

The Narrative Structure of Fielding's *Amelia*

CHARLES A. KNIGHT

WHILE Fielding's *Amelia* has certainly had its soft-spoken admirers, it is fair to say that their measured tones have often been drowned out by the blatant voices of its critics.¹ Such criticism has come from a variety of sources, covered a range of real or supposed problems in the novel, and suggested a number of reasons for its alleged failure. But a common constellation of charges includes the intrusive nature of an inadequately characterized narrator,² the disjointed nature of the novel's structure (its "lumps of undigested didactic material"),³ the embarrassing quality of its appeals to the reader's sympathies,⁴ and its failure to develop a persuasive governing idea.⁵

One cannot contend that *Amelia* is a flawless work of art, and it is particularly difficult to redeem the novel from the failures of its sentimentality, though I will argue that even that sentiment has its significant functions. But *Amelia* is a successful novel and its success lies in Fielding's use of a particular narrative approach and structure to develop a powerful analysis of the nature and effect of institutionalized evil in eighteenth-century society. *Amelia's* narrative structure, in short, is consonant with its overriding satiric and ethical concerns.

I

Some detailed consideration of the narrative surface of the novel is necessary before a sense of its satiric function can become clear. A deceptive impression of tight organization emerges from the novel's opening books, which Robert Alter

calls "a tour-de-force of a sort scarcely attempted in the English novel for another century."⁶ The prison scene and the stories of Miss Matthews and Captain Booth function on a number of levels, revealing their past histories, stimulating their present sexual interests, introducing a variety of significant events and major themes, and foreshadowing future events.⁷

But a major difficulty of the novel is that the opening sequence establishes as well an expectation of coherence that the rest of the novel does not achieve. When one moves, with Booth, outside the claustrophobic air of the prison, the novel becomes diffuse in structure. "A signal structural failure in *Amelia*," Andrew Wright claims, "is the number and quality of static and detailed discussions whose relation to the main course of the action is tenuous at best."⁸ But in addition to the inclusion of apparently peripheral material, the narrative line of the novel is itself disjunct, with frequent changes in point of view and center of revelation. Moreover, the narrator often jumps in to announce apparently arbitrary changes in scene, time, and person. While such interventions may seem appropriate to a narrator with whose company we are familiar or to novels like *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* that are more thoroughly organized through the narrator's consciousness, in *Amelia*, with its less developed narrator, the effect is to interrupt the movement of the novel and continually distance the reader from the material. But, as we shall see, this technique of alienation is an important aspect of *Amelia's* structure, and its significant effect is to prompt the reader's observation that both the novel's action and its apparently unrelated discursive material are intrinsic elements of its overriding satiric concerns.

A similar disrupting tendency is to be found in the frequency with which the novel presents different or new concatenations of events. The novel has clear goals of morality and plot toward which it moves: the reader anticipates the development of Booth's fiscal and sexual responsibility and hopes for the restoration of Amelia's fortune. These goals, however, are unevenly pursued, and despite them critics have seen various

centers of moral significance and even of causality in the novel.⁹ Indeed, one may well see the novel as having no "center" at all, as being constructed of continual clusters of possibly significant events and sequences that change the interrelationships of the novel and hence throw the reader repeatedly off his stride. The sporadic nature of *Amelia's* narrative movement seems to obscure the clear goals defined at the outset and reached at the end.

The nature and effect of this discontinuity can perhaps be best discerned and explained through a closer look at Book XI, which is characterized both by apparently irrelevant interpolations and discussions and by a fragmentation of narrative surface. The opening chapters of Book XI cover a spectrum of topics and events that are connected to the story of the Booths but not to each other. The first chapter is a revealing dialogue between James and his wife, containing a number of parallels to the situation of the Booths: the failure to penetrate the substitution of disguises at the masquerade, the contrast of attitudes toward the country (for Mrs. James the country is only monotonous; for the Booths it represents the "paradise" they have lost), and the larger contrast of the marriages themselves. James's announced inability to get a commission for Booth because he has just gotten two such places for his footmen provides the transition between this chapter and the next, in which Dr. Harrison asks a nobleman of his acquaintance to use his interest on Booth's behalf. Harrison's unwillingness to reciprocate against his conscience leads to a vigorous discussion of the relationship between merit and position in society, a discussion in which his views are dismissed as chimerical and platonic nonsense.

The third chapter announces a move to the story of the Booths, but this return to the central action lasts for less than a page. Most of the chapter is devoted to a lengthy summary of the history of Mr. Trent. Like Booth a military man, Trent is perhaps the most directly contrasting moral figure. He has succeeded in society by prostituting his wife to the lecherous "Noble Lord," and his presence in the novel helps to define

Booth's difference from the world of profound corruption that surrounds him.

The remaining six chapters of Book XI are devoted to four distinguishable stories. The first of these stories carries forward Booth's financial plight: Amelia pawns her clothes and jewels to provide money to pay his gambling debt to Trent, but he is duped into giving the sum as a fruitless bribe and hence is arrested for failing to pay his debt. The second story, concerning Booth's fruitless attempt to prosecute his servant Betty for stealing Amelia's gown, joins the themes of nakedness, pawning, and the law.¹⁰ The third story also involves the act of pawning. Amelia is called unexpectedly to Sergeant Atkinson's supposed deathbed, where he confesses that some years earlier he stole her jewel-framed portrait which, undeterred by sentiment, she takes and redeems for nine guineas. The final story, in which Booth meets and dines with Miss Matthews in order to bring their relation to an end, centers upon the conflicting rivalries of Booth and James for Amelia and Miss Matthews. Amelia, left alone to eat the "favorite meal" she has prepared for Booth, receives a letter addressed to him in which James berates him for dining with Miss Matthews and challenges him to a duel. Wracked with conflicting emotions, Amelia is not entirely displeased to receive a note from Booth that he has been arrested for debt.

Each of these sequences is necessary to the action of the story, except for the incident of Betty and the theft—though even that incident has considerable effect in the novel, both in reducing the Booths to their most destitute condition and in illustrating Fielding's notion about the tendency of vice to percolate downwards in society.¹¹ Betty's thievery does not lack probability, but most of the other major elements of the action in Book XI are neither anticipated nor probable. Booth's arrest for debt, however, though the reader sees it as unfair and may be aware that it is illegal, does follow an anticipated sequence that is almost relentless in its likelihood to reduce Booth to prison or worse.

In addition to their unexpected nature, the sequences I have summarized are further unbalanced because of their rapid

spacing and the intermingling of incidents. None of the four sequences takes place in the uninterrupted manner of my summary, and the reader is therefore unable to work out the consequences of any one sequence before the events of another confront him. Fielding seems deliberately to force his reader to comprehend a variety of events whose full significance cannot be immediately understood.

Fielding nonetheless seems to expect his readers to work their way through this disjunct material and to find in it significant patterns of meaning. It is often the role of the narrator to assist in that process. As Fielding suggests near the beginning of his final book, "there is no exercise of the mind of a sensible reader more pleasant than the tracing the small and almost imperceptible links in every chain of events by which all the great actions of the world are produced" (XII,i).¹² These small links are the perhaps overlooked events that make an apparently random sequence of events into a significant pattern. By pulling together the behavior of Booth, the motivation of James, and the role of Trent, the narrator in XII,i makes significant much of the apparently random action of Book XI.

But in addition to their role in solving Fielding's historical question (the question of how great events are produced), these subsidiary or hidden patterns are important because they have moral significance of their own and because they are related to larger moral themes. Thus, for example, the surprises in book XII that derive both from the pawnshop sequence and the reappearance of Robinson and that lead to the restoration of Amelia's fortune embody a variety of topics of importance in the novel: poverty and the moral power of compassion for the afflicted (especially for beauty in distress), the law and its injustice, the distinction to be made between legal and moral guilt, the manipulation of fortune, the resolution of the past through the actions of the present, the unreliability of the medical profession, and the uncertainty of penitence.

Notwithstanding the movement of such incidents toward larger thematic patterns, one possible explanation of the disjunctions of the novel's narrative is C. J. Rawson's contention

that they are absurd and remain irreducible to the level of explicable meaning by the reader and (especially) by Fielding's narrator. A crux of Rawson's position is his discussion of Fielding's description of Blear-eyed Moll, one of the Newgate inmates observed by Booth in I,iii and iv.¹³ But the basic contrasts of the passage—the contrast of Moll's one-eyed, posy, toothless, obese appearance to the orderly language used to describe it, and the further contrast of her appearance to the fact that she was "taken in the fact with a very pretty young fellow" and that "she was one of the merriest persons in the whole prison"—are important because they are so significant rather than so absurd. The whole passage is in the vein of sexual nausea perhaps more notably illustrated by Jack Bedford's description of Mrs. Sinclair's deathbed in *Clarissa*, as well as by Swift's dressing-room poems.¹⁴ Like its models the passage reverses the idealization of sexual beauty and love by showing sexual love associated with ugliness (here by literally reversing the usual dirty old man and pretty young girl). Moll's merriment is an extension of her one-eyed vision: wrecked by immoral love, she is unaware of both her immorality and her repulsiveness. In the unmerry world of the prison only those with similar vision can be jolly; but many such are present, "laughing, singing, and diverting themselves with various sports and gambols." As the other prisoners, happy or tragic, are described, the same pattern of appearance and reality, of developed and frustrated expectation is repeated. Indeed, the pattern is one of the novel's important satiric devices: if Justice Thrasher is emblematic of society's blind justice, blear-eyed Moll is emblematic of its one-eyed depravity. Rather than appearing as the absurd excrescences of a cosmic cruelty, the details of her description and of the entire Newgate scene illustrate the double focus of *Amelia's* narrative on significant individual scenes and on major thematic patterns.

Thus despite the problems it creates for the reader, Fielding's disjunctive and alienating technique has a major function in realizing the novel's thematic material. *Amelia* achieves a significant breadth and a variety of involvement by forcing the

reader to pay attention both to the meaning of significant scenes and to the meaning of larger patterns to which these scenes are related. The narrative structure of *Amelia* achieves a double focus by forcing the reader's attention to the isolated scene on one hand and to thematic generalizations on the other.

II

The problem of reading *Amelia* thus becomes one of identifying the larger issues which Fielding's alienating disjunctions ask us to recognize, for the movement of the novel's structure is not primarily narrative but satiric and thematic: Fielding is interested in exploring the problems of human behaviour and in analyzing the significance of human institutions in their corrupt state in society. Thus while building his complex narrative structure, calculated to move toward such generalizations, he concentrates primarily on two topics—sex and money—that have nearly ubiquitous relations to the various social institutions he depicts. Each topic has a double importance. Money is a root of evil in *Amelia*—both the source and instrument of corruption; but it is a necessary evil, and hence the prudent control of money is also a necessity. Booth's troubles with money in the novel begin in prison, where he is unable to pay his fee and must be assisted by Miss Matthews. To her he reveals that he has had to flee to London because his imprudent spending in the country has resulted in poverty. Booth's fiscal fall from the Paradise of his country pastoral is echoed by his sexual fall to Miss Matthews' seductions, and from that point in the novel the themes of financial and sexual responsibility are linked, particularly in the novel's treatment of the various sexual designs on Amelia.

These themes are not only important in themselves, they provide important distinctions to be made in looking at the novel's central characters. For Dr. Harrison the final, unforgiveable sin committed by Booth is gambling, and for this "he deserves no compassion" (XII,iii). Similarly, in the area of sexuality Fielding contrasts the injurious, corrupt, and destructive sexuality of James, Trent, and the Noble Lord to the less vicious but uncontrolled sexuality of Booth. Booth thus

stands for one kind of moral problem in the novel—that shared by his heroic predecessors, Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones—the lack of adequate control over the controllable aspects of his own life. In Booth's case this lack of control is not only the result of a youthful and heady personality; it is bolstered by the fact that his Mandevillian view of passion and control is too limited to provide a useful set of guiding principles.

But the moral framework of the novel is not limited to a consideration of particular ethical principles. Fielding is interested in exploring social institutions and in seeing them in terms of their identifying moral characteristics. He uses the narrative possibilities of the novel to explore the intersections of such institutional values with each other and with the principle of self-interest which he so consistently attacks. Two large, distinct, and dominant examples of such institutions and such analysis in the novel can be found in Fielding's treatments of the army and of the law.

Fielding's concern for the army as an institution was timely, given the reduction of the army following the Treaty of Aix la Chapelle in 1748.¹⁵ But Fielding is not much concerned with the particular social problems associated with the army. Instead, the army in *Amelia* embodies a substantial set of values that have important literary functions. The essential features of the military are those that derive from the potential test of the battlefield itself: the soldier's honor means a dependability in battle which any suspicion of personal cowardice would undercut, and the confidence required in the soldier's personal courage is extended to a mutual trust and confidence among officers and men and among officers at different ranks.

Once the novel moves from the military milieu of Booth's initial story, within which the relation among the military characters assumes its most positive meaning, the military life becomes problematic. In the peacetime of a reduced army and half-pay officers the military basis of a soldier's virtue is taken away, and the army becomes an institution like others, to be manipulated for private gain, for power, or for interest. The apparently noble ensign of Books X and XI, the veteran of Marlborough's campaigns, turns into the most despicable cheat

of all. Yet as Fielding presents him, he is not really a hateful character, for we have seen in Booth, and we learn from hints of the ensign's own story, that the life of a former soldier cannot be sustained in an honest way. The Marlborough ensign becomes a good example of how military merit is subsumed into the client-patron relationship that typifies the life of the peacetime army, and he exemplifies as well the role of poverty and ill-use in perpetuating that system. One is reminded of Ulysses of Horace's *Satire* II, 5: the meritorious hero has returned as fortune-hunter.

Fielding's treatment of the army contrasts the ideal characteristics of a meaningful institution to the real values of a corrupt society. The client-patron relationship that holds Booth in suspense for so long in the novel turns out itself to be primarily a cover for lechery, that of James as well as that of the Noble Lord. But against this patronage, and the grosser motives which it conceals or serves, one measures the real trust and loyalty, the real concern for honor, and the real love displayed by Booth, by Atkinson, and even by James himself in the scenes at Gibraltar.

One can trace similar relationships between institutional values and reality in the other professions with which *Amelia* is concerned. The most significant and elaborately developed of these is the law,¹⁶ beginning with the emblematic portrait of Justice Thrasher and moving through the various scenes in prison and the sponging-house, as well as through Harrison's theoretical reconciliation of prosecution and benevolence (IX,viii), and through Booth's unsuccessful attempt to prosecute his chambermaid, to the humane Justice of the last book, who allows the novel's plot to be resolved. Behind the fee-gauging keepers, the dishonest lawyers, and the unjust laws themselves are the real functions of the law to protect the innocent, to punish the guilty, to deter crime, and to restore the stolen. In the light of these real functions of the law the nature of its distortion becomes apparent.

Fielding makes similar though less elaborately developed points about the clergy (IX,viii), about physicians (V, deleted chapter), and about authors (VIII,v). But the main pattern

which Fielding finds in the breakdown of institutions is clear. The Booths—innocently prudent or imprudent—are victimized by institutions to which high moral significance ought to be attached, institutions so distorted by the play of self-interest in society that their very nature is reversed. The army, instead of being built on loyalty and courage, is based on patronage and money; the law preys upon the weak rather than protecting them.

The redemption of a society whose institutions are thus disordered by the egoism they have been forced to serve is not impossible: indeed, the intensity of Fielding's irony at such points as the Newgate scenes in I,iii derives from the fact that the evils described need never have happened. They are not the products of absurd chance but rather are the result of particular actions that should have been different. The ideal meaning of social institutions in the novel is clear, but the corruption of these institutions is clear also, as is the pernicious effect of that corruption. Fielding is pessimistic that the necessary changes to realize the ideal can ever take place. He does not sweeten the life of his novel when he asserts that human wrongs and failings rather than fortune are responsible for human misery, for the effect of these human evils on the individual is as repressive and irrational as are the effects of blind chance. But Fielding gains immeasurably as a satirist and a moral artist by his honest pessimism, for his rejection of Fortune forces the reader to look at himself and at his social role or his own motivation in order to assess blame for the evil of contemporary life.

Thus relevant as Fielding's treatment of social institutions may be to the movement of the novel's plot, his analysis often goes beyond the needs of plot alone: both plot and analysis point the reader to troubling questions about the nature and efficacy of social morality. Fielding is anxious to explore in some depth the social context in which the story of the Booths becomes significant. Hence his shifts in point of view, his interrupted and disjunct narrative development, his piling up of parallels that, if anything, tend to distract the reader from the progress of the action by forcing him to look backward rather than forward, his tendency to describe rather than to dramatize, and his refusal to

move inside his characters: all of which must be seen as part of Fielding's technique of alienation. He wants us to feel sympathy and benevolence for Amelia and her plight. He wants us to make at least tentative judgments on the moral weakness of Booth. But he also wants us to see the story of the Booths in the context of the social and moral issues it raises, and to that end he manipulates his material through a variety of devices that interrupt the movement of his story.

III

Unfortunately consideration of *Amelia* cannot stop with an exposition of its social analysis, for Fielding's narrator does not remain at the distance implied by his disjunctive and alienating narrative technique. At that distance his narrator's undeveloped character seems appropriate and acceptable, for he serves largely to facilitate the reader's grasp of issues that are carried by the novel's structure and the connections it generates, as well as by the novel's set pieces, its interpolated stories, its exempla, and its specific passages of social commentary. But the narrator also appeals to our sympathies, especially for Amelia, in ways which his distance from his material renders hard to take. When Thackeray's narrator of *Vanity Fair* calculates the price he would be willing to pay for a kiss from *his* Amelia (*Vanity Fair*, chapter 4), the embarrassment resulting from this obtrusive shift in narrative distance turns ironically on the narrator himself: he too is a vain sentimentalist in the world of *Vanity Fair*. But though Fielding's narrator is more often ironic than some of his critics are willing to allow, that irony is never self-directed, as it is in the case of Thackeray, and our similar embarrassment at his intrusive sentimentality is never resolved.¹⁷ Fielding's problem is that he seeks to present his material from two points of view—that of the ironic satirist and that of the victim or, still worse, of the victim's affectionate admirer.

Readers of *Amelia* are thus agreed that the novel's pathos does not work, both because of the distance problems it raises and because the novel lacks the psychological realization of character on which such sympathy depends. It is certainly not

inevitable and perhaps not necessary that a novelist capable of realizing a compelling analysis of social morality should have an equally compelling insight into individual psychology. Where both occur, as in *Middlemarch* or the novels of Balzac, the result is an achievement far beyond that of *Amelia*. Fielding's difficulty is that he tried both, and the question to be raised is not whether his pathos is successful but why he believed it to be important. The answer lies in the same thematic concerns as the social analysis with which, in its concrete realization, Fielding's sentiment so sharply conflicts.

Perhaps the most obvious function of the pathetic elements is to dramatize the effect of society's corruption on its victims. Peter LePage has shown that the novel's dominant prison image reinforces and in turn is reinforced by the claustrophobic effect of the plot, as Booth becomes more entangled by his personal and financial affairs.¹⁸ The prison dominance and the tone of moral suffocation are strongly reminiscent of *Measure for Measure*: Colonel James, a lesser, neoclassical version of Angelo, somewhat less obviously threatens Isabella-Amelia, whose moral protector—the Duke or Dr. Harrison—successfully steers her away from trouble. The ultimate moral threat in *Amelia*, though not one consistent with Booth's personality, is that Booth, like Claudio in Shakespeare's play or like Trent in the novel, will consent that virtue be prostituted in the interests of survival.¹⁹

Fielding seeks to make his situation universal: we meet a variety of people, from the ensign to Mrs. Bennet, who in one way or another have consented that such prostitution take place. Further, Fielding conjures with the classic literary emotion of fear, for almost anyone, even one as secure in wealth as Amelia seems to be at the beginning of the novel's chronological action, might suffer the catastrophes that lead to the Booths' central fight against poverty. In the context of this universality, and in relation to the satiric aspects of the plot, the novel's pathos has substantial thematic significance.

In addition to presenting the effect of corruption on its victims, the problematic pathos of *Amelia* dramatizes the personal response necessary to the problems caused by social

corruption. The limited redemption that takes place at the end of the novel does so on the level of the individual and the family. When the machinations of Amelia's sister are revealed, the family is restored to its proper position. When Booth is converted to benevolent Christianity, the individual is saved. Amelia's qualities of prudence and fortitude in the face of suffering, the quality of personal honesty that is dramatized by the various confessions of the novel, and the free-willed benevolence exemplified by Dr. Harrison and by the conversion of Booth are the only means by which the individual or family can transcend or escape a corrupt environment, for these moral qualities all deny the self-interest on which that corruption is built. Thus the novel's personal emphasis on the Booths is thematically necessary, for the alternative responses to the pessimistic picture of corrupt society that Fielding presents are the cynicism of the Jameses and the prostitution of the Trents. Intellectually, then, Fielding's view is consistent: from a self-interested society one cannot infer Christian principles but only Mandevillian ones. Christian principles must be taught by "eccentrics" like Dr. Harrison or by paragons like Amelia. In the repression born of social self-interest one cannot rely on one's own resources. The novel's near-approach to an unhappy ending shows how unreliable these can be.

Thus Fielding's attempts to win our tears over the plight of his heroine are unsuccessful because they do not derive from a considered presentation of the inner lives of his characters but derive instead from his need to show the effects of corruption on its victims and from his desire to demonstrate that the sympathies arising from human relationships and supported by Christian principles are the only possible responses to societal evil.

The sentimental in *Amelia* is part of a constellation of narrative and structural elements that point to the novel's dominant themes. This constellation poses a variety of reading problems, and hostile readings of *Amelia* often fail to solve these problems satisfactorily. The tightness of the opening books may tempt the reader to expect a linear progression emphasizing character development and plot, while the isolated incidents,

structural parallels, and didactic material actually point to a complexly realized analysis of society. Previous experience with Fielding's narrators inspires the hope that the intrusive narrator of *Amelia* will employ a similarly complicated and ironic rhetorical stance. But the ironies of *Amelia's* narrator are more subdued, and the rhetorical function of the narrator is more often limited to directing the reader's attention to the generalizations he must make about social and institutionalized evil.

But once the nature of the novel's demands on the reader are recognized and the centrality of its satiric purposes becomes clear, *Amelia* emerges as one of the most serious of eighteenth-century novels, ranking almost with *Clarissa* in the intensity of its social and moral analysis. Indeed, it is not until the nineteenth century, with such novels as *Bleak House* and *The Newcomes*, that we find the magnitude of scope and seriousness of purpose that *Amelia* provides. *Amelia* remains one of the most helpful sources to which one can turn for a concrete sense of eighteenth-century life: "no other novel provides such a wide panorama of London society or better conveys what it was like to live in London during the seventeen-fifties."²⁰

Thus *Amelia* is a significant achievement, despite the difficulties of its sentimentalism. It is a novel of ambitious scope, of thematic richness and complexity, of effective tensions, contrasts, and comparisons, as well as of frequent and significant allusions, including the often-noted comparisons to the *Aeneid*.²¹ Moreover, its individual excellences are intrinsically related to its general structure and thematic development, and that structure presents an unusually inclusive, unified, and convincing analysis of eighteenth-century society.

NOTES

¹Among the least soft-spoken of *Amelia's* admirers are John Middleton Murry, in *Unprofessional Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956), especially page 46, and George Sherburn, in "Fielding's *Amelia*: an Interpretation," *ELH*, 3 (1936), 1-14. A lively but questionable attack is that of J. Paul Hunter, *The Occasional Form: Henry Fielding and the Chains of Circumstance* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), pages 193-216.

- ²Anthony J. Hassell, "Amelia: Dramatic and Authorial Narrative," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 5 (1972), 225-233. But see also Robert Folkenflick, "Purpose and Narration in Fielding's *Amelia*," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 7 (1974), 168-174.
- ³Robert Alter, *Fielding and the Nature of the Novel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), pages 159-160. See also Andrew Wright, *Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), pages 105-121; and the response to Wright in Arthur Sherbo, *Studies in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Michigan State University Press, 1969), pages 85-103.
- ⁴Alter, pages 166-176; C. J. Rawson, *Henry Fielding and the Augustan Ideal under Stress* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pages 88-91. A plausible and sympathetic treatment of Fielding's sentiment, outside the scope of its discussion here, is Eric Rothstein, *Systems of Order and Inquiry in Later Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pages 204-206.
- ⁵Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "Fielding's *Amelia*: Private Virtue and Public Good," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 10 (1968), 37-55; Eustace Palmer, "Amelia and the Decline of Fielding's Art," *Essays in Criticism*, 21 (1971), 135-151.
- ⁶Alter, page 173.
- ⁷Booth's story establishes, among other things, the roles of Dr. Harrison and Sergeant Atkinson, as well as the image of Amelia as a possible sexual victim, the threat of dueling to avenge her, and the general theme of unrewarded merit.
- ⁸Wright, page 106.
- ⁹Centers of meaning are variously suggested by Maurice Johnson, *Fielding's Art of Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), pages 159-164, and by Peter V. LePage, "The Prison and Dark Beauty of *Amelia*," *Criticism*, 9 (1967), 337-354.
- ¹⁰The whole motif of dress is significant in *Amelia*, as it is in *Joseph Andrews*. Booth is stripped of his coat when he cannot pay the prison garnish; the masquerade represents the extreme of dress and disguise; and Betty's theft is the culmination of the process that reduced Amelia to her "naked virtue." With the money she gains from pawning her picture, she is able to redeem a "clean white gown," in which she appears with simple dignity and great effect at her husband's release from prison.
- ¹¹See *Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers* (1751), page 4. In *Covent-Garden Journal*, 27 (April 4, 1751), Fielding also discusses the problem of the poor imitating their so-called betters.
- ¹²Quotations are from the Henley edition of the *Works of Henry Fielding* (London: William Heineman, 1903). Further references to *Amelia* are parenthetically noted in the text, by book and chapter.
- ¹³Rawson, pages 76-83.
- ¹⁴Everyman's Library Edition, iv, 381. Belford compares the prostitutes to Virgil's Harpies. Moll's behavior also, especially in attacking the homosexual prisoner (I, iv), is particularly harpy-like.
- ¹⁵See Sir John Fortesque, "The Army," in *Johnson's England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), I, 75.
- ¹⁶The prison aspect of the law is detailed in Peter V. LePage, *op. cit.*. Leo Braudy discusses *Amelia's* analogy between public institutions and private affairs

in *Narrative Form in History and Fiction: Hume, Fielding, and Gibbon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pages 180-212.

- 17 At times Fielding's use of sentiment is far more crafty than his less sympathetic readers will allow. Thus Hunter (pages 202-203) cites, as an example of the novel's emotional cheapness, a passage from IV, 3 in which Amelia tries unsuccessfully to explain to her child the unhappiness of Booth's lot, despite the fact that Booth is good and despite the principle that goodness will lead to happiness. The narrator invites the reader to admire Amelia's concern for the religious education of her children. No doubt the invitation is sincere, but the reader is also well aware that the society that punishes Booth does not conform to Amelia's Christian principles. The narrator's omission of his crucial point is an instance of the ironic silence that sometimes makes response to sentiment complex.

¹⁸LePage, pages 337-347.

¹⁹Robert Folkenflick sees a particularly strong parallel with *Othello* that dramatizes the moral threat of the novel, *op. cit.*, pages 168-174; see also Rothstein, page 195.

²⁰John Butt, *Henry Fielding*; reprinted in *British Writers and their Work* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 6, 69.

²¹Maurice Johnson, pages 139-156; L.H. Powers, "The Influence of the *Aeneid* on Fielding's *Amelia*," *Modern Language Notes*, 71 (1956), 330-336.