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Tom Jones and the right measure of self-interest

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For most of his career as a novelist, Fielding faced the complaint that his characters were burdened by comicality and came across as ambiguous. However, the humour and wit Fielding uses in *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749) show an evolution when compared to his earlier texts. His first published prose *Shamela* (1741), which he wrote as an immediate reaction to Richardson's first novel, is purely a parody and has no ambition to be anything else. As Irwin explains, 'Shamela has no significance except in comparison with Pamela, whereas Joseph becomes more than a vehicle for parody'.¹ Although his novels use 'low' forms of humour, like burlesque and slapstick comedy, in *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding uses the main character in more versatile ways. For example, he challenges Parson Adams's traditional stoic views on masculinity when he contrasts them with Joseph's genuine worry about his lover. His masterpiece, *Tom Jones*, displays even more sophisticated forms of satire. His use of the omnipresent narrator, who questions and guides the opinions of the reader, and various other techniques, like the 'double irony' explained by William Empson,² have been described by several literary critics, for instance by Robert Alter in *Fielding and the Nature of the Novel*, Maurice Johnson in *Fielding's Art of Fiction*, Martin C. Battestin in his collection of *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Tom Jones*, and many others. While describing the numerous strategies used in *Tom Jones*, the critics agree that Fielding employs the principle of the true ridiculous and various stylistic means to attack false authorities and hypocritical conventions of the age by stripping various representative characters of their pretended decorum and revealing their

1 W. R. Irwin, 'Satire and Comedy in the Works of Henry Fielding', *ELH*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1946, p. 183.

2 See W. Empson, 'Tom Jones' in M. Battestin (ed.), *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Tom Jones: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1968, p. 34.

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true selfish nature. Even though Fielding portrays these characters in rather unflattering situations, he does not descend to slapstick-like humour as he did previously with Parson Adams. Instead, he uses paralleling, contrasting, commentaries of the narrator, and other techniques to engage the reader in a sophisticated judgment-shaping game, which gradually leads to revelations about the otherwise ambiguous characters.

One striking example of Fielding's new strategy of joining comicality with moralistic aims and toning down the vulgarity in his texts can be seen in the way he treats the characters of schoolmaster Thwackum and philosopher Square, who are responsible for educating Tom and Blifil, the two antagonistic male heroes of the story. For instance, in order to mock the philosopher Square for the hypocrisy of his moralizing doctrines, Fielding depicts him in flagrante in Molly Seagrim's closet, caught in a ridiculous posture:

The posture, indeed, in which he stood was not greatly unlike that of a soldier who is tight neck and heels; ... He had a night-cap belonging to Molly on his head, and his two large eyes, the moment the rug fell, stared directly at Jones; so when the idea of philosophy was added to the figure now discovered, it would have been very difficult for the spectator to have refrained from immoderate laughter.³

The character of Square, although disgraced by the comical situation, does not suffer from any practical jokes or aggressive bullying; on the contrary, the situation merely stresses the difference between rigid philosophical principles and the real practice of people who preach them.

As opposed to the mild ridicule dealt to Square, Master Thwackum is always portrayed as a very sober gentleman, but at the same time as rather overzealous in his duties when it comes to punishing the young Tom. Instead of openly mocking his character, Fielding stresses Thwackum's ridiculous misuse of general principles like 'divine power of grace',⁴ which he applies whenever he finds fit, and his personal maliciousness when he beats Tom out of spite while repeating his favourite flogging line: 'I chastise thee not out of hatred, but out of love'.⁵ Although both teachers are generally respected and honoured guests at Mr. Allworth's house, the mockery of their learned discourses and hypocrisy clearly shows the emptiness of their mannered behaviour and the self-serving intentions hidden behind their sophistry.

Fielding further comments on hypocrisy in 'An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men' where he describes it as a pre-disposition for the 'art of

3 H. Fielding, *Tom Jones*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 198.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 109.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

thriving'. As Jenny Davidson explains, 'the art of thriving involves conning others into sacrificing their own interest in pursuit of an illusionary goal of self-advancement'.⁶ Whereas for Renaissance writers 'the ability to integrate oneself through calculated self-presentation was thought a necessary element of the courtier's repertoire',⁷ such behaviour was certainly an attitude of the past for Fielding, and it deserved severe criticism when viewed from a modern conception of polite conduct. Fielding joined Shaftesbury, Richard Steele and Joseph Addison in propagating a new moral order which would 'propose forms of gentlemanly social conduct that fully discounted and discredited the possibility of duplicitous behaviour'.⁸ Fielding criticises Square's dishonesty by contrasting the philosopher's arguments on '*natural beauty of virtue*' and '*unalterable rule of right*'⁹ with the awkwardness and shameful hiding of the base acts in Molly's room. He also mocks Thwackum's pretended temperance by showing how the schoolmaster masks his cowardly cruelty and selfish love of power behind his stern conduct. These portrayals are a sign of both the changing behavioural paradigm and Fielding's sophisticated techniques of satirizing social vices in his characters.

Fielding's mockery of his characters and the overall satirical tone of his novels did not prevent him from contributing into a serious debate over social models for the burgeoning middle class. As Nancy Armstrong has shown in *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Fielding devoted much attention to creating new social models, especially of womanhood. The beginning of the eighteenth century brought a new interest in ideals of female virtue, which Armstrong sees as closely linked to the political and economic changes of the time. She also observes that 'by the mid-eighteenth century the number of books specifying the qualities of a new kind of woman had well outstripped the number of those devoted to describing the aristocratic male'.¹⁰ Nevertheless, as there was a need for 'a new woman', there was also a need to create the image of a new non-aristocratic gentleman, who would represent the emerging socio-political force. Surprisingly enough, apart from *The Whole Duty of Man* (1673), which appeared at the end of the previous century, up until Fielding's time, there is almost no trace of any conduct books for men. Referring to John Mason's study of courtesy literature, Armstrong adds that where men are concerned, by the mid-18th century the conduct book gradually mutated into other forms, for example satire.¹¹ Therefore, the ideal of

6 J. Davidson, *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 138.

7 P. Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, Harlow, Longman, 2001, p. 57.

8 Ibid.

9 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 109.

10 N. Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 62.

11 Ibid.

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manhood became more blurred and harder to define since it appeared mostly in other texts than conduct books. Although the ideas of female virtue remained at the centre of attention, there were attempts at creating ideal images of masculinity as well – Samuel Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison* and his ‘immanence of goodness’¹² was probably the most prominent one. Nonetheless, as Richardson very well knew, to create such an ideal was not a simple task, as the newly emerging concept of a refined gentleman was not clearly described anywhere. He was therefore very hesitant and almost reluctant at first to undertake this project.

The popular novels of the early 18th century – for example, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* – portray male characters as travellers and explorers, who experience marvellous adventures and live their lives almost in solitude, excluded from the rest of society. Thanks to Ian Watt, Robinson Crusoe is notoriously known as ‘homo economicus’ and became linked with economic individualism.¹³ Defoe’s character is representative of the new opportunities related to colonialism and the myths of the self-made man and the successful go-getter. In these myths, the male hero stands alone as a survivor and a skilful merchant who can physically defend himself against enemies and face the adversities of nature. In contrast, Gulliver needs to live in all sorts of differing environments and prove his numerous talents – from fighting a rat twice his size, to outsmarting plotters at the queen’s court. He explores political and social systems of the countries he visits, but he mostly functions as an observer. Both of these novels almost completely ignore the social role of a man in relation to his peers and to women; therefore, their image is defined by traditional qualities of bravery, survivor-skills, and the ability to trade, which are characteristic of an exclusively male world.

But the newly developed middle class did not identify with such marvellous types of masculine heroes and needed an image which would better reflect their less exciting, industrious and home-oriented way of life, which involved a complex network of social interactions with men and women alike. Such a necessity started a deep interest in the connection between masculine and feminine social roles as well as a need for a new type of fiction which would portray men as citizens but also lovers, husbands and fathers. For example, the portrayal of a masculine lover appeared in popular amatory fiction of Eliza Haywood.¹⁴ Before her most famous and complex work *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), she produced short novels of courtship which often portray the main hero stereotypically as a money-interested cold-hearted villain who causes the ruin of the heroine, as in *The*

12 H. Thompson, ‘Secondary Qualities and Masculine Form in *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2011-12, p. 221.

13 I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1957, p. 63.

14 R. P. Bocchicchio and Saxton, K. T. (eds.), *The Passionate Fictions of Eliza Haywood: Essays on her Life and Work*, Kentucky, University Press of Kentucky, 2000.

Mercenary Lover (1726) and *The Distressed Orphan* (1726), or as easily manipulated but inconstant lovers, for example in *Fantomina* (1725).¹⁵ Although her early work provides an invaluable source of critical commentary on double standards for genders, it is not until much later that Haywood caught the trend of domesticity in fiction and focused on the theme of marital relationships, which she then fully developed in the 1750s, becoming a predecessor of the domestic novel of the following century.¹⁶

Although Fielding undeniably recognized and used the models which were present at the time to build his own portrayal of masculinity, he went far beyond the old chivalric tradition as well as the stereotypes common for the theatre stage of the day. As opposed to Campbell's modern reading of masculine characters in Fielding as feminized, an earlier study by Martin Battestin highlights Fielding's indebtedness to the ideology of Addison and Steele, which was widely disseminated through their magazines at the time of Fielding's first publications. The ideal of a male whose qualities would be based on spiritual heroism rather than the stoicism of statesmen and warriors were the core of Steele's thought, and benevolence was one of the main male virtues promoted by *The Spectator*.¹⁷ Chastity and charity, epitomized in the characters of Joseph and Parson Adams, respectively, were the moral basis of Fielding's first novel. They were also the most prominent notions in the development of the ideal of masculinity, which the emerging social groups around the middle of the century were more willing to adopt as their own.

As Paulson and Lockwood's study of the reception of *Joseph Andrews* revealed, Fielding's emphasis on comicality drew more attention to the character of Abraham Adams than to the young hero Joseph. Since readers were more concerned with the character of the parson and the controversial mixture of good-heartedness and absent-minded foolishness which made him so popular, Joseph remained rather unnoticed. The relatively low interest in the young hero shows that Fielding's statements about masculine models were not exactly easy for audiences to decode. Instead of discussing Joseph as an important change in the development of masculine types, the audiences favoured Abraham's guileless charity and goodness over Joseph's innocence. Consequently, it seems that the virtue of chastity in connection with a masculine hero was hard for readers to accept or take

15 For more details on Haywood's portrayal of masculinity see M. B. Harris, 'Upsetting the Balance: Exposing the Myth of Masculine Virtue and Desire in Eliza Haywood's *Philidore and Placentia*', *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. 58, no. 2, 2017, p. 196.

16 For more details on Haywood's development as a novelist and her struggles with the changing public demands on decorum, see J. Merritt, *Beyond Spectacle: Eliza Haywood's Female Spectators*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2004.

17 M. C. Battestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1959, p. 28.

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seriously at the time. The virgin Joseph, burdened by the amusing comparison to his exemplary sister Pamela, simply did not make enough of an impression on audiences to be admired as a new symbol of masculinity and, as a result, never got as much attention as he gets from present-day critics.

Unlike Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, the hero of Fielding's second novel, was immediately recognized by audiences as a remarkable model of masculinity. In fact, the novel became very controversial because of Tom's character, which was praised by some but condemned by many others. In France, for example, the novel was not even accepted for publication because of its indecencies and scandalous treatment of women¹⁸ – as one of the Parisian reviews states: 'In France, the ladies would be shock'd at the repeated breeches of faith in *Tom Jones* to his mistress, and fathers and mothers would exclaim against the resolute boldness with which *Miss Western* abandons her father's house to preserve herself inviolate to her lover'.¹⁹ In England, it was criticized for the lowness of some of the characters and the indecency of their manners.²⁰ Nevertheless, as the reviews show, this criticism very often came from readers who had a personal aversion to the author, mainly from Samuel Richardson and his circle, and other contemporary critics who made attacks on Fielding's personal life and previous career along with his texts. Yet even though many condemned it for the unacceptable behaviour of some of its characters, *Tom Jones* was commercially a great success and was widely read and enjoyed for its wit and humour. For instance, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu admits that 'falling upon Fielding's Works was fool enough to sit up all night reading'²¹ and Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh complains that

as to Tom Jones, [she is] fatigued with the name, having lately fallen into the company of several young ladies, who had each a Tom Jones in some part of the world, for so they call their favourites; and ... in like manner, the gentlemen have their Sophias'.²²

The popularity of the novel was undeniable, and however indecent some of the events in the novel might have seemed, the main characters, at least, were generally adored.

In contrast to Fielding's first novel, which received complaints about its overall lack of politeness and baseness of comicality, contemporary reviews of *Tom Jones* show that the major source of offense in Fielding's masterpiece was the open sen-

18 R. Paulson and T. Lockwood, *Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage*, London, Routledge, 1969, p. 238.

19 Ibid., p. 225.

20 Ibid., p. 168.

21 Ibid., p. 181.

22 Ibid., p. 183.

suality of his writing. The very first chapter of the novel, an introduction subtitled as a 'bill of fare to the feast,' compares the experience of reading the novel to the pleasure of eating. The provision the author serves to his readers is Human Nature, which he shall represent

to the keen appetite of our reader, in that plain and simple manner in which it is found in the country and shall hereafter hash and ragout it with all the high French and Italian seasoning of affectation and vice which courts and cities afford.²³

This metaphor boldly stresses Fielding's aim to please and entertain the reader, which was not exactly in line with the general instructive ambitions and educational aim literature was supposed to fulfil; this led Fielding to be perceived as witty and facetious.

Also, the overall sexual frivolity of some of his characters was attacked and condemned by many of his predominantly female readers. For example, the scene where Mrs. Waters seduces young Tom in an inn, and the passage where

Moll's own dainty Appearance, when she presented herself in her sweetly-larded Smock, with a Pitchfork in her Hand, before the Hero of the History; and how these two innocent Lovers employed themselves among the Fern

were criticized as indecent,²⁴ and pronounced very much contrary to the author's promises that there is nothing in his history 'prejudicial to the cause of religion and virtue, nothing inconsistent with the strictest rules of decency, nor which can offend even the chastest eye in the perusal'.²⁵ Nevertheless, the hyperbole with which Fielding made such a promise is as facetious as some aspects of the novel itself, and it corresponds with his intention to distinguish between politeness as a mere convention, which obliges us to make ourselves look better than we actually are, and decency as a feeling for another related to social practice. Thus, the playful openness and provocation, which is typical of Fielding, might have ruined the expected decorum of the characters he used, but at the same time, it made them appear more human, and pushed the reader to question the purpose and limits of social conventions.

Despite the fact that *Tom Jones* seemed controversial or even immoral at the time of its publication due to its transgressions against expected decorum, the novel expresses many of Fielding's insights into human relationships and virtues of human nature. As he was influenced by the writings of Anthony Ashley Coop-

23 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 31.

24 Paulson and Lockwood, *Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage*, p. 167.

25 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 5.

er, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, Fielding's view of humanity was positive and full of belief in human moral development. On the other hand, as a magistrate and a writer concerned with portraying the realities of everyday life with sharpness and accuracy, Fielding was also fully aware of the limits of such an endeavour and the inevitable influence of social surroundings on an individual. Therefore, the main character of his book is neither a highly positioned nor a well-off figure but an orphan, who Fielding presents as a model of masculinity, but also as a reminder of the adversities faced by those at the edges of society. By presenting the hero within a fast-shifting plot that also follows the complex stories of several other characters, Fielding makes it more difficult to see the hero as a separate model for social behaviour. Also, the humorous tone of the novel often distracts the reader from the seriousness of the statement Fielding is making about the situation and qualities of the main hero. Moreover, like all the other heroes Fielding creates, Tom's character is fallible and needs to find the right measure of things to achieve wisdom, embodied in the character of Sophia. Although at the start Tom is everything but respectable and in 'the universal opinion of all Mr. Allworthy's family ... certainly born to be hanged',²⁶ Fielding makes sure to show him under many perspectives so that his good qualities become obvious.

The most revealing view is the contrast with Tom's counterpart, a young Master Blifil, who, despite his sober and respectable conduct, turns out to be the opposite of a desirable model of masculinity. Throughout the story these two characters are continuously compared, and each comparison shows that despite the opinion of others, Tom is a much better person than the young Master of the house. As opposed to Blifil, Tom Jones often gets into trouble for disregarding rules and authorities, especially the authority of his self-righteous teachers. On the other hand, he displays great generosity, selflessness and courage when he helps the family of Black George and undergoes severe punishments in order to protect him. As the contrast between the two young men shows, the ability to feel for and help another stands much higher in Fielding's system of values than any general conventional principles. In the notorious scene where Blifil borrows Sophia's little pet-bird just to set it free because its confinement seemed to him 'against the law of nature, by which everything had the right to liberty',²⁷ Fielding contrasts Blifil's learned self-centeredness and total disregard of other people's feelings with Tom's genuine dedication to Sophia's happiness when he tries to save the bird and bring it back to her. This petty incident foreshadows Blifil's darker side, which is revealed when he is recommended to Sophia as an exemplary young gentleman and the heir of the neighbouring estate she is supposed to marry. The reader can easily guess and is assured by the narrator that, as

26 Ibid., p. 103.

27 Ibid., p. 139.

for Blifil, the idea of ‘entire and absolute possession of the heart of his mistress, which romantic lovers require, ... never entered his head. Her fortune and her person were the sole objects of his wishes, of which he made no doubt soon to obtain absolute property’.²⁸ The lack of feeling and consideration on Blifil’s part is again put side by side with Tom’s grief over Sophia’s situation and his decision to leave Mr. Allworthy’s estate in order not to tempt her. As much as Tom comes out of this situation as the moral winner, Blifil is fully revealed as the epitome of a corrupted impostor who pretends good intentions and complies with social conventions only to pursue his own self-interest.

Fielding’s criticism of hypocrisy in his characters coincides with the development in the perception of politeness of the time. Starting with its presentation in the *Spectator* as ‘a blend of traditional values, of which stoicism remained a key component, relocated in a modern and dynamic city culture’, politeness was seen as ‘the guarantor of political liberty and new moral standards in a commercial society’.²⁹ However, later on emerged a competing discourse, which reached its highest popularity in the second third of the century, and both enriched and questioned the existing definition of politeness as a modern virtue. With reference to John Brewer’s work *Pleasures of the Imagination*, Philip Carter claims that by the mid- to late eighteenth century there was a shift from politeness to a ‘new type of refinement’ – sensibility. As John Brewer puts it, ‘while politeness emphasized forms of public presentation in the creation of refinement, sentiment stressed inner feeling’.³⁰ Carter further states that

the result was a body of advice literature which saw less need for the niceties of older definitions of refined behaviour, either because of their incompatibility with displays of feelings, or because of their association with the artifice which sensibility’s advocates saw inherent to earlier forms of polite society.³¹

Therefore, the satirical portrayal of pretended decorum and its contrast with crude particularities of everyday life in Fielding’s novels reflects the turn to sensibility and the importance of inner feeling over learned manners. Nevertheless, Carter makes sure to explain that ‘at no point during the rise of the fashion for sensibility did it fully replace interest in things and people “polite” and agrees with Brewer that both principles basically co-existed’.³² The distinction between

28 Ibid., p. 225.

29 Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 25.

30 J. Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, London, Routledge, 1997, pp. 100, 117, in Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 25.

31 Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, p. 30.

32 Ibid., p. 28.

the old notion of politeness connected with the court and the new understanding of a polite gentleman was clearly distinguished, though. As opposed to courtiers who 'were to learn the appearance of nonchalance and apply their skills in courtly competition', modern gentlemen 'were expected to be less concerned with competing than with socializing'.³³

Social aspects of polite conversation are also prominent in Fielding's thought since he describes the art of conversation as 'the art of pleasing or doing good to one another'.³⁴ Therefore, the ability to address people and converse with them in such a way that they feel happy and comfortable is a key aspect in Fielding's understanding of good breeding and politeness. Although Tom Jones is a man of action and his conduct is generally without sophisticated decorum, Fielding makes sure to keep the standard of politeness in his conversation, especially between the hero and his beloved Sophia. Described by Scott Black as 'an extra-wordly couple',³⁵ Tom and Sophie certainly stand out as extremely refined in their affection for each other. For example, when the two lovers meet after the bird incident, Tom shows his concern for Sophie's loss and approaches her with every possible gallantry while trying to suppress his feelings, saying: 'I know not what I say. Meeting you here so unexpectedly – I have been unguarded – for heaven's sake pardon me if I have said anything to offend you – I did not mean it – indeed, I would have rather died – nay, the very thought would kill me'.³⁶ Although Tom hangs around poaching with Black George, does not hesitate to physically attack Mr. Thwackum, and disappears into a bush with Molly right after an elevated contemplation of his true love for Sophia, his greatest worry is not to offend his idol by his words. Therefore, the hero Fielding creates here represents the necessity of politeness in communication as well as in genuine feeling, since it is this genuine feeling that lies behind correct male behaviour.

Tom and Blifil's approach to Sophia and women in general is also crucial in distinguishing the key difference between virtue and vice in polite masculinity. The contrast between the heroes shows that the problem of the right measure of self-interest and success in life is a theme which preoccupied Fielding's thoughts and which stems back even to his much earlier prose, *Jonathan Wild* (1743). The ruthless Wild is portrayed as a man of cold-blooded ambition, enraging and ominous in the grim light of the London underworld. Fielding makes Wild look incomparably more powerful than the scheming, sad schoolboy Blifil in *Tom Jones*. Yet, there is a great similarity between the two. Opposing previous readings of

33 Ibid., p. 63.

34 H. Fielding, *Selected Essays of Henry Fielding*, Boston, Ginn, 1905, p. 126.

35 S. Black, 'The Adventures of Love in Tom Jones', in J. A. Downie (ed.), *Henry Fielding in our Time*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008, p. 47.

36 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 206.

the character as a Machiavellian corrupter, Claude Rawson in his essay 'Hero as Clown' points out that 'Wild continuously displays comic self-imprisonment, and almost invariable failure in crime and love'.³⁷ Like Blifil, Mr. Wild is eventually unsuccessful in ruining Heartfree and winning the favour of Laetitia. Although he functions as a sarcastic, reversed depiction of life success, the criminal is at the same time ridiculed, as he displays qualities of 'a roguish clown'.³⁸ So, in both novels, Fielding shows evil designs as a form of wretchedness – the result of wrong life choices rather than a devilish deformation of the mind. He also portrays the two protagonists as inevitably ending in ultimate failure – execution in Wild's case and repudiation in Blifil's. The view of evil as general human potential leads Fielding to the idea that the correct approach to self-interest is the key in choosing the right life path, which in his novels always leads to a reward and a happy ending for the hero.

Although Claude Rawson sees Fielding's portrayal of evil 'as in some ways ridiculous'³⁹ in comparison with the work of earlier satirists, the effects of evil characters' behaviour on others are never mocked. The comic fear, described by R. S. Crane as 'a kind of faint alarm',⁴⁰ which we experience as readers in certain places, fits with the comic tone of Fielding's stories, but in other places, evil is taken rather seriously, as in the abduction of Fanny by the Roasting Squire and Blifil's cold-blooded plotting. I therefore disagree with the idea of Fielding's portrayal of evil as light-hearted or purely comic, since the implications of evil designs are strongly felt by the reader when they realize their consequences. Whereas in *Joseph Andrews* Fielding employs the stereotypical trope of a corrupted wealthy gentleman as the instigator of his subjects' suffering, in his following novel he uses a character which possesses the same lack of feeling towards other human beings, but styles him as a scheming hypocrite. Even though hypocrites are often mocked in Fielding's novels, Blifil's total disregard of Sophia's will and his indulgence in possessing her out of spite comes across as truly sinister.

Such examples make it clear that the principle of the true ridiculous can be used to disclose the affectation of characters, but it proves inefficient to fully show their vicious and virtuous qualities. Instead of using mockery, Fielding, therefore, asks readers to consult their own hearts in judging the characters. In line with Shaftesbury's theory of moral sense, which presupposes that we possess a moral faculty to naturally distinguish the good from the evil, Fielding exposes us to two portrayals of manners which are mirrored in the young heroine's innocence.

37 C. Rawson, *The Hero as Clown: Jonathan Wild, Felix Krull and Others*, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1973, p. 20.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

39 C. Rawson, *Order From Confusion Sprung*, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1985, p. 278.

40 R. S. Crane, 'The Plot of *Tom Jones*', in Battestin (ed.), *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Tom Jones: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1968, p. 87.

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Since according to Shaftesbury's aesthetics our 'moral sensibilities generate automatic responses'⁴¹ to what we perceive, we must naturally see the goodness of young Jones and condemn the machinations of Blifil. As Shaftesbury claims in his *Characteristics*:

in these characters ... or pictures of manners, ... the heart cannot possibly remain neutral. ... However false or corrupt it be within itself, it finds the difference ... between one heart and another, one turn of affection, one behaviour, one sentiment and another ... and ... must approve of what is natural and honest and disapprove of what is dishonest and corrupt.⁴²

Like the principle of the true ridiculous, which explains why we laugh at what we find insincere and pretended, our moral sense explains why viciousness disgusts us. While in *Joseph Andrews*, the naïve innocence of Abraham Adams discloses the corrupt mind of the Roasting Squire, in *Tom Jones* the difference between Tom's genuine feeling and Blifil's dishonesty is reflected in their approach to the defenceless Sophia. Her spontaneous preference for the obliging Jones stresses his good qualities, which might be questionable for the reader at this point. By rejecting Blifil, who is a more reasonable choice since his social status and riches can provide for her in life, Sophia follows her emotions in the moral judgment she makes about the two young gentlemen. Her character therefore illustrates the emerging idea of moral sense, which was further developed by Francis Hutcheson, who opposed the school of reason represented by Thomas Hobbes. In his *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections. With Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (1728), Hutcheson 'removed reason from playing any role in the origin or significance of moral concepts' and limited its role to 'knowledge of empirical truths'.⁴³ In Hutcheson's view, reason therefore 'neither moves us to pursue one end or another nor shows us that we ought to pursue a given end'.⁴⁴ As spectators of Sophia's situation, we can see that her affection for the handsome roguish Jones is not naïve or morally wrong, but based on genuine emotions of gratitude and admiration for his good intentions, which confirms our acceptance of the hero as the right choice for Sophia as opposed to the more rational but also repulsive Blifil.

41 W. H. Wandless, 'Narrative Pain and the Moral Sense: Toward an Ethics of Suffering in the Long Eighteenth Century', *Literature and Medicine*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2005, pp. 51-69.

42 A. A. C. Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1964., p. 252.

43 B. Peach (ed.), in F. Hutcheson, *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971, p. 18.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

It is important to note though that, for Fielding, the judgment of the heart, which the reader naturally exercises on characters, did not seem as something to be taken for granted. Well-aware of the variety of his readership and the capriciousness of criticism of the time, Fielding was more subtle and made an effort to clearly assert the basis for distinguishing between goodness and vice. In his introductory chapter 'Of Love', which precedes Tom and Sophia's struggle, he explains the difference between passion and a much more noble feeling of affection based on gratitude and esteem, asking the reader:

Examine your heart, my good reader, and resolve whether you do believe these matters with me. If you do, you may now proceed to their exemplification in the following pages; if you do not, you have, I assure you, already read more than you have understood; and it would be wiser to pursue your business, or your pleasures (such as they are), than to throw away any more of your time in reading what you can neither taste nor comprehend.⁴⁵

Teasing the reader into distinguishing a desire for possession from a genuine affection, Fielding, therefore, establishes a clear difference between Sophia's two suitors in his introductory essay and makes us read on to consider the consequences of this difference.

Unfortunately, even though the choice between the two heroes is clear for Sophia, her relatives see the situation in a very different light. Despite Tom's undeniable inner goodness and good education, Blifil, as the heir of the neighbouring estate, remains the proper match for the young lady, since for her family, Tom's lack of social status and property is a much greater factor in the matters of marriage than are the questions of virtue. The shock and confusion over her preferences in love are perceived as an exhibition of disobedience and foolish disregard of social requirements. As Sophia's furious father is quick to point out:

I always thought what would come o' breeding up a bastard like a gentleman, and letting *un* come about to *volks'* houses. It's well *vor un* I could not get *at un*, I'd a licked *un*, I'd a spoiled his caterwauling, I'd a taught the son of a whore to meddle with meat for his master.⁴⁶

Like some of Fielding's contemporaries who thought that portraying an illegitimate child as an exemplary young hero was quite outrageous, Squire Western finds his daughter's choice more than inappropriate. His frantic outburst of condemnation and protestations against young Jones (as well as against anything

45 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 235.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 265.

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else that contradicts his own interest) makes us focus on Sophia's father, whose attitude to his daughter as well as his general authoritarian views are another instance of Fielding's negative portrayals of masculinity. A supporter of the Jacobite rebellion, which promoted the return of sovereign monarch power in England, Squire Western represents the limited views of the past, which were long replaced by the more liberal thoughts of the Glorious Revolution and later reinforced by John Locke's writings.

Squire Western's retrograde ideas about the absolute reign over the state and family go hand in hand with his primitive behaviour and boorish use of language. Although the Squire is not guilty of any pretension, his character is clearly mocked as a narrow-minded obscurant who shocks us with his rusticism and causes fury among sophisticated ladies. What is more, his hilarious emotional tantrums and hunting metaphors trigger laughter in several serious situations. For example, when he comes to complain to Squire Allworthy about Tom's interest in Sophia, Squire Western grants his surprised apologies with a passionate reply:

Pox o' your sorrow ... it will do me abundance of good when I have lost my only child, my poor Sophy, that was the joy of my heart, and all the hope and comfort of my age; but I am resolved I will turn her out o'doors, she shall beg and starve and rot in the streets. Not one *hapenny*, not a *happenny* shall she ever *hae* o'mine. The son of a bitch was always good at finding a hare sitting, an'be rotted to 'n, I little thought what puss he was looking after; but it shall be the worst he ever *vound* in his life.⁴⁷

Since Western's complaint is preceded by a touching final meeting of the two grief-stricken lovers, the tragic spell of their misery is suddenly broken by his base explanations.

Notwithstanding the comical effects of Squire Wester's speech, Sophia's oppression under her father's selfish tyranny may actually be much more important in the context of Fielding's social criticism than her relationship with Tom is, since it reflects the author's concern about traditional patriarchal authority.⁴⁸ As much as we can laugh at Western's out of place simplicity, his treatment of female members of the family remains outrageous and always represents a substantial menace to the happiness of the young couple. Against the background of Sophia's misery, the harshness of Western's passionate parental love is put side by side with the pretence of Blifil's cold-hearted courtship, which in its essence is equally possessive, and finally drives Sophia to desert her home for London.

47 Ibid., p. 265.

48 A. Smallwood, *Fielding and the Woman Question: The Novels of Henry Fielding and Feminist Debate 1700-1750*, New York, St Martin's Press, 1989, p. 142.

The negative portrayal of Sophia's father also follows Fielding's political affinity with liberal modern ideologies. On the run from the threats imposed by Squire Western's conservative world, the two lovers find themselves connected to politically opposing views. While Western is an eager supporter of the Jacobite cause, Tom gets recruited into the King's Army on his way to London to defend his country against the Pretender. When he meets a troupe of soldiers marching against the rebels at an inn, he does not hesitate to 'serve as a volunteer in this expedition' since he 'had some heroic ingredients in his composition, and was a hearty well-wisher to the glorious cause of liberty'.⁴⁹ Although Tom joins the troupe only for a brief while, Fielding's use of characters in the story clearly marks his ideological loyalty to liberal Whig thoughts and to the Hanoverian dynasty. Brian McCrea's study of Fielding's political sympathies throughout his career as a writer and a journalist confirms his general 'acceptance of the monied interest', but he also admits that 'his fiction does not always reflect this loyalty as, say, Samuel Richardson's does'.⁵⁰ McCrea further stresses Fielding's uneasiness with the changes taking place in English society and art, and his classical education, which had a great impact on his writings. Since Fielding's own mother came from a family who owned a large estate, but his father represented the new and ambitious Whiggish social group whose wealth did not come from the land,⁵¹ the writer was trapped between these ideologies from his early childhood. As a result, the clash between fading Tory principles related to the supremacy of landed gentry and the modern world of new liberties ruled by moneyed men was also an important element in Fielding's portrayal of masculinity.

Parallel to Tom's patriotic support of Whiggish liberty, Sophie joins a camp opposing the old-fashioned views of her father. After abandoning the protection of his house, she flees to his sister, Mrs. Western, who holds a quite contrary set of opinions and uses Lockean rhetoric to support the cause of female rights.⁵² The shelter she offers, however, proves to be far from safe. Instead of helping Sophia escape the marriage with Blifil, she drives her into the clutches of Lady Bellaston and the wicked lord Fellamar who attempts to rape her during one of his courting visits. Luckily, Mr. Western comes to rescue his daughter at the last moment and once again his hilarious outrage releases us from the ominous threat when he affronts the lord:

49 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 321-32.

50 B. McCrea, *Henry Fielding and the Politics of Mid-Eighteenth Century England*, Athens, Georgia, University of Georgia Press, 1981, p. 41.

51 M. C. Batestin, *Henry Fielding – A Life*, London, Routledge, 1989, p. 11.

52 J. Campbell, *Natural Masques: Gender and Identity in Fielding's Plays and Novels*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995, p. 144.

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You are a son of a b— ... for all your laced coat. You my son-in-law, and be d—n'd to you! ... Don't think I am afraid of such a fellow as thee art? Because he has got a spit there dangling at thy side. Lay by your spit, and I'll give thee enough of meddling with what does not belong to thee. —I'll teach you to father-in-law me. I'll lick thy jacket.⁵³

The straightforward storyline of Sophia's flight to her liberalist aunt in the capital in order to escape the patriarchal rage of her father is, thus, further complicated here by the entrance of the evil Lord Fellamar, who represents the previous eras' unrestricted power of the urban gentry.

Despite Fielding's classical learning and nostalgia for simple country life, Squire Western's rage and contempt for the lord corresponds with Fielding's alienation from the political systems of the past. In all his major novels, he employs 'wicked lord' characters who take advantage of innocent ladies in difficult situations and attempt to rape them. This general idea of corrupted nobility is portrayed with the same scorn by other writers of his generation, especially Samuel Richardson, whose Mr. B and Lovelace serve as glaring examples of such characters. The way Fielding depicts the anti-Hanoverian Squire Western reflects his general support of liberal Whiggish thought; not truly evil, but still aggressive, with his vulgar comments and old guard opinions, this character can be seen as a hilarious mock-heroic portrait of a bygone model of masculinity, who is ready to save his daughter from danger, but at the same time, would have no scruples locking her up and terrorizing her if she does not obey his command. Western's overall crudity, political views and the treatment of his daughter are therefore mockingly depicted as wrong and so primitive that we are forced to laugh at their offensiveness.

As we can observe, all the negative portrayals of masculinity in Fielding's work, demonstrated by the pompous Lord Fellamar, the boorish Western, and the prissy Blifil, are connected by the common trait of insensibility towards the feelings of other people. When he displays the impact of such conduct on the sufferings of innocent, adorable Sophia, Fielding clearly marks the lack of feeling and the pretension of feeling as two evils to be condemned by society. Thus, the ability to empathize with others is more important than Fielding's political statements and even trumps the requirement of polite manners, which are seen as important but potentially dishonest.

In accordance with Lord Shaftesbury's theory of human nature, which 'places "social affections" at the very centre of his model of man',⁵⁴ Fielding's idea of virtue opposes the Hobbesian governing principle of selfishness and establishes

53 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 702.

54 S. Grean, *Shaftesbury's Philosophy of Religion and Ethics*, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1967, p. 152.

goodness as inevitably linked with social impulses.⁵⁵ Although Shaftesbury does not give a precise list of the social affections, Grean summarizes them as ‘the impulses including the drive for preservation of the species, gregariousness, sympathy, the various forms of familial affection ... and the love of humanity’.⁵⁶

The exemplary model of empathetic attitude and generous social behaviour is epitomized in the novel by Squire Allworthy’s character, whose sensitive and kind approach to the less fortunate is widely admired. Fielding’s conception of the virtuous Allworthy corresponds with Battestin’s assertion that the concept of the Christian hero, instead of the stoic models of the past generation, enjoyed great popularity during the first half of the 18th century. Here, Battestin’s view of Fielding’s authoritative male figures differs from Brissenden’s interpretation, in which he sees Allworthy as a solitaire, noble stoic, foreshadowing the more sentimental tradition of impotent observers of the suffering world.⁵⁷ In contrast, Battestin links together some of Fielding’s other characters, like Parson Adams and Dr. Harrison, but also Richardson’s Sir Charles Grandison, and claims that ‘the theory of the good man reduced his essential characteristics to two: personal chastity (representative of the temperate discipline of the passions) and social charity’.⁵⁸ Being an embodiment of both, Squire Allworthy stands in opposition to his neighbour Western, whose despotic rule over his own daughter and merciless pursuit of Black George for hunting on his lands only heightens Allworthy’s generosity and good will. By adopting the foundling Tom and giving a second chance to Jenny Jones, who gets the blame for the abandoned child, Squire Allworthy serves as an example of a good Christian actively engaged in the lives of those around him.

Battestin links the idea of a good Christian figure in Fielding’s work with Latitudinarianism, which stresses ‘pragmatic, common sense Christianity’ and maintains that ‘a sincere man might earn his salvation through the exercise of benevolence’.⁵⁹ Along with Isaac Barrow and John Tillotson, whose sermons Fielding read with admiration, the ideals of good men in his novels ‘defended the naturalness of social affections’ against Hobbes’s assertions of ‘a natural state of war and enmity with one another’.⁶⁰ Such an idea of goodness corresponds with Hutcheson’s theory that ‘the desire to procure happiness to others provide us

55 Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 286.

56 Grean, *Shaftesbury’s Philosophy of Religion and Ethics*, p. 153.

57 R. F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade*, London, Macmillan, 1974, pp. 67-68.

58 Battestin, *The Moral Basis of Fielding’s Art*, p. 30.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

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with the idea of moral good'.⁶¹ I therefore agree with Battestin's reading of the character, as it is more accurate in placing Fielding's work into the context of its possible influences.

Yet, even such a truly great man as Allworthy fails to see through the insincerity of Thwackum, Square and Blifil's designs. Like Parson Adams in the previous novel, he displays a great deal of naïve goodness, which prevents him from seeing other characters in their true colours. Allworthy's initial inability to fully distinguish between good and evil illustrates Hutcheson's theory on the function of reason, cognition, and truth in the process of correcting moral judgments. Peach summarizes Hutcheson's ideas when he explains that the moral sense

tends always to react in the same way so long as its disposition to approve benevolence is not on any given occasion interfered with by ignorance, mistaken belief, prejudice, or the like. When such interference occurs, it is properly the function of the reason to find this out and remove the ignorance, correct the belief, or take note of the prejudice. The subsequent reaction of the moral sense under these altered conditions may be said to be a correction of the moral sense.⁶²

Allworthy's ignorance of Tom's good intentions and the full circumstances of Tom's deeds, which are never truly revealed to him, cause him to condemn Tom, but when Blifil's machinations are gradually revealed, Allworthy corrects his judgment and makes amends for the wrongs done to Tom under the bad influence of his advisors.

Brought up in Allworthy's house, Tom Jones mirrors the goodness of his benefactor, but he lacks the prudence which Allworthy shows and which would make Tom a proper model of masculinity. As opposed to Joseph Andrews's extraordinary chastity, Tom's good deeds are always related to sexual experience, which plays an important role in his moral refinement. In alignment with Hutcheson's analogy between internal and external senses, Fielding's second hero therefore learns through responses to his environment rather than representing an example of innate goodness. When Tom decides to help the family of Black George and support them with presents he got from Squire Allworthy, he soon gets involved with one of his daughters, Molly Seagrim. Torn between the lures of Molly and adoration of Sophia, Tom is finally released when he finds Mr. Square in Molly's bedroom, and so feels no longer responsible for the possible consequences of their relationship. After he is expelled from Paradise Hall and sets out on the journey for London, he bravely assists Mrs. Waters when she is assaulted by Northerton and escorts her into the nearest inn. His gallant behaviour is after-

61 L. Turco, 'Moral Sense and the Foundations of Morals', in A. Broadie (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 137.

62 B. Peach (ed.), in Hutcheson, *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, p. 20.

wards rewarded, for ‘Mrs. Waters had, in truth, not only a good opinion of our hero, but a very great affection for him’.⁶³ Tom’s natural inclination to charity as well as bravery and generosity when it comes to assisting ladies in distress are two qualities making his character conflicted between two usual patterns of virtuous male behaviour of the time. As Jill Campbell points out, in Jones’s character we can trace both old and new notions of masculine heroism – of a cavalier and a Christian. Challenging the idea that Fielding’s main character in the novel incorporates the best of the conflicting models, Campbell further observes that ‘Fielding shows, in fact, a particular interest in creating scenes of sustained conflict between these opposed traits, rather than in cleanly reconciling them in a character who can embody “the best aspects of both”’.⁶⁴ Opposing the trend of providing models for the reader, Fielding prefers to play a game where values are reinforced and also questioned within the same character.

The complexity of his male hero was, however, very underappreciated by Fielding’s contemporaries. The freedom with which he approaches women was interpreted as lewdness, and the book itself was called obscene.⁶⁵ As one reviewer of the novel states in his fictive letter to the author:

I say, Sir, have been astonish’d to find the principal Hero of it vicious and ungovernable in his Childhood, debauching a poor Girl almost as soon as he had entered Youth, ... soon after resolving to leave her for another of greater Fortune, before he knew she had given him the least Occasion to do so, and at a Time when he imagined her whole Happiness depended upon him, and when he was under the greatest Obligations to her: How would the Reader’s Astonishment have encreas’d, to find him in his Manhood, when he had engag’d his Affection to *the most adorable of Women* and had met with a reciprocal Affection, forgetting her Love without the least Repugnance, to lie in the Arms of the wanton Mrs. Waters, who he had Reason to think a married Woman.⁶⁶

The perception of Jones as a vicious or at least ambiguous character instead of a virtuous one seems to rise mainly from the instability in his amorous advances. Despite his generous mind and good intentions to help ladies in distress, audiences could not forgive the breaches of his romantic relationship with Sophia, however unrealistic the prospect of their marriage might have been. Even Fielding himself did not portray Tom’s youthful transgressions as positive. Although Tom escapes the responsibility for Molly’s pregnancy when he discovers her unfaithfulness, he is tormented by pangs of conscience when he later thinks of her.

63 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 441.

64 Campbell, *Natural Masques*, p. 173.

65 Paulson and Lockwood, *Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage*, p. 235.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 252.

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His spontaneous dalliance with Mrs. Waters also has its consequences when he must live through the fright of the prospect that she might actually have been his own mother.

What is more, as the novel proceeds, the portrayal of Tom as a generous cavalier is reversed completely when he arrives in the city of London. No longer in a position to help others, he needs to be rescued by Lady Bellaston, who takes him home as a lover and pays him with pocket-money and clothes. The unexpected change of his position from a charitable benefactor to the male version of a kept mistress suddenly puts his previous behaviour in a new perspective. While his affairs with Molly and Mrs. Waters were depicted as mutually rewarding, Tom's unwilling engagement with the aging Lady Bellaston clearly shows the limits of his alleged benevolence. Instead of continuing the image of Tom as a merry obliging gentleman who offers assistance to Molly and Mrs. Waters, Fielding switches to portraying his hero as a male prostitute who uses sex to survive in the harsh environment of the city.

As Tom's role changes, Fielding also unveils another perspective on the character, which illustrates his point about Tom's virtue. Like Shaftesbury, Fielding reflects on the role of self-interest in human conduct, which neither of the writers sees as essentially negative. On the contrary, Shaftesbury argues that

the self-directed impulses are necessary in their appropriate degree for the well-being of an individual, and are not necessarily harmful to our social relationships, though in excess they become vices ... and the greatest threat to our true interest and happiness.⁶⁷

Therefore, Tom needs to find the right measure of self-interest to achieve his happy ending. Shaftesbury defines 'self-affections' as those that 'relate to the private interest or separate economy of the creature ... and constitute whatever we call interestedness or self-love'. Grean further provides a basic list of self-affections as described by Shaftesbury, summarizing them as: love of life, resentment of injury, pleasure (or luxury), desire for wealth and material conveniences, love of praise (emulation) and love of ease and rest (indolence).⁶⁸

Like Squire Allworthy, who in his goodness fails to see the snares set by people around him, for most of the time Tom is fully unaware of the entrapment his female companions have in store for him. Murry rightly observes that 'it is always women who beleaguer him. Tom's trouble is that he cannot find it in his heart to repulse them: and this is because he is, fundamentally, an idealist about women'.⁶⁹ While he plays the role of the Good Samaritan helping the family of Black

67 Grean, *Shaftesbury's Philosophy of Religion and Ethics*, p. 168.

68 Ibid., p. 164.

69 J. M. Murry, 'Fielding's "Sexual Ethic" in *Tom Jones*', in R. Paulson (ed.), *Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1962, p. 93.

George, George's daughter Molly seizes the opportunity and carefully plans to become Tom's mistress in order to raise herself from poverty. Even though Jones avoided her to eliminate his temptation, Molly 'found means of throwing herself in his way' and 'soon triumphed over all the virtuous resolutions of Jones'. She even 'so well played her part, that Jones attributed the conquest entirely to himself, and considered the young woman as one who has yielded to the violent attacks of his passion'.⁷⁰ Later on, when she becomes pregnant, she makes it clear she will not accept a position generously offered to her by Sophia, boldly saying: 'I shan't wash dishes for anybody. My gentleman will provide better for me. See what he hath given me this afternoon; he hath promised I shall never want money'.⁷¹ Contrary to the general opinion about Tom's debauchery, Molly is portrayed here as using Tom to secure herself financially and is ready to do the same with her other lovers. By contrasting Tom's naïve goodness with Molly's crafty designs, Fielding, therefore, releases his hero from the responsibility for the consequences of his actions and at the same time plays with the limitations of the concept of charity.

Even more interestingly, when portraying Tom's adventure with Mrs. Waters, the author places his hero between two extremes of social conduct. The moment Tom hears Mrs. Water's cry for help, he is listening to the story of the disillusioned Man of the Hill, who abandoned human society to live a secluded life in his cottage. Since for Fielding, man is 'an animal formed for and delighted in society' as he claims in his *Essay on Conversation*,⁷² the bitter and hostile story of the Man represents a deterrent example for the reader. The portrayal of the Man's indifference towards humankind culminates when he ignores Mrs. Water's screams, while Tom without hesitation leaves his company to assist her. Tom's love of life and readiness to help others stand in opposition to the solitary life of the misanthrope. When he saves the lady in distress and she encourages Jones to spend a night with her, he does not disappoint her and enjoys life without restrictions.

Although Tom is quick to reject his friend's cynical lethargic approach to life, he cannot resist the opposite extreme of Mrs. Water's hedonism. His failure to avoid temptation is once again related to the charitable generosity which he displays in abundance. So, his manly duties towards the unfortunate Mrs. Waters put Tom in a tricky position, as Fielding clearly uses Tom's character to mock the old-fashioned concept of an obliging cavalier while reflecting on that concept's clash with the emerging trend of a chaste gentleman. In order to save his hero from this quagmire, Fielding manages to stress Tom's inculpability when he reveals the designs behind Mrs. Water's advances. Like Molly Seagrim, even Mrs.

70 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 151.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

72 Fielding, *Selected Essays of Henry Fielding*, p. 122.

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Waters sees Tom as an opportunity rather than an object of sincere affection. When Fielding describes her feelings toward the hero, he makes sure to remind his readers about the meanings of the word 'love', distinguishing genuine feelings from self-serving passion:

To speak out boldly at once, she was in love, according to the present universally received sense of that phrase, by which love is applied indiscriminately to the desirable objects of all our passions, appetites, and senses, and is understood to be that preference which we give to one kind of food rather than another.⁷³

The passion Mr. Waters has for Tom is, in Fielding's view, pardonable considering his exceptional charms. However, he describes Mrs. Waters as 'a fair warrior' who used her 'amorous warfare' and 'slyly and imperceptibly carried on her attack' to finally become the 'conqueror' enjoying 'the usual fruits of her victory'.⁷⁴ The comparison of the seduction scene to a battle where Mrs. Waters figures as the conqueror of Tom's body, not his heart, leaves us with no doubt that the hero ends up in a well thought-out trap with hardly any designs of his own.

The story of the Man of the Hill, whom Tom meets earlier, not only portrays the pitfall of misanthropy but also serves as a warning against the snares of the city where the hero is heading. His relationship with the self-seeking Lady Bellaston, who manipulates him through favours, gifts and the implied obligation of expected gratitude into becoming her lover, shows Tom once again in the position of a victim rather than a seducer. As Fielding puts it, 'he knew the tacit consideration upon which all her favours were conferred; and as his necessity obliged him to accept them, so his honour, he concluded, forced him to pay the price'.⁷⁵ Therefore, the overall exploitation of Jones by women of all social ranks is presented in the book as a naïve sense of obligation and generosity towards the opposite sex, which is expected from him as a man who lingers between the traditional and the emerging patterns for gendered roles.

These transgressions against chastity which the hero is guilty of are nevertheless redeemed by his honest love for Sophia, who remains an unreachable but sincere aim of his affection. After he hears about Lady Bellaston's habit of 'protecting' young men like him, Tom reconsiders his alleged obligations to her and rather thinks of them as a service. His renewed hope to reunite with Sophia also makes him refuse a marriage proposal from the beautiful rich widow Lady Hunt. No matter how desperate the situation, Tom's pursuit of his genuine desire wins over his selfless sense of hospitality – as the narrator explains it, although 'his

73 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, p. 441

74 *Ibid.*, p. 443-444.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 643.

honourable mistress was in the hands of her father and he had scarce any hopes ever to get her out of them again,' and what is more 'this lady's fortune would have been exceedingly convenient to him, and he could have no objection to her in any respect ... to abandon Sophia and marry another, that was impossible'.⁷⁶ By offering her protection in case she decides to desert her family without any financial support, Tom decides to give up all personal benefits to the hope that he could be reunited with his love.

Paul Kelleher, who comments on the romantic relationship between Tom and Sophia in his essay 'The Glorious Lust of Doing Good', develops the view that associates Fielding's ethics with sociability and 'good nature' as the basis for what he calls *feeling without sentiment*.⁷⁷ He argues that 'Fielding refigures antiquity's search for wisdom as a sublunary affair, the virtuous pursuit of heteroerotic love'. By placing the heteroerotic relationship between the two main characters in the centre of his novel, Fielding 'loosens the traditional association between lust and vice'⁷⁸ and, as Kelleher suggests:

tests the limits of how, and how far, lust can be legitimated as a constituent of the social order. Having taken care (and obvious pleasure) in figuring the pursuit of virtue as a palpably hetero(erotic) affair, and having intimated the congruence between character and sexuality, he signals to the reader of *Tom Jones* that sex commands more than merely thematic interest within the novel.⁷⁹

By focusing on lust, Kelleher's commentary complicates the initial simple vitality of the main character that is also characteristic of Joseph Andrews. Although lust is generally connected with vice, when combined with Tom's goodness of heart and honesty of feeling, in Kelleher's reading, it gets translated into affection, and functions as the keystone in his pursuit of happiness.

Although the central story of the two lovers might seem like a titillating romance, it reflects on the moral development of the hero and his final achievement of the virtue of wisdom, which Sophia embodies. As opposed to Kelleher's emphasis on sexuality, Brissenden sees Tom's generosity of spirit and ability to empathize with others as his potential capacity for moral refinement. As Brissenden explains:

76 Ibid., p. 728.

77 P. Kelleher, 'The Glorious Lust of Doing Good', *A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 38, No. 2/3, 2005, p. 169.

78 Ibid., p. 174.

79 Ibid., p. 180.

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if the faculty of moral judgment is located in one's sensibility, it must inevitably bear a very close relationship to one's sexual responsiveness: one's capacity for love and one's capacity for virtue both depend on the delicacy of one's sensibility'.⁸⁰

In Fielding's writing, sexual desire is often a powerful drive that motivates the characters to behave generously towards others. I agree with Brissenden that the main hero's sexual relations function as a learning experience, which make him value and strive for Sophia's love instead of settling for satisfying his sexual appetite or profiting from the riches of his female benefactors.

To stress the progress of the young hero, Fielding departs from the idea of innate goodness as the main driving force of Tom's behaviour. Along with David Hume, Fielding realized that even though benevolence is a desirable virtue, innate desire to do good has its limits, and it is hardly the only motivation of human behaviour. As Turco states, in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739), Hume re-examines 'the principles that underlie the traditions of morals represented by the views of Hutcheson and Mandeville' and maintains that

the self (or the other's self) is not the cause, it is the object of pride and love, and since they have their opposites, humility and hatred, the cause must lie in some pleasant or unpleasant quality of the object that arouses them'.⁸¹

Tom's moral growth therefore depends on his responses to his amorous affairs, and progresses when he finds more pleasure in making himself worthy of Sophia's affections than in satisfying his sexual appetite, which brings him social humiliation. At the same time, as readers, we do not judge Tom's virtue based on his questionable innate goodness, but on Sophia's approval of Tom as her future husband, since she functions as the arbiter of Tom's pleasant qualities.

The romance between Tom and Sophie gets even more down-to-earth when they finally get united in London but are not permitted to marry each other because of Tom's low social status and lack of property. Imprisoned for almost killing a man in a duel, which is another reflection on his cavalier duties clashing with the laws of the modern world, Tom's social identity must be changed to finally acquire the label of a proper young, polished man. For the anti-Hanoverian Squire Western, only a landlord can marry his daughter; therefore, Tom must be revealed as Allworthy's nephew and the true heir of a part of his estate. Consequently, despite his later acceptance of the moneyed bourgeoisie,

80 Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress*, p. 88.

81 Turco, 'Moral Sense and the Foundations of Morals', in Broadie (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 142.

in *Tom Jones*, Fielding remains mainly influenced by his sense of social place and does not get as innovative as his rival Richardson, whose exemplary character Sir Charles Grandison goes beyond the pre-set standard of a land-owning gentleman.⁸² Fielding's heroes, on the contrary, always remain reflective of both the reverberations of the past glory of a charitable educated landlord and the requirements of modern society, which stresses Christian and civic duties of a man, but understands the need for his social advancement. Tom's sense of the right measure of self-interest, which is not motivated by only material or purely personal gain, allows him to break free from Thwackum, Blifil, Molly, Mrs. Waters, Lady Bellaston, and Lady Hunt's schemes, which they hatch in order to abuse Jones's genuine goodness to reach their selfish ambitions. The symbolic pursuit of Sophia keeps him on his way to virtue but is always aligned with his sense of personal happiness, which he thinks both he and his loved one rightly deserve.

To conclude, Fielding's game with characters and perspectives in *Tom Jones* shows his unique accomplishment of joining humour and satire with his moralistic aims. While employing the principle of the true ridiculous, he attacks conventions and draws attention to the pretentious potential of politeness, which can serve manipulation and vice. Instead of putting on affected masks to fulfil social expectations, he calls for inner feeling as the true base of virtue, which is demonstrated in social practice as well as conversation. In his novels, Fielding also makes a statement about the new image of masculinity which was changing its shape at that time. As opposed to earlier novelists, like Defoe and Swift, who remain inspired by the classic tradition of a strong solitary survivor, Fielding presents a model of a young hero who is surrounded by human society and must prove that he has the right social skills to achieve a state of virtue. Since inner goodness is a clear indicator of true politeness for Fielding, but this inner goodness is difficult to recognize in others, his novels portray the main protagonists' struggle to navigate through society and rely on their good sense not to be led astray by ubiquitous schemes. Their trials, therefore, consist in the right understanding of people's intentions and acts, which becomes a real challenge for the reader as well. Since the gendered social spheres were getting closer to each other in Fielding's time, and starting to interact more in the shared domestic space, his male characters become Christianised and, as Campbell points out, also even feminized in the way they express themselves and approach people in their surroundings. Despite their sweet features and the gentle beauty of their manners, Fielding's heroes, however, remain physically strong and brave protectors of their ladies. As Fielding's work incorporates ideas of the Moderns as well as the Ancients, his male characters

82 McCrea, *Henry Fielding and the Politics of Mid-Eighteenth Century England*, p. 41-42.

3 *Tom Jones* and the Right Measure of Self-Interest

reflect notions of both worlds and remain intentionally ambiguous to explore the outcomes of the proposed models. Testing the judgment of his readers, Fielding the satirist makes us construct ideas of manliness and virtue out of the consequences of his characters' actions in a similar manner as his friend Hogarth does in his paintings.