to good health in his very Shandean assessment of English melancholy in Spectator No. 387.¹ Burton contrasts black as the colour of death and green as the colour of life in his account of Lodovicius Cortesius, who insisted on having music and rejoicing at his funeral as if it were a wedding, and "instead of black mourners, . . . took order, that twelve virgins clad in green should carry him to the Church."² Here the symbolism has been taken a stage further than in Sterne, and green has come to symbolize resurrection and the life to come, while black is appropriate only to the unbeliever's fearful approach to the unknown.

Sterne deliberately avoids such a Christian triumph over death in order to keep the tension between the attractions of the carefree world of colour and its obvious futility and inevitable decay. The same phrase, "running at the ring of pleasure", is used to describe the peasant dance which Tristram interrupts his journey to take part in at the end of volume seven of Tristram Shandy (VII, 43, pp. 537-38). Dancing is a purposeless, directionless form of movement, a cheerful, Shandean pursuit, imitated in Tristram's digressive style of writing, which abhors a straight line. At the end of the volume, as Tristram pulls out "a paper of black lines" on which to write his next instalment, the colour of the printed line is again associated with the kind of conventional sober straight-forwardness which is at odds with his irresponsible dancing and digressing.

The same image is taken up again at the beginning of the next volume (VIII, 1, p. 539), where Tristram defies "the best cabbage planter that ever existed" to plant "in straight lines and stoical distances" when life has so many tempting distractions. Alter's comments on this passage show how the planter's stoicism is undermined

¹ Spectator, III, 451-54.

² Burton, p. 344.

by sexual innuendo even before he begins to wander from his furrow after slits in petticoats, but it has not been noted that Tristram is specifically making fun of Montaigne's wish that the King of Terrors should take him "planting Cabbages, but without any careful thought of him, much less of my Garden's not being finished."¹ To Tristram, such stoic indifference is impossible, and the better way to disarm death is to run at the ring of pleasure and enjoy the vanities of life to the full. Knowing that our pleasures are transitory merely makes Tristram value them more, as in the case of Janatone, the inn-keeper's daughter at Montreuil, whose passing beauty and charm is more attractive to him than the unchanging proportions of the great parish church (VII, 9, p. 490). Man is frail and ridiculous, but his mortality also makes him valuable - hence the ambivalence that we find in Sterne's treatment of death.

This ambivalence is perhaps most obvious in the death of Le Fever and the range of critical opinions which this episode has inspired. Again, critics are inclined to attempt to provide a single definitive handle for the episode. New believes that it is designed to show the sterility of Toby's emotional involvement, and that the "facetious" ending reveals the theatrical falsity of the whole story. Dilworth shares New's disapproval of the way Toby and Trim seem to be relatively unconcerned about Le Fever, since they are barely able to keep their minds from their wargames throughout the crisis.² It is possible, however, that Sterne emphasizes the difficulty they have giving over their customary pursuits so that their sacrifice of time and energy will seem more rather than less commendable. The ability to give up one's normal business in order to help the needy is, of course,

¹ Robert Alter, "Tristram Shandy and the Game of Love," American Scholar, 37 (1968), 316-23; Montaigne, I, 107.

² New, pp. 151-52; Dilworth, pp. 22-25.

the Good Samaritan's virtue, and it became something of a cliché in eighteenth-century literature, from Fielding's pedlar, who saves Parson Adams's son from drowning in Joseph Andrews (pp. 309-10), to Henry Mackenzie's philosopher in the story of "La Roche" from the Mirror, who, as a direct descendant of Uncle Toby, leaves his books and goes to a local inn in order to offer his house and assistance to a sick clergyman and his daughter, the counterparts of Le Fever and his son.¹ Moreover, Toby's practical charity, which finds expression in his guardianship of Le Fever's son, is contrasted favourably with the behaviour of the curate, who sits unconcerned in the kitchen of the inn, making prejudiced remarks about the impiety of soldiers (VI, 7, pp. 220-21).

Above all, there is no hint of irony in Sterne's dedication of the tale to Lady Spencer to suggest that this "humane" story was really a satire or parody (V, p. 341).² Contemporary readers took this dedication at face value, and seemed to have no problem reconciling the ending with the overall mood of the passage, although they were never behindhand in criticising other abrupt changes of mood, such as that at the end of Tristram's meeting with Maria, which Ralph Griffiths described as being "like a ludicrous epilogue, or ridiculous farce, unnaturally tagged to the end of a deep tragedy."³ There appear to have been no such objections to the ending of Le Fever's story. Uncut, the episode formed one of the high points of The Beauties of Sterne,

¹ Mirror Nos. 42-44 in Henry Mackenzie, Works (Edinburgh, 1808), IV, 175-207.

² Mark Loveridge, Laurence Sterne and the Argument about Design (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 152; Cash, Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments, pp. 38-39.

³ Sterne: The Critical Heritage, p. 182.

and the deathbed was a favourite subject for illustration.¹ It is only modern critics who find it difficult to swallow the ending:

Nature instantly ebb'd again,---the film returned to its place,---the pulse fluttered---stopp'd---went on---throb'd ---stopp'd again---moved---stopp'd---shall I go on?---No. (VI, 10, p. 426).

Dilworth explains this abrupt halt by saying that Sterne has simply become bored with the sentimental joke. Hafter suggests that he is burlesquing the rhetorical pauses of Garrick's death scenes. Stedmond says that Sterne is merely shrugging off sincere feeling, just as we do in real life when we find the reality of suffering too close for comfort. Rothstein sees the ending as a demonstration of the mechanical limitations of words and their failure to communicate as Tristram intends. These last two explanations come closer to seeing the ending as both comic and pathetic, for, as Paulson points out, if Tristram fails to render death through words, then this in itself is poignant, and so is man's inability to bear the pain of the scene.²

However, it is also possible to see the typographical tricks as a very successful imitation of the final flutterings of Le Fever's pulse, in which it is as much the pulse that asks the question "shall I go on?" as Tristram. Contemporary readers would have recognized the broken sentences as a conventional sign of the writer's incapacitating emotion. Steele, for instance, ends his obituary on the actor Richard Estcourt in Spectator No. 468 with a similar typographical indication

¹ See the frontispiece to the 10th ed. of the Beauties (1787), and T.C. Duncan Eaves, "George Romney: His Tristram Shandy Paintings and Trip to Lancaster," HLQ, 7 (1944), 321-26.

² Dilworth, pp. 25-26; Ronald Hafter, "Garrick and Tristram Shandy," Studies in English Literature, 7 (1967), 475-89; John M. Stedmond, The Comic Art of Laurence Sterne, (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 118; Rothstein, p. 77; Ronald Paulson, "Recent Studies in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century," Studies in English Literature, 16 (1976), 538-40.

of grief: "my Eyes are too much suffused to let me go on---".¹ The cliché is repeated in Henry Mackenzie's The Man of the World, where the narrator is rendered speechless by the death of old Annesley, and it is parodied as an overused formula in William Beckford's Modern Novel Writing at the end of the century.² Sterne may simply be using the device, like Mackenzie, or parodying it, like Beckford, for we can never be sure whether the final question means "shall I go on with the pain of this scene?" or "shall I go on with the joke?"³

Nor is it simply the ending of the story that has a tendency towards comedy. As one early critic remarked, Toby and Trim are "too tender and sentimental", and their behaviour is exaggeratedly brave and heroic, so that Toby appears both admirable and ridiculous as he marches around his bedchamber with one shoe on and one shoe off (VI, 8, pp. 424-25).⁴ We should endeavour, as Lanham points out, to take hold of both handles to the episode, the pathetic and the humorous, and not take only one and attempt to explain the other away, like New or Dilworth.⁵

Some of Sterne's early readers did succeed in grasping both handles. The Critical Review found the story "beautifully pathetic", but also noted the affectionate humour in the portrayal of Toby and Trim, and the mixture of comedy and pathos, which makes us "laugh at the ludicrous peculiarity of Toby, even while we are weeping with

¹ Spectator, IV, 158.

² Henry Mackenzie, The Man of the World, 2nd ed. (London, 1773), I, 315; William Beckford, Modern Novel Writing, (London, 1796), II, 164-71.

³ Cash, Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments, note to pp. 38-39.

⁴ Yorick's Skull (London, 1777), pp. 34-36, reprinted in Sterneiana, Vol. XII and Sterne: The Critical Heritage, p. 140.

⁵ Richard A. Lanham, Tristram Shandy: The Games of Pleasure (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973), pp. 15-18.

tender approbation at his goodness of heart."¹ The mixture arises "because Toby and Trim insist on being Toby and Trim even at the dying man's bedside."² Their compassion for Le Fever is admirable because it is lovably comic. It is valuable because it is so human, and yet it is also pathetic, because it is worthless in the face of death.

By balancing the serious with the comic in this way, Sterne avoids both sentimentality and cynicism.³ Through comedy he can approach even the most tragic experiences of his own life without degenerating into self-pity or despair. This balance is alluded to in the motto to volume three, where his design is "to pass in turn from jests to serious matters and from serious matters to jests" (p. 155). He thus gives a balanced account of his illness in *Tristram* and *Yorick*, and through the misfortunes of the Shandy family relieves his own frustrations over his lack of a son to carry on his name.⁴

Tristram is the last of the Shandy line, childless and apparently impotent. His misfortunes begin at his conception with his mother's ill-timed question, and it is a wonder that he is born with only a minor injury to his nose, his difficult birth having put him at the mercy of Doctor Slop's "instruments of salvation and deliverance", most of which, as Cash has shown, are designed for the destruction of the foetus in difficult births (II, 11, pp. 109-10).⁵ Sterne's extensive knowledge of midwifery is based on his researches into his own wife's

¹ Sterne: The Critical Heritage, p. 140.

² Gerald Weales, "Tristram Shandy's Anti-Book," in Twelve Original Essays, ed. Charles Shapiro (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1960), p. 60.

³ A.E. Dyson, The Crazy Fabric (London: Macmillan, 1965), p. 42.

⁴ Cash, Sterne, pp. 202-03, 225-56; Letters, pp. 45-46.

⁵ Arthur H. Cash, "The Birth of Tristram Shandy: Sterne and Dr Burton," in Studies in the Eighteenth Century, ed. R.F. Brissenden (Canberra: Australian National Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 133-54.

child-bearing problems. A subject of tragic concern to Sterne has thus been tamed by humour to become one more comic and pathetic instance of man's frailty. In Walter's concern for the safety of the foetus, for its birth and baptism according to Shandean principles (preferring even to risk the mother's life in a caesarian delivery), Sterne gives us a ridiculous portrait of his own anxiety and frustration as a father. Death inevitably defeats us at the end of our lives, but it also seeks to crush us in the womb, and through infant mortality it frustrates our desire to live on through our children.

Sterne was well-acquainted with the grief of fathering still-born children and losing others in infancy. His memoirs of his childhood tell of the loss of several sickly younger brothers and sisters, and his earliest memory seems to have been of four-year-old Joram's death from smallpox when Laurence was about six.¹ His own offspring were equally frail - those that survived birth. The first Lydia, born in 1745, lived only one day. Sterne also lost a three-week-old son, after which event he took to his chamber for an entire week, if we can believe his old servant, Richard Greenwood (the story may be unreliable, since there is no record of the child's baptism, but it is easy to imagine Sterne being inconsolable in such a loss).² In his Sermons, children are described as "the dearest of all pledges of a man's happiness", and the death of children is added to the list of earthly misfortunes drawn from Wollaston (VII, 125).³

¹ Cross, Sterne, pp. 13-14; Cash, Sterne, pp. 15-21; Letters, pp. 1-3.

² Cash, Sterne, pp. 134-35; James M. Kuist, "New Light on Sterne: An Old Man's Recollections of the Young Vicar," PMLA, 80 (1965), 549-53.

³ Lansing Van Der Heyden Hammond, Laurence Sterne's Sermons of Mr Yorick, Yale Studies in English, 108 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1948), pp. 35-36.

Sterne's own experience of bereavement also seems to lie behind his consolatory letter to George Oswald's father. The only possible consolation for the bereaved parent is the knowledge that God is a more loving father to us all, but even this consideration may be insufficient to assuage his grief, "because your loss is truly great, and scarce retrievable". The letter reveals Sterne's concern for George Oswald as that of a father for the son he never had:

Had God spared him, he had agreed to live with me so long as he staid in these parts. My house had room enough in it for such a soul and my wife, who loved him as if he had been her own son, would have nursed him with the tenderest care---but alas!---¹

Thus, in real life, death thwarted Sterne's ambition to be an Uncle Toby to this needy son.

Sterne consciously utilizes his own experience of death to make observations on the tragi-comic nature of life. Man is a victim of small circumstances beyond his control. Walter, for instance, has the ability to mend the squeaking door-hinge, but he never does, and consequently he is for ever being disturbed by its noise for the want of three drops of oil and a hammer (III, 21, p. 203). Tristram laughs at Walter for this, but is himself equally behindhand in mending the same hinge now that his father is dead. Death is a similarly small thing, an irritating hinge between this world and the next, which man would like to think he can control or ignore, but which continually thrusts itself upon his attention, making a mockery of his pride and ambition. The link between squeaking hinges and man's mortality is made clear when Trim accidentally disturbs the sleeping Toby and Walter by opening the squeaky door (III, 22, p. 204). If the hinge had been repaired, Trim would have been able to creep away "as silent as death",

¹ Shepperson, p. 63.

leaving them undisturbed, but in fact he becomes an audible reminder of mortality. Death squeaks at man instead of knocking respectfully at the door as in volume seven. The fact that Trim has come to show Toby his destructive modifications to Walter's hereditary jack-boots emphasizes the way in which death cuts short men's lives, disrupting their sense of continuity and achievement in time.

To ignore death, then, or laugh at it is futile, since death must win in the end. The delicate balance between humour and pathos in Sterne arises from his awareness of the ridiculousness and vanity of his own Shandean approach to mortality, an awareness which leaves him uncertain whether to laugh or cry, like Gargantua at the death of his wife Badebec in giving birth to Pantagruel - a comparison which Traugott applies to Walter's speech on the death of Bobby, but which is in fact more appropriate to the tone of Tristram Shandy as a whole.¹ Both Rabelais and Sterne recognize the fact that laughter can easily turn to weeping and weeping to laughter, for these two reactions are not opposites as the distinction between Democritus and Heraclitus suggests. Rabelais's idea of "Democritus Heraclitising and Heraclitus Democritising" comes close to Sterne's own account of his rapidly changing response to life in the same letter to Garrick on the healthful effects of Shandeism: "I laugh 'till I cry, and in the same tender moments cry 'till I laugh."² Whereas Montaigne prefers Democritus' attitude of stoic contempt for life, Sterne's laughter contains an element of Heraclitian commiseration for the human condition, as though one day even the laughing philosopher will be reduced to tears.³ The cheerful Democritus of the title page of

¹ John Traugott, Tristram Shandy's World (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1954), pp. 91-92; Rabelais, II, 25-26.

² Rabelais, I, 218; Letters, p. 163.

³ Montaigne, I, 513-15.

Burton's Anatomy will become the despairing figure among the ruins and bones of Salvator Rosa's Democritus in Meditation. The inscription for Rosa's picture would make a particularly apt epigraph for Tristram's unwritten tenth volume: Democritus omnium derisor in omnium fine defigitur - Democritus the mocker of all things is here stopped by the ending of all things.¹

Nevertheless, life and hope remain in Tristram Shandy, because this final moment of despair is outside the novel. Meanwhile Shandeism is presented as a defence against mortality and an effective form of consolation, despite the fact that it is apparently at odds with the orthodox Christian approach to death of meditation and resignation. Indeed, this contrast is highlighted within the novel itself by the supposed complaints of Madam in volume seven. She objects to Tristram's "strange story" because it is not a conventional "melancholy lecture of the cross" or a sermon on "the peace of meekness, or the contentment of resignation." Sterne ignores "the purer abstractions of the soul, and that food of wisdom, and holiness, and contemplation, upon which the spirit of man (when separated from the body) is to subsist for ever," and sets up the Shandean pursuit of life as an alternative form of consolation, a form which Sterne sees as more typically human and valuable, despite the fact - or, indeed because of the fact - that it is ultimately futile (VII, 26, p. 511).

¹ Salvator Rosa (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1973), pp. 58-59, plate 26.

III - Sentimentality

While Shandeism refuses to take death seriously, and finds comfort in laughter, the other major form of consolation investigated by Sterne is that of the man of feeling who enjoys contemplating the sorrows of others, and finds diversion from his own grief in warm feelings of sympathy and benevolence. This is the approach which Yorick takes in A Sentimental Journey, combined with a lesser degree of Shandeism. When he speaks of the power of man's imagination to "cheat expectation and sorrow of their weary moments", it appears at first that he is commending the Shandean approach to life in which gaiety improves one's health and lengthens one's days, particularly since Yorick seems to have a similar philosophy of digression:

when my way is too rough for my feet, or too steep for my strength, I get off it, to some smooth velvet path which fancy has scattered over with rose-buds of delights; and having taken a few turns in it, come back strengthen'd and refresh'd (pp. 224-25).

However, the digression that Yorick gives as an example is not, as we might expect, a humorous anecdote about noses or a bawdy tale about nuns of the kind that Tristram delights in, but a sentimental meditation on the sorrows of "forsaken" Dido, in which Yorick imagines himself as Aeneas meeting her "pensive shade" in the Elysian fields:

---I see the injured spirit wave her head, and turn off silent from the author of her miseries and dishonours---I lose the feelings for myself in hers---and in those affections which were wont to make me mourn for her when I was at school.

Instead of laughing, Yorick forgets his own sorrows by imagining someone else's. Just as, through Tristram, Sterne questions the

validity of laughter, so, through Yorick, he reveals the advantages and flaws of sentimental consolation. Yorick's predilection for affecting stories of death and bereavement through which he can indulge his emotions is shown to be another typically human weakness, as ridiculous and irresponsible as Shandeism.

In effect, Yorick finds pleasure in the house of mourning, and yet there is no suggestion in Sterne's sermon that the contemplation of sorrow can be enjoyable. Rather, as we identify with the afflicted, so we either become aware of our spiritual inadequacies, and are led to make pious preparation for the time when similar sufferings must inevitably fall to our lot, or else, less selfishly, we relieve the sympathetic pain we feel by giving charity. In his sermon on the Good Samaritan, Sterne attempts to argue that man's "impulse to pity", though instinctive, is not merely "mechanical". It has positive moral value in the Samaritan's case, because it is not simply a passing feeling, but finds expression over a period of time in a number of charitable actions. The argument is far from clear, but Sterne certainly avoids suggesting that there is anything good about the mere contemplation of sorrow. It is the contemplation of the Samaritan's charity to the injured man that gives us pleasure, and not the feelings of pity we may have on reading of the man's sufferings (I, 64-70). Sterne sidesteps the question of the moral worth of sympathy in this sermon, for by placing the emphasis on the Samaritan's active charity, he avoids having to explain if the original "impulse to pity" is more than an instinctive reaction to the spectacle of suffering. Such questions were, of course, vitally important to the eighteenth-century debate on the nature of man. Adam Smith, for instance, sees the "sympathetic imagination" as a mechanical rather than a moral principle, since it is generally active in inverse proportion to a

person's acts of benevolence.¹ The evidence of Yorick's meditation on Dido would seem to support this, since the pleasure he derives from feeling pity is pure self-indulgence, and cannot possibly lead to any practical act of charity.

Yorick is a connoisseur of distressing scenes where he can offer nothing more than sympathy. Such situations form the very raison d'être of the novel of sensibility, where emotion is usually wrung from scenes where nothing practical can be done to alleviate the suffering.² Instead of using an affecting story to demonstrate a character's exemplary charity, as in Tom Jones's generous response to Mrs Miller's account of the poverty of the Endersons, in the novel of sensibility, such tales are designed merely to arouse emotion, and it is more affecting if the character who hears the account is powerless to relieve the afflicted person. Such is the case, for example in Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling, a novel in which the author's avowed intention was to "call forth the Hearts" of his readers. In the story of Edwards (Mackenzie's favourite episode), the hero, Harley, cannot hope to assuage the griefs of the old soldier, since he can neither restore his fortunes, nor bring back his son and daughter-in-law from the grave.³

Death, therefore, is particularly useful to the sentimental novelist, since it rules out all possibility of practical benevolence and leaves us free to indulge in sympathy. In Yorick's Skull, a Sternean imitation of the 1770's, the narrator indulges his melancholy mood by taking a night-time walk through a ruined abbey, where he

¹ Kenneth Maclean, "Imagination and Sympathy: Sterne and Adam Smith," Journal of the History of Ideas, 10 (1949), 399-410.

² See, R.F. Brissenden, Virtue in Distress (London: Macmillan, 1974).

³ Henry Mackenzie, Letters to Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock, ed. Horst W. Drescher (Munster: Aschendorff, 1967), pp. 29, 35; The Man of Feeling, pp. 97-98.

discovers the corpses of a woman and her child. Since they are dead, there is nothing he can do but weep. There is no engagement with the social and moral issues at all. How the woman came to be there is unimportant, and the narrator and reader are free to imagine whatever sorrowful circumstances they find most affecting.¹

A tendency to make the causes of suffering vague, impersonal and arbitrary like this is typical of the novel of sensibility's simplification for the sake of emotional impact. In The Man of Feeling, Edwards is press-ganged into the army as a result of a combination of impersonal social injustice and bad luck. His son's pointer innocently strays onto private land, and is shot by the unmerciful gamekeeper, whom Jack fells to the ground in righteous anger. Convicted for assault and battery, Jack is deemed fit to serve as cannon fodder, and is accordingly captured by the press-gang on Christmas Eve during an innocent game of blind-man's-buff. Edwards then takes his son's place out of pity for his grandchildren and their mother. The children survive, but their parents die broken-hearted, ruined financially after a series of crop-failures.² The world of this novel is simply cruel, and, because we cannot change it, we can only sympathize and indulge in vague feelings of benevolence towards our fellow men.

Yorick enjoys such feelings, because they convince him of his own goodness, "of the existence of a soul within me" (A Sentimental Journey, p. 270). He seems unaware of the fact that his response may be judged as mechanical if it fails to result in any action. He goes "in quest of melancholy adventures", like the "Knight of the Woeful Countenance", seeking occasions on which to indulge his benevolent

¹ Yorick's Skull, pp. 75-85, Sterneiana Vol. XII.

² The Man of Feeling, pp. 89-92, 97-98.

feelings (p. 270). The reference to Don Quixote possibly indicates that he is partly aware of how ridiculous his behaviour will appear in the eyes of the world, but this does not help us to say with any certainty whether Sterne approves or disapproves of the sentimental approach to life which Yorick is championing. Nevertheless, the ambivalence we find here seems to invite us to question Yorick's philosophy, particularly as Sterne uses very similar phrasing in his sermon on "Penances", where he denies that God has "sent us into the world, as so many saint-errants, in quest of adventures full of sorrow and affliction" (VI, 88).

Far from being a valid religious exercise, as Yorick thinks, such behaviour could be self-indulgent "enthusiasm". He goes in search of Tristram's Maria knowing full well that he cannot help her, and yet has the temerity to compare himself to the Good Samaritan, telling her to "imbibe the oil and wine which the compassion of a stranger, as he journieth on his way, now pours into thy wounds" (p. 276). The comparison actually draws attention to the differences between Yorick and the biblical exemplum, for whereas the Samaritan comes upon the injured man by chance, and steps out of his road to help him on impulse, Yorick has deliberately digressed from his path in order to find Maria. Unlike the Samaritan, he can offer her no help either to restore her sanity or to heal the wounds caused by the loss of her lover and the death of her broken-hearted father, and so he is completely free to enjoy his own feelings of benevolence.

His sympathy is further undermined by the obvious sexual attraction of Maria's helplessness and Yorick's desire that she should "lay in my bosom, and be unto me as a daughter" (p. 275). His apparent surprise at the fact that he cannot put her image out of his mind until he is nearly at Lyons draws attention to the fact that he forgets her all too easily (p. 277).

The episode is weighted against Yorick, but we do not condemn him, because his weakness is all too human and understandable. As Sterne points out in the Sermons, when we look on tragedy:

we are apt to interest ourselves no otherwise, than merely as the incidents themselves strike our passions, without carrying the lesson further:---in a word---we realize nothing:---we sigh---we wipe away the tear,---and there ends the story of misery, and the moral with it (IV, 12).

Yorick's questing after regular doses of pleasurable melancholy is a prime example of this general failing. As he anticipates the pleasure of hearing the life story of the lady in Calais, what he sees as his "benevolence" is clearly also coloured by selfish curiosity and sexual attraction (pp. 92-95). The lady's countenance is "interesting", and Yorick begins to concoct an affecting story to suit it, just as the narrator in Yorick's Skull invents the melancholy circumstances of the woman's death. Eager to know if his conjectures are correct, Yorick wishes that polite conversation allowed one to be curious under the guise of moral concern, as in the days of the prophet Esdras. But since he dare not be so bold, he rests content with his invented account, having "got ground enough for the situation which pleased me" (p. 107).

Once again, it is difficult to say whether Yorick appreciates the irony of his comparison between himself and the prophet. When Esdras meets the widow weeping in the field for the loss of her son, he gives her a stern warning against such emotional indulgence. Rather than starve herself to death, she should submit to God (2 Esdras, 10.31). Yorick, on the other hand, despite the fact that he is a clergyman, clearly intends to offer no such conventional religious advice to the lady. He has no real desire to understand the causes of her suffering and to help to relieve them, since this would complicate and dissipate

the mood, and spoil his enjoyment. However, he attempts to justify his inaction by drawing a further biblical parallel, this time between himself and the poor widow who gave all her meagre savings to the temple treasury. In doing so, he puts a quite inappropriate value upon his "mite of courtesy", which in fact costs him nothing, and which he hopes will buy him an affecting story and a pretext for some gentle flirtation (pp. 94-95).

Yorick's benevolence is continually shown to be mechanical and self-indulgent. He is moved by the starling's plaintive cry, "I can't get out", but by the time he has purchased the bird, his sympathy has cooled, and he keeps it as a conversation piece (pp. 197-98, 204-05).¹ Like the groom who originally found the starling on the cliffs at Dover, initially caring for it out of sympathy, but finally keeping it as a personal captive, Yorick ends up treating the bird as a piece of property to be begged for or given away as a bribe.

Yorick creates his own captive, too, in the form of the imaginary prisoner in the Bastille. The transfer from the animal level to the human makes the veiled sado-masochism of Yorick's meditation even clearer:

---I took a single captive, and having first shut him up in his dungeon, I then look'd through the twilight of his grated door to take his picture.

I beheld his body half wasted away with long expectation and confinement, and felt what kind of sickness of heart it was which arises from hope deferr'd. Upon looking nearer I saw him pale and feverish: in thirty years the western breeze had not once fann'd his blood---he had seen no sun, no moon in all that time---nor had the voice of friend or kinsman breathed through his lattice---his children---

---But here my heart began to bleed---and I was forced to go on with another part of the portrait (pp. 201-02)

As soon as the meditation becomes too realistic for comfort, Yorick

¹ Cash, Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments, pp. 78-82.

changes the subject. He cannot simply indulge in feelings of sympathy for the prisoner, because to enjoy such a sense of benevolence one must feel safe and superior to the sufferer, and Yorick at this stage is concerned that he may himself be imprisoned for his lack of a passport. Here, as in the sermon on the house of mourning, the contemplation of pain awakens the instinct of self-preservation.

Yorick's response is also a good illustration of Addison's comments on the pleasures of tragedy and the unpleasantness of real suffering in Spectator No. 418. Following Dacier, Addison says that the "Pleasure" we derive from reading of "Torments, Wounds, Deaths, and the like dismal Accidents" results from "the secret Comparison which we make betwixt our selves and the Person who suffers."¹ Thus, as long as Yorick feels safe, he can enjoy hearing the starling's cry and observing the prisoner in his cell, but when he is in danger himself, the "secret Comparison" between his position and the prisoner's finally produces unbearable feelings, which find vent in tears of self-pity: "---I burst into tears---I could not sustain [i.e. bear or continue to imagine] the picture of confinement which my fancy had drawn."

By shutting himself up in his room to indulge in melancholy, Yorick is in fact following an approved form for moral meditation. Steele, for instance, in the Tatler, sees the private imaginative revival of grief as a necessary moral restraint.² There is, however, a certain ambiguity in Steele's phrasing that suggests a similar toying with emotion to Yorick's. Having admitted that meditation on dead friends is a "pleasing entertainment", Steele's conscious indulgence in sorrow is underlined by the way he deliberately shuts himself in his closet and resolves "to be sorrowful". His feeling is not so much

¹ Spectator, III, 568-69.

² The Tatler, ed. George A. Aitken (London, 1899), III, No. 181, pp. 348-53.

mechanical as artificially generated. Like Yorick in his quest for Maria, he has gone out of his way to seek emotional rewards, and the moral value of such behaviour is equally uncertain for Steele as for Sterne. Speaking of the influence upon him as a child of his mother's grief for his father's death, Steele sees this as the source of his own good nature, just as Tristram at the age of ten finds "the lesson of universal good-will . . . imprinted" on his mind by Toby's merciful treatment of the fly (II, 12, pp. 113-14). But Steele then goes on to deny that his good nature is of any moral worth because it is merely mechanical:

Hence it is, that good nature in me is no merit; but having been so frequently overwhelmed with her tears before I knew the cause of my affliction, or could draw defences from my own judgement, I imbibed commiseration, remorse, and an unmanly gentleness of mind, which has since ensnared me into ten thousand calamities, and from whence I can reap no advantage, except it be, that in such a humour as I am now in, I can the better indulge myself in the softnesses of humanity, and enjoy that sweet anxiety which arises from the memory of past afflictions.

Yorick's sentimental adventures seem to result in a similar balance of indulgent pleasure and embarrassment. Moreover, Steele's meditation also ends in a Sternean fashion, interrupted in mid-sentence by the arrival of a hamper of wine. His dead sweetheart, like Yorick's Maria, is soon forgotten as he and his friends put these free samples through some rigorous testing. The mood of melancholy indulgence is suddenly dispelled, as in the ending of Le Fever's story and the episode in A Sentimental Journey where the postillion ruins Yorick's meditation on the dead ass and its owner (pp. 138-42).

Once again, how we should judge Yorick's reaction to the man and the ass in this last example is extremely problematical. Loveridge sees it as the only unequivocally sentimental scene in the work, since Yorick is merely an observer recounting the sentimental reactions of

the crowd.¹ It should be noted, however, that Yorick does address the man directly at the end of the episode. The fact that he remains in his post-chaise, outside the circle of spectators, listening and watching "over their heads", could be seen as an indication of his unwillingness to become involved on a deeper level, rather than a sign of his critical detachment. From his superior position, he can take vicarious pleasure in the man's tale of woe in much the same way as he did with the imaginary prisoner. This time he maintains just the right distance between himself and the afflicted man, so that the emotional effect is pleasurable rather than painful. His annoyance and disappointment at the postillion's galloping departure confirms that he has been an indulgent rather than a dispassionate observer.

The owner's lament for his ass contributes further to the ambivalence of the scene. At first Yorick takes the peasant's speech to be "an apostrophe to his child", and in fact the man does mourn as if his ass were human. He is "assured" the ass "loved him", and certain that during their unfortunate separation while crossing the Pyrenees "the ass had sought him as much as he had sought the ass, and that they had neither scarce eat or drank till they met." Not only does the man ascribe human feelings to the beast, but he even expresses guilt that he shortened the creature's days by making him bear "the weight of myself and my afflictions together". The syllepsis reveals the somewhat ridiculous combination of roles which the man assigns to the animal as both beast of burden and sympathetic friend. It is no accident that the scene reminds Yorick of Sancho Panza's lament for the loss of Dapple in Don Quixote, where the overblown tragic rhetoric and treatment of the ass as his own child is unreservedly comic.² Yorick

¹ Loveridge, p. 180.

² Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote, trans. Peter Motteux and John Ozell, Modern Library Edition (London: Bodley Head, 1930), Part 1, Book III, Ch. 9, pp. 163-64.

remarks that the ass's owner weeps "with more true touches of nature" than Sancho, but as well as indicating Yorick's approval of the man's greater sincerity, this comparison also highlights the incongruity of such excessive grief for the death of an animal.

The episode is not unequivocally sentimental, nor is it purely satirical, but once again it displays a characteristically Sternean mixture of humour and pathos. Consider, for example, the description of the man's attempts to feed the precious crust of bread to the dead ass's bridle:

He then took his crust of bread out of his wallet again, as if to eat it; held it some time in his hand---then laid it upon the bit of his ass's bridle---looked wistfully at the little arrangement he had made---and then gave a sigh.

That the man's only memento of the beast should be its bridle - an inanimate, man-made object, by means of which man imposes his will upon his dumb slave - increases our feeling that the man's grief is both ridiculous and pathetic. This feeling is not necessarily dispelled by the moral that Yorick draws at the end of the section: "Shame on the world! said I to myself---did we love each other, as this poor soul but loved his ass---'twould be something.---"

Clearly Yorick approves of the sincerity of the man's grief, and wishes we were all equally loving, but the details he chooses to give in his description suggest that he also appreciates the ridiculousness of the scene. The man seems more concerned for his ass than for the two sons that died of smallpox. Also, the man's pilgrimage to St Iago in Spain to thank heaven for sparing his third son must seem an unnecessary, superstitious exercise to Yorick the protestant clergyman. The episode may be an appeal for sympathy between all creatures or an attack on misdirected, indulgent emotion of the kind popular at the time, and exploited, for instance, in sentimental paintings and prints,

such as Jean-Baptiste Greuze's Une Jeune Fille qui pleure la mort de son oiseau (first shown in 1765, and eulogized by Diderot).¹ Sterne's treatment of the death of animals has a calculated ambivalence, and in the final analysis, the man is a touchingly comic example of our human tendency to bring unnecessary suffering upon ourselves, directing our feelings towards the wrong objects, be they animals or attractive women in distress. The pleasure we derive from hearing of the deaths of men and beasts is of dubious worth, since it is divorced from our ability to relieve suffering, and depends solely on our disposition to be melancholy. As Cash observes, Yorick only feels for the dead ass when it suits him to do so. When the post-chaise is impeded by the ass's carcass, he shows no concern either for the ass, or for the shying horse, upon which La Fleur lavishes his whip and the several French variants of Ernulphus's curse (pp. 135-36).²

Yorick's philosophy of sympathy, which he sees as the benevolent ruling principle of the universe in his climactic speech on the "great SENSORIUM of the world", is thus undercut in the very episode in which Yorick claims to display that benevolence. God, who feels for his creation, and senses a single hair falling from our heads, imparts to the shepherd a similar sympathy for an injured sheep which does not even belong to his flock:

---This moment I beheld him leaning with his head against his crook, with piteous inclination looking down upon it---Oh! had I come one moment sooner!---It bleeds to death---his gentle heart bleeds with it (p. 279).

¹ It seems likely that prints of Greuze's works were circulating in England during the second half of the century, see Anita Brookner, Greuze (London: Elek, 1972), pp. 64, 150-53 and plate 3.

² Cash, Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments, p. 44.

As a clergyman - a shepherd of men - Yorick sees his role as one of offering sympathy rather than practical religious advice, but Sterne invites us to question this through the ambiguities of the "sensorium" speech and its context. Not only is it inspired by Yorick's self-indulgent meeting with Maria, but also his imaginary shepherd is suspiciously like the prisoner in the Bastille, a character in an artificial melancholy meditation in which Yorick treats himself to a dose of imaginary anguish and then another of imaginary joy.¹

Such melancholy meditations had become a well-established literary genre by the 1760's, and it was almost unquestioningly assumed that the melancholy pleasure derived from them carried with it some moral benefit for the reader. In Spectator No. 26, Addison claims that meditating on the tombs in Westminster Abbey fills "the Mind with a kind of Melancholy, or rather Thoughtfulness, that is not disagreeable", while Steele writes of "a sort of Delight which is alternately mixed with Terror and Sorrow in the Contemplation of Death" in Spectator No. 133.² Even here the connection between morality and pleasure is characteristically vague, paving the way for self-indulgent melancholy in the guise of morality in the graveyard poets and the popular sentimental tale. A forerunner of the latter is the story of Amanda in Spectator No. 375, which, according to Bayne, caused many tears at breakfast on the day of its publication.³ The story has a moral, in that the girl's Pamela-like virtue convinces the seducing lord that he should change his ways and marry her, but as Bayne's comment suggests, the chief attraction of the story is not its happy ending but its depiction of virtue in distress. Another early example

¹ Loveridge comments further on the contradictions in Yorick's speech, pp. 190-93.

² Spectator, I, 108-11; II, 25.

³ Spectator, III, 409-13.

is the description in the Plain Dealer of the grief ^{of} a helpless widow, whose husband has been hanged for stealing a horse in order to feed his family on the proceeds of its sale. All the features of the novel of sensibility are to be found here, from the writer's use of emotionally-charged dashes to the widow's Shakespearian madness.¹ Once more this is a situation where the onlooker is powerless to act, since charity cannot raise the dead, and the causes of misery are a vague combination of social evils designed to evoke our sympathy rather than our righteous indignation.

Stories like this continued to masquerade as moral meditations throughout the century. Mackenzie, for instance, in the Mirror, retells the story of a young girl, Nancy Collins, whose affecting history of her father's death, her brother's joining the army, and her mother's resulting death from a broken heart is gleaned from her lips by the writer shortly before her own death. The author claims to have told the story not "merely to indulge my feelings", but to encourage readers to be more charitable to those whose loved ones are serving in the army. In fact this moral is simply tagged on to the indulgent scene of unrelievable distress. Similarly in Mirror No. 72, in a pleasurably melancholy description of the funeral of another young girl (called, significantly, Maria), Mackenzie seems to recall the supposedly moral meditations of Addison and Steele, writing of the "sympathetic enjoyment which often makes it not only better, but more delightful to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting."²

Through Yorick, Sterne sets out to draw our attention to just this sort of hazy thinking. He does not so much parody the genre of the

¹ Plain Dealer, No. 12 (1st May 1724).

² Mackenzie, Works, IV, 208-16, 274.

moral meditation as lead us to question our enjoyment of his tales by revealing Yorick's selfish ulterior motives and the shallowness of his emotional response. In other instances we are invited to indulge our emotions in a sentimental scene, and then Sterne thwarts our expectations by cutting the episode short, as in the abrupt change of mood at the end of Tristram's meeting with Maria (Tristram Shandy, IX, 24, p. 631).

Like Yorick, Tristram seems to find it all too easy to shrug off the mood of indulgent melancholy that Maria inspires. At the beginning of the episode Tristram is in a "most perfect state of bounty and good will", rather similar to Yorick's mood of benevolent well-being after his dinner in Calais (A Sentimental Journey, p. 68). He speaks in similar terms of "the kindest harmony vibrating within me", and just as Yorick pulls out his purse and "looks round . . . for an object to share it with", so Tristram is eager to find something on which to exercise his present mood. It is then that he hears Maria's melancholy piping, and learns something of her story from the postillion. He is evidently in just the right frame of mind for an affecting tale, and would have "sifted out" the postillion's own history had not Maria's proved a greater attraction. He gathers her "tale of woe" from her piping, but denies the reader any such pleasure, for within the space of a line, the Tristram who walks back to his chaise with "broken and irregular steps" is enthusing about the qualities of the inn at Moulins. Sterne deliberately frustrates the reader here by encouraging us to enter into the sentimental mood and then pulling the carpet out from underneath our feet. Just as Yorick's benevolence is found wanting when the monk begs for charity, so Tristram's sympathy for Maria is shown to be shallow, since he treats this visit to the house of mourning as little more than an interesting diversion.

In such episodes Sterne seems to be questioning the accepted notion that fiction can be used to inculcate morality. In his Sermons, however, he relies heavily on the power of short affecting scenes to arouse the listener's better feelings and thus carry home the "lessons of wisdom". Such lessons, Sterne claims in his sermon on the Prodigal Son, "have never such power over us, as when they are wrought into the heart by the groundwork of a story which engages the passions" (III, 131). That this is a biblical principle can be seen from the way David is brought to self-knowledge through the prophet Nathan's affecting parable (I, 79-103). However, by including one of his own sermons in Tristram Shandy, Sterne brings this method under severe scrutiny. Not one of the characters who hears Trim's reading of Yorick's sermon on "The Abuses of Conscience" is any the better for the experience, since each one interprets what he hears in terms of his own hobby-horse. The same amoral, hobby-horsical response can be seen in Walter and Toby's visit to the tombs at Auxerre, an episode which treats as tourism what the Addisonian tradition of meditations on the tombs in Westminster Abbey had credited as piety (VII, 27, pp. 513-15). One of Trim's hobby-horses is his lost brother, and accordingly he reacts to the sermon's description of innocence suffering at the hands of the Inquisition as if it were a true account of his brother's sufferings. In his distress he completely misses the point that the sermon is making about the abuse of conscience in matters of religion. Far from being "wrought into the heart", the lesson is actually obscured by this appeal to the passions (II, 17, pp. 138-39). Trim's extreme reaction to what should only be a mildly affecting scene calls into question the accepted conventions of such didactic fictions. If we know that these descriptions are fabrications, then are we not merely indulging in melancholy diversions, like Tristram and Yorick, if we continue to allow them to affect us?

Yorick is a firm believer in the power of sentimental fiction. The town of Abdera, he claims, was miraculously reformed by a performance of the Andromeda of Euripides, so that "the whole city, like the heart of one man, open'd itself to Love" (A Sentimental Journey, pp. 130-31). This passage comes at a key point in his journey, just after his account of the moral benefits of sentimental attachments to the opposite sex. It is presented under the title of "A Fragment", as if it were a document that Yorick has discovered and incorporated into his work as an illustration of his theory of the power of love. The tragedy with its appeal to the emotions is presented as being more effective than all Democritus' efforts to reclaim the town from its immorality through "irony and laughter". The anecdote is, of course, from Lucian, via Burton's Anatomy, but in Burton the reaction of the Abderites is seen as ridiculous and mechanical. Yorick's fragment reverses the traditional judgement of the Abderites, working the story into what Ferriar calls "a beautiful picture".¹

Should we take the fragment at face value like this, or are we meant to question the interpretation which Yorick seems to accept? Loveridge thinks that Sterne uses the episode to illustrate Yorick's continual confusion of mechanical with moral responses, hence the transformation of the Abderites from "passive fools to moral agents".² We cannot be certain of this, however, since the Abderites were not always seen as fools. Bayle, for instance, admits that their emotional reaction was a "Mark of Weakness", but he sees this as being more the result of "Vivacity than Stupidity", leading to "a disordered Imagination, and a sort of Madness which falls rather upon Men of great

¹ Ferriar, pp. 90-92.

² Loveridge, p. 181.

Wit, than upon Fools and Blockheads."¹ Sterne similarly sees such an emotional response to fiction as typically human. Trim weeps at the sermon, just as the tyrant Alexander of Pheres breaks down on seeing the tragedy of Hecuba and Andromache (Sermons, I, 137-38). In the Abdera anecdote a comic or a serious interpretation of the Abderites is equally possible, and Sterne leaves the reader to unravel the implications of the fragment in the context of the novel.

The use of the title "A Fragment" suggests an imitation or parody of the popular sentimental tale. Three sections of Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling are described as fragments (admittedly they are political rather than sentimental), and the entire novel is fragmentary, supposedly being made up of pieces of a mutilated manuscript. Presenting tales as fragments enabled writers to dispense with character and plot so as to concentrate on the affecting deathbed scene or the sorrowful life story. Scott noted this economy in Mackenzie and Sterne, and compared it favourably to Richardson's tedious "accumulation of circumstances" in preparation for his "affecting scenes". Where Richardson employs volumes to achieve his effect, Mackenzie and Sterne use "only a few pages, perhaps only a few sentences."² If, like Yorick, we are only interested in feeling, then it is no longer necessary for a story to have a beginning or end or any connection with what comes before or after it. Beckford parodies these developments in the late eighteenth-century novel in his Modern Novel Writing, simply by taking them to the extreme, so that characters are introduced on one page to die on the next.³

¹ Pierre Bayle, Dictionary Historical and Critical (London, 1734), I, 17-20.

² Walter Scott, Works (Edinburgh, 1870), IV, 9-10.

³ Beckford, I, 149-50.

A similar parodic intention lies behind the fragment that Yorick discovers on the sheet of waste-paper in which La Fleur brings him his breakfast butter. He spends most of the day trying to decipher it, only to discover that the most interesting part of the story, the deathbed confession of the old man, is missing, and he is left with just the initial section about the notary (A Sentimental Journey, pp. 250-55). In other words the story stops at the very point where it begins to take on the form of a conventional affecting tale. Sterne thwarts both the reader and Yorick, interrupting the mood almost before it has been established, as at the end of Tristram's meeting with Maria. The title "The Fragment. Paris" invites us to compare the story to the previous fragment about Abdera, and to see them both as questioning the validity of Yorick's religion of sympathy.

It is no idle detail that Yorick discovers and translates the fragment on a Sunday. Although he decides to spend the day at home, Sterne's clergyman has little intention of performing any religious devotions. Indeed, he seems inclined to favour the French in their use of Sunday as a day for festivity and love-making:

Happy people! that once a week at least are sure to lay down all your cares together; and dance and sing and sport away the weights of grievance, which bow down the spirit of other nations to the earth (p. 248).

.

Here, as in the passage on "the ring of pleasure", Yorick feels excluded from the happier, Shandean approach to life of the French by his nationality and his calling. He is thus left at home to derive what comfort he can from the fragment. This turns out to be a frustrating exercise, since the sentimental part of the story is missing. In fact La Fleur has used the other sheets to wrap up a bouquet for his mistress. He hastens to retrieve them for his master, only to discover that his "gage d'amour" has already been passed on to

a footman, and from the footman to a sempstress, and so on down a line of faithless lovers (p. 256). Thus the loss of the supposedly moral section of the fragment not only frustrates Yorick's dubious passion for sentimental stories, but it also undermines the religion of pleasurable flirtation which he has commended in his comments on French Sundays and in his earlier account of the moral benefits of being in love. The pursuit of sorrow, like Shandeism, is a common human diversion from the sorrows of life and the inevitability of death, but likewise it has its disappointments, and is ultimately vain.

IV - Death and Egotism

There is therefore no real difference between Sterne's view of human nature in the novels and in the Sermons. In both man is presented as fallen, weak and foolish. The difference between the fiction and the preaching lies in the degree of hope or despair which this view of man inspires. As Cash observes, the Sermons have a necessary "clerical optimism", which believes that man can be changed, at least in heaven by the grace of God. In the fiction there are no such clear statements of hope, and the tone is one of "humorous pessimism" laughing somewhat sadly at the spectacle of man as "forlornly inadequate to his own ideals".¹ Sterne never shrinks from the pathetically comic aspects of mortality, even in the Sermons. Man "pursues happiness", and yet he is unwilling to die, and "is so content with misery, that he would wander for ever in this dark vale of it" (III, pp. 34-35). It is quite normal for man to fence against death

¹ Cash, Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments, p. 126.

instead of placing his hopes in a Christian eternity. Sterne shows considerable understanding of the psychology of bereavement, and in the sermon on Elijah and the widow, for example, he draws attention to the way the widow blames Elijah for the sudden death of her son, remarking that "the expostulations of immoderate grief are seldom just" (I, 124).

In the novels even closer attention is paid to the different forms which grief and consolation can take. Walter Shandy, for example, undergoes three grievous blows during the course of Tristram Shandy, and reacts in a different way to each one. When he learns that Tristram's nose has been crushed by Doctor Slop's forceps, he throws himself upon his bed "in the wildest disorder imaginable" (III, 29, p. 216); after the calamitous baptism, he walks out to the fish-pond (IV, 17, pp. 292-94); and when he learns of Bobby's death, his initial reaction is one of disbelief and then annoyance (V, 2, p. 350). As Tristram remarks in the fish-pond episode, there is great variety in "our manners of bearing and getting through with" the various vexations of life. In his sermon on "The Ways of Providence", Sterne talks of the very different ways in which men may respond to sorrow: one man may "undergo with scarce the expense of a sigh,---what another, in the bitterness of his soul, would go mourning for all his life long" (VII, 125). Through Walter's various reactions, Sterne demonstrates the humorous aspects of this variety.

As Holtz has noted, Sterne's representations of sorrow are a far cry from the clichés of other novelists, and show a concern to conserve the individuality of character even in death.¹ As Tristram describes his father's eccentric behaviour he is not making fun of his sorrow, as Dilworth thinks, but delighting in its variety.² He enjoys detailing

¹ William V. Holtz, Image and Immortality: A Study of Tristram Shandy (Providence: Brown Univ. Press, 1970), p. 46.

² Dilworth, p. 15.

the ways in which Walter's attempts to lend tragic dignity to his sorrows are undermined by incidental comic details, such as the hand resting on the handle of the chamber-pot in the first scene. Walter's "lamentable attitude" on the bed is seemingly calculated to advertise the fact that he is "a man borne down with sorrows", but Tristram's over-precise description of the posture and the accidental conjunction with the chamber-pot make Walter appear far more comic, human, and hence sympathetic than he would have done had his grand gesture of despair been a complete success. His theatrical "extravagance" is quite "unchristian", as Tristram says (III, 30, p. 217). Toby is somewhat more orthodox in his religious convictions, but his character as a man of few words prevents him from becoming a mouthpiece for a conventional Christian consolatio. He is inept at determining the precise moment when such words of consolation will be effective (a problem which Sterne found outlined in Joseph Hall's Epistles), and so he is forced to remain sympathetically silent.¹

Both men fail to realize their favourite form of consolation. Toby "full gladly would have ingrafted a sentence of consolation" upon his sympathetic cough, but words fail him (IV, 2, p. 274). In any case, Walter is not interested in anyone else's consolations, but only in his own formal lament, which is spoilt by Toby's hobby-horsical interruption:

---did ever a poor unfortunate man, brother Toby, cried my father, receive so many lashes?---The most I ever saw given, quoth my uncle Toby, (ringing the bell at the bed's head for Trim) was to a grenadier, I think in Makay's regiment.

Walter can only reply to this by resuming his grieving posture so that he can make a second attempt at the speech after Trim has been consulted on this point of information. Even then he is still

¹ Joseph Hall, Works (London, 1634), I, 280.

frustrated by Toby's hobby-horsical and pious interruptions (IV, 7, pp. 277-78). Sterne is not simply opposing Walter's self-love to Toby's Christianity, as Traugott suggests, for this would reduce Walter and Toby to mere representations of attitudes in an argument. Rather he is showing the humorous incompatibility of two of the many different human approaches to sorrow. Walter is frustrated by Toby's pieties because they obviate the need for the circuitous arguments which he enjoys, "cutting the knot . . . instead of untying it". As Loveridge points out, Walter is only unchristian insofar as Christianity is incompatible with his enthusiasm for self-aggrandizing speeches.¹

The same desire for self-glorification in grief lies behind Walter's very different behaviour after the misnaming of Tristram. Here he attempts to give grandeur to his misfortune by assuming an air of stoical resignation and walking out "composedly" to muse by the fish-pond. Tristram's speculation on why the "becalming" properties of fish-ponds have never been investigated by any of the great philosophers or teachers shows how ridiculously wide the gap is between Walter's pond-side musings and the philosophies of the great men that he would like to think he is emulating. As in the previous episode, the period of solitary silence is a dramatic preparation for a lament, but once again Walter's plans are frustrated, for when he returns from the fish-pond to begin his speech, he finds Toby and Trim in the midst of a mock battle. He is thus forced to maintain his stoical air until the tea-things have been cleared away, and he and Toby are once more left alone (IV, 19, pp. 295-98).

The speech this time is somewhat lengthier and more formal. Tristram gives it a special heading, "My Father's Lamentation". In it Walter dramatizes himself as the victim of heaven's whimsical cruelty,

¹ Traugott, p. 118; Loveridge, pp. 97-98.

which "has thought fit to draw forth the heaviest of its artillery against me". The military metaphor is unfortunate, since it inevitably draws forth an interruption from Toby: "such a thing would batter the whole universe about our ears." This comment is comic because it treats Walter's metaphor literally, but it is also a pious truth in the sense that Walter could not possibly withstand the full fury of God as he claims to be doing. Toby's interjection thus reveals the ridiculousness of Walter's self-inflation through hyperbole. His exaggeration of his wife's anxiety over the birth calls forth a similar objection from Toby, and Walter is forced to improvise swiftly in order to carry his point:

what a teasing life did she lead herself, and consequently her foetus too, with that nonsensical anxiety of hers about lying in in town? I thought my sister submitted with the greatest patience, replied my uncle Toby---I never heard her utter one fretful word about it---She fumed inwardly, cried my father; and that, let me tell you, brother, was ten times worse for the child.

The lament ends with a dramatic cry of despair reminiscent of David's mourning for Absalom, and Walter wrings a rich irony from the fact that the repeated name is the very cause of his sorrow:

O Tristram! Tristram! Tristram!
 We will send for Mr Yorick, said my uncle Toby
 ---You may send for whom you will, replied my father.

Walter is uninterested in Toby's pious and practical suggestion, because he is completely wrapped up in the magnificence of his own sorrow. In fact Yorick can offer both spiritual comfort and, more importantly, legal advice on the possibility of rectifying the mistake, but such practicalities are, for the moment, outside Walter's concern.

The third blow, the death of Bobby, occurs in the middle of Walter's planning of his son's grand tour, and thus demonstrates the way death thwarts man's vain plans. His mind is so full of the tour that he is unable to grasp the news that Bobby has journeyed beyond this world, and so he replies indignantly to Toby's "he's gone!" with the expostulations "what---without leave---without money---without governor?" (V, 2, 350). Sterne is not simply satirizing Walter's inability to accept death, but demonstrating a general human failing of which Tristram is equally guilty. When Bobby's death is first announced to the reader, Tristram informs us that he is now "to be considered as heir-apparent to the Shandy family," and goes on to present his plans for the completion of his life and opinions. The death of Bobby thus gives him no sense of his own mortality. He fails completely to see the vanity of his projects: "I have but been clearing the ground to raise the building---and such a building do I foresee it will turn out, as never was planned, and as never was executed since Adam" (IV, 32, p. 269). His proud reference to Adam reminds the reader that the plans of fallen man will inevitably be defeated by death. Tristram's life and opinions are a product of man's foolish, worldly pride, and are as presumptuous as the Tower of Babel or the barns of the rich fool. Tristram can see the vanity of his father's Tristram~~edia~~, that he is merely "drawing a sundial, for no better purpose than to be buried underground" (an image that recalls Donne's poem "The Will" and the traditional use of the sundial as an emblem of time), but he seems unaware as he tells of Bobby's death that his own project is similarly doomed (V, 16, p. 375)¹ Through this and

¹ Ferriar, p. 170; for the sundial emblem, see Frederick Burgess, English Churchyard Memorials (London: Lutterworth Press, 1963), p. 169; Frances Quarles, Hieroglyphikes of the Life of Man (London, 1638), Hieroglyph VI, which is also used as a frontispiece to Rosemary Freeman's English Emblem Books (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948).

Walter's proposed grand tour, man's inability to remember death is revealed as a universal failing. We journey on through life on our hobby-horses, and suddenly, when we least expect it, find ourselves thrown by death, just as Doctor Slop is deposited in the mud, "unwiped, unappointed, unanealed" (II, 10, p. 107). Like Walter, we attempt to appear dignified, but only succeed in looking ridiculous. Walter's reaction when he finally grasps the fact of Bobby's death is a further example of this. As in the fish-pond episode, Tristram's classical comparison belittles Walter. Whereas Agrippina's breaking off from her spinning shows the intensity of her grief, Walter's stabbing his compasses into the map is simply a comic gesture of frustration.

This scene leads into Walter's longest and most successful rhetorical performance, in which for once he manages to maintain the flow of his narration and prevent Toby from interrupting. The speech is not simply another impotent expression of despair, as Hall supposes.¹ Walter derives great comfort from his eloquence, despite the fact that the speech is just a jumble of inappropriate consolatory commonplaces. As Lanham notes, the fact that wit and eloquence can triumph over misfortune is emphasized by the digression that comes just before Walter's speech, which tells how Walter overcame his vexation at his horse's being delivered of a mule by improvising a witty remark to the effect that Obadiah was the father of the unwanted beast (V, 3, pp. 352-53).²

Walter's consolatory method is utterly individual. He observes the custom of no race, ancient or modern, and goes against all the classical and Christian authorities that Tristram cites (from Burton) as saying that it is "an irresistible and natural passion to weep for

¹ Joan Joffe Hall, "The Hobbyhorsical World of Tristram Shandy," MLQ, 24 (1963), 131-43.

² Lanham, pp. 53-57.

the loss of our friends or children." Traugott's comparison of Walter with Rabelais's Gargantua is inappropriate because Walter does not appear to feel any real grief at all.¹ He inhabits a world of his own where death is "an acceptable abstraction, an occasion for quasi-philosophic rhetoric divorced from the specific instance of loss."² By the end of the speech he has "absolutely forgot" Bobby, and is seen smiling at Toby's naïve observation that death is "better in battle than in bed" (V, 5, p. 356).

Should we then condemn Walter as unfeeling? He shows no remorse for his abuse of Aunt Dinah's character, even when she dies and leaves him an unexpected legacy. Instead he begins to plan what to do with the money (IV, 31, p. 332). He appears coldly calculating in his willingness to compliment Toby by naming his son after him if only he can be sure that the baby will die (IV, 14, p. 287). In his defence it should be said that all his "systems" are "baffled by his sorrows" at the death of Toby, when Tristram depicts him weeping "in spite of his philosophy" (VI, 25, p. 452). His lack of feeling for Aunt Dinah is matched by Tristram's lack of concern for Bobby, a lack of concern which the reader also shares in both cases, since these characters are little more than names. Walter and Tristram are simply human in their pursuit of their own plans and projects even in the face of death. Walter can be compassionate, but his compassion is subservient to his hobby-horse, and he is rarely prepared to dismount. His chosen form of consolation is therefore comical, but no more so than any other, as we sense from Tristram's off-hand list of those who prefer weeping to speechifying, a list which brings together Hadrian's grief for his favourite, Antinous, and David's sorrow at the death of Absalom, a

¹ Traugott, pp. 91-92.

² Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom, "'This Fragment of Life': From Process to Mortality," in Myer, p. 66.

juxtaposition which Ferriar rightly notes as smelling "a little of the faggot".¹

All human responses to death are potentially comic, and Walter's is only one of many. Man's ability to forget death even while he is talking about it is, as Tristram says, both "his strength" and "his weakness" - his strength because it enables him to live on without despairing, and his weakness because circumstances will inevitably thwart his plans and thus cause him extra frustration. The conclusion to be drawn from Walter's and Tristram's behaviour can be summarized in words from Mackenzie's Spectator-like essay on death in the Mirror: "a man may even enjoy the present, and forget the future, at the very moment in which he is writing of the insignificancy of the the former, and the importance of the latter."²

Sterne highlights the idea that writing consolatory discourses can be a pleasurable activity by altering Burton's account of Cicero's grief for his daughter so that it appears that the philosopher finds comfort in his own eloquence rather than in the hope that his daughter is in heaven. Here is Burton's version:

Tully was much grieved for his daughter Tulliola's death at first, until such time that he had confirmed his mind with some Philosophical precepts, then he began to triumph over fortune and grief, and for her reception into heaven to be much more joyed than before he was troubled for her loss.³

There is no suggestion here that Cicero ceases to grieve altogether; his hope simply outbalances his sorrow. In Sterne's version, however, there is an exaggeratedly abrupt change of mood:

¹ Ferriar, p. 72.

² Mackenzie, Works, IV, 274.

³ Burton, p. 344.

When Tully was bereft of his dear daughter Tullia, at first he laid it to his heart,---he listened to the voice of nature, and modulated his own unto it.---O my Tullia! my daughter! my child!---still, still, still,---'twas O my Tullia!---my Tullia! Methinks I see my Tullia, I hear my Tullia, I talk with my Tullia.---But as soon as he began to look into the stores of philosophy, and consider how many excellent things might be said upon the occasion---no body on earth can conceive, says the great orator, how happy, how joyful it made me (V, 3, pp. 351-52).

The expansion of Cicero's grief into a full-scale lament in the David and Absalom tradition makes the philosopher appear all the more ridiculous and self-indulgent when he discovers the pleasure of eloquence.

Ferriar thinks that Sterne is being rather "uncharitable" to Cicero in this passage, but it is not unknown for scholars to accuse Cicero of pride in his own oratory.¹ It has also been suggested that Sterne's use of Cicero is a deliberate snub to Warburtonian gravity, since Warburton had expressed his disapproval of Scarron's witty version of Servius Sulpicious' consolatory letter to Tully in his attack on wit in The Divine Legation.² Whether sincere grief could be eloquent was a point much disputed throughout the eighteenth century. Johnson was rather scathing about Lyttelton's Monody on the death of his wife, saying that Lyttelton "solaced his grief by writing a poem to her memory." The fact that Johnson originally wrote "himself" rather than "his grief" suggests that he viewed the poem as a piece of melancholy self-indulgence. Gray was rather more sensitive in his criticism of the inherent contradiction between the poem's avowed purpose of religious consolation and the real source of pleasure in the

¹ Ferriar, p. 75; Lanham, p. 56.

² Francis M. Doherty, "Sterne and Warburton: Another Look," British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 1 (1978), 20-30; Melvyn New, "Sterne, Warburton, and the Burden of Exuberant Wit," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 15 (1982), 245-74.

Monody, which is its mood of inconsolable melancholy:

Poetical ornaments are foreign to the purpose, for they only shew a man is not sorry; and devotion is worse for it teaches him that he ought not to be sorry, which is all the pleasure of the thing.¹

At the end of the century, Vicesimus Knox defends the poem as a sincere expression of grief straight "from the heart of a disconsolate and undissembling mourner", and backs up his argument with an unjustified attack on the sincerity of Johnson's grief for the loss of Tetty. However, in his essay attacking the current taste for sentimental novels and gloomy graveyard poetry, Knox singles out for censure the same self-aggrandizement through the affectation of sorrow that Sterne portrays in Walter's tragic posturing.²

At Bobby's death, as in the incident of the mule, Walter triumphs over mortality by Shandean wit. The same approach enables him to overcome the pain of Toby striking him on the shin and his chagrin at the Shandy bull's apparent impotence (IV, 9, p. 280; IX, 33, p. 646). Much has been said about the sources of Walter's oration - Burton, Bacon, and Joseph Hall, among others of less importance.³ The speech is a jumble of commonplaces, most of which are used without alteration. This itself produces comedy as Walter confuses Toby by talking of "returning out of Asia" in 40 B.C., and later surprises Mrs Shandy by claiming to have "three desolate children" (V, 3, p. 354; V, 13, p. 370). For the most part, however, the traditional consolatory themes are comic not because they are given any parodic treatment, but simply because Walter is saying them. They have become part of his very

¹ Lyttelton, I, 288-89.

² Vicesimus Knox, Winter Evenings or Lucubrations on Life and Letters, 2nd ed. (London, 1790), I, 416-27, 119-24.

³ Ferriar, pp. 71-81.

character.¹

Bacon's essay on death, for instance, is a particularly apt source for Walter to use since it avoids any Christian notion that death is unimportant because it leads to life in heaven, such as we find, say, in Joseph Hall's Epistles.² Instead, death is seen as harmless because it is weaker than our passions and cannot destroy our human individuality. We remain the same even as we die, jesting like Vespasian on his close-stool, or dying like Gallus "as * * * * * * * * * * " (V, 4, p. 357). This final instance (from Montaigne rather than Bacon) is clearly Walter's favourite example of this principle.³ His lack of enthusiasm for his marital duties is obvious, both from his clock-winding habits and his objection that the act of procreation reduces us to the level of "satyrs and four-footed beasts" (IX, 33, p. 645), and it is therefore highly characteristic that he should choose an example that combines death and sex to show the ultimate comic degradation of man. Paradoxically, it is at once reassuring and saddening to know that man's individuality remains even at death, and that he dies unchanged in the midst of his vain projects. Walter seems to be unaware of the fact that the moral of his speech also applies to his own pursuits. He picks up the book of post-roads to illustrate his piece from Burton on the passing of the towns of Troy, Mycenae, Thebes, etc., but does not seem to notice the comic appearance this gesture has coming so soon after his plotting of Bobby's route across Europe.⁴ He preaches that it is better to die and "be freed from cares" than to be "like a galled traveller, who

¹ Graham Petrie, "A Rhetorical Topic in Tristram Shandy," MLR, 65 (1970), 261-66.

² Hall, I, 266, 281, 290.

³ Montaigne, I, 99.

⁴ Fluchère, p. 170.

comes weary to his inn", but who is "bound to begin his journey afresh", but like Tristram at the inn at Abbeville, Walter really prefers to carry on riding his hobby-horse to the end.¹

Walter's speech is first and foremost an assertion of his own continuing existence. In the same way, Bobby's death allows Tristram to assert himself as heir to the Shandy estate, and the death of Aunt Dinah allows Walter to make plans for the bettering of his son. This process, described by Fluchère as "asserting one existence through the cessation of another", is also seen in the kitchen when Obadiah announces the sad news of Bobby. "He is dead," says Obadiah. "So am not I," replies the scullion, who has been "all autumn struggling with a dropsy." The coachman's comment, "He was alive last Whitsuntide," is as inane as Walter's initial response to Toby's announcement of the death. Each character has a different individual response to Bobby's demise. Obadiah is concerned that now that Dinah's legacy cannot be spent on the grand tour project, Walter may implement his other plan for draining the Ox-moor. Susannah's mind is filled with the colours of the various clothes in Mrs Shandy's wardrobe that she hopes to be given. She repeats the word "mourning", but because the death of another person leads to the assertion of one's own life, the word produces "not one single idea, tinged either with grey or black,---all was green," the colour above all which symbolizes life (V, 7, pp. 359-62).

Only Trim seems genuinely concerned for Bobby, and even that concern is undermined by the obvious delight which he too takes in making a speech on death. Tristram actually draws attention to the contrast between Walter and Trim as educated and natural orators

¹ The image of the traveller and the inn is commonplace, and the argument that Sterne is drawing on John Wallis's The Occasional Miscellany is not very convincing, see Richard A Davies, "Further Sterne Debts in Tristram Shandy," N&Q, 220 (1975), 14-16.

respectively, "haranguing over the same bier". Walter has Cato, Seneca and Epictetus "at his fingers ends", and his speech follows classical rhetorical patterns; Trim has no such training, but proceeds "strait forwards as nature could lead him, to the heart" (V, 6, p. 359). This comparison has led critics such as Petrakis to suppose that Sterne prefers Trim's appeal to the emotions to Walter's sterile rhetoric - an argument which seems plausible if we take account of Sterne's own sermon technique of the "theological flap upon the heart".¹ According to Petrakis, Trim is Sterne's ideal preacher, the Pauline fool who teaches wisdom by appealing to the hearts of his listeners in simple and unaffected language.

However, this argument fails to take into account the way in which Sterne questions this technique by including one of his own theological flaps in volume two of Tristram Shandy. Trim is effectively the preacher of this sermon, and it is an obvious failure, not because it lacks an emotional appeal (indeed, as we have seen, it speaks rather too directly to Trim's heart), but because each character responds in a different way, and so completely misses the moral. The sermon reading thus undermines Trim's supposed powers of communication. His speech in the kitchen may draw upon biblical texts, but it is not any more distinctively Christian than Walter's. He makes no mention of anything beyond this life or of the idea that we should be prepared for death whenever it comes.

Neither orator should be seen as an ideal, for both are typically human and selfish in their response to death. Walter pleases himself with the sound of his own voice while Trim luxuriates in his power to arouse the emotions of his audience. Both convert "the disturbance and fear death creates into a pleasurable eloquence, a pleasurable

¹ Byron Petrakis, "Jester in the Pulpit: Sterne and Pulpit Eloquence," PQ, 51 (1972), 430-47.

sorrow."¹ Trim's speech, or, more properly, the dropping of his hat, reduces all those present in the kitchen to tears - even the scullion is affected - whereas the initial announcement of Bobby's death had produced a variety of responses. Tristram sees this as proof of the greater power of visual rather than verbal communication, but as New points out, the response to Trim's dropping of the hat is ridiculously mechanical, and Tristram draws attention to this by emphasizing the object, the hat, rather than its significance as a symbol of mortality.² In addition to this, the onlookers are weeping selfishly for themselves rather than Bobby.

Nevertheless, Sterne makes no moral judgement; he is simply interested in the mechanisms behind our different responses to death. To this end, Tristram's digressions help to keep the scene itself at a distance, so that the reader is not drawn in by Trim's rhetoric. In the second half of the speech we see the effect of Trim's hat beginning to wane, and the communal response is lost as individual character reemerges. Trim begins to flirt with Susannah, disguising his compliments as warnings of the inevitable passing of beauty, Susannah flirts back, and the scullion demands to be treated as a human being:

---Are we not, continued Trim, looking still at Susannah--are we not like a flower of the field--a tear of pride stole in betwixt every two tears of humiliation--else no tongue could have described Susannah's affliction--is not all flesh grass?--'Tis clay,---'tis dirt.--They all looked directly at the scullion,---the scullion had just been scouring a fish-kettle.---it was not fair (V, 9, p. 364).

Sterne's presentation of both Walter's and Trim's consolatory speeches is completely uncondemnatory. There is no exemplum to follow, for these are simply examples of the "delicious mixture" in human

¹ Lanham, pp. 59-60.

² New, pp. 148-49.

nature which makes man lovable because he is at once comic and pathetic. To Sterne, both forms of consolation, Shandeism and sentimental indulgence, are typically human and pathetically comic, as man fences against death in the armour of "his own egotism, his ready willingness to put sorrow into the service of pleasure."¹

This principle of deriving pleasure from sorrow is one that Trim understands well, and he recognizes it in the various consolatory methods of the Shandy household. Mrs Shandy "will get ease of heart in weeping" for Bobby's death, while Walter will acquire his "in talking about it", like Trim himself. The only person without any such comfort in the Corporal's opinion is his own master, Toby, whom he pities because he "will keep it all in silence to himself" (V, 10, pp. 365-66). "I shall hear him sigh in his bed for a whole month together as he did for lieutenant Le Fever," Trim tells those assembled in the kitchen. This former death was "so melancholy an accident" to Toby that he was quite unable to "get it off" his heart, not because he feared death, but because he regretted the fact that his benevolence was powerless to assist the dead man. Toby is forced to fulfil his benevolent impulse towards Le Fever by taking care of his son, and it is this "quieting draught" that calms his sighs and allows him to sleep. Toby's benevolence is yet another form of egotism whereby he fences against death, asserting his own existence through acts of charity.

¹ Lanham, p. 60.

V - Heaven and Hell

It is perhaps surprising that Toby, who is otherwise more obviously pious than any other member of the household, finds his consolation in benevolence rather than in the hope of heaven. Sterne is interested in the consequences of death for those who remain in this world, and thus for the most part he deliberately avoids mentioning the after-life.¹ Ideas of heaven and hell and good and bad deathbeds are foreign to his purpose, since he has no villains to punish or saints to reward. Here again Sterne differs from virtually every other novelist of the century. In Richardson and Fielding, deathbeds are indicative of eternal destinations, so that good can be allowed to triumph in the next world. In Sterne's novels there is no condemnation, and death is simply the end of life. Mackenzie comes the closest to achieving the same effect in The Man of Feeling, where there is virtually no plot and no definable villain to punish, but, of course, his deaths are simply pathetic, rather than pathetic and comic like Sterne's, and in his other two novels he reverts to a conventional use of the deathbed as a judgement day on earth.

Sterne avoids any such conventional ending. The death of the narrator occurs somewhere beyond the last page of both his works of fiction. To Sterne, judgement is generally inappropriate to this world. God allows man time to repent, and consequently "some of the worst of men both live and die without any testimony of God's wrath" (Sermons, V, 156-57). A guilty conscience can be a hell on earth, as in Fielding, but as the sermon in Tristram Shandy demonstrates, even this can be an unreliable guide to a man's moral character.

¹ Inger Christensen, The Meaning of Metafiction (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1981), p. 36.

Hell for Sterne is the splenetic state in which we cannot appreciate the "delicious mixture" of life as seen in the kitchen at Shandy Hall or on the continent in A Sentimental Journey. Smelfungus and Mundungus would find heaven a hell because they are unable to enjoy the pleasures of life (A Sentimental Journey, pp. 116-20). As Stout has shown, this was a commonplace idea in the eighteenth century, but it does help to explain why Sterne places so much emphasis on the enjoyment of life through laughter and emotion, since logically this is the best preparation we can possibly make for the enjoyment of eternity.¹

Sterne avoids speculating on the kind of pleasures eternity may hold. He presumably preached funeral sermons, but he published none of them, and none appear to have survived in manuscript for his daughter to publish posthumously. We can only speculate on the contents of Yorick's sermon on Le Fever, which, we are told, was "upon mortality" and marked "BRAVO" with a line through it (VI, 11, pp. 428-29). One would not guess either from the novels or the sermons that Sterne was writing at the height of Elizabeth Rowe's popularity, for he makes virtually no mention of her notion of a heavenly reunion of friends and relatives. Only the merest hint of this belief is found in Sterne's self-portrait as Yorick in Tristram Shandy. On his deathbed Yorick bids farewell to Eugenius, thanking him for his friendship, and promising that "if it was their fate to meet hereafter,---he would thank him again and again" (I, 12, p. 30). The extreme tentativeness of this promise makes Eugenius weep all the more. The other occasion in the novel where such a hope could have been expressed is in Tristram's speech to Jenny on the passing of time, but here Sterne chooses to make man appear all the more helpless and pathetic as his

¹ See Stout's notes on pp. 119-20.

every goodbye becomes a prelude to the "eternal separation" of death (IX, 8, pp. 610-11).

In fact Sterne did believe in a heavenly reunion, and expressed this belief in letters to his wife and Eliza Draper.¹ When he avoids speculating on the afterlife, he does so for aesthetic rather than religious reasons. He is not, for instance, reacting against the "enthusiastic" aspect of this doctrine, for in his poem "The Unknown World", published in the Gentleman's Magazine, he is quite prepared to entertain Rowe-like notions of "friendship in death" - that our dead friends watch over us like guardian angels:

And yet who knows, if friends we lov'd
Tho' dead, may be so far remov'd;
Only this veil of flesh between,
Perhaps they watch us, tho' unseen.
Whilst we their loss lamenting, say,
They're out of hearing, far away:
Guardians to us perhaps they're near
Conceal'd in vehicles of air.²

Sterne's poem is typical of the period in its treatment of death from a purely human angle as a step into the unknown and in its concentration on emotional consolation for the living. Christian certainties are reserved for the closing stanzas. The idea that the departed remain on earth as guardian spirits became very popular in the eighteenth century, but it was usually expressed in a similarly tentative manner, as in Spectator No. 204 or Johnson's prayer that he might "enjoy the good effects" of his dead wife's "attention and ministration".³ Sterne also follows the fashion of supposing that these guardian spirits are forbidden to give us "notices" or proofs of the afterlife,

¹ Letters, pp. 147, 317, 334.

² Gentleman's Magazine, 13 (1743), 376.

³ Nicholas Penny, Church Monuments in Romantic England (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), p. 103; Spectator, II, 301-02; Boswell, I, 235.

because God wishes man to "live by Faith alone", a view held, for instance, by Baxter, Bayle and Defoe (the last in particular treating all Rowe-like accounts of dead wives' ghosts visiting mourning husbands as "chimney-corner" stories).¹ Mackenzie, on the other hand, avoids such pious scepticism in the pursuit of melancholy. In Lounger No. 72 he refers to a correspondent who expresses the pleasure he derives from the knowledge that he will one day be reunited with his wife and children: "In my retired walks in the country, I am never alone; those dear shades are my constant companions."² Mackenzie's Harley is happy to die as long as he is allowed to become his beloved's guardian angel:

Perhaps, if the souls of the just
Revisit these mansions of care,
It may be my favourite trust
To watch o'er the fate of the fair.³

Such a consolation is far too other-worldly to find a place in Sterne's novels. He does, however, make use of a related idea, which is in effect a reversal of the notion that the dead watch over the living: the idea that the living will always keep the memory of the dead alive, particularly by regularly visiting their graves, a practice which came to be widely observed during the second half of the eighteenth century.⁴ .

In a sense, all the Shandy family gain this form of immortality through the memory of Tristram as set down in his life and opinions.

¹ Richard Baxter, The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits (London, 1691), pp. 3-8; Bayle, II, 65-66; Daniel Defoe, The Secrets of the Invisible World Disclos'd, 3rd. ed. (London, 1738), pp. 213, 280-81.

² Mackenzie, Works, VI, 160.

³ The Man of Feeling, p. 117.

⁴ McManners, pp. 343-44.

In addition, Yorick's ghost has the "consolation" of hearing the inscription on his tomb read by all that pass by his grave (I, 12, p. 32), Tristram calls on "men of goodness" to respect Trim's memory by weeding his grave (VI, 25, p. 451), a service which Yorick also performs for the monk when he visits his resting-place (A Sentimental Journey, p. 102), and Tristram similarly undertakes to pay for the weeding and maintenance of the pathway to Toby's memorial, his bowling green (II, 34, p. 224). Ever one to repeat a good idea, Sterne uses the same melancholy theme in his letter describing his night-time conversations with the ghostly Cordelia by her grave at Byland Abbey. To her he confesses his love for his "Bramine", and anticipates with tearful pleasure the day when all three will be united in death "and some kind hearted swain shall come and weed our graves, as I have weeded thine, and when he has done, shall sit down at our feet and tell us the Stories of his passions and disappointments."¹

Sterne's emphasis on immortality through the memory of the living rather than in heaven is typical of the later eighteenth century, but it should not be assumed that this is part and parcel of a loss of faith. Increased life-expectancy and improvements in family life led to a growing emphasis on the power of human love and a blurring of the distinction between eros and agape, the result of which was that orthodox religious and moral attitudes tended to be obscured rather than superseded.² This can be seen, for instance, if we compare Elizabeth Rowe's attitude to earthly love as being too important not to be continued in heaven with Richard Baxter's view that love on earth is only valuable because it is also a feature of eternity. Elizabeth Rowe, in her famous verses on the death of her husband, sees her love

¹ Letters, pp. 360-61.

² McManners, pp. 440-44; Hagstrum, pp. 1-23.

as a "sacred passion" and a "spotless faith", which she will maintain until she meets Thomas again in heaven, the place where, her husband tells her on his deathbed, "mighty love in endless triumph reigns". Baxter, on the other hand, insists that:

it is the belief that I shall Love my friends in Heaven, that principally kindleth my Love to them on Earth: And if I thought I should never know them after death, and consequently never love them more, when life is ended, I should in reason number them with temporal things, and Love them comparatively but a little.¹

The net result of both arguments is a belief in heaven, but whereas Baxter explains emotion in terms of eternity, Rowe explains eternity in terms of emotion. Sterne's faith, despite his avoidance of Rowe's emotional extrapolation from this world to the next, clearly has a similar experiential basis.

As death came to be seen as the breaking of friendships rather than the parting of soul and body, so consolatory themes tended to become modified to give more emotional comfort for the bereaved and less exhortation to use the opportunity for meditation on one's own death. A further development was the reaction against elaborate tombs and pompous funerals, where the emphasis was upon the wealth and worldly importance of the deceased, in favour of simple monuments erected by the bereaved and bearing an inscription testifying to the continuing bond of love and memory between the dead and the living.² That Sterne approved of this newer fashion is evident from his sermon on Dives and Lazarus, where the rich man is "buried no doubt in triumph, with all the ill timed pride of funerals and empty decorations" (IV, 50). The preferred alternative is seen in Yorick's

¹ Elizabeth Rowe, Miscellaneous Works (London, 1739), I, 112-15; Baxter, The Divine Life, p. 335.

² Ariès, pp. 322-24.

"plain marble slabb" and the simple inscription provided by Eugenius (Tristram Shandy, I, 12, p.32). The life-long tears of "The sweet companion, and the friend sincere" are preferable to "Columns, and labour'd urns".¹

Such changing attitudes inevitably had an effect upon funerary art, where it became common to depict the inconsolable mourner alongside the deceased's simple grave, as in *Yorick and the monk*. Among the funeral invitations in the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera in the Bodleian Library is an engraving of a woman in a flowing dress, leaning against a plain tombstone dated 1761. This design was evidently popular throughout the latter part of the century, since it was also used for a print of Virtue Weeping at the Tomb of Emma Corbett, published in 1786.² Even more common was the image of a woman drooping over an urn.³ In his scenes of weeping and weeding Sterne is following a fashion rather than starting one, though his popularity led to some direct imitation. The most extreme case of this was the setting up of a mock cemetery for all his major characters at Marienwerder near Hanover in the 1770's.⁴ Another instance occurs in the verses "On the Death of Yorick", where the writer observes that although Sterne may not have a grand funeral with all the pomp of black plumes and an "emblazon'd" hearse, he will nevertheless receive a full tribute of heartfelt sorrow from Maria's chanting and the monk's weeping over his grave.⁵ Yorick's Sentimental Journey Continued

¹ Letters, p. 308.

² The 1761 print is in Funerary broadside folder II; Virtue Weeping is in Funerary box III, along with a third, undated version of the same design, which, judging by the style of the engraving, may be early nineteenth century.

³ Penny, Church Monuments, pp. 67-71; Penny, Mourning, p. 44, plate 10; Burgess, p. 185.

⁴ Sterne: The Critical Heritage, p. 23.

⁵ Sterne: The Critical Heritage, p. 205.

contains a feeble imitation of Yorick's visit to the monk's grave in which the traveller weeps over Maria's unmarked grave, and the Continuation of Yorick's Sentimental Journey includes a Spectator-like meditation on the vanity of the fine tombs and inscriptions to be found in St Peter's in Rome. It is preferable, the essay suggests, to find immortality in the tears of the local peasants, over whom the benevolent example of Maria's dead father (now transformed into a hermit with the same name as Sterne's monk, Lorenzo) still exerts a powerful influence.¹ There is clearly a debt here not only to Sterne, but also to James Hervey's popular Meditations Among the Tombs, where the same preference is expressed for a simple tomb along with the desire that his memory should live on among the humble people that he has helped in life.²

Mackenzie's novel, The Man of Feeling, clearly also owes much to Yorick at the monk's grave for its concluding account of the narrator's regular visits to Harley's resting-place. The same solitary tribute is paid at the otherwise neglected memorial of one who was an exemplum of sensibility:

I sometimes visit his grave; I sit in the hollow of the tree. It is worth a thousand homilies! every nobler feeling rises within me! every beat of my heart awakens a virtue!---but it will make you hate the world---No: there is such an air of gentleness around, that I can hate nothing; but, as to the world---I pity the men of it".³

Mackenzie's narrator implies that the mood subsumes the moral - a justification of emotional indulgence which we have already seen Sterne

¹ Yorick's Sentimental Journey Continued (London, 1769), p. 177; Continuation of Yorick's Sentimental Journey (London, 1778), pp. 98-104, 123-28, reprinted in Sterneiana, Vol. XX.

² Hervey, Meditations Among the Tombs, pp. 44-46.

³ The Man of Feeling, pp. 132-33.

question in Yorick. Sterne may approve of affectionate memories, but he is no less ready to ridicule self-indulgent graveside melancholy, as when Tristram eagerly goes to drop a tear upon the Tomb of the Lovers at Lyons, only to find that "there was no tomb to drop it upon" (Tristram Shandy, VII, 40, p. 532). Weeping over tombs is a womanish weakness, Yorick confesses, and yet he begs the world "not to smile, but to pity him" in this further instance of the mixture of humour and pathos in man's dependance on transient emotions (A Sentimental Journey, p. 103).

VI - Conclusion

Shandeism and sentimentality are at once valuable and ridiculous. Tears are a useful source of comfort because they give us a sense of dignity and importance, but because this sense of dignity is illusory and unstable, our tears can all too easily appear comic. Although he is less in favour of emotional indulgence than Mackenzie or Elizabeth Rowe, Sterne is nevertheless anti-stoic. In Bacon's view, the stoics "bestowed too much cost vpon death, and by their great preparations, made it appeare more fearefull."¹ In other words, they gave themselves a false sense of importance by preparing to meet death without emotion. To both Bacon and Sterne such behaviour is ridiculous, since they see death as being outside man's control. A suicide, such as that of Montaubon in Mackenzie's Julia de Roubigné, has no place in Sterne's comic vision, because this form of death supposes that man can control his own end.²

¹ Bacon, p. 2.

² Henry Mackenzie, Julia de Roubigné, (London, 1777), II, 201.

In Mackenzie's novels, death is part of a recognizable pattern of cause and effect. The causes may be mixed, but added together they reveal the prevailing cruelty of the world. Harley's death in The Man of Feeling and Annesley's in The Man of the World indicate that they are too good for this life, the implication being that occasionally man can rise above the fallen world in which he lives.¹ Sterne avoids any such aggrandizement of human nature in life or death. Cause and effect in his novels lead to injury and misfortune, but never to martyrdom. The fall of one object may lead to the fall of another, as the descent of the stone from the parapet of the horn-work at Namur leads to Toby's hobby-horse and the unfortunate descent of the sash-window, but the result is only a maiming in both cases, not loss of life. Death always comes from outside this normal world of cause and effect. It is the debt of Nature, which every man must pay whenever the bailiff knocks at the door. There is no sense in Sterne that death is a martyrdom of the good or a punishment for the wicked. Nor is death a result of man's own tragic actions, as in the domestic tragedy of Julia de Roubigné. The fever which kills Le Fever has no explanation, whereas the final illness of Mackenzie's old soldier, Edwards, is the product of social injustice and hardship. Even the possibility of Tristram's death at birth is a matter of chance, completely outside Doctor Slop's control, and dependant on where the forceps happen to land.

Sterne thus presents an almost medieval view of death as a figure who interrupts life rather than bringing it to an inevitable close.

¹ On Harley's death, see Dale Kramer, "The Structural Unity of The Man of Feeling," Studies in Short Fiction, 1 (1963-63), 191-99; David G. Spencer, "Henry Mackenzie, a Practical Sentimentalist," Papers on Language and Literature, 3 (1967), 314-26; Ralph E. Jenkins, "The Art of the Theorist: Rhetorical Structure in The Man of Feeling," Studies in Scottish Literature, 9 (1972), 3-15; Gerard A. Barker, Henry Mackenzie, Twayne English Authors Series, No. 184 (Boston: Twayne, 1975), pp. 40-41.

Whereas Montaigne treats death as a part of life, using the story of Gallus as simply another illustration of the many ways in which one can die, for Sterne this example is special, since it shows the ultimate indignity of death interrupting man in the midst of his efforts to continue the species.¹ Man may differ from beasts in knowing that he must die, but Sterne sees little advantage in this knowledge. In fact it renders man even more ridiculous in his attempts to evade death or overcome it through stoicism, eloquence, sentimentality and Shandeism.

Yet Sterne's vision of man remains comic and sympathetic. Paradoxically, it is man's mortality that reveals the "delicious mixture" of his comic individuality. In Sterne's view, the man who cannot appreciate this quality of life is as good as dead already: he "has either a pumpkin for his head---or a pippin for his heart" (Tristram Shandy, V, 9, p. 364), he lives on neither a rational nor an emotional level, and so belongs in neither the house of mourning nor the house of feasting.

¹ Jonathan Lamb, "Sterne's Use of Montaigne," Comparative Literature, 32 (1980), 36-37.

Ann Radcliffe: Death, Doubt, Guilt and the Gothic Novel

I - The Sentimental and the Sentimental Gothic Novel

Whereas Sterne exploits the uncertainties of life and death to reproduce a mood of what might be called comic pathos in the novel, his sentimental successors, such as Henry Mackenzie, are interested in pathos alone, and make more obvious use of pious commonplaces about parting and reunion after death to provoke tears of sensibility, rather as Richardson had used seventeenth-century devotional material to make Clarissa's death affecting. In Mackenzie's story of "La Roche", the clergyman's belief in a heavenly reunion, about which he preaches at his daughter's funeral, is said to be a religion of "sentiment" rather than "theory", and Mackenzie points out in his introduction that such "religion is only introduced as a feeling, not as a system, as appealing to the sentiments of the heart, not the head."¹ The theme of heavenly reunion is often used by Mackenzie to increase the pathos of his tearful scenes. Harley on his deathbed assures the narrator that "we shall meet again . . . never to be separated", and earlier the bedlamite woman grasps at the hope that she may be reunited with her Billy.² In The Man of the World, old Annesley holds a similar

¹ Mackenzie, Works, IV, 205-07.

² Mackenzie, The Man of Feeling, pp. 128-29, 34.

belief, despite his otherwise more conventional piety.¹ Mackenzie may use this doctrine largely for its emotional impact, but he clearly believed it himself, having imbibed it as a child from his mother, whose "favourite reading", he informs us, was in Elizabeth Rowe's works, which he remembers as being "much read" during his childhood in the 1750's. He even singles out one particular episode from them which "did interest, and, I am not ashamed to say, does still interest me extremely" - a description from Rowe's Letters of the "domestic virtue and piety and happiness" of a widow and her daughters in "a beautiful retired cottage". Comparing it to "the family pictures of Greuze", Mackenzie insists that the scene is morally improving, making "proselytes to goodness" by "teaching people to enjoy its representations," but in fact it is rather similar to Mackenzie's own scenes of virtue in distress - and, for that matter, Greuze's sentimental paintings - in its gratuitous emotion.² The widow tells her tale to a Harley-like male observer, who can only admire and sympathize, since he is powerless to restore the husband who has died after falling into debt - a cause of death which Mackenzie himself tends to overuse.³

Elizabeth Rowe's ideas were clearly popular with sentimental novelists such as Mackenzie, and became more popular as the century wore on and a more emotional attitude to death became the accepted norm. Nevertheless, there remained those who, like Allworthy's neighbours in Tom Jones, considered such beliefs to be rather

¹ Mackenzie, The Man of the World, I, 308-15.

² Henry Mackenzie, Anecdotes and Egotisms, ed. Harold W. Thompson (London: OUP, 1927), pp. 156-57; Rowe, Letters Moral and Entertaining, Part I, "Letters to the Author by Another Hand," Letter X, pp. 131-38, the writer here is probably Rowe's close friend, Lady Hertford; on Greuze, see McManners, p. 257.

³ See, for example, The Man of the World, I, 14; II, 11-12, 113.

"whimsical" (p. 35). In 1738, in editing Elizabeth Rowe's Devout Exercises, Isaac Watts had complained that her ideas were "a little too rapturous, and too near a-kin to the Language of the mystical Writers."¹ A similarly apologetic tone still accompanies Ann Radcliffe's use of the same beliefs in her Gothic romances towards the end of the century. In The Romance of the Forest, the clergyman La Luc (who is perhaps a reworking of Mackenzie's La Roche), takes Verneuil to the hill-top site of his wife's memorial urn, and there expounds his "simple, rational, and sublime" faith, of which one of the "brightest hopes" is "that we shall meet again those whom we have loved upon earth" (III, 54, 126-27).² Like Elizabeth Rowe, he holds onto his beliefs whether or not they are "the illusions of a visionary brain" because of the comfort they bring (p. 127).³ Mackenzie's La Roche takes a similarly defensive stand, calling on doubters not to deprive others of the comfort of religion, and in the generally calamitous world of Mackenzie's fiction, this plea seems to have a particular urgency, though, of course, it was a common feature of the argument against free-thinking throughout the eighteenth-century, as, for instance, in Spectator No. 186.⁴ "He that would undermine those foundations upon which the fabric of our future hope is rear'd," Old Annesley tells his son in a Spectator-like lecture, "seeks to beat down that column, which supports the feebleness of humanity."⁵

¹ Elizabeth Rowe, Devout Exercises of the Heart, ed. Isaac Watts (London, 1738), Dedication, sig. A3^r-v; for further reactions to Rowe's mysticism, see Stecher, pp. 96-100.

² Ann Radcliffe, The Romance of the Forest, 3 vols. (London, 1791), references to volume and page numbers are given in parentheses in the text.

³ Rowe, Letters Moral and Entertaining, Part I, Letter VI, p. 53.

⁴ Mackenzie, Works, IV, 207; Mackenzie, Letters, p. 47; Spectator, II, 231-34.

⁵ Mackenzie, The Man of the World, I, 56.

Whereas Mackenzie seems desperate to defend hopes of futurity whilst at the same time using them to add pathos to his novels, Ann Radcliffe deliberately introduces elements of doubt into her speculations on the afterlife, which take her novels beyond pathos to the thrill of uncertainty. Here then there is a significant development in the use of death in the novel, as that which was initially intended to carry a moral, but which became a pretext for tears, now becomes a source of the sublime.

II - Religious Doubt and the Sublime

While it is generally accepted that terror in Ann Radcliffe's novels "is firmly rooted in the concept of sublimity as it was defined by Edmund Burke," the importance of "obscurity" in evoking such terror has rarely been associated directly with the mood of religious uncertainty created in the novels by speculations on death. Instead critics have tended to concentrate on her sublime landscapes, her castles, dungeons and dark forests, perhaps because many of Burke's own illustrations of the sources of the sublime are similarly visual - storms, mountains, gothic architecture, disorder and distance.¹ Nevertheless, it is clear that both Burke and Mrs Radcliffe saw potential for sublimity in the speculative and the imaginary, and in particular in speculation about death. According to Burke, "The ideas

¹ See Malcolm Ware, Sublimity in the Novels of Ann Radcliffe, Essays and Studies on English Language and Literature, No. 25, English Institute Upsala University (Upsala, Sweden: Lundequistska, 1963), pp. 6-11; Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in Eighteenth-Century England (New York: Modern Languages Association of America, 1935); Devendra P. Varma, The Gothic Flame (London: Arthur Baker, 1957), pp. 225-26; Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, ed. J.T. Boulton (London: Routledge, 1958), Part Two, pp. 57-87.

of eternity, and infinity, are among the most affecting we have, and yet perhaps there is nothing of which we really understand so little, as of infinity and eternity."¹ Ann Radcliffe, in her essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry", similarly suggests that sublime terror depends upon the kind of "uncertainty and obscurity" exemplified in the ghost scenes and speculations on the afterlife in Hamlet.² Through the play and through her own Gothic romances we can safely indulge our fears of death so that, according to Burke, they become "delightful" terrors, and "a source of the sublime".³

The Gothic novel exploits both old and new ideas of death, bringing them together, like Richardson, to reveal their disturbing contradictions, but with a predominantly emotional rather than moral purpose, playing upon, rather than questioning, the religious doubt and gloom of the eighteenth century exemplified by Johnson's life-long fear of death and the melancholy meditations of the graveyard poets, who treated "unhappiness as the norm of religious experience".⁴ As Coral Ann Howells has observed, the Gothic novel "questions responses to death by exploring the hinterland of anxiety behind late eighteenth-century euphemistic iconography." It is "a fantasy literature embodying contemporary neuroses", articulating and purging fears aroused by the revolutionary ferment, excitement and insecurity of the 1780's and 1790's.⁵ Instead of peaceful country churchyards,

¹ Burke, p. 61.

² "On the Supernatural in Poetry," New Monthly Magazine, 16 (1826), 145-52.

³ Burke, pp. 39-40.

⁴ S.C. Carpenter, Eighteenth-Century Church and People (London: John Murray, 1959), pp. 161-63; Boswell, II, 106-07; III, 154, 294-95; V, 179-80, etc; Wicker, p. 25.

⁵ Coral Ann Howells, "The Gothic Way of Death in English Fiction, 1790-1820," British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 5 (1982), 207-15; Coral Ann Howells, Love, Mystery and Misery: Feeling in

neo-classical urns, weeping willows and draped female figures, we are presented with subterranean vaults, skeletons and rotting corpses, the most macabre elements of the sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century momento mori tradition.¹

To a certain extent, Ann Radcliffe is still exploring the same area of tension between the strict seventeenth-century attitude to death and the more emotional eighteenth-century approach which Richardson utilized in Clarissa. The only difference is that the seventeenth-century customs and iconography now seem even more morbid and unhealthy, and can only be imagined as surviving in remote areas of Catholic countries where superstition and religious tradition still hold sway. The Gothic novel's attitude to Catholicism is typical of the period in that it condemns superstition and religious tyranny whilst at the same time showing a degree of attraction to its more macabre trappings, such as the devotional aid of the wax corpse in Udolpho, which Ann Radcliffe based on a real example in Pierre Grosley's New Observations on Italy.² Mrs Radcliffe shares Grosley's scornful attitude to such devotional aids, but for Emily and the reader the veiled picture has a "sublime" attraction, which "leads us, by a kind of fascination, to seek even the object, from which we appear to

Gothic Fiction (London: Athlone, 1978) pp. 3-7; further on this view of the Gothic phenomenon, see Tompkins, p. 251; Varma, pp. 150, 210-11, 216-18; Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest (London: The Fortune Press, 1938), pp. 398-401; Joel Porte, "In the Hands of an Angry God: Religious Terror in Gothic Fiction," in The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism, ed. G.R. Thompson (Washington: Washington State Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 43-45; for Ann Radcliffe's reactionary attitude to the French Revolution, see Aline Grant, Ann Radcliffe (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1951), pp. 53-54.

¹ Howells, "The Gothic Way of Death," p. 207.

² Pierre John Grosley, New Observations on Italy and its Inhabitants, trans. Thomas Nugent (London, 1769), I, 205; J.M.S. Tompkins, "Raymond de Carbonnières, Grosley and Mrs Radcliffe," RES, 5 (1929), 294-301.

shrink" (Udolpho, p. 248).¹ Similarly, in The Romance of the Forest, a "thrilling curiosity, which objects of terror often excite in the human mind", impels La Motte to take a second look at the "dismal spectacle" of the skeleton in the chest (I, 135).

The contrast between old and new attitudes to death is exploited further in the convent scenes of Udolpho. The skull, bones and hour-glass which Emily is shocked to find in the cell of the unfeeling Sister Frances are merely the devotional tools of one who is enjoined to spend her life meditating on death, but to Emily they suggest cruelty, unnatural suppression of feeling, and guilty secrets (p. 577). Gloomy religion provides a refuge for the criminal and the guilt-ridden, and even inspires guilty feelings in those who are innocent. Yet Mrs Radcliffe is careful to show that this is the result of faults in man not in religion. Whereas in Matthew Gregory Lewis's Udolpho-inspired novel, The Monk (1796), it is as if religion by its very nature corrupts, as the pious Ambrosio becomes the victim of evil supernatural forces, in Mrs Radcliffe's reply to the novel, The Italian (1797), religion - even Catholicism - is not to blame, since Schedoni is merely the prey of his own passions, and uses religion as a convenient disguise and path to power.² This point is further stressed by the obvious contrast between the San Stefano monastery, where Ellena is imprisoned, and the model convent of Santa della Pieta, where religion is "neither gloomy, nor bigotted" (The Italian, pp. 66-67, 299-301). Even among the corruption and cruelty of San Stefano

¹ Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho, ed. Bonamy Dobrée, Oxford English Novels (London: OUP, 1966), page references are given in parentheses in the text.

² Tompkins, pp. 278-79; Matthew Gregory Lewis, The Monk: A Romance, ed. Howard Anderson, Oxford English Novels (London: OUP, 1973); Ann Radcliffe, The Italian or the Confessional of the Black Penitents: A Romance, ed. Frederick Garber, Oxford English Novels (London: OUP, 1968), further references to these works are given in the text.

we find a good nun, Olivia, who occupies her time not with a skull and hourglass, but with a small library of Italian poetry (p. 94).

Nevertheless, despite these often rather comic attempts to show that religion need not be gloomy, there remains a strong sense of fear that our inability to face death is a sign of our own guilt. At the death of Signora Bianchi, for instance, the mixture of old and new attitudes to death deepens the mystery with religious uncertainty and suspicions of guilt. Initially a contrast is made between Signora Bianchi's calm prognostication of her death and the shocked reaction of the sensitive young Ellena to such old-fashioned resignation (The Italian, p. 38). Shortly, however, the sudden death of Ellena's aunt, without the benefit of the last rites, seems to belie her earlier mood. She dies with much agitation, as if struggling to impart some message, perhaps the name of her murderer, or a guilty secret which will affect Ellena's future (pp. 41-44). That this death somehow implicates Ellena is suggested by the way she becomes trapped amid the unfeeling anonymity of the Catholic funeral rites. As she hangs weeping over the corpse, a typical heroine of sensibility, the ghostly strains of the requiem murmur through the darkened house (pp. 42-43). Her aunt's funeral procession, "according to the custom of the country", consists only of priests and torchbearers, and there is no place for Ellena's private grief (pp. 56-57). This ecclesiastical domination of the funeral, which survived on the continent well into the eighteenth century, is thus used to highlight Ellena's loneliness, and to emphasize the sense that some secret is being kept hidden from her.¹

This disturbing mixture of old and new customs and iconography is found throughout Ann Radcliffe's novels. In The Romance of the Forest we find a ruined abbey complete with dank vaults and a skeleton and

¹ Ariès, pp. 165-68; McManners, pp. 292-93.

also the more contemporary image of the "rustic urn" of La Luc's wife "over which drooped, in beautiful luxuriance, the weeping willow" (I, 36-40, 135-36; III, 124). Comparison with Mackenzie is again instructive here, for whereas he also uses both sentimental and Gothic elements, the one cannot be said to balance or compensate for the other, as in Mrs Radcliffe, because the Gothic is used merely to add suspense to Mackenzie's over-stretched plots. In The Man of the World, Bolton chances upon Billy Annesley in a ruined chapel (II, 162), but this is simply an interesting rather than a significant setting, unlike the deserted abbeys and dungeons of Ann Radcliffe's novels, which, like her scenic descriptions, seem to reflect the mental state of her characters.¹ The description of Harley's rustic urn in the same novel - a Rousseauistic memorial in a landscape garden, over which Miss Walton leans with just the "pensive attitude" of widows in contemporary iconography - serves a quite different purpose from the account of the similar hill-top memorial in The Romance of the Forest.² Ann Radcliffe makes her mourning figure a man, thereby avoiding the cliché of the sexually attractive widow, as depicted in Greuze's Inconsolable Widow, Angelica Kauffman's Andromache and Hecuba Weeping Over the Ashes of Hector, and Blair's poem, The Grave (which became popular in the 1780's) - a stereotype which Sterne had humorously questioned in his account of Tristram and Yorick's attraction to Maria and the widow at Calais, returning via the latter and Widow Wadman to the older, satirical view of widows, as used by Fielding, which sees them as predators rather than victims.³ The effect of Ann Radcliffe's

¹ Ware, p. 14.

² Mackenzie, The Man of the World, II, 49-50; on Rousseau's tomb, see McManners, pp. 346-48.

³ Robert Rosenblum Transformations in Late Eighteenth-Century Art (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 40-42, plates 35 and 38; Blair, p. 7, see also James Mean's introduction, pp. iii-v.

departure from the newer convention is to shift the emphasis from the spectacle of grief, which affects the reader at one remove, to the religious speculation, which affects the reader directly. We are no longer in the safe, melancholy world of Harley's landscape garden (a setting closely associated with death throughout the century, as witness Pope's garden at Twickenham and Jonathan Tyers's emblematic representation of the journey of life and death at Denbys near Dorking).¹ Instead we are amidst the terrifying sublimity of the Alps, which "fills the soul with emotions of indescribable awe, and seems to lift it to a nobler nature" (The Romance of the Forest, III, 124). In Udolpho, such sublime landscapes lead Emily and Blanche to raise their thoughts in prayer to the "Great Author" (pp. 242, 475), but this pseudo-religious experience is far from comforting, since it depends upon a sense of one's own insignificance and peril: "As she silently surveyed the vast horizon bending round the distant verge of the ocean, an emotion of sublimest rapture struggled to overcome a sense of personal danger" (p. 480). An alpine landscape is therefore a far from reassuring setting for La Luc's religious speculations, since the sublime surroundings inevitably highlight man's feeble and mortal nature, or, as Mrs Radcliffe phrases it in her account of her continental tour in 1794:

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¹ Maynard Mack, The Garden and the City (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 25; on Denbys, see Scots Magazine, 29 (1767), 456; Gentleman's Magazine, 51 (1781), 123-24; further on this topic, see Christopher Hussey, The Picturesque (London: Cass, 1967); John Dixon Hunt, The Figure in the Landscape (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976); John Dixon Hunt, "Emblem and Expressionism in the Eighteenth-Century Landscape Garden," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 4 (1971), 294-317; Kenneth Woodbridge, "Henry Hoare's Paradise," Art Bulletin, 47 (1965), 83-116; and David C. Streatfield and Alistair M. Duckworth, Landscape in the Gardens and Literature of Eighteenth-Century England (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1981).

while we yield to the awful pleasure which this eternal vastness inspires, we feel the insignificance of our temporary nature, and, seeming more than ever conscious by what a slender system our existence is upheld, somewhat of dejection and anxiety mingle with our admiration.¹

Although La Luc's speculations provide something of a balance to the Gothicism of the forest and the ruined abbey, the clergyman's faith in heavenly reunion is itself subject to sublime uncertainty. Throughout her novels Ann Radcliffe exploits the doubts which had accompanied this doctrine during the century. Like Richardson and Fielding, she presents it as being quite normal for even the believer to fear death, and ostensibly for the same reason that "the sharpness of death consists in parting with those who are dear to us" (The Romance of the Forest, III, 256). Despite the fact that he is "innocent of any great crime", and in traditional terms should therefore be able to "look on death without terror", Theodore cannot part with his family, and derives little comfort from his father's assurance that "we shall meet in a state where sorrow never comes" (The Romance of the Forest, pp. 255-59). The novels consistently show that "death, however long contemplated, must be dreadful when it arrives."² The basis of this fear lies not only in the parting of loved ones, but also in a revival of the fear of the unknown bourn that lies beyond death, linked to a sense that our salvation is uncertain because, as the guilt-ridden nun Agnes says, "all earthly innocence is but comparative" (Udolpho, p. 574). Our passions are "the seeds of vices as well as of virtues" (Udolpho, p. 647), and so even if there is a heavenly reunion of the blessed, we cannot be certain that we shall be

¹ Ann Radcliffe, A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794 (London, 1795), pp. 273-74.

² Ann Radcliffe, The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, 2nd ed. (London, 1793), p. 56, further references are given in the text.

worthy to be numbered among them.

Before the death of St Aubert in Udolpho, Rowe-like speculations on whether the spirits of the dead are allowed to "watch over the friends they have loved" are used to add poignancy and fear to Emily's bereavement. Speculative uncertainty is essential to the mood here, and there is even a sense that La Voison's belief may be mere wish-fulfilment: "'But you believe, sir, that we shall meet in another world the relations we have loved in this; I must believe this.' 'Then do believe it,' replied St. Aubert" (pp. 67-68). Certainly there is little evidence in the novels that the dead do watch over the living as La Voison hopes. All apparently supernatural communications are finally explained as natural phenomena - such as Du Pont speaking from behind a wall (Udolpho, pp. 289-91) - or as figments of a character's imagination, and more often than not, when her characters' minds turn to ghosts, they think of terrifying avenging spirits rather than comforting guardian angels. In scenes such as the haunted apartments of Chateau-le-Blanc (Udolpho, pp. 571-73) Mrs Radcliffe makes full use of all the uncertainties of the debate on the spirit world conducted in the pages of works such as Aubrey's Miscellanies and Defoe's The Secrets of the Invisible World Disclos'd.¹ While the credulous Baron warns the Count against spending a night in these rooms, lest the ghost be bent on his destruction, the Count is more sceptical, and enters upon his night's watch believing that the ghost has a rational explanation. When he meets Emily the next day, however, his former confidence has evaporated, and his refusal to say what he has seen and heard combined with his assurance that "the apparition of the dead comes not on light, or sportive errands, to terrify, or to surprise the timid", only serves to arouse Emily's fearful curiosity further

¹ John Aubrey, Miscellanies (London, 1696).

(p. 573). Does he mean that there really is a ghost on a terrible "errand" to avenge the murder of the Marchioness de Villeroi?

Gothic ghosts are not the benevolent paternal figures of Elizabeth Rowe's speculations, but spirits from the dark world of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy, calling for revenge, and punishing succeeding generations, like the armour-clad figure of Walpole's The Castle of Otranto, or the groaning bones of Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron. Whereas in Clara Reeve's novel the genuine supernatural communications are reassuring, showing Edmund that his cause is just, in Ann Radcliffe's novels such phenomena are almost always disturbing, in the tradition of the ghost of Hamlet's father.¹ In The Romance of the Forest, Adeline, like Edmund, learns information leading to the discovery of her true parentage through a series of dreams (I, 269-74). These dreams lead to the discovery of her father's manuscript account of his imprisonment and death at the hands of the Marquis (II, 14), but such knowledge merely increases her fears, particularly as it reveals to her the "living death" which she may have to face as a prisoner (II, 57). In addition to this, the apparently supernatural way in which the manuscript speaks to her raises such terror in her mind that she dare not so much as look up at the mirror, "lest some other face than her own should meet her eyes" (II, 59). Similarly, in A Sicilian Romance, Ferdinand is filled with guilty terror when he hears the voice of his imprisoned mother, because he thinks it is the ghost of the murdered della Campo calling for revenge, and in The Italian, Vivaldi imagines that the prophesying monk is "the spectre of a murdered person" (p. 78).²

¹ Clara Reeve, The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story, ed. James Trainer, Oxford English Novels (London: OUP, 1967), pp. 44-45; for a discussion of Edmund's degree of fear, see Margaret Anne Doody, "Deserts, Ruins and Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel," Genre, 10, No. 4 (1977), 529-72.

² Ann Radcliffe, A Sicilian Romance (London, 1790), I, 123, 223-26, further references are given in the text.

It is only in Ann Radcliffe's last novel, Gaston de Blondville (based on an imaginary manuscript dated "twelve hundred and something") and the "Provençal Tale" (said to be a twelfth-century fable) of Udolpho (pp. 552-57) that such avenging spirits really exist, but characters in all the novels are ready to believe in such ghosts because the romance world of secrets, mysteries and coincidences seems to support this avenging principle.¹ Coral Ann Howells has suggested that these "subversive inner texts" are more truly Gothic than the main narratives, but this is not really the case, since the particular thrill of Ann Radcliffe's brand of Gothic fiction seems to depend not upon real supernatural phenomena, as in The Monk, but on uncertainty as to whether fear and evil come from within or without.²

The same principles can be seen at work in Mrs Radcliffe's use of ghostly music. This is another phenomenon of the Elizabethan stage, finding its way into Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra and Julius Caesar via North's Plutarch. It is also found in Elizabeth Rowe, who treats ethereal music at night as a warning of approaching death.³ Similar sounds are heard at St Aubert's death, but the peasant La Voison refuses to believe that they are a presage of death, since he has "outlived the warning" for many years. Instead he associates the music with the departed spirit of his wife (Udolpho, p. 68). Again, Ann Radcliffe is careful to provide a rational explanation at the end of the novel (in this case it is the night-time lament of the nun, Agnes), but while it remains unexplained, it acts as a device for heightening suspense, hinting further at the mysterious connection

¹ Ann Radcliffe, Gaston de Blondville (London, 1826), I, 50, further references are given in the text.

² Howells, "The Gothic Way of Death," pp. 210-11.

³ Rowe, Letters Moral and Entertaining, Part III, "Six Letters from Laura to Aurelia," Letter V, pp. 121-25.

between St Aubert and the dead Marchioness, and increasing fear of the supernatural.

A prisoner at Udolpho, Emily sits up one night, thinking on her father's death and on his remarks concerning the afterlife, when suddenly she hears music, and it seems to her "as if her dead father had spoken to her in that strain, to inspire her with comfort and confidence" (Udolpho, p. 330). Her comfort is short-lived, however, as she then connects the music with the mysterious disappearance of the Marchioness (p. 331). These two views of an apparently supernatural event, one comforting, the other worrying, create a mood of terror and suspense in which nothing is certain. Ultimately, such music is always from a mortal source, and is a sign of the proximity of those imprisoned or in hiding, rather than the dead. Even in Gaston de Blondville, where there is a real ghost, the singing that the condemned Woodreeve takes to be a "death-warning" turns out to be that of his wife (III, 3, 10). Nevertheless, to explain away such phenomena is not to reassure the reader, rather it leads us to the disturbing conclusion that La Voison's faith and Emily's fears are the equally fallacious products of an overcharged imagination. The effect is to undermine those emotional proofs of immortality which formed the basis of so much late eighteenth-century belief, and which were so obviously open to the charge of self-deception and wish-fulfilment.¹ As Young expresses it in his Night Thoughts, "Eternal life is Nature's ardent wish:/What ardently we wish, we soon believe."²

Ann Radcliffe reveals the deceptive power of the imagination not to commend atheism or even rationalism, but simply to indulge and purge our fears and doubts. In fact, although her novels were rarely

¹ McManners, pp. 172-75.

² Young, Works, I, 147, lines 1310-11.

subjected to such elaborate religious exegesis as is found in Joanna Southcott's manuscript, they were often commended for their religious content.¹ A review of Udolpho in 1794 paid particular attention to the speculations at the death of St Aubert.² A letter about The Romance of the Forest a year later was even more open in its praise of the novel as "far superior" to Udolpho because of its "pleasing speculations on the reunion of friends in a future state of existence", which "deserve to be detached from the volume" and published as a devotional essay. The writer notes that such a belief is generally held to be a "visionary doctrine", the implication being that it is appropriate to the novel because in the novel one can safely indulge in the unbelievable. The reviewer seems to sense the uncertainty of Mrs Radcliffe's speculations, and feels the need to cite further arguments in support of the doctrine of a heavenly reunion drawn from several divines who "have lately maintained it with an energy not to be resisted".³ In this light, her treatment of this theme appears all the more like a response to contemporary anxieties.

III - The Guilty Death

For the earlier novelists death is important as an indication of a final divine judgement upon a character's moral standing, as different ways of life lead to the contrasting deaths of a Clarissa, a Belton, a Lovelace, a Jonathan Wild, or a David Simple, but gradually during the century, death in the novel tends to drift away from its original

¹ Eugene P. Wright, "A Divine Analysis of The Romance of the Forest," Discourse, 13 (1970), 379-87.

² European Magazine, 25 (1794), 433.

³ European Magazine, 28 (1795), 230-31.

purpose as a moral yardstick to become a catalyst for the reader's sensibility as the supreme example of man's pitiful frailty. This transition from religion and morality to indulgent emotion is virtually complete in Sterne's sentimental episodes and in Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling, where there are no longer any villains to punish. In the Gothic novel, however, a further modification of the traditional deathbed pattern takes place in order to take account of the fascination of the Gothic villain.

The deathbed of the Gothic villain is not a moral corrective, but rather a place where feelings of guilt and uncertainty about the nature of man find expression, feelings arising from the tension between a secularized philosophy of man's natural benevolence and an abiding sense of man's fallen state.¹ While the Jacobin novelists set out to argue man's perfectibility, the Gothic novel tends to show the reverse, that evil has a strange universal fascination. This is accompanied, as Tompkins observes, by a shift of emphasis from the portrayal of repentance to the depiction of the "passionate excesses" which precede it.²

The wicked Marchesa in The Italian is a study in guilt rather than a Spira-like warning. Her actual death is recounted somewhat summarily (pp. 374-76, 385), but in fact she has been dying slowly "for many years" (p. 375); her guilty conscience is a self-destructive force, like an unseen cancer. Whereas in Fielding, the torturings of a guilty conscience are "preludes" of divine judgement, in the Gothic novel there is an additional fearful uncertainty as to whether those "preludes" are genuine signs of God's wrath or merely the product of one's imagination. The scene where Schedoni persuades the Marchesa to

¹ G.R. Thompson, "Introduction: Romanticism and the Gothic Tradition," in The Gothic Imagination, pp. 5-6.

² Tompkins, p. 285.

agree to the murder of Ellena is set in a church, where the singing of the requiem and the inscription over the confessional, "God hears thee!", strike the Marchesa as "an awful warning". She suppresses her fears, however, and "considering that this was a common inscription for Confessionals", disregards "what she had at first considered as a peculiar admonition" (p. 176). Her uncertainty extends to the reader, for whom Schedoni seems neither simply human nor wholly satanic, his face "overspread with a dark, cadaverous hue of mingled anger and guilt" (p. 175). The similar scene in Gaston de Blondville, where the King's conscience is struck by the singing of Gaston's requiem, is far less effective, because there is no doubt here that the king will go to hell if he condemns Woodreeve. The crisis of conscience is much simpler, since the real ghost of the murdered knight offers him a clear choice between salvation and damnation (III, 17-23).

Such real ghosts, devils and evil forces deprive the Gothic novel of its human fascination. Lewis's Ambrosio in The Monk is ultimately a disappointment, since he is a victim, spirited away from his prison cell and hurled to his destruction by the devil (pp. 438-42). Schedoni, on the other hand, remains a fascinating enigma. His conscience is awakened by the spectacle of Ellena's innocence, and he is unable to bring himself to stab or drown her in the scene on the beach (The Italian, pp. 223-24). Later, this strange instinctive abhorrence of the deed is reinforced by the sight of the miniature in Ellena's bosom, which seems to confirm that she is his own daughter (pp. 234-36). Borrowing from Hamlet, Ann Radcliffe shows Schedoni to be the prey of unbearable guilt through his agitation at seeing some players enact the murder of Virginia by her father (pp. 274-75), and yet, at the end of the novel, he destroys himself without a hint of remorse, documenting his crimes with Iago-like detachment, and carefully stage-managing his impressive exit (pp. 390-404). This

ending, far from reasserting moral order through the destruction of evil, shows the fascination of such a "picturesque defiance" of religion and morality.¹ Self-destruction is the fulfilment of his character, rather than a moral commentary on it. Suicide, which the eighteenth-century novel usually pities as a weakness and impiety, is thus re-established as a grand theatrical gesture. In The Romance of the Forest, the Marquis de Montalt makes a similarly dramatic exit in order to avoid "an ignominious death" on the gallows (III, 322). This is a very different world from Fielding's, where Jonathan Wild's overdosing himself with laudanum is nothing but cowardly.

This is not to say that Mrs Radcliffe openly condones this crime, which was particularly prevalent in Britain during the 1790's.² When the Marchioness de Mazzini poisons her husband and stabs herself to death in her disappointment at the end of A Sicilian Romance, her excessive passion is clearly shown to be ridiculous. It is "from trials well endured" that we "derive the surest claim to the protection of heaven" (II, 202-04, 216). Behind the reassurance of this conventional moral, however, the Gothic novel explores a terrifying world where the individual seems insignificant in comparison to sublime landscapes whose Creator may be far above man's petty concerns. Suicide is the Gothic villain's gesture of heroic defiance. By destroying himself, Schedoni asserts his importance, escapes humiliation, and carries the mystery of his fascinating character to the grave. He is perhaps Ann Radcliffe's greatest achievement in characterization. Montoni in Udolpho is less successful, because, having been built up as an attractive villain, he is allowed to fade out of the novel, and the mysterious circumstances of his death are inadequately reported in a

¹ Tompkins, p. 285.

² Sprott, pp. 97. 151-61.

single sentence (p. 569).¹

As in the death of Richardson's Lovelace, there is a sense of wasted potential at the demise of many of Ann Radcliffe's villainous heroes. In The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne, Malcolm, a man "whose understanding might have reached the happiness of virtue, but whose actions displayed the features of vice," laments his weakness, and receives Osbert's forgiveness (pp. 220-21). However, we pity such villains not because all men are potentially good (an idea which the Jacobin novelists champion fiercely, as we shall see), but because we sense that all men are potentially evil because all are subject to the same passions, "the seeds of vices as well as of virtues" (Udolpho, p. 647). Agnes the nun sees herself as living proof of this dictum. Having been an accomplice in the murder of Emily's aunt, she enters the convent to hide her identity and her guilty secret, and vainly seeks to atone for her crime through years of repentance and prayer. To her death, however, she remains tortured by remorse, and in her madness imagines that the spirits of those she has wronged come to torment her (Udolpho, pp. 643-44). Whereas in Clarissa such traditional accusing spirits are sufficiently vague to be either real or imaginary, here they are clearly the projections of a guilt-deranged mind, as Agnes supposes Emily to be the ghost of the murdered Marchioness. Religious observance can no longer bring relief to the guilty, for "indulgence of the passions" can lead to crimes "for which whole years of prayer and penitence cannot atone!" (p. 646). Agnes dies without any hope of forgiveness, even though her confession has been heard and accepted, and although she clutches at the crucifix, her tortured mind wanders far from its assurance (p. 643). The Abbess judges that Agnes is "ill-informed of our holy religion!", but this is clearly an insensitive estimate of a death which Emily witnesses "in silent awe"

¹ Eino Railo, The Haunted Castle (London: Routledge, 1927), p. 30.

as a classic example of the power of passions to which we are all susceptible (p. 647). Far more than a "great and awful lesson" that we should prepare for death by seeking "the peace of conscience", the episode provides an opportunity for a daring, if psychologically limited, study of the "living death" of guilt (p. 642).

IV - "Living Death" and Live Burial

"To live in shame and in consciousness of guilt, is a living death," confesses the wicked Count de Santmorin at the end of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne (p. 261), and the truth of this observation seems to be borne out by the example of the Marchesa in The Italian and Agnes's burial of herself in the convent in Udolpho. Throughout the novels, as Ann Radcliffe uses her settings to reflect the mental states of her characters, so guilt is frequently associated with some form of live burial. In The Romance of the Forest, La Motte and his family hide from justice by burying themselves in the ruined abbey, which is itself buried in the forest. Far from being a sanctuary, the abbey's religious associations merely increase La Motte's fears, and he imagines that the spirits of the dead reprove him for his "sacrilegious" intrusion (I, 38-39). When the family hides in the dungeons of the abbey, the connection between guilt and live burial is made explicit by the narrator's comment on La Motte's view of the vaults:

La Motte, in his then depressed state of mind, thought them the burial places of the monks, who formerly inhabited the pile above; but they were more calculated for places of penance for the living, than of rest for the dead (I, 136).

It is, of course, in the abbey that La Motte discovers the skeleton of Adeline's father, the victim of another live burial at the hands of the same Marquis who is leading La Motte into crime (I, 135). Guilt leads to a death-like loss of identity and mental decay, and as La Motte sinks lower, so he becomes estranged from his wife, and takes to meditating on his crimes in the smaller tomb in the forest where he has hidden the evidence of his robbery of the Marquis (III, 228-31).

Live burial is nearly always associated with closed religious institutions, such as the San Stefano monastery in The Italian. Here, when Ellena is nearly forced to take the veil, Vivaldi thinks that the service must be a funeral. The bell tolls "the knel of death, and it occurred to him, that a dying person was approaching to receive the last sacrament" (p. 117). Ellena refuses to comply with the Abbess's wishes, and she is condemned to starve in a remote dungeon (p. 126). At the climax of this episode, as she and Vivaldi make their escape from the monastery, they find themselves in the "death-room" of a former unfortunate. An intensely claustrophobic atmosphere is built up as they proceed through the seemingly interminable labyrinth of underground corridors, which gives their sudden emergence upon the "moonlight mountains" the feeling of bursting from a tomb (pp. 137-43).

The fear of live burial does appear to have been particularly prevalent during the closing decades of the eighteenth century.¹ Medical assurances did little to stem the tide of horrific tales, and it would seem that the Gothic novel's treatment of this theme is a further example of its unleashing of contemporary neuroses. The most extreme example of this is, of course, Lewis's graphic description in The Monk of the live burial of the nun Agnes as punishment for fornication:

¹ Ariès, pp. 397-401; McManners, pp. 48-49.

Sometimes I felt the bloated Toad, hideous and pampered with the poisonous vapours of the dungeon, dragging his loathsome length along my bosom: Sometimes the quick cold Lizard roused me leaving his slimy track upon my face, and entangling itself in the tresses of my wild and matted hair: Often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms, which bred in the corrupted flesh of my Infant (p. 415).

This is far more horrific than anything in Ann Radcliffe's novels. She aims to inspire "terror", which "expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life", rather than "horror", which "contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them."¹ Consequently, her references to live burial are far more covert and psychological in import. Lewis's nun receives her punishment at the hands of those who cannot understand her commendable love for Raymond. In her own and the reader's eyes, however, she is not guilty of any great crime. In Mrs Radcliffe, on the other hand, there is always a strong sense of self-condemnation in such live burials, even in the minds of those who are innocent.

This irrational sense of guilt can be clearly seen in Emily's reaction to Dorothée's account of the Marchioness in Udolpho. Linking the Marchioness's rumoured love affair to the mysterious papers which her dying father enjoined her to burn, Emily fears that she is the daughter of their illicit relationship, and the furnishings in the deserted apartments of the Marchioness seem almost supernaturally to confirm this connection. Dorothée sees a resemblance between Emily and the Marchioness's picture, and live burial is suggested once again by the way she throws the Marchioness's decaying veil over Emily's head in order to test the likeness further (pp. 531-35). The link between guilt and burial produces some of Ann Radcliffe's most effective scenes, as the novel deals with what Thompson describes as:

¹ Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry," p. 149.

the tormented condition of a creature suspended between the extremes of faith and skepticism, beatitude and horror, being and nothingness, love and hate---and anguished by an indefinable guilt for some crime it cannot remember having committed.¹

V - Conclusion

It may seem strange that religious uncertainty should be the keynote of novels which were written by a happily-married young woman, a staunch Anglican, as a way of filling the hours when her husband was kept late at work. On his return she would "laughingly" present him with chapters "which he could not read alone without shuddering".² Clearly her readers preferred to think of her as a melancholy figure, but even the rumours of her madness at the end of her life seem to have been unfounded.³

In fact this seeming contradiction is central to an understanding of Ann Radcliffe's treatment of death. The conventional moral at the end of Udolpho, that "innocence, though oppressed by injustice, shall, supported by patience, finally triumph over misfortune!" (p. 672), totally disregards the theme of the relativity of guilt which the novel has shown through Agnes the nun, Emily's irrational guilty fears, the fascination of Montoni, and the attraction of the veiled picture. In the final paragraph, the narrator expresses the hope that "this tale, has, by its scenes, beguiled the mourner of one hour of sorrow, or, by its moral, taught him to sustain it," but this is obviously not the

¹ Thompson, p. 3.

² "Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs Radcliffe," prefixed to Gaston de Blondville, I, 8, 105; Grant, pp. 17, 43.

³ Grant, p. 146.

purpose or effect of the novel's disturbing religious speculations. While maintainting a safe vantage point of orthodoxy, Ann Radcliffe allows us to indulge in sublime uncertainty. Affected by the intellectual atmosphere of the period of the French Revolution, beneath the surface, the Gothic novel's view of man and of futurity is one of gloom and pessimism, a view which even the Jacobin novelists, who were themselves involved in the intellectual revolution, found difficult to dispel, when they turned to the novel as a means of propagating their supposedly optimistic, secularized system of morality.

Chapter Six - The Death of Convention in the Jacobin Novel:

Godwin, Holcroft and Bage

I - Death and the Domestic Affections

In the original preface to Caleb Williams, Godwin asserts that his novel is intended to communicate "political principles" to those "persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach."¹ For Godwin, as for Richardson and Fielding, the novel is a sugar-coated pill of instruction, but whereas Richardson's aim was to "steal in . . . and investigate the great doctrines of Christianity under the fashionable guise of an amusement" (Clarissa, VIII, 308), thereby presenting religious truth to those who would not in the normal way read sermons or devotional works, the message of Godwin, the ex-dissenting minister, is wholly secular, and the truths which he is anxious to put across no longer concern the individual's ultimate accountability to his Creator, but rather, his moral responsibility to society.

The so-called Jacobin novelists were ostensibly concerned with the perfectibility of society through rational thought, rather than morality based on religious belief or the emotions of the individual.

¹ William Godwin, Caleb Williams, ed. David McCracken, Oxford English Novels (London: OUP, 1970), p. 1, further references are given in parentheses in the text.

Just as Richardson saw himself as creating "a new species of Writing" by using the novel to teach Christian morality, so writers such as Godwin, Holcroft and Bage sought to take Richardson's legacy and remould it in order to present their secular philosophy to a wider audience.¹

However, the novel of the second half of the eighteenth century with its underlying Christian morality, its emphasis on love and the supreme reward of marriage, and its presentation of the parting of loved ones at death as a major emotional crisis for the individual, hardly seems a promising form for adaptation to express the rational scepticism and social morality of the English Jacobins. It exalts the very "domestic affections" which they sought to replace with the rational sense of duty to society as a whole, Godwin arguing in his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice that in a fire it would be one's duty to rescue the "illustrious archbishop of Cambray" rather than his valet, even if the valet were one's father or brother (or, in the first edition, mother or sister).²

To many of Godwin's contemporaries this cold rationalism seemed utterly unnatural, whether in real life or in the novel, and accordingly it was ridiculed in works such as George Walker's The Vagabond, where Fenton lets his mistress and her father burn to death while he considers rationally which of the two it will most benefit society for him to save.³ To the English Jacobins, however, society

¹ Richardson, Selected Letters, p. 76; on the Jacobin novelists and their political theories, see Gary Kelly, The English Jacobin Novel 1780-1805 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); Don Locke, A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin (London: Routledge, 1980); and Marilyn Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

² William Godwin, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, ed. F.E.L. Priestley (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1946), I, 126-28; III, 146, further references are given in parentheses in the text.

³ Tompkins, p. 324.

is more important than the individual, and passions associated with love and bereavement are corrupt if they distract us from our higher duty.

Death, Godwin asserts, is "among the slightest of human evils" (Political Justice, I, 271). It may dissolve bonds of human love, but in itself it has no detrimental effect on society, even when it comes as a result of a great natural disaster, such as an earthquake. Murder, on the other hand, is "altogether different", for it generates "a thousand ill passions", which spread like a cancer through society:

The perpetrators, and the witnesses of murders, become obdurate, unrelenting and inhuman. Those who sustain the loss of relations or friends by a catastrophe of this sort, are filled with indignation and revenge. Distrust is propagated from man to man, and the dearest ties of human society are dissolved (Political Justice, I, 272).

Godwin's novel, Caleb Williams, sets out to illustrate this theory of death, the mutual destruction of Falkland and Caleb resulting entirely from Falkland's murder of Tyrrel. Falkland, with his guilty secret hidden in his trunk, is something of a Gothic villain, like Mrs Radcliffe's Montoni with his veiled picture, and yet Godwin deliberately chooses not to borrow any of the more sentimental aspects of Udolpho, the testing of Emily's love for Valancourt, and the affecting speculations on immortality at the deathbeds of both her parents. All the natural deaths in Caleb Williams pale into insignificance alongside the one fatal act of violence. Falkland may display excessive grief at the deaths of Clare and Emily Melville, raving over their bodies in a fit of distraction which recalls Emily St Aubert's irrational attachment to the corpse of her father, but his violent behaviour is more obviously dangerous than hers, since it shows him at the mercy of passions which will lead him to the fatal act of vengeance upon Tyrrel (Caleb Williams, pp. 35-36; Udolpho, p. 87).

Godwin thus attempts to show how the logic of his argument in Political Justice holds water in a novel which claims to imitate real life or Things as They Are, as the first edition of the novel was entitled in 1794.

Falkland has the misfortune to be a product of a system which fails to acknowledge the principles of Political Justice. Just as his upbringing has given him too great a concern for his honour, so it has encouraged him to be too affected by the deaths of individuals. If the good of society is more important than the domestic affections, then logically our grief for the death of another person should be in proportion to society's loss, and should not be influenced by domestic ties or friendship. To present this argument in fiction, however, is to go against the conventions of the eighteenth-century novel, where so often moral worth is measured by one's degree of concern for a dying relative. Hence Lady Booby stands condemned right from the beginning of Joseph Andrews because of the insincerity of her mourning for her husband, and in Tom Jones, Blifil's hypocritical attendance at Allworthy's deathbed contrasts with Tom's sincere concern. In Anna St Ives (1792), however, Holcroft attempts to alter this convention to show that mourning for a relative is an unnecessary domestic duty. When Louisa's mother dies, Anna's letter offers no consolation to her friend:

No; I will not attempt to console my Louisa, for I will not suppose even at the present moment that she yields to grief, or is in need of consolation. She will not repine at what is not to be remedied, nor debilitate her mind by dwelling on her own causes of discontent, instead of awakening it to the numerous sources of happiness, which by increasing the happiness of others incite it to activity.¹

¹ Thomas Holcroft, Anna St Ives, ed. Peter Faulkner, Oxford English Novels (London: OUP, 1970), p. 341, further references are given in the text.

Anna's argument against mourning is no longer the religious one that it is repining against God's purposes and deleterious to one's health, but a social one, that private passion distracts one from one's public duty. Her unconventional argument is weakened, however, by the way Holcroft uses the death of Louisa's mother in a conventional way to highlight the moral laxity of the son, Clifton. News of his evil behaviour actually hastens his mother's death, and the reader is thus made to condemn Clifton as unfeeling, because he has chosen to pursue his selfish desires rather than attend his mother's deathbed in the approved manner (pp. 334-35). Holcroft thus judges Clifton on emotional rather than rational grounds, putting his villain in the position of the son in Greuze's painting Le Fils puni, where the prodigal's ultimate punishment is to arrive too late to receive forgiveness at his father's deathbed.¹ Thus while Anna argues rationally against the domestic affections, Holcroft continues to use conventional notions of filial duty at death to denote Clifton as an archetypal rake.

Such contradictions between new theories and old conventions are typical of the Jacobin novelists. In Godwin's case they can be partly explained as indicating a change of heart from the cold rationalism of Political Justice to an acknowledgement of the importance of the passions in determining man's behaviour and happiness. This shift is clearly demonstrated in St Leon (1799), where the hero's first impulse after the storm is to save his own wife and children rather than anyone else, thus implying a necessary modification of the fire argument in Political Justice in order to take account of those "domestic and private affections", which are, Godwin admits in his preface to the novel, "inseperable from the nature of man".²

¹ Rosenblum, p. 37, plate 32.

² William Godwin, St Leon, Standard Novels No. 5 (London, 1831), pp. ix-x, 90-92, further references are given in the text.

Godwin began to make concessions to the power of feeling as early as the second edition of Political Justice, but his marriage and the death of Mary Wollstonecraft in 1797 clearly lie behind the increased sentimentality of his later novels.¹ Unlike Holcroft's Louisa, Godwin gave way to his emotions at Mary's death, and thus discovered that pleasurable indulgent melancholy which the eighteenth century had demonstrated in its Miss Howes, Allworthys, Yoricks, Harleys and Emilys:

I love to cherish melancholy. I love to tread the edge of intellectual danger, and just to keep within the line which every moral and intellectual consideration forbids me to overstep, and in this indulgence and this vigilance I place my present luxury.²

Godwin's treatment of death in the later novels becomes far more conventional and less interesting, merely repeating the "affecting" scenes of earlier novelists. The description of St Leon's dangerous fever and his unwillingness to be parted from his loved ones owes much to Fielding's more sentimental scenes, particularly for the way the child's presence at the bedside is used to increase the pathos (pp. 108-11). In the description of the death of St Leon's wife, Marguerite (pp. 292-93), Godwin clearly draws upon his own experience of Mary Wollstonecraft's death in childbirth, even down to the details of her apparent recovery and her calm, but apparently non-religious, resignation, but despite this, the episode is firmly rooted in the conventions of the family deathbed scene.³ Marguerite's miscarriage

¹ Locke, pp. 139-42; B.J. Tysdahl, William Godwin as Novelist (London: Athlone, 1981), pp. 102-04.

² C. Kegan Paul, William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries (London, 1876), I, 281.

³ William Godwin, Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft, ed. W. Clark Durant (London: Constable, 1927), pp. 113-23.

is brought on by the news of the destruction of St Leon's house by the mob, and so, like Holcroft's Clifton, St Leon is virtually guilty of murder. Like Clarissa, Mrs Grandison and Emily St Aubert's parents, Marguerite calls her loved ones to her bedside and delivers a morally-instructive speech urging her daughters to follow the paths of virtue. The only alteration Godwin makes to the convention is the omission of any obviously religious sentiment in Marguerite's readiness to die. Godwin does not employ religious speculations, as Ann Radcliffe does at the death of St Aubert, to increase the pathos of the scene. In fact he draws attention to this omission, pointing out that the "enthusiasm" of Marguerite's speech "was not of that inconsiderate nature" which would make her daughters "feel with greater acuteness the loss they were about to sustain." In other words, her religion, like Mary Wollstonecraft's, was "not calculated to be the torment of a sickbed".¹ Similarly, although St Leon is as inconsolable as Emily St Aubert, his grief is not exacerbated by speculations on the afterlife. He must avoid thinking of her rotting corpse, and remember her as she was when living (pp. 293-94).

As we have seen, this sense of immortality through the memory of the living was a well-established feature of the novel of sensibility, finding expression in the many scenes where tearful homage is paid at the grave of the deceased, Yorick's weeping at the monk's resting-place in A Sentimental Journey being perhaps the most famous example. Godwin makes use of the same sentimental device in Fleetwood (1805), where Kenrick's virtue is underlined by the respect which he shows at his father's grave.² Elsewhere, however, a typically Godwinian sense of guilt is introduced into such visits, as St Leon kneels beside his

¹ Godwin, Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft, p. 121.

² William Godwin, Fleetwood, Standard Novels No. 22, p. 303.

mother's tomb, and realizes the disgrace that he has brought upon his family, and Fleetwood attends the grave of his father, full of regret for the fact that, like Holcroft's Clifton, he left his parent to die while he pursued a life of debauchery (St Leon, p. 358; Fleetwood, p. 150). Through Fleetwood, Godwin condemns as hard-hearted those who, like Anna St Ives, disapprove of prolonged mourning, for to live on in the memory of our heirs is the only form of immortality we can reasonably hope for.

Nevertheless, despite Godwin's concessions to the domestic affections, his novels still retain a gloomy sense that the individual's death is ultimately unimportant, even to his closest family. When St Leon visits his daughters, pretending to be a messenger with news of their father's death, he has the unusual privilege of observing the extent of their grief for him:

It happens to few men to witness the manner in which the story of their own deaths is received. If it did, I believe we all of us have enough of vanity and personal feeling, however sincere a grief might show itself in the demeanour of survivors, to find it falling short of our appetites and demand (p. 367).

His daughters mourn his death with genuine tears, but all love is limited, and he finally sees his "children consoled, and myself forgotten". Man's "self-importance", based on the domestic affections, is an illusion, and we find ourselves returning albeit more gloomily, to the argument of Political Justice - the relative unimportance for the future of society of the death of the individual.

St Leon's disillusionment contrasts strongly with the clear-sighted optimism of the poet Clare and the soldier Brightwel in Caleb Williams. The wrongly-imprisoned soldier, like Godwin in Political Justice, "casts his eye forward to a perfect future", and on his deathbed, his comfort lies not in religion, but in the firm belief

that a time will come when injustice and oppression will cease to exist (p. 192).¹ This selfless hope in the future of mankind is shared by Clare, whose conventional deathbed warning to Falkland to beware of his "impetuosity" and "impatience of imagined dishonour", is combined with a far from conventional stoicism in the face of death (pp. 31-35).

It seems likely that the character of Clare was based on the Rev. Joseph Fawcett, one of the four men whom Godwin singles out as "oral instructors to whom I feel my mind indebted for improvement", and whose opposition to the domestic affections appears to have contributed to the development of Godwin's views.² Clare is a model philosopher, living up to the optimism of Political Justice, even though the promised Utopia may still be many generations away. Unlike St Leon, he is unconcerned that after his death "the great business of the universe, will go on", though he will "bear no further share in promoting it":

We should be contemptible indeed, if the prospect of human improvement did not yield us a pure and perfect delight, independently of the question of our existing to partake of it (pp. 33-34).

Here the eighteenth-century novel's conventions for dealing with death have been radically altered. Instead of hoping for a reunion of the blessed beyond death, a hope dependant upon God's grace to sinful man, Clare looks to a future heaven on earth, believing in man's own power to perfect himself. The deathbed scene, previously either an indication of moral worth or an opportunity for indulgent emotion, has become a declaration of faith in a secular philosophy, a philosophy

¹ Marilyn Butler, "Godwin, Burke and Caleb Williams," Essays in Criticism, 32 (1982), 243.

² Paul, I, 17-18.

which denies both man's fallen nature and his physical and mental weakness - aspects which the eighteenth-century novel's treatment of death had always emphasized.

So great was the English Jacobins' confidence in the power of the human mind that they believed not only that man was perfectible, but also that through reason he might hope to overcome disease, old-age, and, eventually, death itself. Anna St Ives astonishes her would-be seducer, Clifton, with her confident assertion that "men should finally render themselves immortal" (Anna St Ives, p. 295). Godwin voiced similar ideas in Political Justice, although there they provoked rather more ridicule than admiration, so much so that Godwin felt the need to tone down these speculations in later editions, finally separating them from his main discourse in an appendix, which, he is careful to point out, does not affect the truth of his main argument (II, 526-29; III, 224).¹ Clare clearly believes that such immortality may one day be achieved, although he freely admits that "these things are not yet at least in our power" (p. 33). His confidence in man's progress is all very well in theory, but in the novel there seems to be little sign of the "perpetual improvement" which Godwin talks of in Political Justice. Admittedly the novel claims to depict Things as They Are, but far from encouraging the reader to hope that truth is beginning to make progress, despite the injustice of the present times, the novel seems to move from a position of optimism and hope to one of corruption and despair, as the potentially good men, Falkland and Caleb, gradually destroy each other. The revised ending may show the triumph of truth, but Caleb's feelings of guilt for the subsequent death of Falkland, however one accounts for them, can hardly be seen as progress towards immortality.²

¹ Locke, p. 9.

² See Butler, "Godwin, Burke and Caleb Williams," pp. 237-57.

Clare's virtues and his optimism are wasted because he has been born too soon. In a sense, he has no place in the world of Things as They Are, and can only die. He is an ideal figure, as separated from ordinary men as St Leon is by his possession of the philosopher's stone and the elixir vitae. St Leon's limitless wealth and immortality are a curse because he cannot share them with any other human being. In fact the elixir renders him inhuman, while his wealth leads to corruption and death. It is almost as if Godwin is acknowledging the dangerous nature of his own political ideas and his fears that they may in fact have an opposite effect from that which he predicted in Political Justice if they are pursued too enthusiastically by the enlightened individual.

By the time Godwin came to write his Essay on Sepulchres in 1809, the optimism of Clare had been replaced completely by the pessimism of St Leon. Death is now a "calamity" which impedes man's progress by depriving society of its most valuable members, so that "the world for ever is, and in some degree for ever must be in its infancy". The implication is that man can no longer hope to be immortal, and Godwin resorts to the hope of immortality in the memory of the living, making proposals for the erection of memorials to the illustrious dead.¹ Nevertheless, despite this change from Clare's idealism to St Leon's disillusionment, Godwin never abandons his view of human nature as propounded in Political Justice. In St Leon, for instance, he illustrates his continuing belief that man is by nature immortal in the episode where the young boy discovers the body of the dog, Charon. Like the girl in Wordsworth's poem "We Are Seven", the child has no understanding of death, and supposes that the animal is sleeping, until he notices the bloody wound, after which he tries to wake him, "as one would awake a human being to whom some mischief had happened of which

¹ William Godwin, Essay on Sepulchres (London, 1809), p. 10.

he was unaware." Eventually, the idea of death enters the child's mind for the first time, and he bursts "into shrieks of astonishment and anguish" (pp. 272-73). Thus Godwin attempts to show how man, born perfect and immortal, is gradually educated or corrupted into mortality through the injustices of life.

II - Villainy, Repentance and Reformation

Godwin clearly reacted violently against his Calvinistic upbringing, which condemned the majority of men to eternal punishment without hope of reprieve. Rejecting the doctrine of original sin, the Jacobin novelists denied that man was naturally evil. Thus Frank Henley in Anna St Ives assures the guilt-ridden Clifton that he is only guilty "of ignorance, of mistakes of the understanding, false views, which you wanted knowledge enough, truth enough, to correct" (p. 479). Since evil is only the result of a bad education or upbringing, then it is unjust to punish a man for any crime, and, as Frank Henley points out, "exemplary reformation" is to be preferred to "exemplary punishment". It is better to reform a highwayman, and even help him to escape to the continent, than see him hang under English law (p. 17). Similarly, Falkland refuses to press charges against Caleb, although here the argument against hanging is somewhat obscured by Falkland's erroneous sense of "honour" (Caleb Williams, p. 175).

As Marilyn Butler has remarked, the Jacobin novelists came largely from a dissenting background with "a tradition of opposition to the status quo, and of doubt about human nature."¹ Uncertain of the

¹ Butler, Jane Austen, p. 42.

existence of heaven and hell, and denying the need for repentance and God's grace, they thus opposed capital punishment as a senseless waste of human potential, since death "puts a perpetual close upon the prospects of the sufferer, as to all the enjoyments, the virtues and the excellence of a human being" (Political Justice, II, 380). When Fielding criticized the way in which capital punishment was conducted in the 1750's, his concern was that it should be reformed according to what he considered to be its original Christian principles, both as a deterrent and as a form of punishment through which a criminal might hope to enter heaven.¹ Godwin and Holcroft, on the other hand, see the death-sentence as simply another feature of the corrupt state of a society which allows no room for reformation and improvement, which prevents the robber, Captain Raymond, from giving up his life of crime, and forces Falkland to hound the bearer of his guilty secret (Caleb Williams, pp. 227-28). In theory, no man is evil, and all men can be reformed, but in practice, contemporary society is as unforgiving and unforgetting as the Calvinistic God which the Jacobins had rejected.²

In the novel, this conflict between things as they are and things as they might be produces problems for the writer when it comes to rewarding and punishing his characters. Usually in the eighteenth-century novel the villain must die, even if he is repentant, in order to satisfy poetic justice, thus, in most cases, leaving the

¹ Fielding, An Inquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, Section XI (Henley, XIII, 121-27).

² For discussion of the idea that the real theme of Godwin's novels is his own revolt against God and parental authority and the "self-punishment produced by feelings of guilt", see Harvey Gross, "The Pursuer and the Pursued: A Study of Caleb Williams," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 1 (1959), 401-11; George Sherburn, "Godwin's Later Novels," Studies in Romanticism, 1 (1962), 65-82; Rudolf F. Storch, "Metaphors of Private Guilt and Social Rebellion in Godwin's Caleb Williams," ELH, 34 (1967), 188-207; Kelly, pp. 187-90, 207-08; Tysdahl, pp. 49-58; Butler argues forcefully against such readings in "Godwin, Burke and Caleb Williams."

stage clear for the happy marriage of the hero and heroine. One could compile an extensive list of such deaths - Lovelace in Clarissa, Sir Hargrave Pollexfen in Grandison, Sindall in The Man of the World, Montoni in Udolpho, Schedoni in The Italian, etc - but one would be hard pressed to find many convincing portraits of reformed lives other than, perhaps, Belford in Clarissa and Mr B in Pamela. In the case of the first, we see little of his former life, and in the case of the latter, Mr B emerges as considerably less evil than Pamela had originally thought. Reformation in the novel is almost always associated with some form of illness which is more often than not fatal, so that the novelist is freed from the difficult task of depicting a lasting conversion. An extreme example of this is the repentance of the philosopher Square in Tom Jones, which is merely reported in a letter written on his deathbed (pp. 924-28).

The Jacobin novelists were thus faced with a considerable problem, and they were not always successful in breaking away from the convention of the villain's death, despite their belief in man's perfectibility. They still tend to kill off their villains as if evil were so deeply rooted in their natures that their lives must be cut short, lest, like Fielding's Robinson, they lapse back into a life of crime (Amelia, p. 532). In Godwin's early novel, Italian Letters (1783), St Julian's brother dies after confessing his forgery of his father's will; in Robert Bage's Barham Downs (1784), Kitty Ross's seducer Mr Corrane's timely death effectively sets Kitty free to marry Wyman, as well as adding a legacy of a further two thousand pounds to her fortune; and in Hermesprong (1796), Bage's last novel, the repentant Lord Grondale is conveniently removed by a stroke, a completely unnecessary death, other than as satisfying a desire for poetic justice, since Hermesprong has already won his legal case against

Grondale, and proved himself the rightful heir to the estate.¹

In Anna St Ives, however, Holcroft makes a deliberate attempt to avoid this conventional pattern, and the similarity of the basic plot to that of Clarissa makes this optimistic ending all the more striking. Clifton's repentance during his illness may appear conventional, but unlike Lovelace he has not received his wound in a vengeful duel, but in saving Frank Henley from the murderous intentions of MacFane (p. 468). This impulsive act reveals the essential goodness of Clifton's true nature and that he is worthy to recover from his illness and live a reformed life. The novel ends with the hope that Clifton may gradually be re-educated, but this process is not demonstrated at all in the closing pages. This omission is ultimately more of a strength than a weakness, however, since it renders the happy ending (a change made at Godwin's suggestion) far more speculative and less didactic and idealistic than if Clifton had risen from his sickbed to be transformed into a Grandisonian figure.²

This is precisely the mistake which Robert Bage makes in his characterization of Sir George Osmond in Barham Downs. The change of character is handled too crudely for the portrait of the reformed man to be convincing. Sir George undergoes what the novel itself describes as "a miraculous conversion" during the course of a short conversation with Wyman, after which he swallows his pride, and abandons that "surly unsociable spirit" which Bage sees as corrupting the aristocracy and leading to the spread of "Hatred, Disease, Contempt, Money and Cuckoldom" (I, 218, 213). The dropsical state in which the lawyer

¹ William Godwin, Italian Letters, ed. Burton R. Pollin (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 111-12; Robert Bage, Barham Downs (London, 1784), II, 83; Robert Bage, Hermesprong or Man as He is Not, ed. Vaughan Wilkins (London: Turnstile Press, 1951), pp. 245-46; all further references to these works are given in the text.

² For Godwin's part in the ending, see Kelly, pp. 123, 185.

(effectively an enlightened priest of justice) discovers the knight at the beginning of the interview is simply a symbol of the ultimately self-destructive effect of the inward-looking tendencies of the aristocracy, and as soon as Sir George begins to be a useful member of society, so his health begins to return (I, 206).

One of Sir George's noble acts after his conversion is his attendance at the sickbed of the real villain of the novel, Lord Winterbottom. This encounter, though more clumsy in its execution, is very similar to Holcroft's later scene between Frank Henley and the repentant Coke Clifton in Anna St Ives. Like Clifton, Lord Winterbottom regrets the fact that he has "dissipated" his "noble inheritance" in selfish pursuits and thereby lost an opportunity to be an honour to his country (II, 293). Sir George, like Frank Henley, insists that he need not atone for this crime by dying, nor must his conduct necessarily "render him an alien to his country", for reformation is a viable alternative, for it is "no uncommon thing for men to fall into errors in the youthful part of their lives; repair them as they advance; and die at length in age and honour" (II, 295). Nevertheless, Lord Winterbottom, like Godwin's Falkland, is well aware that the "world at large" will not allow him to forget his past errors: "All my vices, my follies, will be brought into circulation, and I must be sunk still lower than I am, if I could bear to live, where I knew myself the subject of perpetual obloquy" (II, 295-96). In fact Lord Winterbottom recovers, but not before he has made a will making provision, like Mr Corrane, for substantial recompense to those whom he has injured (II, 315). He decides to remain abroad, "an alien to his country", for ten years (II, 316), and so is effectively banished from the happy ending of the novel as surely as Blifil is expelled from Paradise Hall at the end of Tom Jones.

Bage thus avoids demonstrating Lord Winterbottom's reformation, and we merely hear a few rumours of his improving health and continued penitence. Even on the continent, however, he continues to be dogged by his former reputation, as rumours circulate of an affair with the Countess Spoliterre (II, 346-47). Bage is not suggesting that Lord Winterbottom has fallen back into his old ways (this is clear from the fact that his expenditure remains within the strict limits he stipulated on his sickbed), rather he is showing how difficult it is for a reformed man to be accepted by a society which as yet has such erroneous notions of honour and reputation.

More often than not, however, the Jacobin novelists are forced to fall back on the old pattern of the repentant death for their villains, because they can find no convincing way of portraying the life of a reformed man without distorting their presentation of the current evils of society. In the novel, things as they might be cannot be portrayed satisfactorily alongside things as they are.

III - Rape, Reputation and Recovery

Closely allied to the Jacobin novelists' desire to reform their Lovelace figures is their determination to reverse the novel's conventions concerning the victims of rape. Clarissa is drugged and raped by Lovelace, and although her saintly death suggests that her soul has not been violated, nevertheless by dying she conforms to a pattern of expectation for victims of rape which sees them as damaged goods no longer viable for marriage.¹

¹ Hill, "Clarissa Harlowe and her Times," pp. 331-32.

Robert Bage is particularly concerned to alter this convention in order to show that the woman is no more - usually less - to blame than the man, and may similarly go on to live a useful life, either independently or in marriage.¹ In Mount Henneth (1782), the Persian girl, Coralia, is raped by two indian soldiers, and although she survives the customary "hysteric fits" and illness of the rape victim, she automatically assumes that she is dishonoured for ever in the eyes of the Englishman, Mr Foston. Women who have suffered rape, she tells him:

must die, or be immured for ever. Ever after they are totally useless to all the purposes of society. It is the foundation of an hundred fabulous things called novels, which are said to paint exactly the reigning manners and opinions. All crimes but this may be expiated. No author has yet been so bold as to permit a lady to live and marry, and be a woman after this stain.²

Determined to be that pioneering author, Bage has Foston deny that this convention has any foundation in reason or real life, and Coralia is duly married to her rescuer.

Similarly, in Barham Downs, Kitty Ross, abandoned by her seducer, recovers from her illness (in this case, as Kelly notes, a rather convenient miscarriage) with the help of the benevolent Quaker apothecary, Arnold. On his advice she refuses to acknowledge that Mr Corrane has any prior claim to her either as a mistress or as a wife, and she vigorously maintains her independence through another rape attempt before happily marrying Wyman. In the same novel, Sir George Oswald's sincere reformation is evinced by his sympathy for Molly

¹ Kelly, pp. 41-42.

² Robert Bage, Mount Henneth: A Novel, 2 vols. (London, 1782), reprinted in facsimile (New York: Garland, 1979), Vol. I, pp. 228, 233-34; further references are given in the text.

Patterson's fall (II, 189).

For no apparent reason, however, Bage loses confidence in his power to redeem the rape victim when it comes to the case of Annabella, the real heroine of Barham Downs. Like Clarissa, she is drugged by her would-be seducer, and for a while both she and the reader are uncertain whether Lord Winterbottom has married or raped her while she was unconscious. In fact she has not been raped at all, and as a result, her survival of her illness and Henry Osmond's offer of marriage are less impressive than they might have been had Bage not given way to the convention of the "untainted" heroine. Henry Osmond's marriage to Annabella is thus less radical than Mr Foston's espousal of the Persian woman, for Osmond is only defying the opinion of the world, which incorrectly assumes that Annabella is a fallen woman because of the time she has spent under the same roof as Lord Winterbottom, while Mr Foston really is marrying such a woman, thereby opposing society's injustice to women at a deeper level.

Holcroft attempts a similar modification of the Clarissa pattern in Anna St Ives in order to show the superior power of truth, even against physical assault. Whereas Clarissa is very much aware of her physical vulnerability, Anna, kidnapped by Clifton, remains confidently superior to her seducer throughout, and refuses to become a conventional victim:

•

Nay, think you that, were you endowed with the superior force which the vain name of man supposes, and could accomplish the basest purpose of your heart, I would falsely take guilt to myself; or imagine I had received the smallest blemish, from impurity which never reached my mind? That I would lament, or shun the world, or walk in open day oppressed by shame I did not merit? No! For you perhaps I might weep, but for myself I would not shed a tear! Not a tear!---You cannot injure me---I am above you! (pp. 423-24).

Like Bage, however, Holcroft decides not to put this statement to the test, but instead spares Anna's virtue through a series of chance rescues and, even more unrealistically, by endowing her with a superhuman strength, which enables her to hold the door of her room closed against Clifton. Holcroft thus weakens his argument for the power of reason, since Anna's strength seems here to be an instinctive product of the passion of fear: "The terrified Anna was up and out of bed in an instant. . . . Her fear gave her strength; she threw Laura away, and clapped to the door" (p. 416). In avoiding the rape, Holcroft loses the opportunity to demonstrate the truth of Anna's speech and thus show the victory of truth even in the midst of tragedy. The novel, as Kelly points out, fails to live up to its initial promise, and ignores Louisa's ominous remarks that although "truth is irresistible, and must finally conquer", nevertheless "it has many modes of conquering, and some of them are tragical, and dreadful" (p. 154).¹

IV - Tolerant Scepticism

As we have seen, the Jacobin novelists' treatment of death is closely linked to their views on religion and the nature of man, views typified by Bage's Hermsprong, the Man as He is Not of the subtitle, whose "tolerant scepticism" is contrasted with the doctrinal tyranny of the established church, represented in Doctor Blick.² Hermsprong, like Godwin in Political Justice, argues that "death is not an evil",

¹ Kelly, p. 145.

² Kelly, p. 49.

that it is unnatural for man to fear it, since it is merely "privation of sense", and he takes delight in revealing the contradictions in Doctor Blick's arguments concerning heaven and hell:

'Sir,' said he, 'are you an atheist? Death, privation of sensation! No, sir; it is enlargement of sensation. It is renovation---it is the gate of life---it is a passport to eternal joys!'

'Then surely,' said Hermsprong, 'it is not an evil.' (pp. 41-42).

To the English Jacobins, religious argument is circular, pointless and an actual evil when it leads to the kind of intolerance we see in Doctor Blick's sermon denouncing dissenters as atheists and revolutionaries (pp. 92-93). With their dissenting background, they naturally viewed religious intolerance as concomitant with political tyranny. This contemporary tyranny is demonstrated in Godwin's St Leon in the activities of the Inquisition, while in Bage's novels an ideal of tolerant deism is shown in the Red Indian, Lontac, whom Hermsprong's mother vainly tries to convert to Christianity (Hermsprong, pp. 167-69), and in the Indian priest who believes that:

we are all . . . brethren of the same faith; divided more by calling the same, or nearly the same things by different names, than by any thing fundamental, or useful to mankind to distinguish (Mount Henneth, I, 210-11).

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Playing down the doctrinal and mystical aspects of religion, Bage's Indian insists that the "love of God and of your neighbour" is "the basis of all religion upon earth" (I, 213). The superiority of this true religion of practical benevolence is demonstrated by Bage (in a manner reminiscent of Fielding) in the contrast between Doctor Blick's faith without works and Hermsprong's charity to the victims of the storm (Hermsprong, pp. 69-71). Godwin's similar opposition to religious doctrine leads to Caleb's approval of the Welsh vicar, who is

more concerned with his farming than with religion - a surprising reversal of Fielding's judgement of Parson Trulliber (Caleb Williams, pp. 289-90; Joseph Andrews, pp. 162-68).

Godwin denounced as "accursed and detestable":

that religion by which the fancy is hag-rid, and conscience is excited to torment us with phantoms of guilt, which endows the priest with his pernicious empire over the mind, which undermines boldness of opinion and intrepidity in feeling, which aggravates a thousandfold the inevitable calamity, death, and haunts us with the fiends and retributory punishments of a future world.¹

Accordingly, in his novels he avoids the religious speculations which render Mrs Radcliffe's deathbed scenes more touching or sublime. The setting of his Italian Letters is not the Catholic and superstitious Italy of Ann Radcliffe's novels, but a country where Christianity is no longer a part of everyday life, and in his pastoral, Imogen, within the pre-Christian setting, he is free to commend a form of deism and attack the tyranny of organized religion as seen in the pagan priests and unmerciful gods of the inset-story of Arthur and Evelina.² Godwin's rational, unemotional approach to religion is partly a product of the eighteenth-century dissenting tradition.³ Certainly, it would appear to be linked to Godwin's early education in Sandemanian beliefs, the central tenet of which was "that belief in God must be a matter of wholly intellectual assent, unpolluted by any element of emotion or unreasoned faith."⁴ Hence he avoids all mention of the afterlife in

¹ Paul, I, 28.

² Tysdahl, pp. 21-24, 83-84; William Godwin, Imogen: A Pastoral Romance from the Ancient British (New York: New York Public Library, 1963), pp. 34-36.

³ Marilyn Butler, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background 1760-1830 (Oxford: OUP, 1981), p. 13.

⁴ Locke, p. 17.

his novels, since such hopes have no basis in reason. They ignore the evidence of the rotting body that "at death there is an end of all":

We pretend to infer the character of an infinite benevolence from what we see in a world where despotism, and slavery, and misery, and war continually prevail, and then, reasonably growing discontented with the scene, we piece out most miserably another world with hallelujahs and everlasting rest, according to our fancy, and we call this evidence.¹

Death in St Leon is a release from the torments of life: "There all our prospects end, and we are no longer sensible to pain, to persecution, to insult, and to agony" (p. 197). Having seen how religion failed to help his father to die without "considerable reluctance", Godwin finally abandoned his faith and his calling as a dissenting minister, and looked instead to a future heaven on earth. He disdained his mother's surrender to "the visionary hopes and tormenting fears of the methodistical sect", but had to endure her pious exhortations that he should return to the fold until her death in 1809:

If I could see my children walk in ye truth I should be happy, my Happiness is bound up in theirs. It would sweeten my expiring moments, with Views of meeting those I have been ye Instrument of bringing into life, in the happy regions of blessedness [sic].²

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This idea of a heavenly reunion, so popular in the eighteenth-century novel, is precisely the kind of "visionary hope" which Godwin sought to avoid, and although at the death of Mary Wollstonecraft he expressed some regret that he could not offer his children any comfort in his "scepticism", Godwin never abandoned his

¹ Paul, I, 309, 360.

² Paul, I, 6-7, 57; II, 179.

rational approach to death.¹ Heavenly reunion has no place in his novels, nor, incidentally, does it appear in his six published sermons, where heaven is described in a conventional biblical manner.²

Godwin was thus avoiding what had become a very popular belief, one which he himself had been familiar with since his childhood reading in James Janeway's A Token for Children, and which Mary Wollstonecraft had certainly held at one time.³ To his early readers, then, his novels must have seemed all the more strange, irreligious and subversive for this omission. Bage, on the other hand, was less radical in his approach, using the hope of a heavenly reunion in true Radcliffean fashion to render Annabella's delirium more affecting:

Osmond turned sobbing from her.

'Come hither, Sir Ambrose,' says she; I don't know what to make of him. I thought to have met him in Heaven; I might have loved him there you know; and now he won't hear of it. How odd it is.'

'There are a great many happy days for both of you on Earth, I hope, Miss Whitaker; and Heaven at last.' (Barham Downs, II, 214).

Once again, Bage has succumbed to a conventional use of religion in the novel as a catalyst for emotion.

Holcroft, like Godwin, is careful to avoid such speculations, but he still makes rather crude use of religious language to indicate the moral state of his characters. Clifton expresses his feelings of guilt in the conventional language of hellish torments, fearful visions, demons, devils and blood. Frank Henley, however, convinces him that he is wrong to condemn himself, thus implying that the guilty conscience

¹ Paul, I, 281.

² William Godwin, Sketches of History in Six Sermons (London, 1784), p. 161.

³ Paul, I, 7; James Janeway, A Token for Children (London, 1676), pp. 10, 36, 39; for Mary Wollstonecraft's belief in this doctrine, see her letter to her sister Everina, Paul, I, 185.

is merely a product of one's upbringing - an argument which Richardson and Fielding had used the novel to combat (Anna St Ives, pp. 474-75). Similarly, Abimelech's greedy hypocrisy is highlighted by the canting piety of his letters, where he regularly expresses the hope that he may die well and receive a heavenly reward: "to partake of the resurrection of the just sheep, and of the virgin oil in our lamps, and of the martyrs and of the profits and of the saints everlasting rest" (p. 218). His misspelling reveals the ruling passion of greed behind his piety. Virtue, the English Jacobins insisted, arises from selfless "sympathy", not from any hope of reward. A morality based on future rewards and punishments, such as we find in the novels of Richardson and Fielding, is invalid, because, in Godwin's words: "If I wish to make myself useful to my fellow-men merely because I expect to be rewarded for it, it is clear that I have no love of utility or virtue."¹

Thus all moral argument in the Jacobin novel, like Godwin's condemnation of murder in Political Justice, has to be based on the effect our actions have upon society rather than the individual's hopes and fears. Hence, while Jacobin heroes continue the novel's Grandisonian opposition to suicide and duelling, the arguments given against these crimes are no longer Sir Charles's religious ones that the duellist and the suicide are hastening to meet their Maker with the sin of murder on their souls (Grandison, I, 206). Falkland's moral argument marks a return to the Aristotelian view of the individual's responsibility to society. The duellist:

tramples upon every principle of reason and equity. Duelling is the vilest of all egotism, treating the public, which has a claim to all my powers and exertions, as if it were nothing, and myself, or rather an unintelligible chimera I

¹ Paul, I, 305.

annex to myself, as if it were entitled to my exclusive attention (Caleb Williams, p. 98).

In Italian Letters, St Julian further reveals the barbarity of this form of "Gothic and savage revenge", in that it unfairly places the innocent party on the same level as the guilty (p. 84).

When dealing with duelling, the Jacobin novelists found it somewhat easier to keep to their beliefs, since they were merely dropping the religious side of an argument which the novel had always championed. The same can be said generally of their opposition to suicide, Frank Henley's persuading the suicidal Clifton that he should live on being an obvious example. However, in Hermesprong Bage once more shows a tendency to return to the old religious argument, when his narrator, Gregory Glen, recounts his determination to commit suicide:

I did not at this time know the turpitude of the crime I was going to commit; I did not know it was murder, and of all murders the most flagitious. I might kill another man, and repent; but I could not repent of killing myself; nor could God ever forgive me for rushing into his sacred presence without a passport (p. 6)

Obviously this would not be the argument of the novel's model gentleman, Hermesprong, but Gregory Glen is, nominally at least, the narrator of Hermesprong's story, and his piety seems an unnecessary addition to the novel, an unthinking repetition of the religious arguments against suicide which lie behind the eighteenth-century novel's characterizations of sinful despair from Richardson's Pamela to Mrs Radcliffe's Marchioness de Mazzini.

V - Conclusion

Although the Jacobin novelists did, as Kelly suggests, develop the legacy of Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, the novels they produced as a result were often an unsatisfactory mixture of the old and new.¹ Despite their attempts to modify the novel in order to illustrate their philosophical ideas, they were often not radical enough in their approach, and tended to fall back on conventional dénouements. Even Godwin returns to the sentimental in his tearful deathbeds and his weeping over graves, and to the Gothic in St Leon's fear of being buried alive in the limitless vaults of Bethlem Gabor's castle (St Leon, p. 421). The Jacobin novelists therefore represent a backwater of the novel, a largely unsuccessful attempt to free it from the conventions concerning the death of the villain, the affecting death of the innocent, and the hope of a heavenly reunion. These were to remain an important part of the novel well into the nineteenth century.

Finally, however, Caleb Williams emerges from the crowd as by far the most revolutionary and uncompromising novel of the period, a deliberate turning away from the eighteenth-century novel of love and marriage, where death is a moral yardstick or a sentimental catalyst. Here death in the novel takes on a new meaning. The tragedy of Clarissa Harlowe, whose certain hope is in the joys of heaven, becomes the tragedy of Caleb Williams, whose uncertain hope is in the future of mankind:

¹ Kelly, p. vii.

Towards morning Mr Falkland quietly withdrew the curtain, and looked at the dying man. His eyes were open, and were now gently turned towards his young friend. His countenance was sunk, and of a death-like appearance. I hope you are better, said Falkland in a half-whisper, as if afraid of disturbing him. Mr Clare drew his hand from the bed-clothes and stretched it forward; Mr Falkland advanced, and took hold of it. Much better, said Mr Clare in a voice, inward and hardly articulate; the struggle is now over; I have finished my part; farewell; remember! These were his last words. He lived still a few hours; his lips were sometimes seen to move; he expired without a groan (Caleb Williams, p. 35).

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