

NARRATIVE AUTHORITY, CRITICAL COMPLICITY: THE CASE OF *JONATHAN WILD*

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The twentieth-century critical reception of Henry Fielding's *The History of the Life of the Late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great* has been largely dismissive. As John D. Baird writes:

Jonathan Wild is a difficult book. Those who warm to Fielding's lively presentation of mid-eighteenth-century life in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*—the "Roast Beef of Old England" school—are repelled by what they regard as a bleak thesis-novel. Those who enjoy Fielding's verbal irony in his most famous novels may find the radical ironies of *Jonathan Wild* too extreme for comfort. Authors of otherwise notable studies of Fielding's fiction find excuses for omitting *Jonathan Wild* from extended consideration, as being somehow outside the main line of development.¹

Fielding's satiric biography of the most notorious criminal of his generation, ironically presented as an example of heroism and greatness, has always bothered critics. The use of a twenty-year-old satiric parallel between gang leader Wild and de facto prime minister Robert Walpole is thought to be a tired joke. The work's mock-heroic structure, and its seemingly relentless elevation of a despicable individual, is held to be beneath Fielding's usual comic standards. The "savagely ironic note" struck from the beginning has been accused of "disturb[ing] or frighten[ing] many . . . readers."² Radical generic instability makes the work difficult to categorize and even to describe; at once political allegory, parodic biography, rogue narrative, and more, *Wild* is variously held to be a novel, a failed novel, a novel in the making, or a work that must be read not as a novel but as a satire.³ *Wild* is the only one of Fielding's fictions that he revised after publication, suggesting that he considered it to be worth his time. Yet a high percentage of Fielding critics seem motivated by its challenges to marginalize it or exclude it altogether—as not, or not yet, "'real' Fielding."⁴

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The most recent addition to the category of notable studies of Fielding's fiction that exclude *Wild* is a series of articles by John J. Richetti.⁵ Interested in representations of the social order and social difference in the novel, Richetti focuses on the ways that Fielding's narrative strategies function as a means of class-based social control. While Fielding has traditionally been celebrated as a master of the social panorama, Richetti argues that Fielding's comic strategies in fact allow only a "superficial . . . recognition of social difference." In particular, "the energetic resistance to the dominant culture [E. P.] Thompson finds in a plebeian eighteenth-century counter- or subculture is in effect missing or neutralized."⁶ Assumptions about the social order that conflict with Fielding's, though they may at some level be represented, are ultimately "contained" by his narrative structure: "neutralized by a powerfully implicit ideology that silently transcends politics."⁷ In arguing for the ultimate "containment" and "neutralizing" of competing ideologies in Fielding's fiction, Richetti's essays recall John Bender's *Imagining the Penitentiary*, which reads Fielding's narrative strategies as a tributary of modern civil control.⁸ In his "juridical and polemical contributions to the reformist movement," Fielding works to "classify and order behavior under supervision" (pp. 89, 148); in his novels, Fielding's "over-riding concern" is with "the deployment of narrative as an authoritative resource" (p. 139). Fielding may give temporary voice to socially subversive ideologies, but by framing them in his own world view, he ultimately defuses or contains them. In particular, Fielding's narrators are a source of "intensely supervising commentary"; events are "inseparable from [their] manner of . . . contextualizing them."⁹ Bender suggests that Fielding's techniques of narrative control grew increasingly sophisticated. Whereas in *Wild*, the innocent man is saved from the gallows by a "good magistrate," by the time that Fielding writes *Tom Jones*, the good magistrate has become the narrator, an omniscient, benevolent figure who inquires into "every minute circumstance." Fielding thus "subordinates the liminal randomness of patrician justice . . . to consistently structured narrative procedure" (p. 179). Most important, in so doing he tightens his control over the reader's moral and political responses.

What is at stake for our understanding of *Wild* if we accept these theories of narrative control in Fielding's fiction—the "subordination" and "neutralizing" of competing voices and sets of assumptions about the social order? How might attention to the microlevel of language and to the history of readers' experiences modify or challenge these claims?¹⁰ Of course, critics have always stressed Fielding's efforts to guide readers into specific ethical and political judgments. And now that his strategies have been linked with the repressive powers of the modern state, the story has acquired added drama. But there are other ways of conceptualizing the operations of power in Fielding's "juridical novels," and, as this work's critical history of disturbance

and avoidance suggests, there are certainly other ways of reading *Wild*. There have always been readers of Fielding's fiction who have come away with an impression not of the author's narrative authority, but rather of his own sense of the tenuousness of narrative control. At the same time, alongside what some critics have identified as Fielding's anxiety concerning reader response is his seemingly contradictory discomfort with the "operations of power." As Charles A. Knight suggests in his reading of *Joseph Andrews*, "at the moment when Fielding's narrative authority reflects the need for social control, his parodic discourses proclaim his distrust of the vehicles of control and of the motives of those who seek it."¹¹ In *Wild*, issues of control are complicated further by Fielding's criminally resistant subject matter and by his sometimes ambiguous handling of that subject matter. Anticipating Fielding's tenure as justice of the peace for Middlesex and Westminster, but coming closest of all his fictions to representing the London underclasses he would be confronted with as urban magistrate, the work's distinctive tone and satiric methods have been considered in bad taste and even as "disgusting."¹²

This essay links issues of narrative authority in *Wild* to a threatened social order, beginning from the assumption that "the urgency that governs [the assertion of authority] often derives from the threat to authority or even from its collapse."¹³ E. P. Thompson has claimed as a leading feature of this period in England "the enlargement of that sector of the economy which was independent of a subject relationship to the gentry."¹⁴ The eighteenth-century socioeconomic developments that Thompson outlines are an apt description of *Wild*'s double satiric focus: along with the "parasitism of the State at the top," Fielding critiques the "erosion of traditional relations by free labor and a monetary economy at the bottom."¹⁵ Fielding's satire on high political corruption is refracted through (very) low life, and while addressing his satire on high politics, critics have tended to overlook his concern with what we might call "low politics." Fielding's ironic hero is based on the historical son of a carpenter and a fruitseller—a member of the laboring classes who rose through free or independent labor (organized crime) to a position of real (though illicit) social power. In Fielding's version of the Wild biography, the activities of a (largely plebeian) criminal underclass become a figure for, as well as an example of, certain kinds of class-based social change.¹⁶ Among its many tasks, Fielding's fiction is a coming-to-grips with class conflicts and shifting class relations: at once a satire on high corruption and a critique of low movement.

But gentry-pleb relations in *Wild* have been overlooked, this essay suggests, because in this work Fielding stages class encounters at the level of language. Or rather, he stages them at the level of language use or sign, for "different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of the class struggle."¹⁷ It is no accident that Fielding describes the corruption

that he will expose in verbal terms: as a form of "bombast . . . mistaken for solid wit and eloquence."¹⁸ In the relatively genteel genre of the eighteenth-century novel (or something like it), Fielding communicates the threat of low groups' insubordination not so much through their actions, as through their use (or "mis-use") of language. Fielding shows remarkably little interest in depicting his underworld subjects' historical crimes; we don't so much see his criminal characters steal, cheat, murder and so on as we hear them *talk*. A 1763 reviewer was right in summing up this work as "little action, many reflections,"¹⁹ for in *Wild*, the level of language is "where the action's at." *Wild* is Fielding's most pointedly heteroglossic fiction; the narrative is virtually organized around the parodic quotation of competing social voices. Fielding's professed theme is "roguery." But he uses competing class-based voices to articulate that theme—to the point where one theme is classes on the move.

In his preface to *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* (1751), Fielding links the breakdown of traditional social relations to symbolic language use, suggesting that the decline of the use of the "Oath of Fealty" between lords and laborers contributed to the "Commonalty's" increased independence. He quotes Lord Coke, who claimed that "Prudent Antiquity did, for the more Solemnity and better Memory and Observation of that which is to be done, express Substances under Ceremonies," and he suggests that the decay of certain linguistic "Ceremonies" contributed to socioeconomic "Alterations," whereby the "Commonalty, by Degrees, shook off their Vassalage, and became more and more independent of[f] their Superiors."²⁰ In *Wild*, low characters' linguistic pretensions are a sign of their criminal nature and of a much larger social threat. Competing notions of correct language use become the territory of class confrontation: language use is a "transaction through which conflicts of ideology and identity are actively waged."²¹ This essay attends to the ideological implications of competing discourses and speech genres in *Wild*, arguing that in this text it is at the microlevel of language that "the rough-edged historicity of happenings"²² in Fielding's divided society registers most tellingly. While we can't get at unmediated plebeian voices anywhere in eighteenth-century fiction, we can get at the voices attributed to plebeian characters and the relationship between those voices and the author's discourse, and in this text competing discourses challenge one another rather than one discourse submitting to another's "controlling architectonics." In particular, the energetic resistance of a plebeian counter-culture is not "missing or neutralized" in *Wild*; indeed, there is a sense in which that resistance is this work's *raison d'être*.

Wild is a text in dialogue with its own making, incorporating not only a variety of literary genres, but also a multiplicity of quoted languages ranging from the poetic prose of the prayer book to criminal cant. In accordance with its mock-heroic structure, Fielding's parody of almost all levels of the

contemporary linguistic and generic hierarchy tends to be organized as a juxtaposition of "high" and "low." Incorporated high styles include rhetorical speech; incorporated high genres include classical exemplary biography and epic. Strict adherence to convention quickly becomes stylization to the point of parody, as when Fielding loads epic paraphernalia such as stock epithets, heroic similes, and supernatural machinery onto low characters such as Wild's mother, who, when pregnant with the hero, "dream[t] she was enjoyed in the night by the gods Mercury and Priapus."²³ Incorporated and displayed low or everyday styles and speech genres include proverbs, maxims, colloquialisms, clichés, puns, oaths, curses, insults, professional jargons, and national languages. Parodied low literary genres include criminal biography, sentimental drama, farce, travel narratives, and popular fiction of the sort most notably practiced by contemporary authors such as Penelope Aubin and Eliza Haywood. M. M. Bakhtin might well have been thinking of *Wild* when he described the English comic novel as "a comic-parodic re-processing of almost all the levels of literary language, both conversational and written, that were current at the time."²⁴

Fielding's "remarkably sharp ear for the cadences and vocabulary of the actual spoken language"²⁵ makes it tempting simply to list instances of quoted speech genres and dialects. But social languages, like social ranks, are meaningful only in relation to each other. The point in *Wild* is not the individual languages and layers of parody, but rather their total juxtaposition and conflict (and for our purposes, the relation of that conflict to narrative control). To understand the cumulative effect or "point" of the quoted languages, we need to imagine each discourse as "pregnant with the image of a speaking person": a person who is the "embodied representative" of a "real social group."²⁶ Fielding simultaneously incorporates underclass dialects, middle-class professional jargons, and elite high style, and the conflict between these competing class-based discourses is central to his theme as well as to his methods. *Wild*'s pompous narrator constantly translates the discourse of one speech community into that of another. His description of the hero's post-marital malaise, for instance, is a classic example of a hybrid construction: "When the boy Hymen had, with his lighted torch, driven the boy Cupid out of doors, that is to say, in common phrase, when the violence of Mr. Wild's passion (or rather appetite) for the chaste Laetitia began to abate. . . ." (p. 148). Parodic stylization is interrupted by the direct authorial word (language that embodies the semantic and axiological intentions of the author). When Newgate prison-keeper Mr. Snap arrests gang member Bob Bagshot, he is "obliged to introduce Mr. Bagshot into [Count la Ruse's] apartment, it being, as he said, the only chamber he had to lock up in" (p. 69). The narrator stresses the fact that Snap borrows, not coins, such low expressions by putting them in italics or quotation marks and disclaiming them with

phrases like "as he said." Familiar phrases signaling hybridization in Fielding include "in the vulgar tongue," "if I may use a coarse expression," "as the gentlemen of our age agree to call," "to wit," "namely," and "viz." (to name a few). As we shall see, the primary displayed low languages are the cant languages of London's criminal underworld. Fielding foregrounds the particular otherness of this discourse by providing footnotes on the cant terms that he quotes. "Priggism" is footnoted as "thievery," "prigs" as "thieves," and so on—with an additional note, "Terms used in the Cant Dictionary" (p. 53).

In claiming a special importance for Fielding's juxtaposition of competing languages in *Wild*, I recognize that this is to an extent customary of his style in general, and that in a sense, the translation of the discourse of one speech community into another to foreground their differences may be seen as the essence of the genre of mock-heroic. But in this criminal biography set at the heart of London's underworld in Newgate Prison, quoted high languages are put into the mouths not of relatively harmless parlor pretenders, but of the most threatening members of the urban underclass. It is not a matter of tradespeople adopting polite discourse, but rather of underclass characters doing so, and in so doing rejecting the structures of authority and modes of explanation of elites. *Wild* explores at length the ways in which language use can undermine, as well as enforce, existing structures of privilege and power. Fielding relentlessly parodies his low characters' quotation of genteel language, for in this work underclass adoption of polite discourse signals a deep, unresolved social threat. The appropriation by low characters of the speech forms and linguistic "Ceremonies" of the privileged is expressive of a socially subversive world view: a view that holds that "Ceremony," not "Substance," constitutes "the only external Difference between Man and Man."²⁷

In his important "Essay on Conversation," published alongside *Wild* in his 1743 *Miscellanies*, Fielding acknowledges language use as one of the primary forms through which our social relationships are manifested. He lays down "some of the chief . . . Rules for our Conduct" in "Conversation"—that is, verbal interaction between human beings. The first of his "Positions" is that polite forms of address "have in them no Substance." Phrases like "My Lord" and "His Grace" are rather politically necessary and socially expedient than in any sense intrinsic: "all mere Ceremonies exist in Form only, and have in them no Substance at all: but being imposed by the Laws of Custom, become essential to Good Breeding" (p. 127). Yet these same sociolinguistic "Ceremonies," "poor as they are, are of more Consequence than they at first appear." For "in Reality, [they] constitute the only external Difference between Man and Man. Thus, His Grace, Right Honourable . . . have, in a Philosophical Sense, no Meaning, yet are, perhaps, politically essential, and must be preserved" (p. 127). Verbal markers of rank and power are not natural referents signifying inherent worth, but rather arbitrary signifiers reproducing social hierarchies. Fielding's linguistic politics are those of a strategic essentialist. While he

recognizes the arbitrary nature of linguistic "Ceremonies," he also identifies them as crucial to the maintenance of the existing social order.

Yet precisely because polite linguistic ceremonies "have in them no Substance," they are dangerously open to appropriation ("corruption") by low groups. On the one hand in *Wild*, Fielding critiques the exploitative use of language to undergird power and privilege; on the other hand, he warns his genteel readers of the potential use of language to collapse rank. Fielding's underworld characters evince a radical disregard for what is posited as a beneficial (though artificial) stable relationship between social and linguistic hierarchies. Characters such as Count la Ruse recognize and exploit the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs: the fact that signs, like social ranks, are meaningful only in relation to each other. Fielding knows that the great use linguistic "Ceremony" as a form of conspicuous consumption or display, and as we will see, he satirizes them for these ceremonies' oppressive use. But when criminally upstart characters such as Wild use the same linguistic tools successfully enough to reap rewards normally reserved for the gentry and aristocracy, then the same mockable folly becomes a serious social threat.

One part of low characters' appropriation of high language is quoting genteel discourse; another part is disclaiming the low. When Wild and his gang sit down to cards, their effort at genteel sociability is disrupted when Bagshot proclaims, "'I thought I had been among gentlemen and men of honour, but d—n me, I find we have a pickpocket in the company.'" The narrator comments, "the scandalous sound of this word extremely alarmed the whole board" (p. 73). Fielding communicates the fact of a whole counter-culture's rejection of polite society's laws and codes not so much by depicting criminal characters committing acts of violence as by showing how these characters position themselves in relation to elite language and ideologies of language use. Low characters' adoption of high language is itself a threat and signals a larger conflict taking place in eighteenth-century society. Fielding's underworld characters do not obey elite property laws, and they do not obey elite laws of language use, either. When Count la Ruse is made prisoner in Mr. Snap's jail, yet continues to speak in "high" style, he is rejecting the identity assigned to him by those in power of "criminal." He, a low character, is setting himself up in opposition to dominant structures of authority—precisely by adopting the characteristic speech types of the great.²⁸ Fielding underlines the fact that his low characters' language is adopted by having them move in and out of high style. When Count la Ruse accuses Bagshot of robbing him, Wild warns, "I advise you to take care how you cast any such reflections on a man of Mr. Bagshot's nice honour." The Count forgets himself and swears, "'D—n his honour! . . . nor can I bear being robbed'" (p. 70). The pointed narration here ("quoth the enraged count") further underlines the juxtaposition of competing discourses. Moments later, La Ruse checks his "slip": "These

are foolish words, of course, which we learn a ridiculous habit of speaking" (p. 71).

Fielding's underworld characters use high language as an illicit social passport, yet there is a continuing need for the low languages they reject, especially in matters pertaining to their occupation. The fiction's primary parodied low languages, cant languages, in fact supply a vital communicative need. Cant languages are characteristic of what linguists call "anti-languages": a special vocabulary in areas central to the activities of a social group, activities which set it apart from the norm society (here, activities such as pick-pocketing or being hanged).²⁹ Fielding deliberately displays cant terms, foregrounding their oppositional nature. The particular terms he quotes indicate the division of labor among thieves (a "mill-ken" is a housebreaker, a "bridle-cull" a highwayman, and so on), coping strategies when confronted with the law ("rapping" translates as perjury), and the general condition of low life ("seedy" is translated as "poor"). While Fielding displays these terms to distance them, some of his quotations of cant terms suggest odd moments of potential identification between the debt-ridden author and his "seedy" characters.³⁰ In one instance, Wild objects to a practice that robs the playwright of his profits. La Ruse teaches him to attend the theater without paying, and he participates, but his views on his own actions are surely in agreement with those of Fielding the ex-dramatist: "This, however, did not suit Wild's temper, who called it a cheat. . . . He said it was a custom very much savouring of the sneaking-budge [shop-lifter] but neither so honourable nor ingenious" (p. 57).

Fielding is aware that there is more to these extreme examples of "dialect" than a practical need for a way of referring to subcultural activities indirectly: that an "anti-language" is not merely a special vocabulary, but also an oppositional ideology. The cant term for the gallows, "cheat," suggests a distinctly oppositional way of reading public hangings (the law as bully or thief rather than as bulwark of the social order). Whereas to those in power, public hangings represented the victory of authority over anarchy, to the victim of the hanging and indeed to many of the spectators, the gallows effectively "cheated" a human being of his or her life.³¹ The antagonistic sociocultural meanings of cant languages embody one form of plebeian resistance that is, in fact, present in Fielding's fiction in mediated form. E. P. Thompson has suggested that there was no coherent underclass opposition in eighteenth-century England, "but rather a set of gentry-pleb relationships manifest in widespread behavior such as . . . 'ironic attitudes towards the Law.'"³² Cant languages clearly exemplify those "ironic attitudes towards the Law." Wild and his gang have their own argot involving a systematic negation, not only of the semantics, but also of the axiological belief system, of the norm society.

In part due to *Wild*'s multiple satiric purposes, critics have tended to overlook the voice that Fielding gives to oppositional underclass groups. The text communicates the diverse threats of class mobility, yet it also provides an astonishingly generous platform for the expression of socially subversive views. In his study of Fielding's representation of the underclasses, Richetti suggests that we must necessarily focus on Fielding's depictions of servants, for in only a few instances can we observe "an actuality in which there lurk other beings, the under class from which the eighteenth-century servant class was in fact recruited." Richetti admits that upon rare occasions, Fielding represents "characters who are in one way or another temporarily outside stabilizing master-servant relationships," and that in such instances, "great . . . difficulty for comic appropriation occurs."³³ If Richetti were to consider *Wild* alongside Fielding's other fictions, he would find members of the lower orders who are decidedly outside traditional "master-servant relationships." It throws things for a twist that while historically the son of a joiner, Fielding's Wild "does not serve masters; he is the master."³⁴ When Fielding not only gives voice to socially subversive ideologies, but also has his ironic narrator take those ideologies as his own and indeed as the "common view," an additional layer of tension results. The social world that *Wild*'s underworld characters inhabit is indeed "felt in the narrative as separate and threatening, to some extent unresolved and unprocessed."³⁵

At one level Fielding's satire is a critique of high political corruption within a fundamentally sound social order. At another level, it is intimately concerned with those members of the underclasses for whom that same "fundamentally sound" social order is a "cheat." Bender claims that even the long subversive speeches in *Wild* are "invaded by the narrator's tone and subordinated to Fielding's satiric intention" (p. 152). But while Fielding certainly refracts his own intentions through the language of his underworld characters, it is an ideological gesture to assume that by framing the subversive views that he quotes in his own discourse, Fielding persuasively "subordinates" or "contains" them. Ultimately, this kind of interpretation depends on the reader—a fact that Fielding recognized and satirized anxiously in *Wild*. Wild's notorious speech on the social function of the "low, mean, useful part of mankind" (p. 61) ostensibly argues for the naturalness of elite exploitation of plebeian labor, yet through the inversion demanded by the work's ironic structure, becomes a powerful critique of what Thompson calls the eighteenth century's particularly "predatory phase of agrarian and commercial capitalism."³⁶ Significantly, Wild's polemic is a defensive one—prompted by a violent disagreement with one of his "hands." This fictional confrontation between gang leader and "worker" is a satiric embodiment of the erosion of traditional structures of authority and consensual politics in eighteenth-century England. Wild's worker returns from a robbing mission, only to learn

that his master plans to claim the bulk of the profits. He protests, "is not the labourer worthy of his hire?" (p. 60). This sets Wild off on his defense of capitalist exploitation, arguing that "the low, mean, useful part of mankind are born slaves to the wills of their superiors, and are indeed as much their property as their cattle" (p. 61). As one who routinely co-opts his "hand's" labor, Wild holds that humanity should be "considered under two grand divisions, those that use their own hands and those who employ the hands of others" (p. 78). Passages like this one, when read ironically, may have contributed to Lord Byron's famous reading of *Wild* as proto-Jacobin manifesto ("The inequality of conditions, and the littleness of the great, were never set forth in stronger terms").³⁷ At such moments, Fielding's liberatory impulse challenges his conservative politics, and "concepts of . . . social distinctions" are indeed "roughly handled."³⁸ Democratic sentiments are expressed and unsubordinated; radical ideas are not "assimilated" but arguably advertised in print. With respect to socially subversive world views in *Wild*, we cannot easily say "here they are" or, somehow, "here they aren't."

For Bender and Richetti, Fielding's relationship with his reader is one of largely unilateral "control." Bender reads the workings of power in Fielding's fiction as anticipating later eighteenth-century developments in techniques of sociojuridicial surveillance. Fielding's narrative authority becomes increasingly successful because it becomes increasingly invisible; the successfully controlling author keeps himself hidden behind the scenes. Richetti too constructs Fielding's relationship with his reader as one of string-pulling manipulation. Fielding's own representation of that relationship as one of negotiation or exchange is "transparently superficial," since the author is in control of all the strings, and the reader is willingly played upon.³⁹ While these critical models of readerly passivity make it easier to construct an authoritative Fielding, other critics have stressed Fielding's own awareness that narrative authority is only posited, not possessed. The delighted reader of Fielding is not necessarily the duped reader; the reader can be well entertained by Fielding without being won over to his personal views. In *Wild*, Fielding actually dramatizes the role of the reader in the construction of textual meaning. He depicts his ironic hero as a "bad reader," reading the life of Alexander the Great not as a negative example of immoral behavior but as a conduct manual. Reading the ancients "wrong" gives Wild an "undeniable testimony of the great antiquity" of thievery (p. 47). The nature of the reading process ensures that the same text that effectively promotes social control can undermine social control as well—can "produce unexpected cultural and social effects."⁴⁰ Modern scholars may find Byron's "radical" reading of *Wild* unacceptable. The fact remains, however, that this is how one dedicated reader of eighteenth-century literature appropriated Fielding's text. Byron's reading of Fielding as closet revolutionary is extreme evidence that texts "can be opened to new cultural addresses and functions."⁴¹

Richetti suggests that one way Fielding neutralizes any real threat stemming from the representation of socially subversive ideologies in his fiction is by depicting his plebeian characters as linguistic buffoons. According to this model, Wild's phonetic letter to his "MOST DEIVINE AND ADWHORABLE" Laetitia should "reveal . . . in its clumsiness an unredeemable class location."⁴² At such moments, Fielding certainly makes a point about language use as marker of class location, but that point, one might object, is not necessarily the same for all readers. The "grammatical or orthographic awkwardness" of Fielding's plebeian characters can be read differently by different readers—as a sign of those characters' lack of access to class-based educational institutions, for instance, rather than as a sign of their inherent "lowness" or stupidity. Bob Bagshot makes this very point about the relationship between discursive style and privilege when he protests his superior gang member's exploitation. When Wild seeks to silence him by means of his rhetorical skills, Bagshot interrupts, "D—n me . . . though I can't talk as well as you, by G— you shall not make a fool of me" (p. 61).

Fielding's awareness of possibilities for readerly resistance or misappropriation is evident not only throughout *Wild*, but also in his revisions of the work before he died. His addition of a new set of instructions for the reader—the aggressive "Advertisement from the Publisher to the Reader" (1754)—suggests a special anxiety that readers were not reading this fiction "right." Fielding's intensified efforts to police errant readers may be linked to his increasing familiarity with the London criminal underclass. As magistrate for Westminster and Middlesex after 1749, he encountered daily his city's pockets of resistant "readers"—of laws, of the criminal justice system, of the meanings of hangings. Fielding's awareness of "bad readers"—whether the criminally resistant reader, who reads structures of authority differently than those in power, or the unresisting reader who "devours a story with greedy ears" (p. 149)—may help us to understand what many critics have seen as the underlying tentativeness or uncertainty of his fiction—alongside his compensatory control-mongering.

At the same time, while acknowledging Fielding's "will to power," critics have also recognized his "distrust of the vehicles of control and of the motives of those who seek it."⁴³ *Wild* is after all on one level a satire on the new breed of statesman-politician, and more generally, on rhetorical manipulation and the exploitative use of language to abet power and privilege. The relation between social rank and language use in Fielding's day cannot be overemphasized; high style was the cornerstone of what Thompson calls the "theatre of the great."⁴⁴ Fielding's Wild is a grand master of the verbal masquerade—an adept at stylization, able to quote whole discourses of an alien ideology at will. (When he visits Heartfree in Newgate he "discourse[s] on the badness of the world" [p. 136] to gain the good man's trust.) Wild tries to do with language what the great do every day: adopt a hegemonic high style in order to enhance

his mystique and power. Fielding critiques Wild's inappropriate linguistic ambitions, but he also critiques high style itself when used as an oppressive tool of power. It is no accident that Wild most commonly slips into high style when attempting to exact deference from his underworld inferiors. As we have seen, when Bagshot confronts Wild concerning the distribution of profits within the gang economy, he is temporarily silenced by the great man's rhetorical manipulation. But he then suddenly finds his tongue once more, and, as I have noted, counters in his own low style, "What is all this stuff to me? . . . though I can't talk as well as you, by G— you shall not make a fool of me" (p. 61). As so often in *Wild*, competing modes of language use are juxtaposed to make a point about class relations. Faced with this plebeian protest against his exploitative labor practices, Wild immediately drops his verbal mask and addresses his "hand" in a different manner: "Your money or your blood" (p. 62). Through Wild, his underworld proto-capitalist, Fielding demonstrates high style as a temporary polite stand-in for brute force. Whenever Wild cannot persuade his workers, he has them hanged.

Fielding's distrust of the vehicles of control is also apparent in his effort to alert readers to his own manipulations. *Wild* satirizes, not emulates, puppet-master controllers: great men who work invisibly "behind the scenes." Well-known setpieces critique the invisible workings of power—particularly by the language-wielding "great." If, as Bender suggests, the successful agent of narrative control in Fielding's view is one who keeps himself hidden behind the scenes, how are we to interpret the setpiece in which Fielding depicts puppet-master-controllers as evil oppressors? Fielding suggests that a "great man . . . dances and moves everything . . . but he keeps himself wisely out of sight: for, should he once appear, the whole motion would be at an end" (p. 154). He then draws an explicit parallel between the skills of the puppet-master and the skills of the fictional narrator (or at least, the author of "romances"). When Wild is later committed to Newgate, Fielding shows him using his rhetorical skills to win the position of head inmate. When Wild then sets out to plunder those who elected him, and they protest, a "grave man" lectures them on their foolishness (pp. 174-75). Fielding suggests that the willing victims of rhetorical tyranny are guilty along with the rhetoricians, but he ultimately sides with the verbally oppressed. By making his Wild a rhetorician, he alerts readers to the seductions of verbal manipulation—and simultaneously trains them to resist such seductions. It does seem likely, as Bender suggests, that Fielding worked to polish his strategies of narrative control between *Wild* (1743) and *Amelia* (1751). But in *Wild*, narrative authority is only one project competing with its opposite. Fielding's desire to impose an authoritative world view is at odds with his own liberatory impulse—and neither cancels the other out.

Stanley Fish has suggested that it is "the structure of the reader's experience rather than any structures available on the page that should be the

object of [the critic's] description."⁴⁵ Generalizing about readers' experiences is risky, but *Wild*'s long history of critical discomfort suggests that for many readers, the experience of reading this text is not one of satisfying "narrative authority." In attempting to understand why *Wild* has "disturbed or frightened many of its readers," critics have pointed to several sources of ambiguity, including problems inherent in the work's mock-heroic structure. The constant false elevation of "low" subject matter—here, members of the criminal underclasses—risks producing a reverse effect, "suggesting . . . that the low subject matter is not wholly undeserving of elevation."⁴⁶ Critics have also pointed to the lack of *any* unproblematically positive character—including the immoral ironic narrator. Whereas in Fielding's critically favored fictions, the narrator is a benevolent guide, in *Wild* the narrator's moral guidance is labor-intensive. While the narrator's judgments are meant to be read ironically, readers "who devour a story with greedy ears" do not always do the work of inversion. Furthermore, requiring readers to interpret moral and political issues through the lens of an immoral guide itself gives rise to a complicated effect. In addition to the unappealing narrator, Fielding's presentation of his allegorical "good man" has long been recognized as a source of readerly discomfort.⁴⁷ When Mr. Heartfree is about to be hanged, and Mrs. Heartfree runs to her beloved husband "with a look all wild, staring, and frantic," the narrator comments, "our good-natured reader will be rather inclined to wish this miserable couple had, by dying in each other's arms, put a final period to their woes" (p. 179). Fielding keeps us from getting caught up in the Heartfree's story. He forces us to stay alert, not give in to his own skills as puppet-master narrator.

Notoriously unnerving, too, is Fielding's handling in this work of the issue of divine providence. When Heartfree sits in his cell fighting off despair, some aspects of his monologic self-sermons—his efforts to convince himself that his "failing of a transitory imperfect reward here is a most certain argument of . . . obtaining one . . . hereafter" (p. 151)—are so unpersuasive that it seems the author is parodying not only his good man's propensity towards didacticism, but also his reliance on supernatural forces. Of one such sermon at which Wild is present, the narrator observes, "the former part of this speech occasioned much yawning in our hero" (p. 152). Fielding's willingness to parody authoritative discourses may be liberating to many readers, but in a narrative about the rise of the criminal underworld it can also be unsettling. Moments like this one, which represent another kind of hermeneutic challenge in this work, no doubt contributed to Digeon's judgment of it as "shock[ing]," "imprudent," "terrify[ing]" and even "dangerous" (pp. 127-28). Richetti has suggested that Fielding's narrative strategies "evoke a world where God is in his heaven because the narrator as a surrogate Providence is in charge."⁴⁸ At the end of *Wild*, many readers are left with a different sense: the sense that in modern urban society, omniscient Providence might have a little too much

business on its hands. The predatory forces that nearly caused Fielding's good man to be hanged have not been persuasively "contained."

A more subtle type of hermeneutic challenge occurs at moments when the reader is called upon to step outside the normal pattern of interpretation—even to exercise conflicting judgments. It is true that the "sarcasm of Fielding's narrator focuses meaning and guides interpretation," but it is not true to state that "Fielding's story never slips from the control of his heavily ironic narrator."⁴⁹ Critics have tended to flatten out *Wild*'s irony, describing it as "mechanical" or "relentless." But irony is a double-voiced discourse, wherein the same words temporarily serve two different ideologies, and even in so "single-minded" a text as this one is supposed by some critics to be, the relationship between the voices is not static. For the most part, we are meant to invert the narrator's statements to come at Fielding's meaning. But the relationship between the direct intention of the narrator and the refracted intention of the author is not one of consistent "inversion." Far from the unrelenting irony some critics have ascribed to him in this text, Fielding has a tendency to slip out of his "exact reversal" irony at key moments. At several points, the narrator's rigid positioning in relation to his subject collapses; the "normal" relationship between the world views of narrator and author slips. If Fielding's irony "steadily requires us to understand the opposite of apparent denotation" (Bender, p. 151), how are we to respond to statements such as the following?

When I consider whole nations rooted out only to bring tears into the eyes of a GREAT MAN, not indeed because he hath extirpated so many, but because he had no more nations to extirpate, then truly am I inclined to wish that Nature had spared us this her MASTERPIECE, and that no GREAT MAN had ever been born into the world. (P. 78)⁵⁰

By this point we have become accustomed to turning everything the narrator says "upside down," yet here the pattern of interpretation in which we have been trained does not work. Points of discursive collapse such as this one, when the previously distinct world views of Fielding and his narrator appear to fuse (when $A = -A$), paradoxically cause us to question how we have interpreted what has come before—and point to an instability in this work's "narrative authority." Fielding routinely undercuts his own emotional outbursts, and his ironic narrator here goes on to satirize his own "slip." But the narrator's stance at such moments is oddly compromised. The dominant experience of reading *Wild*, and the impression the reader is left with, is one of unrelieved tension rather than of satisfying control and easy pleasure.

Finally, for now, the fact that Fielding's *Wild* remains to the end "brutal, self-absorbed, and hideously clear about his own purposes"⁵¹ is also of paramount importance. The subjects of contemporary criminal lives were typically represented as going to the gallows humbled and penitent; the last

gasps of the ideally repentant criminal stood for the shutting-down of the threat to society that the offender represents. Fielding pointedly rejects this literary convention and sociojuridicial trope, depicting Wild as having retained his own way of seeing things until the end. Fielding does not pretend, even at this crucial moment, to have resolved the conflict between the ideologies of offender and offended. He does not "civilize" Wild. Some readers might object that because he was dealing with a historical figure, Fielding had no choice but to deny the reader the satisfaction of a repentant Wild. But Fielding certainly had no qualms about taking liberties with the historical record. Whereas the historical Wild went to the gallows emaciated and inarticulate from laudanum, Fielding's Wild is not weakened in any way, but rather criminally dexterous, articulate, and resistant to the end. Indeed, Fielding's Wild commits two crimes even as the noose tightens around his neck. And, significantly for the verbal strategies I have argued for as central to this work, Wild's last crime is not (as most critics assume) his theft of the ordinary's bottle-screw out of his pocket. His last crime is a verbal, socio-ideological one: the "offence of prophane and common swearing and cursing" and/or "taking God's name in vain in common discourse."⁵² Until his last breath, Wild's antagonistic language use embodies his resistant world view. His sociolinguistic "crimes" are themselves acts of resistance to structures of authority—and here, signal the still-uncontained threat to the social order that he represents.

Wild is hanged, and thus ends the life of a particular rogue—but that is precisely what Fielding told us this work is not about. The antagonistic world view that Wild represents is no more "contained" by the noose than the competing ideologies represented by the cacophony of voices in Fielding's fiction are "neutralized" or "absorbed" by an "assimilating narrational presence." In terms of combating crime and/or threatening world views, the hanging of a "particular rogue"—or structuring of a novel—means nothing at all.

At the heart of this work remains a tension so unnerving that it has raised questions in critics' minds as to Fielding's wisdom in giving an anti-society a voice. Fielding's contemporaries certainly recognized this effect. As we have seen, a 1763 reviewer praised *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, but rejected *Wild* as in "bad taste": "We do not like to follow for two volumes a hero of roguish and wicked actions who ends on the gallows."⁵³ Several twentieth-century critics have also questioned Fielding's willingness to represent at length, even to "play with," criminal ideologies or world views. Digeon attributes "the undeniably uncomfortable sensation which may still come over the modern reader" of *Wild* to

the character of the book, which is at bottom purely anarchical. It probes deep down into our souls and there, like Swift, stirs up certain beliefs which we neither dare nor desire to disturb. It is an intellectual pastime, a lawyer's game, wherein the concepts of honour, virtue and social

distinctions are roughly handled. Judged as dangerous by those who believe in "necessary prejudices", it may also shock those who accept them without believing in them, or who deem it imprudent to destroy them. Like Pascal's, his doubt sometimes leads us into depths which terrify the ordinary swimmer. (Pp. 127-28)

It is still rather shocking to read parts of *Wild*, a work in which Fielding represents at length ideologies that are distinctly not that of the dominant order but in fact diametrically opposed to it (and pointedly not resolved or "fully controlled as a comic analogue for the domestic and personal").⁵⁴ The evidence of decades of puzzled and even hostile critics suggests that many readers do not lay down this fiction with a sense that Fielding has neutralized subversive ideologies. By the end of the text, Fielding's *Wild* has been too much laughed at to be a disturbing threat in himself. But the class-based social needs, greeds, and expectations for which he stands still remain.

The strain on *Wild*'s comic structure hints at the strain on the contemporary machinery of criminal justice; the challenges to narrative authority in Fielding's text figure the challenges to traditional authority in his society at large. Fielding's withholding of diverse kinds of readerly satisfaction communicates the tensions of his time; depending on one's view of eighteenth-century England, his most "anarchic" fiction may be not a failure, but a unique kind of success. Critics are right to be made uncomfortable by this text; that is an appropriate response. But the impulse to force it into rigid critical paradigms, to excommunicate it as "an entirely simple handling of one idea—or at most two,"⁵⁵ or to ignore it altogether must be resisted. Instead of constructing paradigms to neutralize this text's conflicts, we would learn more from listening to the conflicts. For Fielding's narrative of the London criminal underclass, while not in fact "a remarkable exception to all the rest of his known work,"⁵⁶ does defeat all easy generalizations about him: the man, the magistrate, and the authority-asserting author.

At the same time, we need to reconsider the ways that we trace class relations in early modern literary texts. Theorists of democracy and public discourse have suggested that with respect to the dynamics of a plebeian culture, only a "stereoscopic view . . . reveals how a mechanism of exclusion that locks out and represses calls forth counter-effects that cannot be neutralized."⁵⁷ This text enacts what it enacts—the "historicity of happenings" in a society increasingly forced to admit to and cope with conflicting interests—at the microlevel of language. Attention to "the fine points of Fielding's technique" therefore becomes crucial to a certain kind of critical project. Furthermore, hybridization is a linguistic effect which foregrounds, not "neutralizes," conflict and struggle; "points where exchange takes place do not cancel out opposing forces but interrelate, intermix, and so alter them."⁵⁸ Subversive ideas in *Wild* are pressed into the service of satire, but the very recording of those ideas, even parodically or indirectly, moves social debate

to a new place. The quotation of ideas invites readers to "embrace them in his [or her] assessment."⁵⁹ (As we have seen in the case of Byron, it can also trigger unexpected effects.) *Wild's* textual fault-lines figure ideological contradictions, and linguistic warfare figures ideological warfare in Fielding's divided society. No author can ever "cancel out opposing forces." But in his unique fiction about the London criminal underclasses, Henry Fielding can and does take them as his theme.

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NOTES

Special thanks to Vincent Carretta, Sharon Groves, Kathryn King, Susan Lanser, and Eleanor Shevlin for commenting on an earlier version of this essay.

- 1 Baird, "Criminal Elements: Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*," in *Rough Justice: Essays on Crime in Literature*, ed. M. L. Friedland (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 76. For examples of "notable studies of Fielding's fiction" that exclude *Wild*, see Robert Alter, *Fielding and the Nature of the Novel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), J. Paul Hunter, *Occasional Form: Henry Fielding and the Chains of Circumstance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press 1975), Sheldon Sacks, *Fielding and the Shape of Belief: A Study of Henry Fielding* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1964), and the essays by John J. Richetti cited below.
- 2 Pat Rogers, *Henry Fielding: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1979), p. 137; Aurelien Digeon, *The Novels of Fielding* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1925), p. 104. Rogers sums up *Wild* as "a fierce, single-minded work" (p. 137).
- 3 On *Wild* as "a study of genre in transition," see Alexander Pettit, "What the Drama Does in Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 6 (1994): 153-68. For the argument that *Wild* must be read as a satire rather than as a novel, see Robert H. Hopkins, "Language and Comic Play in Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*," *Criticism* 8 (1966): 213-28, 215. Margaret Anne Doody reads Fielding's satiric fictions as both/and rather than as either/or, observing that due to the imposition of anachronistic criteria for novel-ness, "the 'canon' . . . has deleted the Lucianic Henry Fielding almost entirely, so we can have the realist magistrate who writes the authoritative *Tom Jones*" (*The True Story of the Novel* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1996], p. 4).
- 4 Digeon, p. 125.
- 5 See Richetti, "Representing an Under Class: Servants and Proletarians in Fielding and Smollett," in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, ed. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 84-98. "The Old Order and the New Novel of the Mid-Eighteenth Century: Narrative Authority in Fielding and Smollett," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 2 (1990): 183-96, "Class Struggle Without Class: Novelists and Magistrates," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 32 (1991): 203-18, and "The Public Sphere and the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Social Criticism and Narrative Enactment," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 16 (1992): 114-29.

- 6 Richetti, "Representing an Under Class," pp. 90, 88.
- 7 Richetti, "The Old Order and the New Novel," p. 184.
- 8 Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 177.
- 9 Bender as summarized in Richetti, "The Old Order and the New Novel," p. 191.
- 10 Bender acknowledges that "the fine points of Fielding's fictional technique" are not his chief concern (p. 139).
- 11 Knight, "Joseph Andrews and the Failure of Authority," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 4 (1992): 109-24, 123.
- 12 Unsigned review of the French translation of *Jonathan Wild*, *L'Année littéraire* (1763), 2:26-27; rpt. in *Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Ronald Paulson and Thomas Lockwood (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969), p. 435.
- 13 Knight, p. 110. This point is evident in eighteenth-century England's increasingly repressive penal code. Extreme penalties for minor property crimes stemmed from the ease, not difficulty, of committing such crimes. Of hanging as punishment for pick-pocketing, Blackstone writes: "This severity (for a most severe law it certainly is) seems to be owing to the ease with which such offenses are committed, and the difficulty of guarding against them: besides that it is an infringement of property" (*Commentaries* 4:241).
- 14 Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," *Journal of Social History* 7 (1974): 382-405, 385. See also Thompson's "Eighteenth-century English Society: Class Struggle without Class?" *Social History* 3 (1978): 133-66.
- 15 Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," p. 387. Michael McKeon also reads *Wild* in terms of class relations, but he focuses on the middling characters, the Heartfreeds, and does not touch upon issues of plebeian representation (*The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987], pp. 383-94).
- 16 On the inevitable overlap of "underclass" and "underworld" in eighteenth-century England, see Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991).
- 17 V. N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929), trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973), p. 23.
- 18 Fielding, Preface to the *Miscellanies* (1743), p. 33.
- 19 Unsigned French review, rpt. in Paulson and Lockwood, eds., p. 435.
- 20 Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers and Related Writings*, ed. Malvin R. Zirker (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1988), p. 69.
- 21 Roger Fowler, *Literature as Social Discourse: The Practice of Linguistic Criticism* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1981), p. 150.

- 22 This is William Beatty Warner's phrase in "Social Power and the Eighteenth-Century Novel: Foucault and Transparent Literary History," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 3 (1991): 185-203, 195. Warner's essay critiques 1980s Foucauldian accounts of the novel, observing that the "analysis according to power . . . rounds out the rough-edged historicity of happenings. It does not attend to the microlevel of actual behaviour in any time or place. Instead it abstracts and summarizes."
- 23 Fielding, *Jonathan Wild*, ed. David Nokes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), pp. 44-45. All further references are to this edition.
- 24 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981), p. 301.
- 25 Claude Rawson, *Order from Confusion Sprung: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Literature from Swift to Cowper* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985), p. 284.
- 26 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, p. 411.
- 27 Fielding, "An Essay on Conversation," *Miscellanies by Henry Fielding, Esq.* (1743), vol. 1, ed. Henry Knight Miller (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Univ. Press), p. 127.
- 28 Fielding never indicates whether Count la Ruse is a "real" count (that is, one who, within the realm of the fiction, is allowed to use the title) or a "ruse" count, as his name implies. If we are to understand the count as a "real" count, then Fielding's point about the actual incongruity of titles, language use, and real worth may be even more subversive than I am suggesting.
- 29 See for instance M. A. K. Halliday, "Anti-languages," *Language as Social Semiotic* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), pp. 164-82.
- 30 On Fielding's unenviable economic circumstances during this period of his life, see Martin C. Battestin, *Henry Fielding: A Life* (London: Routledge, 1989), esp. pp. 264-373.
- 31 Fielding also discusses multiple ways of reading hangings in *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers*. pp. 167-72.
- 32 Thompson, "Class Struggle without Class," p. 151, qtd. in Richetti, "Representing an Under Class," p. 87.
- 33 Richetti, "Representing an Under Class," p. 86.
- 34 Ronald Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), p. 73.
- 35 Richetti, "The Old Order and the New Novel," p. 194.
- 36 Thompson, "Class Struggle without Class," p. 139. Wild declares: "The ploughman, the shepherd, the weaver, the builder, and the soldier, work not for themselves but others; they are contented with a poor pittance [the labourer's hire], and permit us, the GREAT, to enjoy the fruits of their labours" (p. 61).
- 37 Byron wrote: "I have lately been reading Fielding over again. They talk of Radicalism, Jacobinism, etc., in England (I am told), but they should turn over the pages of 'Jonathan Wild the Great' . . . [Fielding's] contempt for Conquerors and the like is such, that, had

he lived now, he would have been denounced in 'the Courier' as the grand Mouth-piece and Factionary of the revolutionists. And yet I never recollect to have heard this turn of Fielding's mind noticed, though it is obvious in every page" ("Detached Thoughts," no. 116 [1821], in vol. 5 of Byron's *Works*, ed. R. E. Prothero [London, 1901], p. 465).

- 38 Digeon, p. 128.
- 39 Richetti, "The Public Sphere and the Eighteenth-Century Novel," p. 120.
- 40 Warner, p. 203.
- 41 Warner, p. 203. For another example of Fielding's recognition of the role of the reader or listener in shaping a story, see Mrs. Heartfree's narration of her adventures in book 4, chapters 7-11. The way that Mrs. Heartfree tells her tale is directly affected by audience response. Mrs. Heartfree is a self-conscious narrator who chooses her words for maximum effect. She repeatedly stresses her danger, and especially her attractiveness to men, until the "symptoms of utmost disquietude in her husband's countenance" (p. 193) force her to reassure him that she is returned to him virtue intact. The relationship between narrator and audience here is one of co-dependency rather than of unilateral control. In her awareness of the goal-directedness of her tale, Mrs. Heartfree is like Fielding: anticipating our responses, accounting for questionable occurrences, providing footnotes for our greater understanding, and determining style in response to our implicit rejoinders.
- 42 Richetti, "Representing an Under Class," p. 85.
- 43 Knight, p. 123.
- 44 "Patrician Society, Plebian Culture," p. 390.
- 45 Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1980), p. 152.
- 46 Digeon, p. 104; Baird, p. 91.
- 47 Particularly important discussions of the Heartfree's as ambiguous characters include Allan Wendt, "The Moral Allegory of *Jonathan Wild*," *ELH* 24 (1957): 306-20, Claude Rawson, *Henry Fielding and the Augustan Ideal under Stress* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 228-59, and McKeon, pp. 389-94.
- 48 Richetti, "The Old Order and the New Novel," p. 189.
- 49 Bender, pp. 152, 151.
- 50 For additional examples see the sentences beginning "And, should I speak in the language of a man" (p. 176) and "Indeed while greatness consists in power" (p. 218).
- 51 Rogers, p. 137.
- 52 See Blackstone, *Commentaries* 4:59; and see 19 Geo. II. c. 21.
- 53 Unsigned French review, rpt. in Paulson and Lockwood, eds., p. 435.
- 54 Richetti, "The Old Order and the New Novel," p. 194.

- 55 Andrew Wright, *Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1965), p. 45.
- 56 Digeon, p. 104.
- 57 See for instance Jürgen Habermas, "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," trans. Thomas Burger, in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 421-61, pp. 427.
- 58 Theodore B. Leinwand, "Negotiation and the New Historicism," *PMLA* 105 (1990): 477-90, 480, paraphrasing Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1986).
- 59 Ronald Paulson, Introduction to *Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Paulson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1962), p. 8.