Fielding on Walpole: A Study of Henry Fielding's Major Political Satires

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FIELDING ON WALPOLE: A STUDY OF
HENRY FIELDING'S MAJOR
POLITICAL SATIRES

by
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LIFE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There have always been politicians; likewise, there have always been political satirists. In no period was political satire a more flourishing art than in the years from 1660 through the end of the eighteenth century. In England, Dryden, Swift, Pope, Gay, and Fielding each devoted a large share of his enormous talents to political writings.

The purpose of this work is to study Henry Fielding's satires on Sir Robert Walpole, for Walpole was the primary target of Fielding's political writings. The progression from the early to the later political plays, and from these to Jonathan Wild, indicates much about the development of Fielding's thought. Early in his career, when he was a struggling young playwright and law student, Fielding was concerned in a general way with certain problems in eighteenth-century English society; he was particularly disturbed by the belief that true merit is often unrewarded in this world. Closely related to this problem was the abuse of men's talents by the selfish and the greedy; thus, in The Author's Farce, Colley and Theophilus Cibber are shown mangling the works of talented playwrights and then presenting
these plays to the public as their own; in the same play, the owner of a Grub Street bookstore is revealed profiting from the works of the miserable hacks he employs.

In addition to these problems, Fielding saw everywhere the corruption and abuse of social institutions designed for man's protection and happiness. In such early comedies as Love in Several Masques, The Temple Beau, and The Lottery, members of the middle and upper classes view marriage as an institution designed for financial profit; these people are abusing and corrupting an essentially beneficial social institution. In Rape Upon Rape (The Coffee-House Politician), Justice Squeezum is using his office to obtain money from persons who are falsely arrested by his henchmen but who are unable to prove themselves innocent of the outrageous crimes with which he charges them. Justice Worthy, a respectable, honest justice of the peace, laments that "golden sands too often clog the wheels of justice, and obstruct her course: the very riches, which were the greatest evidence of his villainy, have too often declared the guilty innocent; and gold hath been found to cut a halter surer than the sharpest steel." In Worthy's confrontation with the crooked Squeezum, Fielding's concern for the corruption of laws for personal aggrandizement is made clear:

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1Henry Fielding, "Rape Upon Rape; or, The Justice Caught in His Own Trap," The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, Esq., With an Essay on the Life, Genius and Achievement of the Author, by William Ernest Henley, LL.D. (New York, 1902), IX, 145-46. (This edition will hereafter be referred to as Works.)
SQUEEZUM. I hope, brother, you will show me extraordinary justice; and I assure you, should any affair of yours come before me, my partiality shall lean on your side.

WORTHY. Partiality, sir! I hope no cause of mine ever will require it. I assure you I shall do the strictest justice; I believe you will not need more.

SQUEEZUM. Sir, my case needs no more; but I think it incumbent on us all to discountenance any prosecution of ourselves on any account whatsoever.

WORTHY. To discountenance it by the innocence of our lives is indeed laudable, but no farther. It is a cursed law which exempts the maker or the executor of it from its penalty.

SQUEEZUM. Truly, brother Worthy, I think the makers of laws, and the executors of them, should be free of them; as authors and actors are free of the playhouse.

WORTHY. You are ludicrous, Mr. Squeezum. But let me tell you he is the greatest of villains, who hath the impudence to hold the sword of justice while he deserves its edge.2

In Fielding's later political plays, and in Jonathan Wild, one person is the focus of criticism for engaging in corruption, for not rewarding merit but subservience, for abusing the powers of political office—Sir Robert Walpole. In Fielding's plays from Pasquin through Eurydice Miss'd, all the aspects of Fielding's contempt for Walpole are made clear. Finally, in his great political novel, Jonathan Wild, Fielding culminates his attacks on the corruption of Walpole's administration, while he also considers the general problem of the abuse of mankind by all corrupt leaders who use either the office of monarch or of elected official for personal gain and not for the public's welfare.

In a study of Fielding's political satire, there are three areas which require a brief, preliminary discussion: 1) Politics

2Ibid., 147.
and the stage in the early eighteenth century; 2) The ethical question of greatness and goodness; 3) Fielding's view of the purpose of satire.

The literature, and especially the drama, of the early eighteenth century is conspicuously concerned with political argument, either in denunciation and name-calling or in glorification of some political ideology.³

Both the Drury Lane Theatre and Lincoln's Inn Fields were involved in party rivalry. The managers of Drury Lane, Colley Cibber and Richard Steele, ostentatiously displayed their loyalty to the House of Hanover and the Whig party. They also attempted to spread the belief that John Rich, manager of the rival theatre, was sympathetic to the Tories.⁴

As the years passed, the name-calling campaign continued--Drury Lane loudly proclaimed loyalty to King George, while Lincoln's Inn Fields protested against the introduction of politics into the drama, "but by innuendo giving from time to time indication of something less than enthusiasm for the reigning monarch."⁵

The distinctions between Whigs and Tories gradually became blurred; politics were based on those in power and those out of power. Those in power, after 1721, were the Walpole Whigs.

⁴Ibid., 376.
⁵Ibid., 391.
the faction with which Drury Lane was identified. By the end of the decade, John Rich had committed himself to supporting the Opposition.

One of the first plays of political interest in the eighteenth century was Joseph Addison's *Cato*, which was first produced at Drury Lane in April, 1713. After the production of the play, many pamphlets appeared which discussed its alleged political allegory. The Whigs interpreted the hero-martyr Cato as their leader, the Duke of Marlborough. The Tory writers' allegory cast Marlborough as Caesar, a tyrant who wished to retain his office for life. Many years later Colley Cibber avowed that *Cato* was a "Whig" play and that the Tories had misinterpreted it to serve their own selfish ends.

Three years after the first production of *Cato*, in 1716, there began the practice of an annual revival of Nicholas Rowe's tragedy, *Tamerlane*; the production was usually acted on November 5th, the date on which William III first landed in England. Rowe's play was called a "Whig" play because Tamerlane was intended to represent William III and Bajazet, the tyrant, Louis XIV. Since the annual presentation of this play began one year after the Jacobite rebellion of 1715, the intention may have been

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to remind the audience of the close association between the Jacobites and the French.

The growing public interest in both the theatre and politics led to the production of more and more plays with political overtones. Some plays merely adopted a title suggesting political content to capture public interest. For example, in 1720 John Rich presented Benjamin Griffin's comedy *Whig and Tory*. This is a rather ordinary romantic comedy about two lovers who wish to marry; their marriage plans are complicated by the fact that one's father is a Whig, the other's a Tory. Politics merely provides a frame of reference for the comedy, but the political title was used to gain a larger audience.

Political allusions in plays continued through the 1720's. Only when Walpole was firmly established in power, and when the Opposition to him began to crystallize, did the political satirists have a stationary target for their barbs. Thus Gay's ballad operas and Fielding's political plays climax a tradition of political drama that had been developing since the Restoration.

Fielding, then, was writing in an established, if unperfected, tradition of political drama. His subject matter was closely related to an important ethical question of the eighteenth century— the conflict of greatness and goodness.
Fielding the playwright, journalist and poet was much concerned with the greatness of popular morality. The early works are filled with references to it. .. Greatness is the basic and moving trait of a number of characters in the plays. Indeed, the great man, as politician, conqueror, or rogue, finds more prominence in Fielding's early works than in the works of any other writer of the time. Goodness receives not so much direct attention, but enough to make it a topic of almost equal importance. 7

In Jonathan Wild, Fielding says that greatness consists of bringing all manner of mischief on mankind and goodness in removing it from them. This idea of greatness as an essentially vicious force is closely related to Thomas Hobbes' conception of natural man:

Both are moved primarily by an inordinate self-love, which expresses itself in excessive ambition, and in aggression unrestrained by compassion for fellow beings or concern for social good. Neither of them is satisfied with the gains of a limited conquest; their lust for power "ceaseth only in death." There is a difference in that the natural man is the normal occurrence in a pre-societal state, whereas the great man is a prodigious occurrence in a state of civilization. This difference does not, however, alter the fact of their spiritual kinship.

The consideration of greatness became a commonplace in the popular literature of morality. The portrayal of greatness in


8 Ibid., 60-61.
these works is the same as that of Fielding. In both the moral literature and in Fielding's writings, greatness is presented as a destructive principle operating in individuals to the detriment of all men.  

In the popular moral literature the great man was presented as a politician, statesman, courtier, tyrant, conqueror, or rogue. The writers frequently drew examples of such men from history; the two "classical" examples were Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, while the two modern examples were the great conquerors Charles XII of Sweden and Louis XIV of France.  

Opposed to greatness is the quality of goodness, benevolence, or good nature. "Good Nature," said Fielding, "is that benevolent and amiable Temper of Mind which disposes us to feel the Misfortunes and enjoy the Happiness of others; and consequently pushes us on to promote the latter, and prevent the former; and that without any abstract Contemplation on the Beauty of Virtue, and without the Allurement or Terrors of Religion.  

Goodness, for Fielding, was an active force which removed the destruction and harm of greatness from human society. On a social level, goodness was called "Publick Spirit." This virtue

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9 Ibid., 70.  
10 Ibid., 49.  
was defined by Edward Bentham as a "settled and reasonable principle of Benevolence to, or hearty concern for the welfare of human society." 12

In his political satires, Fielding never presents a finished portrait of the good man as he does of the great man in Jonathan Wild. In his early works the concern is with the disease rather than with the cure. 13

The two contemporary traditions in which Fielding wrote were those of political drama and the controversy on greatness and goodness. The form in which his most effective early work was cast is satire.

In The Champion of January 3, 1739/40, Fielding wrote:

"[W]hen wit hath been used, like that of Addison or Steele, to propagate virtue and morality; when, like that of Swift, to expose vice and folly; it is then only, that these become commendable, and truly worthy of our praise and admiration." 14 Fielding clearly regarded satire as an effective tool of the good man in his fight to eliminate vice, while his view of the purpose of the

12 Irwin, 56.


14 The Champion (January 3, 1739/40), Works, XV, 136.
Satirist was in agreement with Swift's statement:

There are two Ends that Men propose in writing Satyr, one of them less Noble than the other, as regarding nothing further than personal Satisfaction, and Pleasure of the Writer, but without any View towards Personal Malice; the other is a Publick Spirit, prompting Men of Genius and Virtue, to mend the World as far as they are able. And as both these Ends are innocent, so the latter is highly commendable. With Regard to the former, I demand whether I have not as good a Title to laugh, as Men have to be ridiculous, and to expose Vice, as another hath to be vicious.15

Satire, then, implies a positive standard or ideal. The work of the satirist is to place the actual behavior of man next to the standards which he says are his guides. The frequently shocking contrast is expected to awaken the reader. "Satire is intended to hurt and sting its readers into self-knowledge and amendment and claims to be born in a mood of bitter moral indignation."16 Thus Fielding's irony is intended as "orthodox and corrective"; its aim is to rid society of "deviations from a healthy sensible social morality."17

According to Fielding's view of satire, the writer should satirize only what is capable of being corrected; he should never

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17 Humphreys, 12.
attack an entire class or profession but only the culpable members. Fielding subscribed to the view expressed by Joseph Addison in *Spectator* No. 34x, "That Vice and Folly ought to be attacked wherever they could be met with, and especially when they were placed in high and conspicuous Stations of Life." "In this last is the resolution of the apparent discrepancy between theory and practice, a resolution which made it possible to reconcile the professions of the age that the individual should not be attacked with the practice of attacking, for example, Walpole. An individual's prominence released the satirist from his obligation to avoid personal satire."\(^{18}\) As Swift said: "And although some Things are too serious, solemn, or sacred to be turned into Ridicule, yet the Abuses of them are certainly not, since it is allowed that Corruption in Religion, Politics, and Law, may be proper Topicks for this Kind of Satyr."\(^{19}\)

Fielding summarized his satirical purpose in a statement in *The Champion*:

> How useful, and indeed how necessary this bench [Fielding's mock court] must be, will not be doubted by any who consider that our laws are not sufficient to restrain or correct half the enormities which spring up in this


\(^{19}\) Swift, 263.
fruitful soil. The man who murders, robs, or ravishes, is indeed punished with death. But there are invaders and destroyers of our lives and fortunes, and of the persons and honor of our women, whom no laws in being can any way come at.

Nor would it be enough that those greater crimes should be punished, the covetous, the prodigal, the ambitious, the voluptuous, the bully, the vain, the hypocrite, the flatterer, the slanderer, call aloud for the champion's vengeance. In short, whatever is wicked, hateful, absurd, or ridiculous, must be exposed and punished before this nation is brought to that height of purity and good manners to which I wish to see it exalted.20

CHAPTER II

THE AGE OF WALPOLE

The early years of the eighteenth century in England have been appropriately named "The Age of Walpole." In those years the power of a political office was dependent on the stature and abilities of the man who occupied the office. Through his own manipulations of the English political system, Robert Walpole molded the office of prime minister into a position of tremendous power. Walpole has been credited with creating cabinet government and with bringing dynastic stability to England by insuring the Hanoverian succession. He has also been accused of maintaining himself in office for twenty years by the worst forms of bribery and corruption and of countenancing, and even promoting, the worst social conditions in England's history.

On May 25, 1698, Walpole became heir to his family's estates by the death of his brother Edward. In November, 1700, he acquired the estates upon his father's death; there were nine manors in Norfolk, one manor in Suffolk, and various outlying
lands with rent rolls of 2,169 pounds per year.¹

Walpole was first elected to Parliament from the borough of Castle Rising in January, 1701. "This seat he transferred to his uncle Horatio upon the election of the first Parliament of Queen Anne in July, 1702. He himself was returned on July 23, 1702, for the borough of King's Lynn, for which he sat during the rest of his career in the House of Commons."²

Two early friends figured prominently in Walpole's political career; the first was Charles Townshend, his father's ward, Walpole's classmate at Eton, and later his brother-in-law. The second, the person whose influence dominated Walpole's early political fortunes, was Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough.

The early government under Queen Anne was based on the Churchill interest, as directed by the Duke of Marlborough, his wife Sarah, and Sidney Godolphin. When this group alienated the Tories, they had to draw support from the Whigs. Walpole had three qualities that made him desirable as a political ally: 1) his intimacy with the family group; 2) his industry and talent; 3) his possession of the two family pocket boroughs of Castle Rising and King's Lynn.³

²Ibid., 637.
³Ibid., 638.
With the Churchill family in power, Walpole's political fortunes rose. On June 28, 1705, he was appointed to membership on the council to Prince George of Denmark, lord high admiral of England. Three years later Marlborough appointed him secretary at war.

In 1709 and 1710, owing to the controversy surrounding Dr. Sacheverell, Walpole's political career very nearly ended.

Sir Samuel Garrard, the tory Lord Mayor of London, invited Dr. Henry Sacheverell to preach before him at St. Paul's on 5 November 1709. The Fifth of November sermons were a yearly event at which distinguished clerics were expected to discourse on the evils of popery. Sacheverell had already won a reputation as the boldest orator amongst the High-Church party, a man in whom an undertow of hysteria gave a remarkable effectiveness to his eloquence. To choose such a cleric for such an occasion amounted to deliberate provocation. Dr. Sacheverell did not disappoint the Lord Mayor. After a few perfunctory phrases on the iniquity of popery in general and the Gunpowder Plot in particular, he warmed to his theme. He turned his attention to the present state of the Church whose 'Holy Communion had been rent and divided by factions and schismatical imposters, her pure Doctrines corrupted and defiled, her primitive worship and discipline profaned and abused . . . This promising beginning led on to a thorough castigation of the government, with a particularly vicious jibe at Godolphin, for its tolerant attitude to occasional conformity and to dissenters' schools. 5

As a result of this sermon, Sacheverell had to face an

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4 November 5th was the date on which William III landed in England to assume the Crown vacated by James II.

impeachment trial before the House of Commons. The ministry employed their ablest men as the parliamentary managers of the trial; events went so poorly for the government, however, that they brought Walpole in as another manager in February, 1710. Public interest in the trial was enormous, and public support was for Dr. Sacheverell and against the ministry. Sacheverell was found guilty by a majority of seventeen; Walpole wrote to a friend that "I think they had as good as acquitted him." The ministry had hoped for a severe sentence, but parliament only ordered Sacheverell to be forbidden to preach for three years and his sermon was to be burnt by the common hangman.

The Tories took care to keep popular enthusiasm for Sacheverell alive; they even claimed that none of the managers of the impeachment would be returned to Parliament. In the general election of 1710 the Whigs received an unparalleled defeat. For the first and only time Walpole contested the election in the county of Norfolk. In the October 11th election there, he was at the bottom of the poll with 2,397 votes--800 behind the two winning candidates. He had secured his position by having himself elected to represent the family pocket borough of King's Lynn.

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6 Ibid., p. 150.  
7 Ibid.  
8 Leadam, 639.
Also in 1710, Walpole was appointed treasurer of the navy through the intercession of the Duchess of Marlborough, he was permitted to retain his post as secretary at war. The influence of the Marlboroughs was, however, on the decline, and through the spring and summer of 1710, most of their appointees and supporters were dismissed. In April the Lord Chamberlain, the Marquis of Kent, was replaced by a supporter of Robert Harley. Shortly afterwards both Sidney Godolphin and the Earl of Sunderland were dismissed. Finally, on September 28th, George Granville was given Walpole's post as secretary at war.

Not long after his dismissal, Walpole was faced with the further disgrace of a trial for corruption:

It was alleged that he had given two contracts for forage to certain contractors on condition that they reserved a share of the profits for a friend of his, or alternately paid this "sleeping partner" £500 on each contract to keep out. They preferred to follow the latter course and sent the money in the one case to Robert Mann and in the other directly to Walpole who handed it to Mann. Walpole was no more guilty than most of his detractors, but his powers of criticism had already awakened opposition. 9

After a trial before the House of Commons, Walpole was found guilty "of a high breach of trust and notorious corruption" by a vote of 205 to 148. His expulsion from the House of Commons was carried by a majority of 22, and his committal to the Tower.

As he languished in his comfortable quarters in the Tower, Walpole was again elected to the seat from King's Lynn. On March 6th, however, the House of Commons declared that he was ineligible for the existing parliament and that the election was void. Until July 8th, Walpole remained in the Tower where he was visited by all the Whig leaders. He passed his time there by composing a pamphlet in his own defence, "The Case of Mr. Walpole, in a Letter from a Tory Member of Parliament to His Friend in the Country." 11

On August 8th, Parliament was dissolved, and August 31st Walpole was again returned for King's Lynn and took his seat in Parliament once again.

The following year, 1714, was a year of change, for George I came to the throne and the Whigs came to power.

Queen Anne died on August 1st. The Act of Settlement, passed on the death of Anne's surviving child in 1700, explicitly debarred James II and his sons from succession so long as they remained Catholics. The succession was settled in favor of James I's granddaughter, the Electress Sophia of Hanover and her son George Lewis, the reigning elector.

Despite the Act of Settlement, the political leaders of

10 Leadam, 640. 11 Ibid.
both parties were fearful that civil war might erupt. The strong sentiment for restoration of the Stuarts finally culminated in rebellion in 1715, but by that time the Hanoverians were in firm possession of the throne. Ultimately, the English people rejected James Edward Stuart not for what he was but for what he represented. "His close contact with the hated enemy, the French, his very Catholic piety (which did not, incidentally, prevent his maintaining a Protestant chapel for his mistress), and, above all, the Stuart political tradition with its long record of turmoil" alienated the English people.12

George I set out from Hanover for England in mid-September, 1714. Between Anne's death and his arrival, England was governed by twenty-five Lord-Justices, most of whom were Whigs. One of their most important actions was the dismissal of Lord Bolingbroke from his position as Secretary of State.

The first ministry under George I was designed "to secure the support of the Whig nobles and the moderate Tories as well as that of the wealthy merchants and the City of London."13 The results of the 1715 general election showed that public opinion supported this Whig ministry headed by James, Earl Stanhope and Charles, Viscount Townshend.

12 Green, 78.  
13 Ibid., 80.
As Townshend's political fortunes rose, so did Walpole's. In 1714 he was appointed Paymaster General of the Forces, and in 1715 he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer.

As Townshend's fortunes fell, Walpole felt obliged by personal loyalty to follow his friend into political exile. Townshend's fall from power was occasioned partly by foreign policy and partly by the filial antagonism so common to the Hanoverians.

At the end of 1716, George I became convinced that Townshend's foreign policy was not in the best interests of Hanover; he therefore appointed Townshend to the relatively obscure post of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Walpole continued to hold office while Townshend was in Dublin.

The next year George I made one of his many trips to Hanover. Against his wishes, he was persuaded to name the Prince of Wales regent. "The King suspected that his son might abuse his position and was further alarmed by what he learned of his son's activities in England. The Prince, it appeared, had made a short triumphant progress concluding with a visit to Tunbridge Wells, where he visited the Chapel, took a turn in the walks, tasted the waters and gave his hand to several to kiss." 14 These attempts by the Prince of Wales to cultivate popular support enraged George I

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14 Ibid., 87.
and were certainly a factor in Townshend's dismissal.

When Townshend was dismissed from office, Walpole also resigned. Contemporary accounts of the resignation scene indicate that the King was very unhappy about losing Walpole's services:

On the occasion of Walpole's handing back the seals of office . . . George I passed them back to him no less than ten times in an attempt to stay his resignation. Horace Walpole, who records the incident, adds that "the heat, flame, and agitation, with the water standing in his eyes, affected everybody in the room; and 'tis sayd that they that went into the closet immediately found the King no less disordered." 15

Both Walpole and Townshend were back in office by 1721.

The Jacobite rebellion of 1715, although it was quickly suppressed, gave the ministry an excuse to postpone the general election scheduled for 1718. They did this by the Septennial Act which provided that the existing parliament and all future parliaments should have a maximum duration of seven years.

At the time of Townshend's dismissal and of the Septennial Act, Walpole was leader of the Whig opposition in the House of Commons. In 1719 he had occasion to call on all his political skills to defeat the Peerage Bill.

Stanhope, the first minister at this time, hoped to insure Whig control over the House of Lords, which he considered a potential channel of royal opposition to the ministry. He therefore

15 Ibid., 109.
introduced the Peerage Bill which "provided that the House of Lords, except for six new creations, should be limited to its existing number."16 The government's excuse for this bill was that the creation of a large number of new peers, as in 1712, served only to upset the constitutional balance.

Walpole denounced the Peerage Bill as a design to destroy the fundamental constitutional balance of the Crown, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons. In his speech against the bill, Walpole said that "the strongest argument against the bill is, that it will not only be a discouragement to virtue and merit, but would endanger our excellent constitution; for as there is a due balance, and consequently subvert the whole constitution, by causing one of the three powers, which are now dependent on each other, to preponderate in the scale. The crown is dependent upon the commons by the power of granting money; the commons are dependent on the crown by the power of dissolution: The lords will now be made independent of both."17 The Peerage Bill was defeated by 92 votes.

This defeat was the occasion for a reconciliation in the

16 Ibid., 89.
Whig party. The Prince of Wales was grudgingly reconciled with his father George I, and Walpole was reconciled with the Whig ministers. The Prince of Wales never quite forgave Walpole for this move, for the Prince believed that Walpole effected the reconciliation so that he could obtain a post in the ministry.

The tranquillity resulting from this reconciliation of factions was but temporary. In the immediate future was the event that brought the downfall of Stanhope's ministry and cast Walpole in the role of savior of the national economy— the South Sea Bubble.

The origin of the South Sea Company, in 1711, was due to the efforts of Robert Harley to gain the support of the commercial classes. The Company agreed to take over £9,000,000 of the national debt in return for a monopoly on trade with South America. By 1719 the South Sea Company had capital of £11,000,000 and an established reputation with the commercial public.

The scheme, which, it was hoped, would increase the Company's reputation as well as enrich the country and the directors, was designed to incorporate the national debt, then £51,000,000 in the Company's own capital, to pay off £7,000,000 of this at once and to receive from the government a gradually reduced interest on the rest which would reach ground-level at four per cent in 1727.\(^\text{18}\)

Although this plan was not inherently dishonest, Walpole

\(^\text{18}\)Green, 101-02.
foresaw that it was financially unsound. There was certain to be an inflation in the price of the Company's stock which would serve to unsettle the entire stock market. However, public sentiment in favor of the measure was so great that these economic consequences were ignored.

Men of all classes and financial conditions began to buy shares in the South Sea Company. (Walpole, who had warned against the plan, bought shares, sold them at the right moment, and made a fortune.) The shares rose from 150% in January, 1720, to 1,000% in August. The result of this inflation was the growth of hundreds of companies with plans for making money on the most improbable ventures. "There were companies to encourage the 'growth of raw silk' in England, to develop woollen goods, to make sail cloth, to drain bogs in Ireland, to breed horses, to make starch, to smelt iron with pit-coal, to get gold from sea-water, to trade in hair for wig-making, to import diamonds and to furnish funerals in every part of Britain, as well as hundreds of other schemes for manufacturing or developing land."^{19}

Throughout June and July the market remained stable, but the rivalry of the South Sea Company and the new companies to which its success gave rise finally caused the plan's downfall.

On August 18th, the directors of the South Sea Company applied for a writ of *scire facias* against four of these rival companies. The South Sea Company wished to undermine public confidence in the other companies by showing their shaky legal foundations; the directors of the South Sea Company either forgot or chose to ignore the fact that this action would cause a general fall in the stock market which would affect all companies. Such a decline occurred at once. Also, "the same persons, who speculated in these new companies, were holders of South Sea stock; and through their losses in the former, they were compelled to sell part of what they owned in the latter."\(^{20}\) On Monday, September 19th, South Sea stock opened at 450; one week later it reached the low of 180.

Hundreds of men were financially destroyed in the crash. One of the victims wrote, "The Directors have Brought themselves into Bankruptcy for being cunning artfull knaves, I am come into the same state for being a very silly fool."\(^{21}\)

A financial disaster of such proportions was bound to affect the ministry which had been so closely associated with the plan. Stanhope, the only member of the ministry untouched by the scandal, died in February, 1721, and Sunderland, who had originally

favored the scheme, resigned.

From the public's viewpoint only one man could save the country from total chaos—Robert Walpole. In December of 1720, he had proposed a measure which restored public credit. In April, 1721, Walpole was appointed First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, the positions he occupied until his fall from power in 1742.

Walpole's policy, through over twenty years in office, may be summarized in two words—peace and prosperity. Through the Sinking Fund, which he established, and through dexterous management of the national debt, Walpole sought to create a climate favorable to economic expansion. A condition that Walpole considered absolutely essential to economic prosperity was that England avoid entanglement in foreign wars.

Walpole's career from 1721 to 1742 may best be viewed in the five major crises with which he had to deal: 1) the death of George I and the accession of George II (1727); 2) the Excise Bill (1733); 3) the death of Queen Caroline (1737); 4) the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739); 5) the Opposition (1726-42).

Lord Chesterfield described George I as "an honest, dull, German gentleman, as unfit as unwilling to act the part of a king,
which is to shine and oppress."\(^{22}\) Despite this pallid public image, the private life of George I, especially in his relations with his son the Prince of Wales, was very stormy. His reaction to the Prince's "progress" through the kingdom in 1717 has already been noted. In November of the same year a child was born to the Prince and Princess of Wales. The King insisted that the Duke of Newcastle should be godfather. Since the Prince could not overrule his father, he shook his fist at the Duke and shouted, "Rascal, I will find you out." The startled Duke heard the sentence as "I will fight you," and thought he was to be involved in a duel with the heir to the throne. George I, enraged at his son's behavior, banished him from St. James Palace. The Prince then purchased Leicester House which became a gathering place of the Opposition.

Although Walpole effected a public reconciliation between the King and the Prince, the two never outgrew their passionate hatred of one another. When the Prince of Wales became George II, he was determined to rid the government of his father's adherents; foremost among these, of course, was Robert Walpole. "The new king at first proposed to commit the treasury to Sir Spencer

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Compton, an amiable nonentity. But, finding Compton unable without Walpole's help to draw up the speech from the throne or make provision for the new civil list, and also influenced by his remarkably able wife, Queen Caroline, George had wisely committed the government once more to Walpole." 23

The first crisis Walpole weathered successfully, with the aid of Queen Caroline. In the second crisis, the Excise Bill, he was not so fortunate.

The revenue of the British government depended upon two types of tax—direct and indirect. The principal direct taxes were those levied on land and houses; Walpole hoped that by gradually eliminating the land tax, he would gain the support of the country gentlemen.

The major indirect tax was the excise, levied on goods within the country. Walpole was particularly fond of this type of tax because he believed that it was the most equitable. To foil smugglers, Walpole introduced, in 1723, a system of bonded warehouses. All goods on which the excise was to be levied were brought to a central government warehouse and kept there until they were re-exported or sold to English retailers. In 1723, the goods

which were affected by this provision were tea, coffee, cocoa, and chocolate. 24

Ten years later, Walpole decided to include wine and tobacco under the excise system. The public's liking for these products and their hatred of any excise tax conspired to defeat the Excise Bill. Lord Hervey, who presents a detailed account of the conduct of the excise bill through parliament, attributes its defeat to the conspiracy of Walpole's enemies and to popular misunderstanding of the nature of the measure:

The art, vigilance, and industry of his enemies had so contrived to represent this scheme to the people, and had so generally in every country and great town throughout all England prejudiced their minds against it, they had shown it in so formidable a shape and painted it in such hideous colours, that everybody talked of the scheme as a general excise; they believed that food, and raiment, and all the necessaries of life, were to be taxed; that armies of excise officers were to come into any house and at any time they pleased; that our liberties were at an end, trade going to be ruined, Magna Charta overturned, all property destroyed, the Crown made absolute, and Parliaments themselves no longer necessary to be called." 25

Passion against the excise ran high; members of parliament received instructions from their constituents to defeat the measure. Members of the army denounced Walpole, and the army officers

24 Green, 116-17.

warned that the troops might not obey should anti-Excise riots break out. Walpole himself was accosted by a mob: "On the City of London petition Walpole's majority sank to seventeen, a drunken mob, howling 'damn you, no excise,' hustled him in Westminster Hall and tore at his red cloak to get him down." 26

From William Pulteney, Wyndham, and The Craftsman came denunciations of the measure, and from Walpole himself came a spirited defense in a pamphlet entitled A Letter from a Member of Parliament to His Friends in the Country Concerning the Duties on Wine and Tobacco. The epigraph to this pamphlet reads, "Magna est Veritas et Praevalebit" (Truth is great and it shall prevail).

Despite Walpole's belief that his bill could be pushed through Parliament, the weight of public opinion forced him to withdraw the measure in April. Immediately the slogan, "Liberty, Property, and no Excise" (which Henry Fielding later used in Pasquin) appeared throughout England. There were bonfires and celebrations throughout the island, and an "orgy of jubilation" took place in Oxford, a Jacobite stronghold. 27

The defeat of the Excise Bill and the public hostility


aroused by the measure encouraged the Opposition to believe that Walpole might be defeated in the general election of 1734. These hopes were premature, for the Duke of Newcastle's masterful manipulation of the election provided Walpole with another majority.

Three years after this election, in 1737, Walpole's political career was dealt a terrible blow with the death of Queen Caroline, Lord Chesterfield referred to this remarkable woman as "a woman of lively, pretty parts, a quick conception, and some degree of female knowledge." Horace Walpole wrote that "her understanding was uncommonly strong; so was her resolution." 28

For the ten years from 1727 to 1737, Caroline was Walpole's major political ally. "Walpole and the queen would agree upon all important decisions in the first instance, and then the queen would discuss them with the king, leading him to believe that Walpole's policy was his own choice." 29

After Caroline's death, the Duke of Newcastle, Walpole's close political associate, wrote to a friend: "This is the greatest blow that ever he [Walpole] received and goes deeper than any I have ever known. But a concern for his own honour, the good of the public, a regard for his friends, and a desire to comply with

28 Chesterfield, 190-91.

29 Williams, 203.
the dying requests of the Queen, have determined him to engage and
go on." 30

The death of Queen Caroline has often been described as "an event highly disastrous to the country, to the King, and to Sir Robert Walpole." 31 The loss of the Queen's assistance and the mounting support for the Opposition made clear that it was only a matter of time until Walpole's power would collapse. The inevitable downfall was perhaps hastened by the war with Spain that began in 1739.

The grievances between the English and Spanish had been building for many years. The Spanish resented the three major concessions extracted by the English in the peace of Utrecht: 1) the English received a monopoly on the slave-trade with the Spanish West Indies; 2) the South Sea Company received the right to send one ship each year with English goods to be sold at the fairs in Vera Cruz and Cartagena; 3) the English conquest of Minorca and Gibraltar was confirmed. 32 The Spanish also complained that the annual ship of the South Sea Company was fraudulently overloaded, and that English settlers were engaging in illegal

31 Coxe, II, 492.
32 Williams, 207.
activities in various Spanish territories.

On the English side, grievance against the Spanish had been growing for many years:

The South Sea Company complained of the vexatious delays of the Spanish officials in issuing the permit for the annual ship, and of their ships and effects being impounded as soon as hostilities opened in 1718 and 1727... although by treaty ample time should have been allowed to the Company to remove them after the outbreak of war. English merchants generally resented the so-called 'right of search' exercised by guarda-costas licensed by the Spanish governors to stop illegal smuggling. Often these guarda-costas were little better than pirates, attacking all English ships they met in West Indian waters, even those plying between English colonies, on mere suspicion of smuggling intent. They would either bring them into Spanish ports where judges could always be found to confiscate ships and cargoes on the flimsiest pretexts, or seize the cargoes themselves on the high seas and turn the ships adrift.33

One of the major English complaints concerned the mistreatment of captured English sailors. From the most famous of these incidents the war received its name as "The War of Jenkins' Ear." In 1738, Captain Jenkins told to the House of Commons that in 1731 the Spanish had captured and looted his ship; before setting the ship adrift, they lashed Captain Jenkins to the mast and ripped his ear off. "When asked what he did then, he asserted that he 'committed his soul to God and his cause to his country,' words... efficacious in stirring up warlike feeling."34

33 Ibid., 207-08. 34 Ibid., 208.
So aroused was the British public that Walpole was forced to take action. Letters demanding compensation were sent to the Spanish, and a British fleet was dispatched to the Mediterranean. The Spanish agreed to an investigation by a joint commission; the report of this commission was embodied in the Convention of Pardo. The Spanish commissioners agreed that £200,000 was due to England. From this total, £60,000 was deducted for the English sinking of the Spanish fleet at Passaro and £45,000 for payment in cash, which left England a balance of £95,000. This was further diminished, because the Spanish would pay this sum only if the South Sea Company paid £68,000 owed to the Spanish. Thus from the original sum of £200,000, only £27,000 could actually be collected by the English. 35

Walpole felt that, since the Spanish had accepted the principle of payment for damages, the British should continue to negotiate for a better settlement. He said that "a war with Spain, after the concessions she has made by this very Convention, would on our parts be unjust, and, if it is unjust, it must be impolitic and dishonorable." 36

Walpole was at last forced to concede to the demands for war, not so much because of the Opposition as because of the

35 Ibid., 209. 36 Ibid.
members of his own ministry, especially the Duke of Newcastle. On October 19, 1739, war was finally declared; Walpole is reported to have said to the Duke of Newcastle, "This war is yours, you have had the conduct of it and I wish you joy of it."

The loss of his battle against the Spanish war was Walpole's last major defeat before his fall in 1742.

During his years in office, Walpole had three major political allies: Queen Caroline (see above), the Duke of Newcastle, and Lord Hervey.

Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle, held a number of political offices in the years from 1717 through 1762. In addition to his acknowledged genius in managing elections, Newcastle had certain other political advantages: 1) great personal wealth; 2) control of seven boroughs; 3) a decisive voice in the selection of candidates for at least four counties; 4) influence through extensive family connections; 5) a strong influence, developed through the years, on both clerical and lay patronage. 37

Many people considered Newcastle a stumbling, bumbling, foolish individual (he was reportedly afraid of the dark), but Lord Chesterfield believed that those who called Newcastle a "living caricature" had not estimated him accurately: 37

Ibid., 28.
The public opinion put him below his level; for though he had no superior parts, or eminent talents, he had a most indefatigable industry, a perseverance, a Court craft, and a servile compliance with the will of his Sovereign for the time being; which qualities, with only a common share of common sense, will carry a man sooner and more safely through the dark labyrinths of a Court, than the most shining parts would do without those meaner talents.38

The acerbic Lady Mary Wortley Montagu agreed with the unflattering estimate of Newcastle. When Walpole appointed him Secretary of State, in 1724, someone said to Lady Mary that it was strange for the prime minister to ally himself with such an insignificant associate. Lady Mary replied:

"Oh," said Lady Mary, "I can account for it. If I was a country gentlewoman and came suddenly to a great fortune and set up my coach, I should like to show it to the neighbouring village, but I could not carry you with me, for people might doubt whether it was your coach or mine. But if you would let me carry your cat with me, I would; for nobody would think it was the cat's coach."

The second of Walpole's political aides was the notorious John, Lord Hervey, who was useful because of his closeness to the Queen and because he wrote many pamphlets in support of the ministry. "He was a sickly, effeminate person. His handsome but corpse-like face plastered thickly with paint, the elaborate foppery of his dress, his diet of asses' milk and flour biscuits, and his

38 Chesterfield, 222.
soft affected manners, provoked the ridicule of satirists." 40

Alexander Pope, with whom Hervey had the misfortune to quarrel, denounced him in several poems:

Narcissus, praised with all a Parson's power,
Looked a white lily sunk beneath a shower. . . .

(Dunciad, IV, 103-104).

There are (I scarce can think it, but am told),
There are, to whom my Satire seems too bold:

The lines are weak, another's pleased to say,
Lord Fanny spins a thousand such a day.

(The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace, 1-6)

Let Sporus tremble-- A. What? that thing of silk Sporus, that mere white curd of Ass's milk?
Satire or sense, alas! can Sporus feel?
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?
P. Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings;

Whether in florid impotence he speaks,
And, as the prompter breathes, the puppet squeaks;
Or at the ear of Eve, familiar Toad,
Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad,
In puns, or politics, or tales or lies,
Or spite, or smut, or rhymes, or blasphemies.

(Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, 305-10; 317-22).

The unfortunate Hervey is also reported to have been "rapturously fond" of the Prince of Wales. The Prince, however, preferred Hervey's mistress, Miss Vane, to Hervey himself, a double

humiliation.

Arrayed against Walpole and these associates were the members of the Opposition, led by Lord Bolingbroke. The nature of the Opposition illustrates that eighteenth century politics was more a matter of the "ins" and the "outs" than of the Whigs and the Tories.

The leader of the Opposition was Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, who had been dismissed from Parliament in 1716 and had lived in exile in France until 1723. Bolingbroke's estates were restored in 1725, but he was never permitted to occupy his seat in Parliament. He was the power behind Opposition activities until 1734, when he retired to France and devoted himself to writing.

Bolingbroke knew that the only hope for an effective Opposition lay in a coalition of the Tories and the discontented Whigs. Bolingbroke himself was a Tory; so was William Shippen, whose only noteworthy characteristic was his habit of holding a glove to his mouth while speaking. Shippen was a confirmed Jacobite, like William Wyndham, although Bolingbroke persuaded Wyndham to support the Hanoverian dynasty. Bolingbroke's writings, replete with denunciations of Walpole, provided statements of the political

41 Plumb, First Four Georges, 83.
principles of the Opposition. A Letter on the Spirit of Patriotism (1736) and The Idea of a Patriot King (1738) embody many of Bolingbroke's reflections on the unhappy state of England under Walpole: "I think, and every wise and honest man in generations yet unborn will think, if the history of this administration descends to blacken our annals, that the greatest iniquity of the minister, on whom the whole iniquity ought to be charged, since he has so long been in possession of the whole power, is the constant endeavor he has employed to corrupt the morals of men."42

In setting forth the attributes of the Patriot King—a love of country that transcends parties or personal interests, a willingness to govern like a father to all—Bolingbroke loses no opportunity to warn the monarch against placing too much power in the hands of a minister and against being susceptible to the flattery of courtiers.

An earlier work, "A Dissertation on Parties," was dedicated by Bolingbroke to Walpole; the dedicatory epistle contained the warning that Walpole would at some time be called upon to give an account of his stewardship:

Though our kings can do no wrong, and though they cannot be

called to account by any form our constitution prescribes; their ministers may. They are answerable for the administration of the government; each for his particular part, and the prime, or sole minister, when there happens to be one, for the whole. He is so the more, and the more justly if he hath affected to render himself so, by usurping on his fellows; by wriggling, intriguing, whispering, and bargaining himself into this dangerous post, to which he was not called by the general suffrage, nor perhaps by the deliberate choice of his master himself. It follows then that ministers are answerable for every thing done to the prejudice of the constitution. .. 43

Because Bolingbroke was barred from Parliament, he frequently composed speeches for the members of the Opposition who were sitting in Parliament. In 1734, when the repeal of the Septennial Act was being debated, William Wyndham delivered a denunciation of Walpole which was probably composed by Bolingbroke.

Let us suppose, Sir, a gentleman at the head of the Administration whose only safety depends upon corrupting the Members of this House. This may now be only a supposition, but it is certainly such a one as may happen, and, if ever it should, let us see whether such a Minister might not promise himself more success in a septennial than he could in a triennial Parliament. It is an old maxim that every man has his price, if you can but come up to it. This, I hope, does not hold true of every man, but I am afraid it too generally holds true, and that of a great many it may hold true is what, I believe, was never doubted of, though I don't know but it may now likewise be denied.

In reply to this, Walpole presented a scarcely veiled denunciation of Bolingbroke:

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When gentlemen talk of Ministers abandoned to all sense of virtue or honor, other gentlemen may, I am sure, with equal justice, and, I think more justly, speak of anti Ministers and mock patriots, who never had either virtue or honor, but in the whole course of their opposition are actuated only by motives of envy and of resentment against those who may have disappointed them in their views or may not perhaps have complied with all their desires.

The ranks of the Opposition "were constantly being increased by whigs turned out of office or favour by Walpole's impatience of criticism." 44

The most vociferous member of the Opposition was William Pulteney who had loyally followed Walpole into political exile. When Walpole returned to power, Pulteney expected to receive an office. When a preferment was not forthcoming, Pulteney "thought himself slighted by Sir Robert Walpole, to whom he publicly avowed not only revenge, but utter destruction." 45 Pulteney, a brilliant debater, was the "floor leader" of the Opposition in the House of Commons.

In 1730 Carteret returned from Ireland and joined the Opposition. In 1733, the year of the Excise Bill, Lord Chesterfield was dismissed from his office and joined the Opposition. The most important recruits in that year were Sir Richard Cobham and his

44 Williams, 204.
45 Chesterfield, 202.
following of "Boy Patriots": George Lyttelton, the Grenvilles, and William Pitt.

The royal family's estimate of three of the Opposition leaders--Bolingbroke, Carteret, and Chesterfield--is illustrated in the King's response to Lord Hervey's announcement, in 1737, that three people were writing the history of George II's reign.

"You mean," said the King, "Lords Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, and Carteret." "I do," replied Lord Hervey. "They will all three," said the King, "have about as much truth in them as the Mille et Une Nuits. Not but I shall like to read Bolingbroke's, who, of all those rascals and knaves that have been lying against me these ten years, has certainly the best parts and the most knowledge; he is a scoundrel, but he is a scoundrel of a higher class than Chesterfield. Chesterfield is a little tea-table scoundrel that tells little womanish lies to make quarrels in families, and tries to make women lose their reputations, and make their husbands beat them, without any object but to give himself airs; as if anybody could believe a woman could like a dwarf-baboon." The Queen said all these three Histories would be three heaps of lies, but lies of a very different kinds; she said Bolingbroke's would be great lies, Chesterfield's little lies, and Carteret's lies of both sorts.46

The major organ of the Opposition propaganda was a periodical called The Craftsman established by Lord Bolingbroke in 1726, the year in which the Opposition's attacks on Walpole began in earnest.

Bolingbroke began to think about establishing a newspaper

46 Lord Hervey, III, 755.
in the summer of 1725. One year later, on July 15, 1726, a newspaper called The Country Gentleman appeared. In this issue, Bolingbroke employed a device which came to be widely used by the Opposition writers and which was taken up by Fielding in The Grub-Street Opera; Walpole was cast in the role of an upper servant who deceives and cheats his master—in this case Robin, the coachman:

The Country Gentleman—Friday, July 15, 1726:

Sir,

Tho, of late your Speculations have been chiefly employ'd in publick Affairs, yet as you have undertaken to animadvert upon Abuses of all Kinds, I must suggest one to your Consideration, which is become general, and is justly complain'd of by every Body; I mean the great Insolence, Cheats and Negligence of SERVANTS; who, instead of being a Conveniency, are now grown one of the greatest Uneasinesses of Life. You will now give me Leave to illustrate the Grievance I complain of by an Instance, that Happen'd, not very long ago, within my own Acquaintance.

One Mr. D'ANVERS, a Friend of mine, a Gentleman of known Worth and Merit, and of an easy Fortune, set up a Chariot, for the Conveniency of going to a little Place, which he had near the Town, and back again. As he studied Use more than Show, he bespoke a good strong plain Chariot, but upon Springs, as naturally loving his Ease. He hired a Coachman, nam'd ROBIN, who was mightily recommended to him; a pert forward Fellow, who knowing Mr. D'Anvers's Aversion to Trouble, undertook to find him in Horses; to keep his Chariot in constant good Repair; and all This at an easier Rate, than any other Body should do it at. Mr. D'Anvers, pleased with the Fellow's fair Promises and, above all, with the Prospect of little Trouble, readily agreed with him upon his own Terms.

Robin's first Care was to provide himself with a pair of quiet Nags, that should neither kick, nor rise, nor give him the least Disturbance in the Coach Box. Accordingly he got a Pair of dull
Beasts to his Mind, call'd Surly\textsuperscript{47} and Ranter\textsuperscript{48}; but as they had not Spirit enough to disturb the Coachman, neither were they able enough to draw the Coach; for they stumbled and blunder'd every Step they took, notwithstanding the Whip, with which Robin used pretty freely to keep them up.

Mr. D'Anvers, who found himself very uneasy in a Chariot, that only mov'd by Starts and Jerks, us'd to pull the String pretty often, and ask Robin, what the Devil was the Matter. Robin, who could not well lay the Blame on Horses of his own providing, told his Master the Roads were so bad, and full of Holes, that it was impossible to avoid those Jolts, and that he defy'd any Coachman to drive, or any Horses to draw better, in such cursed Ways. This Excuse pass'd for some Time, till the Summer came, and the Roads grew better. Mr. D'Anvers, finding the Motion full as uneasy as before, he began to pull the String much oftner, and to grow a little testy. Robin, who found that some new Excuse was necessary to pacify his Master, laid all the Blame upon Ranter, (who, by the way, was grown a little hard-mouth'd) and told his Master, that if he would let him change him for a Horse that he knew, call'd Sloven\textsuperscript{49}, he would undertake to carry his Honour as easily as ever he was carry'd in his Life. Mr. D'Anvers, who already had such ill Luck with Horses of Robin's providing, desired that he might first see this Sloven, before he was put to his Coach. Sloven was accordingly produc'd, to the great Surprize of Mr. D'Anvers, who, tho' not very nice in his Cattle, order'd him to be immediately taken away; saying that he never saw so filthy a Beast in his Life and that he was not good enough for a Dray-cart. Robin, being thus disappointed, had recourse to another Stratagem, and told his Master that, to say the Truth, the Reason why he did not carry him so smoothly, as otherwise he should do, was that his Honour interrupted him so often, by pulling every Minute; but if his Honour would consent to have that Check-string taken away, he would answer for it, all should go right. This Request, however unreasonable it might seem, Mr. D'Anvers, from his natural Indulgence, granted; resolving not to leave Robin the least Excuse. Accordingly, the String was taken away, which Robin wore in Triumph across his

\textsuperscript{47} W. Stanhope

\textsuperscript{48} The Duke of Newcastle

\textsuperscript{49} Horace Walpole
Shoulders, and now sat uncontroul'd in the Coach-Box. The next Time Mr. D'Anvers went to his Country-House, Robin resolv'd to leave the beaten Road, and go a new Way over the People's Grounds; when unfortunately he happen'd to be attack'd by the People, whose Fences he broke down. Robin ship'd and swore; the Horses stumbled and plung'd. The Country People, with their Clubs, laid on both Robin and the Horses. The Chariot was overturn'd in a Ditch. The Tackle was broke. The Horses run away; and Robin broke his Neck with the Fall. Mr. D'Anvers was happily taken out of the Chariot, without being hurt, and as soon as known was treated with the Respect and Regard, that was due to his Rank and Virtues; everyone expressing their Indignation at the Abuse of so good a Master; but rejoicing, at the same Time, at the deserv'd Catastrophe of so bad a Servant.

I am, SIR, Young humble Servant, WILL. JOHNSON

P.S. I have often heard this Story of Mr. D'Anvers; but not with all these Circumstances, and have wonder'd, that the Laws are not made more strict, in relation to Servants. The present Statutes, that are now in force, only relating to Apprentices, Labourers, or Servants of Husbandry, hired for a Year. Indeed, the Statutes of 21 of Hen. 8 Chap. 7, makes it Felony for a Servant to go away with his Master's Goods, to the Value of forty Shillings, with an Intent to Steal, or embezzeI them; provided the Goods be deliver'd to him to keep; and another modern Statute has been made to the same Purpose; but there are Millions of other Abuses amongst Servants, for which the Law has made no Provision, and because they are so universal a Grievance, worthy the Attention of the Legislature.50

The first issue of The Craftsman appeared on Monday, December 5, 1726; it was published on Monday and Friday for about a year and then on Saturday only until April 17, 1736--the "endurance record" for an English periodical up to that time.51

50 The Country Gentleman (July 15, 1726).
51 Sichel, 246-47.
The first issue stated the author's purpose in very clear terms:

I have entitled my paper THE CRAFTSMAN under which general Character I design to lay open the Frauds, Abuses and secret Iniquities of all Professions; not excepting those of my own; which is at present notoriously adulterated with pernicious Mixtures of Craft and several scandalous Prostititions. The same malignant Contagion has infected the other learned Faculties and polite Professions. It has crept into the Camp as well as the Court; prevailed in the Church as well as in the State; has vitiated the Country in the same Manner that it has poisoned the City, and worked itself into every Part of our Constitution, from the highest Offices of Life, down to the lowest Occupations, in a regular and gradual Descent.

It is my Design, in this Paper to detect and animadvert upon all these Corruptions, as far as they come within my Knowledge; to shew how general the Evil is grown, and how Craft predominates in all Professions. But the Mystery of State-Craft abounds with such innumerable Frauds, Prostitutions, and Enormities in all Shapes, and under all Disguises, that it is an inexhaustible Fund, an eternal Resource for Satire and Reprehension. 

The publisher of The Craftsman, Richard Francklin, was arrested and tried three times for seditious libel. In 1730, Franklin was tried for printing an "Extract of a private letter from the Hague," probably written by Bolingbroke.

This letter prophesies a change in Walpole's policy in the field of Foreign affairs. After the resignation of Lord Townshend in 1730, his policy of alliance with Spain was abandoned; Walpole instead chose an alliance with the Emperor, which was achieved in

52 The Craftsman (December 5, 1726).
The Treaty of Vienna. The letter printed in *The Craftsman* castigated Walpole for his rapid shift in policy:

If this [the change in allies] should prove true, it will certainly redound very much to the Honor of those Gentlemen who have so vigorously opposed the late Measures; and the Ministers, who have not only concerted and pursued these Measures, but loaded all Opposition to Them with the foulest Imputations, will be obliged to take a great deal of Shame to Themselves; for what can be a stronger Condemnation of their own past Conduct, or the Conduct of Those whom They have employed to write in their Cause, than to see Them wheel about all on a sudden and pursue Measures directly opposite, which have been pointed out to them, for several Years together, by their Adversaries; and for which They have represented those Gentlemen, in the most opprobrious Colours, as factious Incendiaries, Germanized Patriots, and Enemies to their Country? What can be more ridiculous than to see Them desert one Ally, whose good Faith, Sincerity, and even Cordiality of Friendship they have so often extoll'd; and at last run into the Arms of another, whom they have so industriously set forth as the most dishonourable, ungrateful, and perfidious Prince?

Lord Chief Justice Raymond, in his address to the jury, made clear that they were not to decide the truth of the charges in the letter but only questions of fact; did Francklin publish the particular issue of *The Craftsman*, and did the letter refer to King and his ministers, "for when people's names are not set down at length, but pointed at by circumlocution, or pieces of words,"

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54 Ibid., 249.
or by initial letters, &c. the law always allows innuendos in informations, which explain and tell what the defendant meant by them; and the law likewise allows juries to give their verdict on oath, whether they think that these dark defamatory speeches have the same meaning as mentioned in the information or not." The jury, of course, found Mr. Francklin guilty.

The Earl of Egmont, in his diary, makes an interesting comment about one juror in this trial, who was the father of Walpole's mistress: "Francklin, the bookseller, being to go on his trial next Monday for publishing the Craftsman, a special jury was appointed on that account, and Mr. Skerrit named one of them, which was thought strangely imprudent, because of the talk it would occasion. Mr. Skerrit's daughter being kept by Sir Robert Walpole."

Despite Francklin's conviction, The Craftsman continued to be published until 1736; one year after this, Lords Chesterfield and Lyttelton established another Opposition periodical, Common-Sense, named after a character in Fielding's play Pasquin.

At last, of course, the Opposition triumphed. Some historians believe that the fall of Walpole became inevitable with the

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55 Ibid., 251.

defeat of the Excise Bill, while others consider Queen Caroline's death the turning point. Certainly the Queen's death and Walpole's defeat in the declaration of war with Spain were important events; behind these events were the members of the Opposition, making use of every possible opportunity to discredit Walpole.

In February, 1741, Samuel Sandys led a famous attack on Walpole in the House of Commons. Sandys' speech is an excellent catalogue of the Opposition's charges against Walpole from 1726 until his fall:

According to our constitution, we can have no sole and prime minister: we ought always to have several prime ministers or officers of state ... But it is publicly known, that this minister, having obtained a sole influence over all our public counsels, has not only assumed the sole direction of all public affairs, but has got every officer of state removed that would not follow his direction ... By this means he hath monopolized all the favours of the crown and engrossed the sole disposal of all places, pensions, titles, and ribbons, as well as of all preferments, civil, military, or ecclesiastical.

... he has greatly aggravated the heinousness of his crime for having thus monopolized all the favours of the crown, he has made a blind submission to his direction at elections and in parliament, the only ground to hope for any honours or preferments, and the only tenure by which any gentleman could preserve what he had. This is so notoriously known, that it can stand in need of no proof. Have not many deserving gentlemen been disappointed in the preferment they had just title to, upon the bare suspicion of not being blindly devoted to his personal interest? Have not some persons of the highest rank and most illustrious characters been displaced, for no other reason than because they disdained to sacrifice their honour and conscience to his direction in parliament. ... Nay, has not this minister himself not only confessed it, but boasted of it?
he not said, and in this House too, that he would be a pitiful fellow of a minister who did not displace any officer that opposed his measures in parliament?  

In his reply to this attack, Walpole gave "an account of his stewardship" and concluded by saying that "while I unequivocally deny that I am sole and prime minister, and that to my influence and direction all the measures of government must be attributed, yet I will not shrink from the responsibility which attaches to the post I have the honour to hold."  

In the general election of 1741 the ministerial majority was greatly diminished, and Walpole finally resigned in 1742. After his resignation from the House of Commons, George II created Walpole First Earl of Orford. Thus Walpole ended a career devoted to building the power of the House of Commons by assuming his seat in the House of Lords.

For he was the first chief minister in normal times to look on the house of commons, not the house of lords, as his proper place. "I have lived long enough in the world, Sir," he said in one of the Spanish debates, "to know that the safety of a minister lies in his having the approbation of this House. Former ministers, Sir, neglected this, and therefore they fell; I have always made it my first study  


58"Speech by Sir Robert Walpole in the House of Commons on the motion for his removal, 13 February 1741," English Historical Documents, p. 129.
to obtain it, and therefore I hope to stand." By such an attitude he immeasurably raised the prestige of the commons. Before his time there would have been little point in his greeting to his old rival Pulteney, as the two newly created earls met for the first time in the house of lords: "You and I, my lord, are now two as insignificant men as any in England."59

Walpole's personal life also served as grist for the Opposition mill. He delighted in heavy drinking, coarse conversation, and women. The Opposition most frequently attacked Walpole for the luxurious style in which he lived and for openly keeping Maria Skerrett as his mistress.

Walpole's taste for lavish decoration and expensive paintings was well known. He spent over £200,000 in remodeling his home at Houghton and some £40,000 on his collection of paintings. Sir Thomas Robinson described the splendor of Houghton after a visit there in 1731:

I believe it is the best house in the world for its size, capable of the greatest reception for company, and the most convenient state apartments, very noble, especially the hall and saloon. The finishing of the inside is, I think, a pattern for all great houses that may hereafter be built: the vast quantity of mahogoni, all the doors, window-shutters, best staircase, &c., being entirely of that wood; the finest chimneys of statuary and other fine marbles; the ceilings in the modern taste by Italians, painted by Mr. Kent, and finely gilt; the furniture of the richest tapestry, &c.; the pictures hung on Genoa velvet and damask; this one article is the price of a good house, for in one drawing-room there are to the value of three thousand

59 Williams, 211.
pounds; in short, the whole expense of this place must be a prodigious sum, and, I think, all done in a fine taste. 60

Walpole also built a hunting lodge at Richmond Park at the cost of £14,000; according to Lord Hervey, the lodge was a "bower of bliss" for Walpole and his mistress, Maria Skerrett. 61

Walpole's marriage to Catherine Shorter, which occurred in 1700, actually lasted for only a few years; in about 1706 the two apparently agreed to continue nominally as husband and wife but to really go their separate ways.

Sometime in the early 1720's Walpole met Maria Skerrett, possibly through Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Whatever the origins of the liaison, Miss Skerrett bore Walpole a daughter in 1725; she lived openly as his mistress until the death of Lady Catherine Walpole in 1737 enabled the two to marry. 62 The wedding was followed by the second Lady Walpole's presentation at court, an event which the Earl of Egmont sarcastically described:

March 6, 1737--Last Friday Sir Robert Walpole declared his marriage to Mrs. Skerrit, by whom he had two daughters during his late lady's lifetime. She was the same day introduced to Court and received with great marks of distinction by his Majesty and the Princess Amelia. The

61 Halsband, 119.
62 Ibid.
Duchesses of Newcastle and Richmond contended earnestly which of them should have the dishonourable honour of presenting her to the King, but at length Mrs. Walpole, Horace Walpole's wife, did the office, as the nearest relation, and to shew that Sir Robert marrying his whore was by consent of his family. Thus a stay-maker's daughter carried the bell from two duchesses.

A few weeks later, Evelyn noted in his diary some verses that had been given to him regarding Walpole's marriage. The "low" tone is typical of many of the Opposition's personal attacks on Walpole:

I can't conceive why in decline of life
Sir Robert should betroth a second wife:
Can you suppose he feels an amorous rage,
Thus swell'd with fat, and thus excis'd by age?
He surely don't, but wonder not, my friends,
The knight in this pursues his constant ends.
He, long inured to plunder and defraud,
Unmov'd by virtue and by shame un-aw'd,
Perverts to private use a public whore,
That he may rob the public one way more,
The only way he never rob'd before.64

Contemporary opinions on Walpole were diverse, although most of the favorable statements came after his fall. Samuel Johnson, who was rabidly anti-Walpole during the minister's life, later said, "He was the best minister this country ever had, as, if we would have let him, he would have kept the country in perpetual peace."65

63 Eymont, II, 469. 64 Ibid., 471.
65 Samuel Johnson, quoted in Chesterfield, 207.
Such charitable evaluations were not often stated or printed while Walpole was in office. The Craftsman, The Beggar's Opera and Henry Fielding's plays are all typical of the Opposition's public attacks in periodicals and plays, while such individuals as Lord Egmont, the Duchess of Marlborough, and Lord Chesterfield assailed Walpole in public and private correspondence.

One of Egmont's early attacks on Walpole as first minister appeared in his diary for 1730; in this entry he makes the familiar charge that Walpole ruled by surrounding himself with "little men" to do his hack political work:

Sir Robert Walpole stayed till the division was over, in order to influence the House . . . but he found there are certain occasions where he cannot carry points; it is this meanness of his (the prostitution of the character of a first Minister in assisting and strenuously supporting the defence of dunghill worms, let their cause be ever so unjust, against men of honour, birth, and fortune, and that in person too), that gains him so much ill-will; formerly, when the first Minister appeared in any matter, he did it with gravity, and the honour and service of the Crown appeared to be concerned, but Sir Robert, like the altars of refuge in old times, is the asylum of little unworthy wretches who, submitting to dirty work, endear themselves to him, and get his protection first, and then his favour, which as he is first Minister, is sure to draw after it the countenance of the Court . . .

Some eight years after this, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, in a private letter, accused Walpole's administration of "all

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66 Egmont, I, 85-86.
manner of infamous practices" in a contested election in which the Duke of Marlborough supported the anti-Walpole candidate. She despaired of her husband's success, for she wrote that the House of Commons "will always vote as they are ordered by the minister, let him be ever so bad."67

One of the most moderate evaluations of Robert Walpole in his own time came from his old enemy, Lord Chesterfield, who began his essay on Walpole by stating that an impartial evaluation of the minister would be impossible. Chesterfield mentions Walpole's social virtues and vices and then presents a restrained damnation of him as a minister:

He was very able as a minister, but without a certain elevation of mind necessary for great good, or great mischief. Profuse and appetent, his ambition was subservient to his desire of making a great fortune. . . . He would do mean things for profit, and never thought of doing great ones for glory.68

The passage of time has brought little perspective to the view of Walpole; he has been both praised and damned by this century's historical writers.

Sir Charles Petrie considers Walpole a shadow cast over the


68 Chesterfield, 208-09.
first forty-two years of the eighteenth century; even after his fall "the evil that he did lived after him." Petrie adds that, although Anne's ministers had violated the standards of conventional morality, "it was left for this Norfolk squire to debase the whole public life of the country."⁶⁹

A somewhat more moderate position is taken by V. H. H. Green who agrees that Walpole was corrupt but excuses his conduct by saying that "Walpole was only participating in a game that every one played."⁷⁰ Green views bribery as a common political tool in the eighteenth century; since the practice was so common Walpole should not be singled out and condemned for practicing it.

The best and most objective appreciation of Walpole's character is found in J. H. Plumb's recent biography, a work in which Walpole at last receives the consideration of an eminent historian a consideration to which his important place in English history certainly entitled him:

His powers of concentration were of the highest, and they were backed by an obstinate will, soaring ambition, a greedy love of power, for he was a man utterly confident of his capacity to rule.

Yet he had one rarer and, perhaps, more important gift. He had a heightened awareness both of the world and of men. From this sprang both his exquisite taste and his finesse

⁶⁹ Sir Charles Petrie, The Four Georges (Boston, 1936), p. 77.

⁷⁰ Green, 106.
in human relations. He could live outside his own character. He possessed empathy, the quality to get, as it were, into the skin of other human beings, to feel with them; an intuitive quality which, of course, could err, but more often brilliantly clarified a complex human situation. His power over Queen Caroline and George II was derived from his capacity to interpret correctly their true feeling for each other; he was never deceived by the outward vagaries of their behaviour.

Time and time again he misjudged public opinion to an extent that would have been fatal to a nineteenth-or twentieth-century prime minister. Also he had no intuitive sense of dynamic political forces, for he held obstinately to a static view of society. . . . Essentially he was an administrator, interested in order and efficiency. Fortunately, it was a time for these virtues to flourish.71

71 Plumb, Walpole, xiii.
CHAPTER III

HENRY FIELDING'S EARLY POLITICAL PLAYS

The plays written by Fielding before Pasquin (1736) are certainly not so important to his political satire as the later plays, for Fielding's approach to politics in the early plays is essentially non-partisan. Jokes at the expense of Robert Walpole were popular with the London audiences, and it was a simple matter for the playwright to call attention to Walpole by the use of such epithets as "great man" or "prime minister," much as twentieth-century writers of comedy used references to a 'golfing president' to refer to President Eisenhower and affectations of a Boston accent to suggest President Kennedy.

There are, however, three of Fielding's early plays which deserve examination in terms of political satire: The Author's Farce; The Tragedy of Tragedies; The Grub-Street Opera. The Author's Farce is Fielding's first attack on those who make their fortunes by exploiting the talents of others; it also represents his first extensive use of "jokes" at the expense of Walpole. The Tragedy of Tragedies is Fielding's first experiment in "representational" political satire, that is, in the use of a character to
represent Walpole. Finally, *The Grub-Street Opera* is a satirical political allegory, in which the characters represent not only Walpole and other politicians but also members of the English royal family. *The Grub-Street Opera* belongs with the early political plays primarily because of the non-partisan nature of the satirical attack.

One of the most important events in Henry Fielding's theatrical career occurred in London on January 29, 1728; that event was the first performance of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Gay's ballad opera started the fashion for dramatic satire on the administration of Sir Robert Walpole, a fashion that terminated only when the Licensing Act of 1737 subjected all dramatic presentations to government scrutiny and approval.

*The Beggar's Opera* was phenomenally successful. There were sixty-two performances between January 29 and June 19, 1738, of which thirty-two were consecutive.¹ Ladies' fans carried reprints of the songs and pictures of the characters (especially Macheath). The actors became the toasts of fashionable London; Miss Lavinia

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Fenton, who played Polly Peachum, married the Duke of Bolton.  

During the 1729 theatrical season, there were fifty-nine performances at Lincoln's Inn Fields. At the same time, the play was being presented in the provinces and in Ireland.

Gay's ballad opera also enjoyed that most sincere form of flattery, imitation. Before the end of 1728, two new ballad operas were being shown. In 1729, when Gay published his sequel, Polly, there were twelve other ballad operas produced or published. At the peak of this vogue, in 1733, there were twenty-two new ballad operas, including Gay's posthumous Achilles.

There were apparently two reasons for the political satire in The Beggar's Opera. First, just before this work was composed, Gay had sought a preferment at Court but did not receive what he considered adequate recognition of his talents. Gay therefore set about writing a play in which he ridiculed the ruling classes and Sir Robert Walpole, the leader of the government.

Secondly, Gay was well aware of the public's keen interest in politics and proposed to capitalize on it. Gay's first play,

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2 Dudden, I, 37.  
3 Case, 531-32.  
4 Ibid.  
5 Dane F. Smith, Plays about the Theatre in England from The Rehearsal to the Licensing Act in 1737 (New York, 1936), p. 137.
The Wife of Bath, had been postponed twice and been denied success because of the popularity of Addison's Cato; Gay reportedly felt that Cato "was a wearisome deal of inflated nonsense, versified with mild success, and supported only in public popularity by the political implications which men read between its lines."  

Gay achieved his first aim--social satire--by writing a "Newgate pastoral," a tale of London's underworld, in which the pickpockets, murderers and fences were invested with the vices and affectations of England's upper classes. The second aim--political satire--was accomplished by obvious references to the ministry of Sir Robert Walpole, especially in scenes in which the unscrupulous tactics of Peachum, Lockit, and Macheath are described.

That the audience was well aware that Walpole was being satirized is clear from William Cooke's account of the reaction to certain scenes: "The first song was thought to point to him [Walpole]--The name Bob Booty, whenever mentioned, again raised the laugh against him; and the quarrelling scene between Peachum and Lockit, was so well understood at that time to allude to a recent quarrel between the two Ministers, Lord Townshend and Sir Robert,

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6William H. Irving, John Gay: Favorite of the Wits (Durham, North Carolina, 1940), 238.
that the House was in convulsions of applause."

Gay's method was to scatter comparisons of the thief and statesman and other political allusions throughout the play, allusions designed to remind the audience of Robert Walpole. For example, in Act I, Scene 3, Peachum reads a list of the members of the gang. The last name he calls off is "Robin of Bagshot, alias Gorgon, alias Bluff Bob, alias Carbuncle, alias Bob Booty--" This, like Bolingbroke's "Robin" parable in The Country Gentleman, immediately drew the attention of the audience to Robert Walpole.

The two most famous satirical thrusts at Walpole in The Beggar's Opera are the parallel Gay draws between Peachum, Jonathan Wild and Robert Walpole, and the Peachum-Lockit quarrel.

Peachum acknowledges in the first scene that he acts "in a double capacity, both against rogues and for 'em." He is a receiver and seller of stolen goods and so acts for the criminals, but he also acts as a thief-taker, that is, one who gives information against criminals to the authorities. His very name is taken from the cant term "peach"--to turn a fellow criminal over to the police. Peachum is unquestionably modelled on the famous criminal and thief-taker Jonathan Wild (for a summary of Wild's activities,)

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see Chapter VI).

The ballad opera opens with a song by Peachum:

Through all the employments of life,
   Each neighbor abuses his brother;
Whore and rogue they call husband and wife;
   All professions be-rogue one another.
The priest calls the lawyer a cheat,
   The lawyer be-knaves the divine;
And the statesman, because he's so great,
   Thinks his trade as honest as mine.

The use of the term "statesman," followed by "great," is intended to draw attention to the comparison of Walpole and Peachum. An issue of The Craftsman, published February 17, 1727/8 (a little more than two weeks after The Beggar's Opera first appeared) shows that the Peachum-Wild-Walpole comparison was clearly understood. The writer, "Phil-Harmonicus," notes: "In the very first song, the Employment of a Statesman is, by innuendo, made as bad or worse than that of Jonathan Wild, represented under the Character of Peachum."  

Throughout the play, references to the similarities between the life of the criminal, Peachum, and the life of the statesman, Walpole, are frequent; for example, in Act II, Scene 10, Peachum acknowledges, "In one respect, indeed, our employment may be reckoned dishonest, because, like great statesmen, we encourage those

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8 The Craftsman, No. 85 (February 17, 1727/8).
who betray their friends."

In this scene (Act II, Scene 10) there occurs the famous quarrel between Peachum and Lockit, the warden of Newgate prison, who is Peachum's partner in crime. The two men are settling up the year's accounts, when Peachum comes across the name "Ned Clincher" in his account book. Ned had been turned in by Peachum and had been condemned to hang; Lockit had accepted a bribe to postpone the hanging but had sent Ned off to an early death. When Peachum accuses him of dealing harshly with Ned, Lockit becomes enraged because his honor has been called into question. The two almost come to blows and then agree it is to their mutual advantage to be at peace. This quarrel is a parody of a recent "unpleasantness" between Walpole and Lord Townshend which ended with drawn swords. As William Cooke points out, the audience was very amused by this scene.

Just before the quarrel, Peachum sings a song containing some advice for Lockit:

> When you censure the age,
> Be cautious and sage,
> Lest the courtiers offended should be.
> If you mention vice or bribe,
> 'Tis so pat to all the tribe;
> Each cries --"That was levelled at me."

According to one source, Walpole actually attended a performance of *The Beggar's Opera*. When the song was finished, there was a
general call for an encore; as the encore was being performed, all eyes turned toward the Minister to study his reaction. "Sir Robert, observing the pointed manner in which the audience applied the last line to him, parried the thrust by encoring it with his single voice; and thus not only blunted the poetical shaft, but gained a general huzza from the audience."  

In addition to the political life of Walpole, The Beggar's Opera also mentions his personal life. Through the work of Peachum, Macheath, the dashing criminal-hero of The Beggar's Opera, is apprehended and imprisoned. He attempts to secure the assistance of Lucy Lockit (the warden's daughter) so that he may escape; Macheath tells Lucy that she is his wife "in every respect but form." In Act II, Scene 13, Polly Peachum enters to Macheath and Lucy and says, "Where is my dear husband?" The two women then quarrel with one another and with the faithless Macheath; because he needs Lucy's aid, Macheath spurns Polly.

These two women may well represent Lady Walpole and Maria Skerrett, Robert Walpole's mistress. Two comments especially are intended to parody Walpole's difficult domestic situation. Polly says to Macheath, "Am I not thy wife? Thy neglect of me, thy aversion to me, too severely proves it." Soon afterward she states,  

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9David E. Baker, Biographica Dramatica; or, A Companion to the Playhouse... (London, 1812). II. 55.
"Sure, my dear, there ought to be some preference shown to a wife! At least she may claim the appearance of it." These barbs are based on the fact that Walpole's first marriage, to Catherine Shorter, was actually of short duration; Sir Robert decided to lead his own life and left his wife free to do the same. For several years before Gay's ballad opera, Maria Skerrett had been acknowledged as Walpole's mistress.

The satire on Walpole, personal and political, delighted the Opposition. The Opposition periodical, The Craftsman, veiled its praise in irony. The reviewer "denounced" The Beggar's Opera as "the most venemous allegorical libel against the Government that hath appeared for many years. . . . The satirical strokes upon Ministers, Courtiers, and great Men, in general, abound in every part of this most insolent Performance."\(^\text{10}\) So successful was the irony in this review that Watson Nicholson later quoted this article as "assailing" The Beggar's Opera.\(^\text{11}\)

Some fifteen months after The Craftsman's review, Jonathan Swift wrote an article defending Gay against charges of undermining public morality. Swift ironically asserts that Gay's

\(^{10}\) *The Craftsman*, No. 85 (February 17, 1727/28).

satire does not apply to contemporary events but may prove a valuable lesson for the future:

In this happy Performance of Mr. Gay's, all the Characters are just, and none of them carried beyond Nature, or hardly beyond Practice. It discovers the whole System of that Common-Wealth, or that Imperium in Imperio of Iniquity, established among us, by which neither our Lives, nor our Properties are secure, either in the High-ways, or in publick Assemblies, or even in our own Houses. It shews the miserable Lives and the constant Fate of those abandoned Wretches; for how little they sell their Lives and Souls; betrayed by their Whores, their Comrades, and the Receivers and Purchasers of these Thefts and Robberies. This Comedy contains likewise a Satyr, which although it doth by no Means affect the present Age, yet might have been useful in the former, and may possibly be so in Ages to come: I mean where the Author takes Occasion of comparing those common Robbers of the Publick, and their several Stratagems of betraying, undermining and hanging each other, to the several Arts of Politicians in Times of Corruption.¹²

John Gay "prepared the way" for Henry Fielding in two ways: first, by popularizing political satire on the stage; second, by introducing ballad opera (new lyrics set to the tune of old ballad airs). Fielding employed both political satire and ballad opera in The Author's Farce, one of his early plays and the first of his plays to use extensive political references.

Henry Fielding, like John Gay, began his relationship with Robert Walpole by seeking the Prime Minister's assistance in

receiving a preferment at Court. In 1730, Fielding wrote "An Epistle To The Right Hon. Sir Robert Walpole,"\(^{13}\) a facetious verse letter designed to gain the Minister's attention.

Fielding's poem is a play on the idea of 'greatness' and 'great man,' an idea he later used in his most scathing denunciations of Walpole. He begins by asking, "Would you not wonder, Sir, to view/ Your bard a greater man than you?" Fielding then proves that he is, indeed, a greater man than the Minister to whom this epithet was so often applied.

Philosophers, says the poet, have traditionally equated the state of greatness with wretchedness. Clearly Fielding is far more wretched than Walpole. Fielding then compares his daily life to that of the Prime Minister. First, it is considered very fashionable to dine late, and he who dines latest is most fashionable. Surely the person who dines latest is the poet, "who never dines at all."; in this respect the poet must be esteemed greatest.

Fielding begins another verse by saying, "We're often taught, it doth behove us/ To think those greater, who're above us." Fielding is indeed "above" Walpole, since he lives in a garret, four stories above the Minister's residence.

\(^{13}\) Henry Fielding, "To the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole," *Works*, XII, 279.
Finally Fielding compares himself and Walpole in terms of the avid attentions of followers:

Greatness by poets still is painted
With many followers acquainted;
This too doth in my favour speak!
Your levee is but twice a week;
From mine I can exclude but one day—
My door is quiet on a Sunday.

The poet's followers are, of course, those men to whom he owes money; his door is "quiet" on Sunday, because debtors could not be arrested on Sunday. Because he may be arrested, the poet views the world from his window, like an Eastern potentate, while the Minister is forced to mix with a large crowd.

Fielding concludes his comparison by stating that Walpole may perhaps be offended by the poet's great station; if so, he will gladly come down to any "place" (i.e., office) the Minister wishes.

Fielding's verse epistle to Walpole is no longer remembered for its poetic merit; in fact, Arthur Murphy included it in his "Essay" on Fielding's life and works as a curiosity. The poem does represent an interesting contrast to such late works as The Historical Register and Jonathan Wild, for in the verse epistle Fielding praises Walpole in the same terms in which he would later damn him.

In the same year in which Fielding implored Walpole for
assistance, 1730, he began to achieve some recognition as a playwright of promise. On March 30, 1730, at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, Fielding's play, The Author's Farce; with a Puppet-Show, called The Pleasures of the Town, was first presented; the following day the play was published under the pseudonym, Scriblerus Secundus. 14

Fielding's first two plays were written in the manner of the Restoration comedies. Both Love In Several Masques and The Temple Beau involve multiple love affairs. Love in Several Masques, for example, is an impossibly complex comedy of romantic intrigue; it is interesting to note that Fielding's plots and counter-plots are based on the attainment of marriage and not on illicit affairs. He is clearly concerned in this play with the corruption of the institution of marriage by those who marry for money or for social prestige.

Fielding also attacks the false values of the upper classes by presenting three fops--Rattle, Sir Apish Simple, and Lord Formal. Lord Formal particularly is developed as an example of hypocrisy in diction and manner as he explains to the worthy Merital the activities of a "beau":

14 Dudden, I, 49.
Why, positively, Mr. Marital, this is an hour wherein I seldom make any excursions farther than my drawing-room. But, being a day of business, I have rid down two brace of chairmen this morning. I have been, sir, at three milliners', two perfumers', my bookseller's, and a fan-shop. . . . It has exagitated my complexion to that exorbitancy of vermeille, that I shall hardly have reduced it to any tolerable consistency under a fortnight's course of acids. . . . Well, positively, going into a bookseller's shop is to me the last of fatigues, and yet it is a necessary one: for since the ladies have divided their time between cards and reading, a man, to be agreeable to them, must understand something of books, as well as quadrille . . . . I'll tell you how I do. By going to a bookseller's shop once a month, I know the titles and authors of all the new books: so when I name one in company, it is, you know, of consequence supposed I have read it. . . .

(I, 5)

As in most of his early plays, Fielding presents in this one a worthy character who is aware of the vanity and hypocrisy of London life. Wisemore, of *Love in Several Masques*, is quite clearly an ancestor of Luckless' friend Witmore. Wisemore comments that in London, "I have seen hypocrisy pass for religion, madness for sense, noise and scurrility for wit, and riches for the whole train of virtues. Then I have seen folly beloved for its youth and beauty, and reverenced for its age. I have discovered knavery in more forms than ever Proteus had. . . ." (I, 2).

The Author's Farce is really two plays; the first tells of the poet Harry Luckless, his financial difficulties, his efforts to get his play produced, and his romance with Harriet. The second play, the puppet-show, is a satire on the popular amusement.
of London; this play-within-a-play revolves around the problems of finding a suitable husband for the Queen of Nonsense.

Although Fielding uses many political "jokes" in The Author's Farce, the play primarily deals with the state of society. The story of Luckless shows Fielding's concern that merit goes unrewarded because of selfishness and vanity; the Marplays, who represent Colley and Theophilus Cibber, refuse to perform Luckless' play because he will not make ridiculous changes to satisfy their vanity. The puppet-show expresses Fielding's fear that England had become a "nation of sheep" in the universal admiration of the Goddess of Nonsense. "The easy displacement of the monarchy of wit is to Fielding only symptomatic of a state of society in which applause and riches go to the man who has placed himself beyond the law. The vogue of modern authors is like the reputation of the 'great man'; it represents a triumph of aggressive affectation over weak understanding." 15

The Author's Farce opens with a Prologue in which Fielding criticizes the audience for receiving all drama with applause, "like the tame animals design'd for show."

Or when, in armour of Corinthian brass,
Heroic actor stares you in the face,
And cries aloud with emphasis that's fit, on

15 Irwin, 168.
Liberty, freedom, liberty and Briton!
While frowning, gaping for applause he stands,
What generous Briton can refuse his hands?
Like the tame animals design'd for show,
You have your cues to clap, as they do bow;
Taught to command, your judgments have no share;
By chance you guess aright, by chance you err.

Fielding is concerned here with two attitudes of the British public; first, they are indiscriminate in their approval of theatrical entertainments. Second, Fielding believes that because of this uncritical acceptance, the English people frequently mistake the appearance of a virtuous action for the actuality; they cheer the actor and his slogans of freedom, they cheer the politician and his slogans of freedom; they fail to perceive that the actor and the politician are essentially the same, for, behind the bombast, the promises are hollow and meaningless. Several years after The Author's Farce, Fielding expressed this conviction in an essay in The Champion:

In the same manner we are deceived in the grand pantomines played on the stage of life, where there is often no less difference between appearances and reality of men and things, and where those who are either strangers to the springs of political action, judging by habits, pasts, or titles, have actually mistaken men for heroes, patriots and politicians, who have been in fact . . . mere machines . . . for when a man is absolutely void of capacity, it matters not whether his skin be stuffed with guts or straw, or whether his face be made of wood or brass.16

16 The Champion (April 22, 1740), Works, XV, 288.
In The Author's Farce, Fielding laughs at the complacent attitude of the British public, an attitude which would countenance the existence of social and political vices so long as the appearance of virtue could be maintained. In his last political play, Eurydice Hiss'd, Fielding maintains that this public permissiveness has gone past the point of amusement. Later still, in Jonathan Wild, the grave man, who enunciates Fielding's political creed, states that it is the people's own fault that they are being exploited by corrupt and avaricious politicians, for the public fails to distinguish between appearance and reality.

After the Prologue, Act I opens at the house of Mrs. Moneywood, where she is denouncing her lodger, the playwright Luckless, for not having paid his rent. His expressions of his financial distress and of his hopes for his play are of no avail. Mrs. Moneywood coldly says, "I would no more depend on a benefit-night of an unacted play, than I would on a benefit ticket in an undrawn lottery." (I, 1) She becomes further enraged when she is confirmed in her suspicion that Luckless and her daughter Harriot are in love. Mrs. Moneywood announces that she will marry Luckless herself; when Luckless refuses her offer, Mrs. Moneywood leaves, crying that she will be revenged.

After Mrs. Moneywood's departure, Luckless and Harriot, his
sweetheart, meet. He tells her of her mother's proposal and pretends that he has decided to be prudent and accept. There follows a few moments of sentimental dialogue, as Harriot pretends that Luckless' decision does not break her heart, before Luckless reveals that he loves only Harriot.

Since all this sentiment is to be followed by a love duet, Fielding breaks the effect by a topical allusion to Walpole in one of Luckless' similes; Walpole is referred to as a "great man," the term frequently used by the Opposition writers. Luckless, emphasizing the strength of his ardor, says, "What, to part with thee? A pretty woman will be sooner in earnest to part with her beauty, or a great man with his power." (I, 3).

Shortly after the two lovers part, Luckless' true friend Witmore arrives to offer consolation and assistance. Luckless expresses wonder "at finding a man in this age, who can be a friend to adversity." (I, 5).

Witmore's objective comments on society contain Fielding's indictment of corruption in English life. The scene between Witmore and Luckless is really Witmore's monologue on the venality of English life: true merit is not rewarded; to be successful a man must become a flatterer to some worthless but influential individual; the only truly honorable occupations are regarded as
degrading. Witmore is ostensibly concerned with the plight of his friend in the theatrical world ruled by vain managers; however his statements leave no doubt that Witmore's charges are meant to apply to all society:

'Sdeath! in an age of learning and true politeness, where a man might succeed by his merit, there would be some encouragement. But now, when party and prejudice carry all before them; when learning is decried, wit not understood. . . Be profane, be scurrilous, be immodest; if you would receive applause, deserve to receive sentence at the Old Bailey; and if you would ride in a coach, deserve to ride in a cart. . . .

If thou wilt write against all these reasons, get a patron, be pimp to some worthless man of quality, write panegyries on him, flatter him with as many virtues as he has vices. Then, perhaps, you will engage his lordship, his lordship engages the town on your side, and then write till your arms ache, sense or nonsense, it will all go down.

What does the soldier or physician thrive by, but slaughter? The lawyer, but by quarrels? The courtier, but by taxes? The poet, but by flattery? I know none that thrive by profiting mankind, but the husbandman and the merchant: the one gives you the fruit of your own soil, the other brings you those from abroad; and yet these are represented as mean and mechanical, and the other as honourable and glorious. (I,5).

In using such terms as "party and place" and in referring to the courtiers's profit on taxes, Fielding was echoing Opposition criticisms of Walpole. "Party" had become very important during the administration of Walpole; he was one of the first to insist on a politically homogeneous Cabinet. "Place" was also an important word in the Opposition catalogue of charges, for the members of
the Opposition accused Walpole of filling positions with his political henchmen and of selling public offices in return for political favors.

That Walpole was profiting from public taxes was an Opposition axiom. In 1711 Walpole, then Secretary of War, was found guilty of "a high breach of trust and notorious corruption" for allegedly pocketing a large sum of public money involved in two forage contracts in Scotland. Walpole was expelled from the House of Commons and imprisoned in the Tower. Although the entire plot was a Tory device to get rid of Walpole, this incident gave credence to the Opposition's statements regarding Walpole's corruption.

The seriousness of the Witmore-Luckless scene is alleviated by the appearance of Marplay, Junior, who represents Theophilus Cibber, which is soon followed by the arrival of Bookweight the bookseller. Marplay tells Luckless that he may come and read his play for the two Marplays; Bookweight refuses to publish Luckless play since it has not been presented.

The second act opens as Luckless reads his play for the two Marplays. In the first two scenes of Act II, there is a

17 In the original version of this play, the character "Sparkish" was a caricature of Wilks, Cibber's associate as manager of Drury Lane. When Fielding revised the play, he substituted Theophilus Cibber for Wilks, since Wilks was then dead.
satire on Colley Cibber and Theophilus Cibber, on their habit of altering plays, and on their practice of foisting bad plays on the public.

Act II, Scenes 2 through 6, take place in the home of Bookweight, the bookseller who keeps a "stable" of hack writers. The writers are busy engaged at their respective tasks; Mr. Blotpage is composing a poem; Mr. Quibble is writing a refutation of a pamphlet he had composed earlier; Mr. Dash is adding "a few moral reflections" to a tale of murder. Mr. Bookweight is urging them all to greater speed.

Into this group comes Mr. Scarecrow peddling his political pamphlets:

Scarecrow. Sir, I have brought you a libel against the ministry.
Bookweight. Sir, I shall not take any thing against them; --for I have two in the press already. [Aside.
Scarecrow. The, Sir, I have an Apology in defence of them.
Bookweight. That I shall not meddle with neither; they don't sell so well. (II, 5)

Fielding refers here to the common practice of political writers of writing on both sides of a question.

Luckless enters Bookweight's home to offer his puppet-show, which is to be presented that night at Drury Lane playhouse. Bookweight is astounded at the thought of a puppet-show in a playhouse, but Luckless remarks, "Ah, why, what have been all the
playhouses a long while but puppet-shows?" (II, 6). Bookweight acknowledges that the puppet-show may succeed and agrees to make a bargain with Luckless for its publication.

Act III is devoted to the presentation of Luckless' play; thus, The Author's Farce is the first play in which Fielding uses the device of the rehearsal or presentation of a play, a device he was to use extensively in his later plays. The device is very effective for satire, since the author can intervene between the audience and the play and can direct the attention of the audience to the characters and incidents he wants them to notice.

Before his play opens, Luckless explains the matter and setting to the Manager. "Why, Sir, the chief business is the election of an arch-poet, or, as others call him, a poet laureat, to the Goddess of Nonsense. . . . As for the scene, it lies on the other side the river Styx, and all the people in my play are dead" (III, 1).

This farce is devoted primarily to literary and dramatic burlesque, but Fielding comments on the social and political scene in the dialogue and in the ballad airs. The songs (there are twenty-five songs in the puppet-show, while there are only two songs in Acts I and II.) are in the style of The Beggar's Opera --traditional ballad airs with new lyrics.
Two of the major sources of social satire in the farce are Punch and his wife, Joan. As the farce opens, they are screaming abuse at one another; they decide, however, that since they hate each other as much as men and wives of the upper classes, they must express their hatred in the genteel fashion:

Punch. Since we hate like people in vogue,  
Let us call not bitch and rogue:  
Gentler titles let us use,  
Hate each other, but not abuse.

Joan. Pretty dear!  
Punch. Ah! Ma Chere!  
Both. Joy of my life, and only care. (III, 1)

These characters move freely in and out of the farce; that is, Punch frequently steps out to converse with Luckless, and he also breaks into the plot of the farce on occasion.

After Punch and Joan dance off, Charon (the boatman on the river Styx) and a Poet are seen disputing, because the poet has not paid his fare across the river. As they are talking, one of Charon's sailors comes in with a prisoner, Mr. Robgrave, a sexton. Charon charges Mr. Robgrave with stealing jewels and other valuables from graves. Mr. Robgrave's answer is a satirical thrust at Walpole's alleged method of employing underlings to do his political "dirty work" and rewarding them with a small office. "Alack, Sir," says the Sexton, "I am but a poor rogue; the parish officers and others have had them [the valuables] all; I had only a small
reward for stealing them." (III, 1). This method is similar to that practiced by the great criminal Jonathan Wild, to whom Walpole was frequently compared (see Chapter V).

After the unhappy Sexton has been disposed of, and after the characters representing the popular entertainments have gone off, Fielding makes a brief joke at the expense of Walpole and Edmund Curll; Luckless introduces the bookseller, Mr. Curry (obviously Curll) as the "prime minister" of Nonsense. (Swift was the first to use the term "prime minister" in reference to Walpole; the title was taken up by the Opposition and used, interchangeably with "great man," to signify Walpole. Throughout his political satires, Fielding uses these two terms extensively.)¹⁸

As the Bookseller and the Poet walk away, discussing the underworld as compared to the upper world, Punch breaks out of the play to converse with Luckless. Punch says that he has determined to leave his wife and establish himself in trade. He cannot be a tradesman because he has no stock; he cannot be a lawyer because he knows no law; he cannot be a member of parliament, which he refers to as "the rarest trade," because he does not have an estate. He concludes, at length, that there is only one thing he

can do with no qualifications whatsoever. "Ay, why then I'll turn
great man, that requires no qualification whatsoever." (III, 1).
This is, of course, another joke at the expense of Robert Walpole.

The term "great man" is used again, almost immediately
after Punch makes his resolution to become a "great man." Don
Opera sings about the foolish man who works to merit true praise,
while the wise, or great, man works only for money.

Let the foolish philosopher strive in his cell,
   By wisdom, or virtue, to merit true praise;
The soldier in hardship and danger still dwell,
   That glory and honour may crown his last days:
   The patriot sweat,
       To be thought great;
Or beauty all day at the looking-glass toil;
   That popular voices
       May ring their applauses,
While a breath is the only reward of their coil

But would you a wise man to action incite,
   Be riches propos'd the reward of his pain:
In riches is center'd all human delight;
   No joy on earth but what gold can obtain.
   If women, wine,
       Or grandeur fine,
Be most your delight, all these riches can;
   Would you have men to flatter?
To be rich is the matter;
   When you cry he is rich, you cry a great man.
   (III, 1)

Once again, Fielding is obviously referring to Walpole, who was
notorious for his addiction to women, to drink, and to sumptuous
decoration and expensive pictures.

In these two jibes at Walpole as great man, the Punch-
Luckless scene and Don Opera's song, the term "great man" is used only once, in the last line of the scene and song, as the climax to a hierarchy of occupations. In the Punch-Luckless scene, the "great man" is the only position for which one does not need qualifications. In the song, all occupations that are pursued with altruistic motives are classified as "foolish," while the 'great man' is wise since he accepts money as his only reward.

The Author's Farce ends happily for all the characters, despite the fact that Constables enter to prevent the conclusion of the puppet-show. The Constables will not permit the Goddess Nonsense to be reviled, since the whole town supports her. The end is a burlesque of the endings of the sentimental comedies; all the characters, even Punch, are discovered to be relatives of kings and queens.

In The Author's Farce, then, Fielding's references to Walpole are primarily in political jokes; there is no extended satire. In the two places in the farce at which Walpole is referred to as the "great man," the epithet appears only once, as the climax to a series of occupations.

Fielding's satire, in this play, is not aimed at a single person; it is aimed at the social system which permits evil to go unchecked and even attempts to ignore its very existence. Only
in his late plays (i.e., The Historical Register, Eurydice Hiss'd), and in the novel Jonathan Wild does Fielding attack Walpole as responsible for originating a system which not only tolerated corruption but lived by it.

Less than a month after the first appearance of The Author's Farce, on April 24, 1730, another play of Fielding's was shown for the first time at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket. This was Tom Thumb: a Tragedy, a burlesque of the bombast of the heroic drama, especially the plays of Dryden, Lee and Banks. The burlesque was so enormously successful--it enjoyed a run of over forty nights--that Fielding set to work revising and expanding it.

The revision, entitled The Tragedy of Tragedies; or, The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great, was presented on March 24, 1731. Fielding had considerably altered the early version; he also added a "Preface," in which he parodied the pedantic methods of critics, and mock-scholarly footnotes. There is also indication that Fielding added political satire to the second version.

Three eminent critics place The Tragedy of Tragedies among Fielding's political satires. J. H. Plumb, Walpole's biographer, places this play with The Beggar's Opera and The Historical Register as the most outstanding and enduring of the plays.
satirizing Walpole. Homes Dudden considers this Fielding's first experiment in political satire. Winfield Rogers says that in the revision Tom Thumb became "the Great," "and thus moves from literature to life."

Although there were many references to the play in various periodicals immediately after it first appeared, there was no statement that the burlesque contained political satire. However, The Daily Post for March 29, 1742, attributed some political significance to The Tragedy of Tragedies; the writer described Fielding's work as "a piece, at first calculated to ridicule some particular persons and affairs in Europe (at the time it was writ) but more especially in this island."

It is very likely that Fielding did, indeed, add political allusions when he changed Tom Thumb into The Tragedy of Tragedies. From The Beggar's Opera and The Author's Farce, he knew that audiences responded enthusiastically to topical jokes, particularly when the laugh was at the expense of a powerful politician.

By the deft use of allusions, particularly epithets, Fielding suggests that Tom Thumb represents not only the hero of the

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19 Plumb, First Four Georges, 76.
20 Dudden, I, 66-67.
21 Rogers, 39.
22 The Daily Post (March 29, 1742), in Dudden, I, 68.
heroic drama but also Sir Robert Walpole. First, he uses the term "the Great" to refer to Tom Thumb; this epithet is used in the title and in two scenes (I, 2; II, 3). Tom Thumb is also referred to as a "great man" (I, 5). Such references would inspire the audience to draw a comparison between Tom Thumb and Robert Walpole.

In addition to using the title "the Great," Fielding uses the popular Opposition comparison of Walpole and two tyrants of the ancient world, Caesar and Alexander. The King, in The Tragedy of Tragedies, compares the conquering Thumb to the ancient warriors:

Tom Thumb! Odzooks, my wide extended realm
Knows not a name so glorious as Tom Thumb.
Let Macedonia Alexander boast,
Let Rome her Caesars and her Scipios show,
Her Messieurs France, let Holland boast Mynheers,
Ireland her O's, her Mac's let Scotland boast,
Let England boast no other than Tom Thumb. (I, 3)

There are certain other specific references to the Walpole-Tom Thumb parallel. Tom is the King's friend and is referred to by Arthur as "preserver of my kingdom" (I, 2). One of the courtiers hails Thumb as "the pillar of the state" (I, 1). Tom is associated with Walpole's political policy of "peace and safety" (III, 6) and with Walpole's favorite recreation, fox-hunting.

Tom Thumb is the hero of the Court party, who hail him as
the kingdom's savior; he is despised and plotted against by the "Opposition," headed by Lord Grizzle. Twice it is suggested that Tom is a fraud. In the first scene of the play, the courtiers Noodle and Doodle are awaiting Tom's arrival. Noodle repeats the rumor that Tom's miraculous birth (Tom Thumb was supposed to have been begotten of a pudding) is a deceit:

They tell me it is whisper'd in the books
Of all our sages, that this mighty hero,
By Merlin's art begot, hath not a bone
Within his skin, but is a lump of gristle.
(I, 1)

Later, when the Queen and Lord Grizzle converse about Tom's proposed marriage to the Princess Huncamunca, Lord Grizzle says that Tom's victory over the giants did not actually happen:

I tell you, madam, it was all a trick,
He made the giants first, and then he kill'd them;
As fox-hunters bring foxes to the wood,
And then with hounds they drive them out again.
(I, 5)

When Grizzle leaves, the Queen, in a soliloquy, confesses her love for Tom Thumb, which may be intended as a parody on Queen Caroline's widely-rumored love for Walpole.

While Walpole is satirized as Tom Thumb, the Opposition appears in the character of Lord Grizzle, referred to by the Queen as a "mountain of treason, ugly as the devil" (I, 5). Grizzle, like Tom Thumb, wants to marry Huncamunca and becomes enraged when
he learns that she has already married Thumb. Huncamunca generously says, "A maid, like me, Heaven form'd at least for two,/ I married him and now I'll marry you" (II, 11). Grizzle, a typical Opposition politician, refuses to share what he refers to as "the office" of Huncamunca's husband.

Grizzle and his Opposition party are presented as a disorganized group. Late in the play Lord Grizzle, Fodle, and the rebels are wandering about a plain in search of an enemy to fight (III, 7). Fielding thus laughs at both the Ministry and the Opposition.

The Tragedy of Tragedies is Fielding's first experiment in political satire using representational characters, although Tom Thumb represents only certain aspects of Walpole, and Grizzle is a composite of Opposition characters. Fielding's earliest success with the extensive use of this device appears in The Grub-Street Opera.

The Grub-Street Opera represents Fielding's first sustained political satire, as well as his first encounter with governmental disapproval of his work. It is a revised version of the ballad opera by Fielding which was first shown on April 22, 1731, The Welch Opera, or, The Grey Mare the Better Horse. The title probably refers to the strange and garbled English spoken
by King George II and Queen Caroline, for Fielding presented in this play characters who represented all the leading politicians and even the royal family. The whole play is an allegory on the contention between the Ministry, headed by Walpole, and the Opposition, headed by William Pulteney.

The Welch Opera was performed a total of ten times. On April 22, 23, 26, and 28, 1731, it was shown as an afterpiece to The Tragedy of Tragedies. On May 19, 26, and 27 and June 1, 2, and 4, 1731, it was shown as an afterpiece to The Fall of Mortimer, a political play which was eventually suppressed by the government. 23

In The Daily Post of Saturday, June 5, 1731, there appeared an advertisement for The Fall of Mortimer to which the following note was added: "N.B. There being a great demand for The Welch Opera, we are obliged to advertise the Town, that it being now made into a whole Night's Entertainment, intituled, The Grub-street Opera, now in Rehearsal, it cannot possibly be performed any longer with this play." 24

In revising his play from The Welch Opera to The Grub-Street...
Fielding made three major changes: first, he expanded the play from two acts to three acts; second, he made the topical allusions more pointed; third, he changed the name to The Grub-Street Opera, "a mocking reference to the political pamphlets of the day, which, though often composed by persons of eminence, belonged essentially to the Grub-Street class of literature, the peculiarity of which was to substitute blank contradiction and vulgar abuse for rational argument." Fielding, who had already satirized the production of these pamphlets in The Author's Farce says in the Prologue to The Grub-Street Opera that "the whole wit of Grub-Street consists in these two little words--you lie."

On June 7, 1731, in The Daily Post, it was announced that The Grub-Street Opera would be presented on June 11th. On June 11th, another advertisement appeared, urging the public to come to the Little Theatre in the Haymarket that day to see The Grub-Street Opera. Fielding's ballad opera was not presented on June 11th. On the following day, June 12th, it was stated that the illness of one of the actors had caused the delay and that the play would open the following Monday. On June 14th, the day appointed for the opening, at the bottom of the advertisement for The Fall of Mortimer in The Daily Post, the following note

25 Dudden, I, 90. 26 Brown, 34.
appeared: "Note, we are oblig'd to defer the Grubstreet Opera till further notice." Thus ends the stage history of The Grub-Street Opera; although two of the printed versions mention it as having been performed, there is no conclusive evidence that it was ever acted.

Why was The Grub-Street Opera never presented? Homes Dudden suggests that the Lord Chamberlain, at Walpole's direction, banned the play. That some of Fielding's contemporaries believed this to be true is clear from a statement in the printed version of The Welch Opera, published on June 26, 1731, without Fielding's authorization. The author of the Preface to this work said, "As the Performance of the Grubstreet Opera has been prevented, by a certain Influence which has been very prevailing of late years, we thought it would not be unacceptable to the Town, if we communicated to them the Welch Opera." Fielding himself denied that The Grub-Street Opera had been banned by the government. In a letter printed in The Daily Post on June 28th, Fielding denounced the bookseller Rayner for publishing The Welch Opera and denied that the revised version had

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27 Ibid., 35.  
28 Dudden, I, 90.  
There cannot, of course, be any completely verifiable solution to the two-fold problem of why the play was not performed and why Fielding denied that the government banned its presentation. As Jack R. Brown points out, the evidence for government intervention is conclusive. Fielding may have denied this because "it is likely that at this time Fielding was not as proud as he might later have been at having his work considered dangerous to the government, and that he was anxious to steer a middle course and to leave the way open for a later reconciliation with the ministry." 31

Brown suggests that perhaps Fielding planned to write a version that would be inoffensive to the government. 32 Another possibility is that the government's intervention was indirect. Fielding may have been warned that if the play should be performed, it would be banned, and he may have preferred to withdraw the play rather than risk the Ministry's displeasure. 33

Several considerations make the last suggestion the most probable. Fielding was not at this time a member of the Opposition. He had not, in fact, given up hope of securing some

30 The Daily Post (June 28, 1731), quoted in Brown, 36.
31 Brown, 37. 32 Ibid. 33 Ibid.
preferment from Walpole. In 1731, the year of The Grub-Street Opera, Fielding addressed a second verse epistle to Walpole, in which he once again sought the Minister's intercession on his behalf. In 1732, Fielding dedicated his comedy The Modern Husband to Walpole, and in the Dedication, he lavishly praised Sir Robert as a "patron of the Muses." It therefore seems likely that Fielding attempted to secure his own political future by voluntarily withdrawing The Grub-Street Opera, and that he attempted to save the ministry embarrassment by denying that his decision was the result of governmental coercion.

There are two printed versions of The Grub-Street Opera. The first, called The Genuine Grub-Street Opera, was published on August 19, 1731. It appears to have been printed either from a copy taken down at a rehearsal or from the memory of the actors. The only "approved" version was brought out by J. Roberts, Fielding's publisher, late in the summer of 1731. This authorized version appears in collections of Fielding's works.

The Grub-Street Opera was obviously written under the influence of Gay's Beggar's Opera. Fielding uses the same formula as Gay had; he takes characters from the upper levels of society

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35 Ibid.
and places them in occupations and situations that are much lower on the social scale, but he has them retain the vices and affectations of the upper classes. This distorted perspective is one of the major sources of humor in The Grub-Street Opera; for example, Fielding shows the pettiness of the political quarrels of Walpole and Pulteney by likening the two men to two servants fighting for the position of butler. Fielding also uses the ballad opera format originated by Gay—short airs, familiar to the audience, with brief sections of prose dialogue.

Within this "borrowed" format, Fielding presents his allegory of the house of a wealthy Welsh squire and the royal "house" of England. In the comparison, Squire Apshinken, his wife and son represent the royal family of England; his servants are the ministers and politicians, and the parish is England.

Sir Owen Apshinken is George II, a man for whom Fielding always had deep affection and respect. Sir Owen is beloved by his tenants; one of them, Mr. Apshones says, "Sir Owen hath still behaved as the best of landlords; he knows a landlord should protect, not prey on his tenants—should be the shepherd, not the wolf of his flock" (II, 7). Sir Owen does not take an active part in the management of the parish but leaves the administrative duties to his wife. He tells the parson, Mr. Puzzletext, "If she
interferes not with my pipe, I am resolv'd not to interfere with her family.--Let her govern, while I smoke" (I, 2). Sir Owen is, as Mr. Puzzletext replies, a victim of "petticoat government" (I, 1).

The head of this "petticoat government," Lady Apshinken, is the brilliant and domineering Queen Caroline. She possesses many of the traits for which Caroline was well known: she is fond of disputing about theological matters (I, 2); she is thrifty to the point of parsimoniousness; she loathes her son (I, 2); and she staunchly defends the butler Robin (III, 5). Indeed the parish is governed by Lady Apshinken and Robin, much as the Opposition insisted that England was governed by Queen Caroline and Walpole.

Lady Apshinken attempts to keep Sir Owen in his place by frequently reminding him of an advantageous offer of marriage which she had refused, on grounds of conscience. This parallels Caroline's refusal of a match with the Roman Catholic Archduke Charles of Austria. 36

The son of this strange pair, young Owen Apshinken, represents Frederick, Prince of Wales, the son of George II and Caroline. Lord and Lady Apshinken despise their son, for, as Lady Apshinken says, "Whatever Nature hath done for him in another way,

36 Dudden, I, 91.
she hath left his head unfurnished" (I, 2). J. H. Plumb reports a similar statement of Queen Caroline's regarding Frederick: "If I was to see him in hell, I should feel no more for him than I should for any other rogue who ever went there." On the same occasion George II referred to his son as "a monster and the greatest villain ever born."

Lord and Lady Apshinken are determined to thwart young Owen, who, they fear, is about to make an unsuitable marriage. Lady Apshinken, in fact, instructs Mr. Puzzletext to see that all the maids in the parish are married at once, because Owen has shown a great interest in them (I, 2). This resembles a situation that arose in England's royal family. Frederick, the Prince of Wales, wanted to marry Princess Sophia Dorothea Wilhelmina of Prussia, but King George forbade the marriage, and negotiations were finally broken off in 1730 (one year before the production of The Grub-Street Opera).

The chief servant in this household is Robin, the butler, who represents George II's first minister, Robert Walpole. Robin's mismanagement of Sir Owen's household is to be equated with Walpole's alleged mismanagement of the government of England; as

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37 Plumb, First Four Georges, 83.
38 Ibid.
39 Dudden, I, 92.
Robin steals spoons and plate from his master, Walpole stole public money from the King and the treasury. The accusations against Robin are summed up in a tirade by his rival William, the coachman (William Pulteney):

Sirrah, I will make you repent you ever quarrell'd with me—I will tell my master of two silver spoons you stole—I'll discover your tricks—your selling of glasses, and pretending the frost broke them—making master brew more beer than he needed, and then giving it away to your own family; especially to feed the great swoln belly of that fat-gutted brother of your's—who gets drunk twice a day at master's expence. . . . No, sirrah, it is not all—then there's your filing the plate, and when it was found lighter, pretending that it wasted in cleaning; and your bills for tutty and rotten stone, when you us'd nothing but poor whiting. Sirrah, you have been such a rogue, that you have stole above half my master's plate, and spoil'd the rest. (II, 4)

The "fat gutted brother" who gets drunk daily at the master's expense is Horatio Walpole, Robert's brother.

Later in the play Robin mentions one of William's charges. The butler states that, although he does brew extra beer, Lady Apshinken will not let him be discharged for it since "she knows half of it hath gone to her own private cellar, where she and the parson sit and drink, and meditate ways to propagate religion in the parish---" (II, 5). This refers to the fact that Walpole had obtained for Queen Caroline an unprecedentedly large jointure of £100,000 per year (between one and three million dollars by
modern standards). 40

There are further resemblances between Robin and Walpole. Robin is in love with Sweetissa, the waiting woman, as Walpole was with Maria Skerrett. Like the Prime Minister, Robin is accused of religious scepticism (I, 11). Robin has managed to save something for his "old age" by cheating Sir Owen, as Walpole was charged with robbing the public treasury to amass a personal fortune.

Just as peace for England was an important part of Robert Walpole's national policy, so Robin is known by both servants and family as a peacemaker. When Puzzletext enters at the end of the play, shouting that he has been beaten, both Lady Apshinken and William deny that Robin could have done it, for "he's peaceably enough inclin'd" (III, 14). William has earlier accused Robin of adopting a peaceful attitude out of base motives:

I suppose peace-making is one of the secret services you have done master----for they are such secrets, that your friend the devil can hardly discover--and whence does your peace-making arise, but from your fears of getting a black eye or bloody nose in the squabble?--for if you could set the whole parish a boxing, without boxing yourself, it is well known you would do it, sirrah, sirrah----had your love for the tenants been the occasion of your peace-making, as you call it, you would not be always making master so hard upon them in every court. . . (II, 4)

40 Ibid.
Robin is also like Walpole in having a certain worldly wisdom. Walpole reportedly enunciated the doctrine that every man has his price. In one of his songs, Robin states this principle by contending that every man is a rogue:

The more we know of human kind,
The more deceits and tricks we find
In ev'ry land as well as Wales;
For would you see no roguery thrive,
Upon the mountains you must live,
For rogues abound in all the vales.
The master and the man will nick,
The mistress and the maid will trick;
For rich and poor
Are rogue and whore,
There's not one honest man in a score,
Nor woman true in twenty-four. (I, 8)

In the final scene of the play, Robin repeats this idea in another song in which there is a direct reference to Walpole by the term "great man":

In this little family plainly we find
A little epitome of human kind,
Where, down from the beggar up to the great man,
Each gentleman cheats you no more than he can.
    Sing tantarara, rogues all.
For if you will be such a husband of pelf,
To be serv'd by no cheats, you must e'en serve yourself;

The world is so cram'd brimful of deceit,
That if Robin be a name for a cheat,
    Sing tantarara, Bobs all, Bobs all,
Sing tantarara, Bobs all. (III, 14)

Both songs state that all men are villains and will do anything or cheat anyone for the proper price. As a result, no one is
to be trusted; if a man refuses to deal with cheats, he cannot deal with anyone and must then "serve himself."

Robin's adherents in the Apshinken household are two. The first is John, the groom, who is equivalent to John, Lord Hervey, one of Walpole's chief supporters. John appears only briefly, chiefly to carry a challenge from Robin to William. John remarks that he has neglected his own work to do Robin's tasks (I, 9), a statement sure to provoke laughter from an audience that knew Lord Hervey as one of Walpole's chief political aides.

Robin's second ally is Thomas, the gardener, who represents Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle; Newcastle was an invaluable political friend, since he was reported to be a genius at managing elections. Thomas appears in the play only briefly to act as a "yes-man" to Robin.

Robin's chief rival in the Apshinken domain is William, the coachman, who is to be identified with William Pulteney, leader of the Opposition against Walpole. While Robin has a hearty, genial quality, William is something of a conniving sneak; his single aim is to take Robin's place as butler. William tells Robin of his willingness to be promoted to the place of chief servant:

When Master thinks fit, I am ready to quit,
A place I so little regard, Sir;
For while thou art here,
No merit must e'er
Expect to find any reward, Sir.
The groom that is able
To manage his stable,
Of places enough need not doubt, Sir;
But you, my good brother,
Will scarce find another,
If master should e'er turn you out, Sir.

(II, 4)

The song expresses William Pulteney's desire to supplant Walpole. Robin (Walpole) comments on William's ambition by saying, "But perhaps you may find me too cunning for you, and while you are attempting my place, you may lose your own" (II, 4).

In the last scene of the play, William begins a chain of accusations among the servants; each tells some items that one of the others has pilfered. Parson Puzzletext advises the Apshinkens to be lenient with the offenders; the parson also says that if Robert has stolen more, it is only because he has had more chances. The graceless loser William dissents: "We are none of us so bad as Robin, tho'—there's cheating in his very name.——Robin, is as much as to say, robbing" (III, 14).

Both William and Robin have sweethearts among the female servants. William is in love with Susan, the cook; Robin is preparing to marry Sweetissa, the waiting woman, who represents Walpole's mistress, Maria Skerrett. These two women are usually the
source of the wisdom of expediency in the play.

Early in the play, Sweetissa and Margery, the house-maid, discuss Robin. Margery cannot understand why Sweetissa will consent to marry a rogue like Robin. Sweetissa is not concerned, for she knows that the rich are not punished for their crimes:

**Sweetissa.** Why should not I love Robin? And why should not Bob love me? While ev'ry one else he is fobbing, He still may be honest to me. For tho' his master he cheats, His mistress shares what he gains; And whilst I am tasting the sweets, The devil take her who complains.

**Margery.** But should he be taken indeed; Ah! think what a shame it would be To have your love dragg'd out of bed, And thence in a cart to the tree.

**Sweetissa.** Let halters tie up the poor cheat, Who only deserves to be hang'd; The wit who can get an estate, Hath still too much wit to be hang'd.

(I, 5)

The characters in *The Grub-Street Opera* are involved in the sketchiest of plots. Young Owen, who would like to have Sweetissa for himself plants two letters—one for Sweetissa to find which makes Robin appear unfaithful, one for Robin to find which describes Sweetissa as having been unfaithful with William. The contention that ensues is Fielding's picture of the political strife between Robert Walpole and William Pulteney.

Robin sends William a challenge, and the two meet for a
duel. The "duel" actually consists of name-calling and accusations, a parody on the manner in which the Government and the Opposition conducted themselves in debate. The scene is also intended to ridicule a duel between William Pulteney and John, Lord Hervey, that was a topic of fashionable gossip in 1731.41

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William. Robin, come on, come on, come on,
     As soon as you please,
Robin. Will, I will hit thee a slap in the,
     Slap in the, slap in the face.
William. Would, would I could see it,
     I would with both feet
     Give thee such a kick by the by.
Robin. If you dare, Sir, do.
William. Why do not, Sir, you?
Robin. I'm ready, I'm ready.
William. And so am I too.
William. 'Twas he that lies
     Did first devise,
     The first words were his, and the last shall be mine.
Robin. You kiss my dog.
William. You're a sly dog.
Robin. Loggerhead.
Robin. Fool.
William. Fox.
Robin. Swine. (II, 3; II, 4)
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As this exchange is taking place, Susan, the cook, enters and observes the quarrel. She chides them both with words which could apply both to servants and politicians: "Fie upon't! William, what have we to do with master's losses? He is rich, and can

41 Ibid., 93.
afford it—don't let us quarrel among ourselves—let us stand by one another----for, let me tell you, if matters were to be too nicely examined into, I am afraid it would go hard with us all ----wise servants always stick close to one another, like plumbs in a pudding that's overwetted, says Susan the cook" (II, 4).

At the conclusion of the play, all the problems are resolved. Young Owen is married to the daughter of an honest country squire; Robin and Sweetissa are reconciled; William and Susan, and John and Margery decide to marry. In addition, the bountiful Lord and Lady Apshinken allow the servants to keep the goods they have stolen from the household.

'While Robert Walpole is certainly one of the chief targets of Fielding's satire in The Grub-Street Opera, he is by no means a villain. If he has stolen more than other politicians, it is because his opportunities have been greater. There is, in fact, an indication that Fielding attempted to soften the attack on Walpole. When The Grub-Street Opera was published, Fielding inserted in Act I, Scene 5, two passages that do not appear in the two other printed versions of the play. Both passages are compliments to Robin, and hence Walpole, spoken by Sweetissa. She first says to Margery, "Oh Margery, Margery! an upper servant's honesty is never so conspicuous, as when he is abused by the
under-servants.—They must rail at some one; and if they abuse him, he preserves his master and mistress from abuse" (I, 5).

Then, as the scene closes, Sweetissa states that "if all my master's ancestors had met with as good servants as Robin, he had enjoyed a better estate than he hath now" (I, 5).

These speeches were obviously calculated to soothe the ruffled feelings of the ministry. As Jack R. Brown points out, the insertion of these compliments to Walpole clearly indicates that in 1731 Fielding was not yet committed to the Opposition. 42

[I]t is important to bear in mind that Fielding's first attempt at direct political satire found him very largely non-partisan and distinctly light-hearted. He is simply an entertaining young man, bantering the politics and politicians of his time with little regard to "sides" or governmental principles. His satire is aimed at corrupt practices in general and, most of all, at those who take this whole matter of politics too seriously . . . . It is quite likely . . . that Fielding at this time was more an looker-on at politics than an active participant in party warfare, was not overjoyed at finding his play taken as an outright attack on the ministry. . . . 43

Fielding was bitterly disappointed when The Grub-Street Opera was banned. He gave up writing political satire until 1734. Since the Little Theatre in the Haymarket was being kept under close surveillance by the Government, presentations of regular drama practically ceased. Fielding, therefore, began to show his

42 Brown, 38. 43 Brown, 40.
plays at Drury Lane. As Dudden comments, to present satire on
the ministry or the Crown at the Theatre Royal would have been
"inadmissible."44

One of the plays by Fielding produced at Drury Lane was a
comedy, The Modern Husband, dedicated to Robert Walpole. In
retrospect, the "Dedication" is filled with irony; the virtues
which Fielding extols in Walpole in 1732 would be the vices for
which he would denounce the Prime Minister in 1736:

[When the little artifices of your enemies, which you
have surmounted, shall be forgotten; when envy shall
cease to misrepresent your actions, and ignorance to
misapprehend them, the muses shall remember their pro-
tector, the wise statesman, and the generous patron, the
steadfast friend, and the true patriot; but above all
that humanity and sweetness of temper, which shines
through all your actions, shall render the name of Sir
Robert Walpole dear to his no longer ungrateful country.

With this dedication, Fielding's public appeals to the
Minister ended; yet not until almost two years later, in 1734,
did Fielding begin to make overtures to the leaders of the
Opposition.

Fielding's early political plays were not written, like
his later dramatic satires, out of political conviction. The
satire is non-partisan and impartial; Walpole is the target of
many political jokes, but so are the leaders of the Opposition.

44 Dudden, I, 95.
The satire in Fielding's early political plays is that of a young playwright aspiring to theatrical popularity. The Beggar's Opera had conclusively demonstrated that allusions to the social and political personalities of the day were enormously popular with audiences. Thus it was certainly with a view to financial and popular success in the theatre that Fielding satirized Robert Walpole and other politicians in The Author's Farce, The Tragedy of Tragedies, and The Grub-Street Opera.
CHAPTER IV

HENRY FIELDING'S LATER POLITICAL PLAYS

Henry Fielding was disappointed in his attempts to receive some form of financial support from Sir Robert Walpole and therefore turned his attention to the leaders of the Opposition. His first real overtures came with his ballad opera Don Quixote in England, which Fielding dedicated to Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, one of the prominent leaders of the Opposition. A year before the appearance of Don Quixote, in the dedicatory epistle to his comedy, The Intriguing Chambermaid, Fielding stated the principle that would govern his later drama: "But while I hold the pen, it will be a maxim with me, that vice can never be too great to be lashed, nor virtue too obscure to be commended; in other words, that satire can never rise too high, nor panegyric stoop too low."¹

The panegyric to Chesterfield in the Dedication to Don Quixote is twofold. Fielding first praises Chesterfield the politician "who hath so gloriously distinguished himself in the

cause of liberty." He also praises Chesterfield as a man of letters who is "the most favorite offspring of the British muses."2

Fielding's appeal to Chesterfield as politician and man of letters is related to a secondary purpose of the dedicatory epistle, a consideration of the stage as a political weapon. Fielding recalls that Socrates' destruction was perpetrated in part by the plays of Aristophanes, and concludes that "what is able to bring wisdom and virtue into disrepute, will, with great facility, lay their opposites under a general contempt."3

Thus Fielding suggests that theatrical ridicule, which teaches by example rather than precept, could be a powerful support for the Opposition's cause. "I fancy a lively representation of the calamities brought on a country by general corruption, might have a very sensible and useful effect on the spectators."4

Because of this power of the theatre, Fielding states that a free stage is as valuable, and should be fought for as vigorously, as a free press.

In the opening lines of the Dedication Fielding commends


3Ibid., 7

4Ibid.
"certain scenes" to Lord Chesterfield's attention. These are the three scenes (I, 8 and 9; II, 3) that Fielding added to the original version of the play, which he had written while a student at Leyden in 1728. These election scenes served to heighten the topical interest of the play, since a general election was approaching when Don Quixote was first produced. In fact, the writ for the election were issued on April 18, 1734, the day that Don Quixote in England was published. 5

In this play, Fielding transports Don Quixote and Sancho to an English country town. They are surrounded by venality and corruption in all areas of life. Two themes frequently found in Fielding's plays appear in this one. The first is his disgust at the fact that rich and poor are not punished alike for the same crimes. As Don Quixote tells his squire, "gaols in all countries are only habitations for the poor, not for men of quality. If a poor fellow robs a man of fashion of five shillings, to gaol with him; but the man of fashion may plunder a thousand poor and live in his own house" (I, 2).

Allied to this complaint is Fielding's lament that wealth is society's only measure of a man's worth; this leads to the practice of the most unscrupulous means in acquiring money. In

5 Dudden, I, 126.
both The Author's Farce and The Grub-Street Opera, Fielding brought out the fact that society considers men foolish to follow an honest profession and perform tasks out of a sense of duty; the "truly" wise man lives only for money. One of Fielding's most vigorous denunciations of opportunism appears in Don Quixote's speech to Sancho in the opening moments of the second act:

Virtue, Sancho, is too bright for their eyes, and they dare not behold her. Hypocrisy is the deity they worship. Is not the lawyer often call'd an honest man, when for a sneaking fee he pleads the villains' cause, or attempts to exert evidence to the conviction of the innocent? Does not the physician live well in his neighborhood, while he suffers them to bribe his ignorance to their destruction? but why should I mention those whose profession 'tis to pray on others? Look through the world. What is it recommends men but the poverty, the vice, and the misery of others? This, Sancho, they are sensible of; and therefore, instead of endeavouring to make himself better, each man endeavours to make his neighbor worse. Each man rises to admiration by treading on mankind. Riches and power accrue to the one; by the destruction of thousands. (I1,1)

The political satire in Don Quixote in England, which is concerned with the corruption common in local elections, is concentrated in the three scenes Fielding added to the play in 1734.

In the first of the "election scenes," Act I, Scene 8, the Mayor and a Voter, Mr. Retail, discuss the possibility that there will be no candidate to oppose Sir Thomas Loveland in the forthcoming parliamentary election. If there is no contest, then Sir Thomas is assured of victory and will have no need to spend money
with the local merchants or to wine and dine the local voters. The Mayor suggests that they ask Don Quixote to stand for election, and the two men debate the wisdom of such a course. They immediately dismiss as unimportant the objection that Don Quixote is mad, but Mr. Retail then mentions the rumor that the knight has no money, a far more serious handicap than madness in an election contest. The Mayor says that he has learned from Sancho that Don Quixote has a considerable estate and will be able to meet the expenses of an election. As the scene closes, the Mayor announces that he will not be sold by any man but himself, for "I think that is the privilege of a free Briton" (I, 8).

The following scene (I, 9) continues the election satire. Mr. Retail and the Mayor consult with Guzzle, the innkeeper, about the problem. The three agree that an opposition candidate is necessary to protect the integrity of the town's citizens:

   **Mayor.** I like an opposition, because otherwise a man may be obliged to vote against his party; therefore when we invite a gentleman to stand, we invite him to spend his money for the honour of his party; and when both parties have spent as much as they are able, every honest man will vote according to his conscience. (I, 9)

At last the Mayor approaches Don Quixote to ask him to stand as a candidate against the "Knight of the Long-Purse" (II, 3). Quixote ludicrously misunderstands the Mayor's intentions; the Mayor is encouraged, however, when Quixote begins to make the
lavish promise that anyone recommended by the Mayor will be made
governor of an island within a year. In an "Aside," the Mayor
says, "This is a courtier, I find, by his promises" (II, 3).

Don Quixote at last understands the request; he becomes
enraged at the Mayor's statements that "one man's money is as good
as another" (II, 3) and that the election will be carried by the
candidate who spends the most money in the town. Quixote delivers
another diatribe against the degeneration of mankind, similar in
tone to his speech to Sancho on mankind's hypocrisy (II, 1):

Ha! caitiff: dost thou think I would condescend to be
the patron of a place so mercenary? If my services can-
not procure me the election, dost thou think that my money
should make me their knight? . . . Gods! to what will
mankind degenerate! where not only the vile necessaries
of life, but even honours, which should be the reward of
virtue only, are to be bought with money. (II, 3)

The statements in this speech regarding the sale of honors
and the reference in the scene to the "Knight of the Long-Purse"
are probably directed at Walpole. Fielding obviously attempted
to make the political satire in this play rather general, since
any play dedicated to Lord Chesterfield would immediately be sus-
pect as the work of an Opposition writer; and Fielding was clearly
not ready to make an unequivocal commitment to the Opposition.

One passage in the play is almost certainly an allusion to
Robert Walpole. Sancho, wondering what is to become of him, says,
"Well, if ever I do lay my fingers on an island more, I'll act like other wise governors, fall to plundering as fast as I can; and when I have made my fortune, why, let them turn me out if they will" (II, 14). Homes Dudden interprets this speech as a reference to the common comparison of Walpole and a thief.6

The election scenes in *Don Quixote* served as Fielding's reminder to the Opposition of the effectiveness of political satire in the theatre. He did not ally himself completely with the Opposition by producing a scathing attack on the Prime Minister; rather he offered his services to Chesterfield and waited for the reaction of the Opposition leaders.

The reaction was not swift in coming. For two years following *Don Quixote* in England Fielding did not use his dramatic talents to further the Opposition cause. In 1736 and 1737, however, he joined the ranks of those fighting Walpole; in these two years, Fielding wrote three bitter dramatic satires on the corruption of Walpole: *Pasquin*, *The Historical Register*, and *Eurydice Hiss'd*.

The political plays of 1736-37 are very different from those of 1730-31. The early plays treat politics in a very light vein; in the later plays the satire against Walpole is in deadly

earnest. The earlier plays are the works of a young playwright trying to use political satire to gain quick theatrical success. The plays of 1736-37 are those of a man who has taken up a crusade against political corruption. As Henry Knight Miller points out, there is no doubt that Fielding's last three political dramas were written as the result of political conviction: "There can be no doubt that in the thirties he was completely sincere in the belief that Walpole's policies were sapping the moral strength of the nation and threatening English liberty."\(^7\)

In these later plays, Fielding became increasingly bold in the use of characters to represent Walpole. In *Pasquin*, the high-priest Firebrand embodies certain qualities of Walpole. In *The Historical Register* Quidam, the silent politician, clearly represents Walpole, and, in Fielding's boldest political play *Eurydice Hiss'd, Pillage* stands for the Prime Minister.

In addition to the use of characters as vehicles for his political satire, Fielding showed increasing mastery of the rehearsal framework as a vehicle for satire. Fielding already knew, from *The Author's Farce*, the value of introducing the character of the author as an interpreter of the satire to the audience. While

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the major use of Luckless in *The Author's Farce* was to pinpoint the literary satire, the author's Trapwit (in *Pasquin*) and Medley (in *The Historical Register*) heighten the political satire. These two characters fulfill their satirical functions by their comments, addressed either to the actors in the play-within-a-play or to the audience. For example, in *Pasquin* one scene shows two candidates for election bribing the Mayor of a country town; unsatisfied with the secrecy of the action, Trapwit cries to the actors, "Bribe a little more openly" (I, 1).

For the "author" of the rehearsal play to interpret the satire to the audience directly would be ineffective theatrically (and dangerous politically). Fielding therefore introduces in the later political plays a character to "represent" the audience, usually a critic or another playwright. Since this observer is perceptive but unacquainted with the play, Fielding is able to direct the explanation of certain political jokes to the audience through this observer. For example, in *The Historical Register*, Fielding wants to be certain that the audience pays close attention to the satire in the auction scene; he therefore has Mr. Medley, the playwright, tell Mr. Sourwitt, who is visiting the rehearsal, to pay very close attention to this scene. This observer-character frequently takes the audience into his confidence
through "asides," in which he comments on the play-within-a-play, the author, the political satire, or theatrical conditions in London.

The first of the political plays of 1736-37, *Pasquin*, was also the first of Fielding's plays to be produced at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket after Fielding and James Ralph took over as managers. This play was first presented on March 5, 1736, under the title: *Pasquin: A Dramatic Satire on the Times: Being the Rehearsal of Two Plays: viz., A Comedy, called The Election; and A Tragedy, called The Life and Death of Common Sense.*

The title of this play is derived from the name of a statue which, in ancient Rome, was a place of exchange for anonymous satires. On the opposite side of the city was a statue of Marforio where those who wished to reply to attacks placed their responses. In Georgian England, "Pasquin" was frequently used as a signature by satirists who wished to remain anonymous.8

*Pasquin* was the greatest success of the London theatrical season of 1736. On March 25, 1736, the Duke of Egmont wrote in his Diary that he "went to the Haymarket Playhouse to see *Pasquin* again, which was extremely crowded though the seventeenth day of its acting." The play enjoyed a total run of over sixty nights.9

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8 Smith, 206.  
9 Dudden, I, 179.
Pasquin consists of the rehearsal of two plays—a comedy by Mr. Trapwit and a tragedy by Mr. Fustian. Before, during, and after the rehearsals there is conversation and by-play between the authors, the actors, and the prompter. The rehearsal of the comedy comes first and occupies most of the first three acts; the rehearsal of Mr. Fustian's tragedy is postponed because the first ghost is not present.

Since Mr. Fustian has not seen Mr. Trapwit's comedy, he is used as the "uninitiated" observer who represents the audience. Mr. Trapwit tells Mr. Fustian, before the rehearsal begins, that a certain friend has furnished the Prologue for the comedy. In the Prologue, the friend, who wishes to remain anonymous until he knows that the Prologue is accepted, writes that in the play Trapwit will "without fear and favour" satirize both Whig and Tory (I, 1). From the Court party, Lord Place and Colonel Promise are standing for election; the candidates from the Country party are Sir Harry Fox-chace and Squire Tankard. The Court party, of course, stands for the Whigs, and the Country party represents the Tories. The names "Place" and "Promise" are obvious references to Walpole's political methods, since the Opposition alleged that he built support by promising offices or places. The names of the Country party candidates, "Fox-chace" and "Tankard," recall the traditional
pastimes of the country squire that Fielding later exemplified in Squire Western in *Tom Jones*. Robert Walpole was himself a country squire, and the names "Fox-chace" and "Tankard" also describe his two favorite recreations, hunting and drinking. Thus the names of all four candidates have some reference to the Prime Minister.

The most effective political satire in this opening scene is directed against bribery. Any satire on political bribery, especially when it followed the obvious references to Walpole in the names of the candidates, would naturally be taken by Fielding's audience as an attack on the Prime Minister. Trapwit, the author of the comedy, tells Mr. Fustian that he has introduced two kinds of bribery into the play to demonstrate his versatility and "to diversify this matter, and do the same thing several ways" (I, 1). When Mr. Fustian then asks, "Is there nothing but bribery in this play of yours?" Trapwit's defense is that his play is "an exact representation of nature" (I, 1). This exchange is reminiscent of scenes in *The Grub-Street Opera* and *Don Quixote in England* in which men are said to live and work only for money and not for honor or duty.

The first type of bribery presented by Trapwit is direct bribery, which is practiced by the court candidates, Lord Place and Colonel Promise. This is bribery by "the squeeze of the hand."
Mayor. My lord, we are sensible of your great power to serve this corporation; and we do not doubt but we shall feel the effect on't.

Lord Place. Gentlemen, you may depend on me; I shall do all in my power. I shall do you some services which are not proper at present to mention to you; in the mean time, Mr. Mayor, give me leave to squeeze you by the hand, in assurance of my sincerity.

Trapwit. You, Mr. that act my lord, bribe a little more openly if you please, or the audience will lose that joke, and it is one of the strongest in my whole play.

Lord Place. Sir, I cannot possibly do it better at the table.

Trapwit. Then get all up, and come forward to the front of the stage. Now, you gentlemen that act the mayor and aldermen, range yourselves in a line; and you, my lord, and the colonel, come to one end and bribe away with right and left. (I, 1)

That the squeeze of the hand was used as a synonym for bribery in reference to Walpole is clear from a description of the Prime Minister which appeared in The Champion on December 13, 1739:

The Champion, Dec. 13, 1739:

... I observed a huge over grown fellow, with a large rabble at his heels, who huzza'd him all along as he went. He had a smile, or rather a sneer in his countenance, and shook most people by the hand as he past; on each side of him walked three persons, with cloths and brushes in their hands, who were continually employed in rubbing off mire from him; and really he travelled through such a quantity of dirt, that it was as much as they could possibly do to keep him from being covered. ... As soon as he came to the gate, he whispered to the guard, and then shook him by the hand; upon which the gate was opened, but as the guard was going to shut it on the rest, the huge man turned about, and cried, 'Sir, I pay for self and company;' upon which it was flung wide open, and the whole crew entered in, and marched on without the least interruption through the
several passes; the huge man shaking all those who should have kept them by the hand.¹⁰

As the bribery scene progresses, Trapwit directs the Mayor to show the gold as he mentions the "squeeze of the hand." The actor portraying the Mayor replies that he has no gold, and Trapwit instructs one of the workers to get "counters" before the opening performance. Mr. Fustian, the observer, tells Trapwit that the actor has outdone the author by showing a courtier bribing with an empty hand (I, 1). This statement rounds out the satire begun in the names "Place" and "Promise," for the Opposition charge against Walpole was not only that he promised places to gain support, but that he did not fulfill his promises, once the need for an individual's support had passed.

When the court candidates have completed the direct bribery, the country candidates, practitioners of indirect bribery, enter. Sir Harry Fox-chace surveys the situation and immediately perceives that the town officials have been bribed; he therefore launches into an eloquent speech on the evils of bribery:

Gentlemen, I begin to smoke you; your pulses have been felt, I perceive: And will you be bribed to sell your country? Where do you think these courtiers get the money they bribe you with, but from you yourselves? Do you think a man, who will give a bribe, won't take one? If you would be served faithfully, you must choose faithfully; and give your vote

¹⁰ The Champion (December 13, 1739), Works, XV, 101.
on no consideration but merit; for my part, I wou'd as soon suborn an evidence at an assize, as a vote at an election.

(I, 1)

Following this denunciation, which is a summary of many of the Opposition charges against Walpole, Sir Harry immediately begins to bribe indirectly. After offering a supply of wine and venison to the Mayor, he begins to place orders with the various merchants who are also Aldermen. From Mr. Stitch, the tailor, he orders half a dozen greatcoats and from Mr. Damask one hundred yards of silk. He tells Mr. Timber and Mr. Iron that he plans to tear down his house and build a new one and will need their commodities; Sir Harry finishes by ordering the bricks for his new house from the Mayor. With the prospect of these enormous profits, the town officials agree to drink to Sir Harry's slogan, "Liberty, property, and no excise!"—a well known slogan of the Opposition.

The Mayor and Sir Harry then congratulate each other since they are both above bribery, and Trapwit explains the joke to Mr. Fustian:

Sir Harry. Give me thy hand, Mayor, I hate bribery and corruption; if this corporation will not suffer itself to be bribed, there shall not be a poor man in it.

Mayor. And he that will deserves to be poor; for my part, the world should not bribe me to vote against my conscience.

Trapwit. Do you take that joke, Sir?

Fustian. No faith, Sir?

Trapwit. Why, how can a man vote against his conscience, who has no conscience at all?
Fielding thus makes certain that the audience, identified with Mr. Fustian in this scene, will appreciate the meaning of his satirical jest. Following the bribery scenes, the focus of Trapwit's satire shifts to the vices of the fashionable world; he therefore says he will introduce some "scenes of politeness and fine conversation among the ladies" (II, 1). In the first of these scenes (II, 1), Lord Place visits Mr. Mayoress, the Mayor's wife, and her daughter, Miss Mayoress. In her domination of the household and of her husband, Mrs. Mayoress represents George II's wife, Queen Caroline, as Trapwit makes clear at the end of the scene when he tells Fustian that the moral of the scene is that England is ruled by petticoat government. Mrs. Mayoress is presented as a staunch supporter of the Court party, as Queen Caroline was of Walpole and his administration.

Lord Place speaks to the two ladies of the pleasures of the fashionable world of London and the court; he is enlisting the aid of Mrs. Mayoress to secure her husband's political influence for his election. He tells Mrs. and Miss Mayoress of the fashionable practices of gambling and "keeping" and assures them that there are several trades reputable enough, which people of fashion may practise; such are gaming, intriguing, voting, and running in debt" (II, 1).
After Lord Place's departure, Miss Mayoress expresses her belief that it would be naughty for a young lady to allow herself to be kept by a fashionable gentleman. In Mrs. Mayoress' reply, Fielding once again attacks the double standard of justice for the wealthy and the poor: "That can't be [that keeping is wrong], if your betters do it; people are punish'd for doing naughty things; but people of quality are never punish'd; therefore they never do any naughty things" (II, 1).

Soon after this speech the Mayor, who is now quite drunk, arrives shouting "Liberty, property, and no excise!"--the slogan of the Country party. The Mayor and his wife argue at some length about which party he will support, and the Mayor is finally reduced to enraged incoherence:

Mayor. I won't be brib'd--
Mrs. Mayor. A place is no bribe---ask the parson of the parish if a place is a bribe.
Mayor. What is the place?
Mrs. Mayor. I don't know what the place is; nor my lord [Lord Place] does not know what it is, but it is a great swinging place.
Mayor. I will have the place first, I won't take a bribe, I will have the place first; liberty and property!--I'll have the place first. [Exit.]
Mrs. Mayor. Come, my dear, follow me; I'll see whether he shall vote according to his conscience, or mine.
I'll teach mankind while policy they boast,
They bear the name of power, we rule the roast. (II, 1)

As the characters exit, Trapwit announces that his second act has ended; he then tells Fustian the mottoes for the first two
acts, "Sir, my first act sweetly sings, Bribe all, bribe all; and the second gives you to understand that we are all under petticoat government" (II, 1). The explicit statement that these two acts have satirized Walpole and the Queen comes only after the scenes have been played. To announce these mottoes at the beginning of the play would surely have been too bold and would have made the scenes themselves somewhat anti-climactic; Fielding therefore chose to build up to these two statements through the satirical scenes.

Trapwit next calls the actors to begin the Third Act of the comedy, which opens with Lord Place promising jobs at court in return for votes in the election; to one ignorant voter he even promises the position of poet-laureate, in a jest obviously aimed at Colley Cibber.

In this scene, for the first time, Colonel Promise speaks, after Mr. Fustian says that "it is high time for the colonel to be heard" (II, 1). The Colonel is first heard saying to a voter, "Depend upon it, Sir; I'll serve you"—a statement previously made several times by Lord Place. Mr. Fustian objects to Trapwit that the line has been used already, and Trapwit replies, "Ay, and if I was to bring an hundred courtiers into my play, they should all say it—none of them do it" (II, 1). Trapwit thus rounds out this exchange as Fustian finished the bribery scenes, with a jest
about the hollowness of the courtier's pledge. Since the court
candidates represent Walpole's party, the statements about bribery
and false promises are obviously meant to be extended to relate to
the Prime Minister.

The remark about the falseness of a courtier's promise is
followed immediately by a topical political joke. A voter ap­
proaches Colonel Promise and asks if the rumor that the Colonel's
soldiers are to be made of wax is true; if so, the voter, a wax
worker, wishes to make the Colonel's regiment including a chaplain
for which the wax worker has saved "a most delicate piece of black
wax" (II, 1). The Colonel's reply is once more the courtier's
empty promise, "Sir, you may depend on me." Homes Dudden describes
this scene as "an allusion to the objection raised by the Opposi­
tion against the maintenance of an expensive and in their opinion
useless standing army, and to an ironical suggestion of Chester­
field that in future the troops, except the officers, should be
made of wax (the mechanical figures being mobilized when necessary
by being wound up with a key)." 11

The exchange between the wax-worker and Colonel Promise is
followed by a scene in which the Opposition is shown to be as cor­
rupt and avaricious as the Court party. The Mayor and Sir Harry

11 Dudden, I, 177.
Fox-chace denounce the courtiers for their luxurious living and for their large expenditures for houses and pictures; all this is obviously a comment on Walpole's lavish style of living.

Sir Harry generously says that he wants only to be reimbursed for the expenses of the election which, although he has not bribed a single voter, has cost him more than five thousand pounds. Sir Harry's statement that "I love my country, but I don't know why I may not get something by it as well as another," shows him to be as rapacious and self-seeking as the court candidates. From Fielding's point of view, such a man is less dangerous than a Walpole only because he is out of power.

The Mayor's dialogue with Sir Harry is followed by another quarrelling scene between the Mayor and his wife, in which they resume their debate about the Court party and the Country party. The Mayor announces that Sir Harry has promised him a position as ambassador; his wife merely scoffs at this, since Sir Harry's party is not in power. The Mayor replies that the Tories will win the coming election, and Sir Harry is to have a position of prominence; he does not know how to describe the office and therefore uses the title "great man" commonly assigned to Walpole: "Sir Harry is to be----I don't know what to call him not I,----some very great man; and as soon as he is a very great man, I am to be made an ambassador [sic] of" (II. 1).
The Mayor's political alliance with Sir Harry disturbs his daughter who fears that he "is a Jacobite in his heart" (II, 1). Her mother, a true Whig and a cunning politician (as was Queen Caroline), reassures her daughter that the Mayor's vote, not his sentiment, is all that matters: "What signifies what he is in his heart; have not a hundred, whom every body knows to be as great Jacobites as he, acted like very good whigs? What has a man's heart to do with his lips? I don't trouble my head with what he thinks, I only desire him to vote" (II, 1).

The conflict between Whig and Tory is continued in a scene between Miss Mayoress and Miss Stitch. In the most refined terms Miss Stitch extols the virtues of The Craftsman, the Opposition periodical, as Miss Mayoress praises the Daily Gazeteer, Walpole's newspaper. The two become extremely passionate in their political disagreement, so passionate that Miss Stitch rips the fan given to her by her sweetheart. Miss Mayoress, mindful of her mother's advice about the importance of a vote, offers Miss Stitch "the exact fellow" to the torn fan if she will persuade her sweetheart to vote for the Court candidates.

Miss Stitch. And can I sell my country for a fan?--
What's my country to me? I shall never get a fan by it.--
And will you give it me for nothing?
Miss Mayoress. I'll make you a free present of it.
Miss Stitch. I am asham'd of your conquest, but I'll take the fan.
Miss Mayoress. And now, my dear, we'll go and drink a dish of tea together.

And let all parties blame me if they can,
Who're brib'd by honours trifling as a fan. (II, 1)

This dialogue is directed at all the members of the Opposition "bought off" by Walpole with jobs, especially Lord Hervey, one of Walpole's chief aides. Hervey had originally been a supporter of William Pulteney but came over to Walpole's side and was rewarded with the post of Vice-Chamberlain of the Household. 12

Trapwit's comedy is happily resolved, after the election, by the shrewdness of Mrs. Mayoress. The Mayor, who bowed to her wishes and voted for the Court party, was then enraged when the Country candidates were elected. In the last scene of the comedy, Mrs. Mayoress convinces her husband that he should report the Court candidates as winners. This will result in a contested election, and many of the townspeople will receive a trip to London at the expense of the candidates. Although the Mayor says that his conscience "boggles" at this duplicity, he is placated by the realization that no other course would be advantageous to him. One of the spectators protests to Trapwit that "Interest would be a better word than Conscience," to which Trapwit replies, "Ay, Interest, or Conscience, they are words of the same meaning; but I think

12 Ibid.
Conscience rather politer of the two, and most used at court" (III, 1). Trapwit's comedy thus ends with a stinging reminder of the hypocrisy of the Walpole administration.

The political satire in Trapwit's comedy is presented primarily through party representatives; only in Fustian's tragedy does Fielding bring on stage a character that represents Walpole. The wife of the Mayor, who stands in many respects for Queen Caroline, might also be viewed as a social-climbing country wife.

The satire in the first part of *Pasquin* is directed at two practices closely associated with Walpole: 1) bribery; 2) manipulation of elections. For dramatic economy, Fielding associates the bribery with the election; Walpole was charged, however, with bribery not only of electors but of members of parliament and judges as well. According to the Opposition, Walpole and his lieutenants promised positions in return for votes, while the Duke of Newcastle masterminded the corruption of the national electoral machinery.

The satire in the first part of *Pasquin* is thus focussed on the methods of the Whig party; to present Walpole as a character in the election comedy would obviously have been indiscreet. Fielding therefore deferred presentation of a character representing Walpole until the rehearsal of Fustian's tragedy. By placing
the "Walpole" character in the second half of the play, Fielding runs the theme of political satire throughout *Pasquin*. In Trap-wit's comedy, Fielding presents the corruption that enables a demagogue to seize and maintain power; only in Fustian's tragedy does he present a view of the demagogue himself.

Mr. Fustian's tragedy about the life and death of Queen Common-Sense is also cast in unmistakably political terms. The action takes place at the court of Queen Common-Sense and involves a plot against the Queen by three disloyal courtiers, Firebrand, Physick, and Law. Firebrand is the "high priest" to the Sun, a reference to Walpole's position as the King's first minister.

Firebrand exemplifies the hypocrisy that Fielding hated in Walpole, the assumption of a mask of virtue to deceive the public. Firebrand reveals his assumed virtue to Law and Physick:

*I will divulge myself: know thro' this mask,
Which to impose on vulgar minds I wear,
I am an enemy to Common-sense;
But this not for ambition's earthly cause,
But to enlarge the worship of the Sun:
To give his priests [read "ministers"] a just degree of power,
And more than half the profits of the land. (IV, 1)*

In the climactic confrontation of Firebrand and Queen Common-Sense, the conflict clearly involves the struggle for political power. Firebrand asserts that he is infallible and that his power is its own justification and relies on no authority as a source. The
Queen's protestation of loyalty to the Sun clearly expresses Fielding's own allegiance and devotion to George II, while her refusal to approve the Sun's priests represents Fielding's disapproval of the King's ministers. Although the references are to Firebrand as a man of religion, the Queen's speech is clearly a statement about a man of politics, Robert Walpole:

Then know, I honour and adore the Sun!
And when I see his light, and feel his warmth,
I glow with flaming gratitude towards him;
But, know, I never will adore a priest,
Who wear pride's face beneath religion's mask,
And makes a pick-lock of his piety,
To steal away the liberty of mankind. (IV, 1)

In a statement that echoes the bribery scenes in Trapwit's comedy, Firebrand promises Law and Physick that "men shall be brought . . . to bribe you with large fees to their undoing" (IV, 1).

Later Fielding again attacks the bribery practiced by Walpole, when Firebrand murders Queen Common-Sense. Her dying speech is a gloomy prediction of the havoc Firebrand will wreak when he gains power:

Now, Priest, indulge thy wild ambitious thoughts,
Men shall embrace thy schemes, 'till thou hast drawn
All worship from the Sun upon thyself:

Places, requiring learning and great parts,
Henceforth shall all be hustled in a hat.
And drawn by men deficient in them both.
Statesmen----but oh! cold death will let me say
No more----and you must guess et caetera. [Dies.] (IV, 1)
Firebrand immediately decides that to be known as Common-sense's murderer would be unwise. In Firebrand's speech in which he plans his deception, Fielding attacks Walpole's use of money for corrupt purposes; he also attacks Walpole's hypocrisy, when Firebrand determines to deliver the Queen's funeral oration:

She's gone, but ha? It may be seem me ill
T' appear her murderer; I'll therefore lay
This dagger by her side, and that will be
Sufficient evidence, with a little money,
To make the coroner's inquest find self-murder.
I'll preach her funeral sermon, and deplore
Her loss with tears, praise her with all my art . . . (V, 1)

At the end of Fustian's tragedy, the ghost of Queen Common-Sense rises and announces that she will henceforth haunt all those who murder Common-Sense. This idea was picked up in 1737 when Lord Chesterfield and Lord Lyttleton started an Opposition periodical which they named Common-Sense, after the character in Pasquin.

In Pasquin, political corruption is treated both comically and seriously. Trapwit's comedy presents a light, satirical treatment of election bribery, while the bombastic, pretentious, and hypocritical aspects of corruption are presented in a serious character in Fustian's tragedy.

'As a result of the production of Pasquin and several other political satires, the Little Theatre in the Haymarket came to be "known by the name of Fielding's scandal-shop, because he frequently exhibited there certain drolls, or, more properly,
invectives against the ministry."^{13}

The climax to the attacks on the Ministry at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket came in the spring of 1737. During March and April, Fielding's two plays, *The Historical Register for the Year 1736* and *Eurydice Hiss'd*, were first presented; in May the *Daily Gazetteer*'s attack on Fielding and his reply appeared. Finally, in June, Parliament passed, at Robert Walpole's direction, the *Stage Licensing Act*. This censorship law effectively ended Fielding's theatrical career.

The first of the two plays, *The Historical Register*, is usually considered Fielding's best dramatic satire. "This play . . . is Fielding's best effort in the field of political and social satire. His shrewd hits at theatre conventions, lack of sensitivity on the part of the audiences, social foibles, and political corruption represent a most effective use of the stage for satire."^{14}

*The Historical Register* opened at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket in March, 1737. March 21, the date of the auction in the

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^{13} Eliza Haywood, *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless*, quoted in Dudden, I, 194.

play, is usually believed to be the date on which the play was first presented.

The title of this play is derived from The Historical Register, an annual publication which contained a summary of all the important domestic and foreign events of the year as well as a record of births, deaths, and marriages of important persons. The irony, of course, is that the playwright, Mr. Medley, believes that the year's events can be compressed into a short play. Mr. Sourwit, the observer character, questions the playwright, and Mr. Medley defends himself by charging others with doing nothing: "If I comprise the whole actions of the year in half an hour, will you blame me, or those who have done so little in that time? My Register is not to be filled, like those of vulgar newswriters, with trash for want of news; and therefore, if I say little or nothing, you may thank those who have done little or nothing" (I, 1).

The boldness of the political satire in The Historical Register caused a sensation in London in both the theatrical and political worlds; the clamor increased after the addition of Eurydice Hiss'd, as an afterpiece, in mid-April. "For the historian who wishes to understand the causes of the Licensing Act of 1737, a reading of The Historical Register for the Year 1736 . . .

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15 Dudden, I, 194.
is largely sufficient. Of all political attacks in play form, it is perhaps one of the best."  

Before the passage of the Licensing Act, Fielding attempted to defend *The Historical Register* and *Eurydice Hiss'd* against the Whig charges that the plays were aimed at overthrowing the ministry; his method of defense was an appeal to the public, which he presented in a "Dedication to the Publick" of the two plays. This "Dedication" first appeared in a pamphlet with the published versions of the two plays on May 12, 1737. It is Fielding's most direct statement on political corruption before the essays in *The Champion*.

In the "Dedication," Fielding mockingly presents his play to the public as "a ministerial pamphlet, calculated to infuse into the minds of the people a great opinion of their ministry, and thereby procure an employment for the author, who has been often promised one, whenever he would write on that side."

Fielding advances two reasons for dedicating his play to the public rather than to a specific individual. First, the purpose of the play is to awaken the public, ostensibly to the corruption

16 Smith, 220.

in the theatre. Fielding's elaboration of this statement clearly shows that he also wishes to awaken the public to the dangers of Walpole's administration. He is relying on the public to complete the often stated parallel between the theatre and the court. The theatre manager who proceeds in an arbitrary fashion is to be equated with the prime minister who acts in this way. The "buying of actors at exorbitant prices" is to be taken as the bribing of politicians, and the conclusion, that the town must pay, applies to both theatre and politics; the town pays for corruption in the theatre by higher admission prices and for corruption in politics by higher taxes. In the opening scene of The Historical Register, Mr. Medley states the analogy even more directly: "When my politics come to a farce, they very naturally lead me to the playhouse; where, let me tell you, there are some politicians too; where there is lying, flattering, dissembling, promising, deceiving, and undermining, as well as in any court in Christendom" (I, 1).

Fielding's second reason for dedicating his plays to the public is that he requires their help in defending himself from the attacks of the Daily Gazeteer, the paper that charged Fielding with subversive intentions in the presentation of the two plays. In answer to this charge, Fielding advances the mock claim that The Historical Register is actually designed to inspire allegiance to
the Ministry. He notes the belief that "a certain person [Walpole] is sometimes the author, often the correcter of the press, and always the patron of the Gazeteer." Fielding "defends" Walpole by stating that even though he has no taste in literature, he has at least some common sense (probably a pun on the title of the Opposition periodical). In fact, Fielding writes, if the Gazeteer "does not immediately disappear, I do intend shortly to attempt conjuring it down, intending to publish a paper in defence of the m------y against the wicked, malicious, and sly insinuations conveyed in the said paper."

These two reasons for dedicating the plays to the public epitomize the tone of the "Dedication"--half serious and half satirical. Fielding attacks Walpole by serious statements about the dangers to liberty from corrupt politicians:

The liberties of a people have been subdued by the conquest of valour and force, and have been betrayed by the subtle and dexterous arts of refined policy; but these are rare instances, for geniuses of this kind are not the growth of every age; whereas, if a general corruption be once introduced, and those, who should be the guardians and bulwarks of our liberty, once find, or think they find, an interest in giving it up, no great capacity will be required to destroy it: on the contrary, the meanest, lowest, dirtiest fellow, if such a one should have ever the assurance in future ages to mimic power, and brow-beat his betters, will be as able as Machiavel himself could have been, to root out the liberties of the bravest people.

Fielding also makes satirical jabs at Walpole by the mock
defense of the Minister from the **Daily Gazeteer** and by the use of Walpole's first name in an impudent joke: "As two gentlemen were walking the street together, the one said to the other, upon spying the figure of an ass hung out—Bob, Bob, look yonder, some impudent rascal has hung out your picture on a sign-post."

The mixed tone of the "Dedication" echoes the mixture of satire and seriousness in *The Historical Register* itself. Superficially the play is a light farce, but there is a very serious attack on vice and corruption which becomes apparent in the auction scene and in the "Quidam" scene.

In this play Fielding once again turns to the rehearsal format as the vehicle for his political satire. Mr. Medley's comedy, *The Historical Register*, is to be rehearsed, and Mr. Sourwit and Lord Dapper are present as the uninitiated observers who represent the audience. Before the rehearsal begins, Mr. Sourwit begs Mr. Medley to reveal the moral of the drama. The Playwright responds,

> Why, Sir, my design is to ridicule the vicious and foolish customs of the age, and that in a fair manner, without fear, favour, or ill-nature, and without scurrility, ill-manners, or common-place; I hope to expose the reigning follies in such a manner, that men shall laugh themselves out of them before they feel they are touched. (I,1)

The political satire in *The Historical Register* is concentrated in three scenes of Mr. Medley's play: 1) the opening scene; 2) the auction scene; 3) the "Quidam" scene. The first and third
scenes are laid on the island of Corsica, which Mr. Medley describes as "being at present the chief scene of politics in all Europe," and the auction scene takes place in London. Fielding has given emphasis to these scenes in the structure of the play by placing them at the "strongest" points in the drama--at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the play.

The first of these scenes opens by revealing five politicians seated at a table. Sourwit immediately calls Mr. Medley's attention to an error in the printed text of the play, which shows the 2nd Politician as the first to speak. Medley replies that this is no error: "Sir, my first and greatest politician never speaks at all, he is a very deep man, by which you will observe I convey this moral, that the chief art of a politician is to keep a secret" (I, 1). The silent politician is, of course, Robert Walpole.

The four politicians jabber about domestic and foreign affairs in a debate characterized by incoherence and ignorance. Fielding writes in the "Dedication" that these politicians "are represented as a set of blundering blockheads rather deserving pity than abhorrence."

As the four "blockheads" converse, Medley reveals to Sourwit that, although all appear to know nothing, "there is one who knows; that little gentleman yonder in the chair, who says nothing, knows it all" (I, 1).
The four politicians, who have agreed that they need to levy a tax to raise money, debate about what commodity to tax. They briefly consider laying a tax on learning but soon realize that too few men possess it to make a tax profitable; a tax on ignorance, they decide, will yield large revenues. As the politicians leave to levy their tax, Medley comments that this arbitrary taxation "is the full account of the whole history of Europe" (I, 1).

The auction scene, the second scene of political satire, is the central scene in The Historical Register, for the political and social satire come together. The auction of abstract commodities, such as virtue and patriotism, reflects Fielding's belief that Walpole's administration was being conducted like an auction, with honors and offices sold to the highest bidders, and that the politicians cooperating with Walpole were selling their honor and patriotism for financial gain.

The auctioneer, Mr. Hen, begins by announcing that he will sell the "curiosities which this choice cabinet [possibly a pun referring to the King's council of ministers] contains."

The first item for sale is "a most curious remnant of Political Honesty." It is "curious" because it is the same on both sides, not changeable, as were most political convictions and affiliations. This item is sold to Lord Bothsides for only five pounds.
The second Lot contains "a most delicate piece of Patriotism." Mr. Hen assures the bidders that several gentlemen at court wear it, for "it's quite a different thing within to what it is without." Since no one will bid, Mr. Hen is forced to "put Patriotism by." One of the spectators, Mr. Banter, then comments, "Ay, put it by, one day or other it may be in fashion."

In Lots Five and Six, Fielding jibes at both Walpole and John Rich, the producer of pantomine entertainments, in this exchange between Mr. Hen and Mr. Banter:

_Hen._ Lot 5 and 6. All the Wit lately belonging to Mr. Hugh Pantomine, composer of entertainments for the play-houses, and Mr. William Goosequill, composer of political paper in defence of a ministry; shall I put up these together?

_Banter._ Ay, it is a pity to part them; where are they?

_Hen._ Sir, in the next room, where any gentleman may see them, but they are too heavy to bring in; there are near three hundred volumes in folio.

_Banter._ Put them by; who the devil would bid for them, unless he was the manager of some house or other? The town has paid enough for their works already.

Lot Eight contains "a very considerable quantity of interest at court," which brings over one thousand pounds. The bidding for this item becomes so frenzied that Lord Dapper, one of the spectators, leaps to his feet and enters a bid.

The frantic bidding for interest at court contrasts with the silence following the announcement that the final lot contains "a great deal of Wit, and a little Common-Sense." Mr. Medley explains
to Sourwit that "the reason nobody bids for it, is because everyone thinks he has it."

The auction scene effectively satirizes the callousness, self-interest, and indifference to virtue of the court and upper classes. Fielding does, in this scene, what he believes these people did in life; he makes virtues and values into material objects which can be acquired by purchase.

At the end of the auction scene, Mr. Medley explicitly states the analogy between the theatrical and political worlds and damns both. Medley's speech is an even more pointed attack on Walpole than Mr. Trapwit's "motto" speech in *Pasquin*:

Yes, Sir; you may remember I told you before my rehearsal, that there was a strict resemblance between the states political and theatrical; there is a ministry in the latter as well as the former, and I believe as weak a ministry as any poor kingdom could ever boast of; parts are given in the latter to actors, with much the same regard to capacity as places in the former have sometimes been--in former ages, I mean; and though the public damn both, yet while they both receive their pay, they laugh at the public behind the scenes; and if one considers the plays that come from one part, and the writings from the other, one would be apt to think the same authors were retained in both.

The final scene of political satire in this play, the Quidam scene, ends Mr. Medley's farce. Mr. Medley, who calls this scene "the dance of the patriots," tells Sourwit his reason for putting this scene at the end of the play is that the sight of the patriots will leave the audience happy.
Fielding mentions in the "Dedication" that the patriots "are represented as a set of cunning, self-interested fellows, who for a little paltry bribe would give up the liberties and properties of their country." These men merit abhorrence, whereas the "blockhead" politicians in the first scene deserved pity.

As the scene opens there are four patriots sitting about a table and drinking. Medley points out to his guests that each man represents a different type of patriot. The first is the noisy patriot, "who drinks and roars for his country, and never does either good or harm in it." The second is the cautious patriot, who insists that all their political maneuverings be "under the rose." The third man is the self-interested patriot, concerned only for the growth of his own business, and the fourth is the indolent patriot who has slept throughout the debate.

As the politicians are toasting liberty, Sourwit comments to Medley on a man watching the action from back-stage. Medley's reply to Sourwit's questions prepares the audience for the entrance of a character representing Walpole:

Sourwit. Why do you suffer that actor to stand laughing behind the scenes, and interrupt your rehearsal?

Medley. O, Sir, he ought to be there, he's a-laughing in his sleeve at the patriots; he's a very considerable character--and has much to do by-and-by.

Sourwit. Methinks the audience should know that, or perhaps they may mistake him as I did, and hiss him.
Medley. If they should, he is a pure impudent fellow, and can stand the hisses of them all; I chose him particularly for the part—

Quidam, whose name in Latin means "Someone," enters and "lays a purse upon the table" before the Patriots. Bribing them is short work, for they eagerly snatch up the money. Quidam then leads them out in a dance. Medley explains Quidam's trick to Sour-wit and Lord Dapper:

Sir, every one of these patriots have a hole in their pockets, as Mr. Quidam the fiddler there knows; so that he intends to make them dance till all the money is fallen through, which he will pick up again, and so not lose one halfpenny by his generosity; so far from it, that he will get his wine for nothing, and the poor people, alas! out of their own pockets, pay the whole reckoning.

Quidam, who bribes the patriots away from their beliefs and then recovers the money, represents Walpole. This is made clear by the dialogue before his entrance (see above) and by Fielding's ironic denial of the analogy in the "Dedication":

But I am aware I shall be asked, who is this Quidam, that turns the patriots into ridicule, and bribes them out of their honesty? Who but the devil could act such a part? Is not this the light wherein he is everywhere described in scripture, and the writings of our best divines? Gold hath been always his favourite bait wherewith he fisheth for sinners; and his laughing at the poor wretches he seduceth, is as diabolical an attribute as any. Indeed it is so plain who is meant by this Quidam, that he who maketh any wrong application thereof might as well mistake the name of Thomas for John, or old Nick for old Bob.

Three times in The Historical Register, Fielding employs the
term "great man," a common epithet for Walpole. The term is first used in reference to the blundering Corsican politicians in the first scene and is employed later to describe the delusion of an actor who has "run mad." The third reference, in a conversation between Apollo (a character in the play-within-a-play) and Mr. Medley, is the most direct reference to Walpole:

Apollo. Let them hiss, let them hiss, and grumble as much as they please, as long as we get their money.

Medley. There, Sir, is the sentiment of a great man, and worthy to come from the great Apollo himself. (I, 1)

The boldness of the political satire in *The Historical Register* exceeded anything Fielding had previously presented on the stage. In two scenes he brought on characters who portrayed Walpole as the silent-but-knowing politician and as the corrupter of patriots.

Fielding cuts across party lines to describe two types of men in political life: the blundering politician and the false patriot. The first group is too stupid to lead a country, the second too corrupt. In this respect, *The Historical Register* is Fielding's bitterest dramatic satire, for there is no true man who cherishes his principles, like Luckless' honest friend in *The Author's Farce* or Honestus in *Eurydice Hiss'd*, nor is there any voice of reason like Common-Sense in *Pasquin*.

The last of Fielding's political plays, *Eurydice Hiss'd*,
appeared as an afterpiece to *The Historical Register* on April 13, 1737. In this play Fielding boldly parallels the defeat of Walpole's Excise Bill in 1733 and the damnation of his own farce *Eurydice* in 1737.

Fielding's farce, *Eurydice; or, The Devil Henpeck'd*, opened at Drury Lane on February 19, 1737, as an afterpiece to Addison's *Cato*. Fielding's play was a satire on "petticoat government," set in hell. The relationship of Pluto and Proserpine is similar to that of Lord and Lady Apshinken in *The Grub-Street Opera*; the husband is a genial soul dominated in domestic and political affairs by his overbearing wife. The analogy between Proserpine, who has seized control of "infernal affairs" from Pluto, and Queen Caroline who dictated policy in George II's England, was no doubt clear to the audience. It was not, however, politics that precipitated the damnation of the farce. Homes Dudden describes the events at Drury Lane on February 19:

Unfortunately on that night there was a riot in the house, occasioned by the insolent behavior of the footmen. These flunkies had by custom a privilege of occupying the boxes pending the late arrival of their masters and mistresses; they were also accorded free admission to the gallery, that they might be able to attend their employers as soon as the performance was over. Their rude and obstreperous manners were a constant source of annoyance both to the actors and to the ordinary playgoers. On the evening in question the noise made by the lackeys in the boxes was so intolerable that the people in the pit rose in a body and drove them out of the theatre. The ejected footmen, however, broke down
a door and rushed tumultuously into their gallery. After Theophilus Cibber had vainly pleaded for order, the Riot Act was read, and several arrests were made; but it was impossible to obtain quiet. Though the actors managed, in some fashion, to get through Cato, the performance of Eurydice collapsed amid a hubbub of groans, catcalls, and hisses. . . . The farce was "damned beyond redemption," and after one more effort had been made to play it, was withdrawn.18

"From the damnation of his own farce and from the public disapproval that forced the withdrawal of the Excise Bill, Fielding drew the materials for the double parody in his farce. He once again uses the parallel of the court and the theatre as the basis for his satire. Thus Pillage, the author of a farce, represents Fielding, author of Eurydice, and Walpole, author of the Excise Bill. The farce that is damned is both Fielding's play and Walpole's bill, and the "House" is both the playhouse and the House of Commons.

That the audience appreciated this parallel is shown by the entry in the Duke of Egmont's Diary for April 18, 1737:

"Monday, April 18, 1737. -- I dined at home, and then went to the Haymarket Playhouse, where a farce was acted called Eurydice First [obviously an error in reproducing the title] an allegory on the loss of the Excise Bill. The whole was a satire on Sir Robert Walpole, and I observed that when any strong passages fell, the Prince, who was there, clapped, especially when in favour of liberty.19

Some years later, Thomas Davies wrote in his Life of Garrick

18 Dudden, I, 189.  
19 Egmont, II, 216.
that "Fielding in his Eurydice Hissed, had brought the minister upon the theatre in a levee scene."\footnote{Thomas Davies, quoted in C. B. Woods, "Notes on Three of Fielding's Plays," \textit{PMLA}, XLIV (1937), 369.}

In the play itself, in which Fielding once again uses the rehearsal format, there are several hints that the satire is directed against Walpole. As Mr. Medley explained the purpose of \textit{The Historical Register} to Sourwit, Mr. Spatter, author of the farce, explains his moral to Sourwit, who has "stayed on" to observe the second rehearsal:

... for it [the play] is, Mr. Sourwit, of a most instructive kind, and conveys to us a beautiful image of the instability of human greatness and the uncertainty of friends. You see here the author of a mighty farce at the very top and pinnacle of poetical or rather farcical greatness, followed, flattered, and adored by a crowd of dependants; on a sudden fortune changing the scene, and his farce being damned, you see him become the scorn of his admirers, and deserted and abandoned by all those who courted his favour, and appeared the foremost to uphold and protect him.

As this speech is finished, the rehearsal of the play begins, and Mr. Pillage, author of a farce and main character in the play-within-a-play, enters. Sourwit questions "Pillage" as a name for an author, but Spatter tells him to wait and observe how well the character's actions fit his name. Pillage then speaks a kind of prologue which immediately makes clear the analogy between the author of a farce and a minister; in fact, the discerning spectator
had only to substitute the name "Walpole" for "Wolsey" in the following speech:

Who'd wish to be the author of a farce,
Surrounded daily by a crowd of actors,
Gaping for parts, and never to be satisfied?
Yet, say the wise, in loftier seats of life,
Solicitation is the chief reward;
And Wolsey's self, that mighty minister,
In the full height and zenith of his power,
Amid a crowd of sycophants and slaves,
Was but perhaps the author of a farce,
Perhaps a damn'd one too. 'Tis all a cheat,
Some men play little farces, and some great.

Fielding follows this with an immediate reference to Walpole's epithet, "great man." Thus, in the first speeches of the play Pillage is clearly identified as Walpole.

With Pillage's "real" identity firmly established, Fielding launches into the allegory of the damnation of the farce and the Excise Bill.

In 1733 Walpole had aroused hostility not only from the Opposition but from the whole country by proposing an inland duty on wine and tobacco. The word "excise" was so despised that the tax was considered an attack on the constitutional liberties of English citizens. Walpole had previously revived a salt tax; therefore, the Opposition newspapers wrote of the evils of a general excise before the opening of Parliament in 1733. Despite popular hostility Walpole introduced the subject in the House of Commons in
March and had the new bill read for the first time on April 4th. The second reading was set for April 11th. Walpole dropped the bill because of furious popular demonstrations and because of his shrinking majority.  

As soon as the bill was dropped, celebrations broke out all over England, and April 11th "was remembered as a day on which English liberty had won a signal victory." Perhaps Fielding deliberately chose April 13th for the opening of *Eurydice Hiss'd*, since it was an appropriate day for a play on the Excise Bill.

The political satire in this play opens with the poet Pillage's levee, at which he puts off some job-seeking actors, promises parts to others, and encourages certain people to be present at the playhouse to applaud his farce. His attempts to secure the success of his farce by promising his followers various favors parallel Walpole's use of bribery to preserve his majority in the House of Commons. As the scene closes, Pillage soliloquizes:

> Then I defy the town; if by my friends,  
> Against their liking I support my farce,  
> And fill my loaded pockets with their pence,  
> Let after-ages damn me if they please.

In order that the meaning of this scene may not escape anyone in the audience, Fielding has Mr. Spatter immediately state its

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21 Woods, 369-79.  
22 Ibid., 370.
significance:

Sir, I intend first to warn all future authors from depending solely on a party to support them against the judgment of the town. Secondly, shewing that even the author of a farce may have his attendants and dependants; I hope greater persons may learn to despise them, which may be a more useful moral than you may apprehend; for perhaps the mean ambition of being worshipped, flattered, and attended by such fellows as these, may have led men into the worst of schemes, from which they could promise themselves little more.

The next scene takes place between Pillage and his friend Honestus, a man of true integrity. Pillage desires his support to help applaud the farce, and Honestus refuses to be corrupted:

Faith, Sir, my voice shall never be corrupt.
If I approve your farce, I will applaud it;
If not, I'll hiss, though I hiss alone.

Honestus' advice to Pillage is so worded that it might be directed to either a playwright or a prime minister: "I tell you, Sir, the Farce [bill] you act [plan to have read] tonight I don't approve, nor will the House [of Commons] unless Your Friends by Partiality prevail." 23

As Lord Hervey's Memoirs illustrate, Lord Scarborough refused to be a part to Walpole's attempt to push the Excise Bill through Parliament:

On Monday morning before the Wednesday that was appointed for the second reading of the Bill, Lord Scarborough came

23 Ibid., 371.
to Sir Robert Walpole, to let him know that he found the clamour so hot and so general, that it was his opinion the Administration ought to yield to it; that, for his own part . . . . he was determined not to contribute to cram it down the people's throats; and came to tell Sir Robert that, if it should be forced through the House of Commons and brought into the House of Lords, he would oppose it. 24

The speeches of Honestus in this scene about the duties of a good theatre manager define Fielding's own beliefs on the nature of the role of the politician in society. Honestus insists that merit only must determine rewards and not friends or influence. Then, in a sharp exchange with Pillage, Honestus insists that the town is entitled to see good plays in return for their admission money. In the political sphere, the insistence is that the citizens of a country are entitled to well-administered, responsible government, since the citizens' taxes support the government. Another criticism implicit in Honestus' speeches is that Walpole keeps far more political retainers than are necessary.

Honestus departs, "as an honest critic," committed to no support of Pillage's farce. Pillage then laments:

I wish I could have gain'd one honest man
Sure to my side---But since the attempt is vain,
Numbers must serve for worth. . .

The audience does not view Pillage's farce but hears of its reception from one of the gentlemen in the audience:

24 Lord Hervey, I, 154.
'Tis true, at first the pit seem'd greatly pleas'd, 
And loud applauses through the benches rang; 
But as the plot began to open more, 
(A shallow plot) the claps less frequent grew, 
Till by degrees a gentle hiss arose; 
This by a cat-call from the gallery 
Was quickly seconded; then follow'd claps 
And long 'twixt claps and hisses did succeed 
A stern contention: Victory hung dubious. 
So hangs the conscience, doubtful to determine, 
When honesty pleads here, and there a bribe; 
At length, from some ill-fated actor's mouth, 
Sudden there issued forth a horrid dram, 
And from another's rush'd two gallons forth; 
The audience, as it were contagious air, 
All caught it, halloo'd, cat-call'd, hiss'd, and groan'd. 

The desertion of Pillage's friends is similar to the desertion of Walpole's friends when the Excise Bill came up. 

Sir Thomas Robinson, who wrote a detailed account of the progress of the bill in the commons, and who recorded the ministry's dwindling majorities as the days went by, says that on the day appointed for the second reading many of those who had deserted Walpole but not voted against him, came down with a resolution openly to join with the enemy.25 

Pillage is surprised to find that he has one true friend, Honestus; despite the consolations of his companion Pillage takes to drink. This is probably an allusion to Robert Walpole's well-known "convivial habits." 

One of the play's serious moments occurs in a scene between Pillage and his Muse. Mr. Spatter's comments on the actors' speeches reveal Fielding's belief that Walpole's policies had 

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carried the dangers to English liberties "past a jest":

Muse. And thou, or else thy muse disclaims thy pen,
Would'st sooner starve, ay, even in prison starve,
Than vindicate oppression for thy bread,
Or write down liberty to gain thy own.
Sourwit. Hey-day! methinks this merry tragedy is growing sublime.
Spatter. The last is, indeed, a little out of my present style; it dropt from me before I was aware; talking of liberty made me serious in spite of my teeth; for between you and me, Mr. Sourwit, I think that affair is past a jest.

Eurydice Hiss'd closes with Honestus expressing the hope that the sorry spectacle of the damned and drunken Pillage may profit mankind by the sad example.

The satirical spectacle of Eurydice Hiss'd was too much for the Walpole administration to countenance. The King's first minister had been brought on the stage and presented as venal, corrupt, money-grubbing, and drunk. Walpole's cherished hope for financial reform through an Excise Bill had been compared to a theatrical farce. Clearly Fielding, as well as other writers of dramatic political satire, had to be silenced.

Over the violent protests of the Opposition, especially Lord Chesterfield, the Licensing Act was passed in June, 1737.

The main provisions of the bill were simple and direct. It prohibited, under penalty of £50, the acting for "hire, gain, or reward" of any play or theatrical performance of any kind soever not previously sanctioned by letters patent from the crown, or licensed by the Lord Chamberlain. All theatres were to be restricted to the city of Westminster and the liberties therof, and to the place where the royal
family happened, at any time, to reside. Copies of all plays to be acted must be placed in the hands of the Lord Chamberlain at least a fortnight before being represented.\(^{26}\)

A few days after the passage of this act the Little Theatre in the Haymarket closed, and so ended Fielding's theatrical career.

Fielding later commented indirectly on Walpole's use of the Licensing Act as a device to forestall political criticism:

The late act regulating the stage, notwithstanding the objections of poets, players, and other idle people, gave great satisfaction to all of the graver sort. The Licensiousness of some modern performances favouring too much of the old comedy, and attacking several persons, whose character, from their high station, ought to be dear to every Englishman, made wise and thinking men wish for some reformation therein; which, if the legislator had, not provided, it is not easy to guess how far the jest might have been carried before this time; since I have been assured that a very large black-basket was bespoken for the use of the little house in the Haymarket; and several masques, drawn to the life, were provided, one of which would have made a certain person ashamed to shew his face, who never yet could be put out of countenance.\(^{27}\)

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\(^{26}\) Nicholson, 63.

\(^{27}\) The Champion (December 10, 1739), Works, XV, 91-92.
CHAPTER V

JONATHAN WILD

The Licensing Act of 1737 effectively ended Henry Fielding's career as a playwright; it did not, however, silence Fielding as a critic of Robert Walpole and his Administration. From 1738 to 1742, Fielding confined his political writings to periodicals and occasional pieces such as The Veroniad. Finally, in 1743, there appeared Fielding's last, and greatest, denunciation of Walpole, The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great.

As a basis for this devastating attack on Walpole, Fielding chose the life of one of history's most celebrated criminals, Jonathan Wild. To appreciate the parallel that Fielding draws between Wild, the thief, and Walpole, the politician, some knowledge of Wild's career is essential.

Jonathan Wild was born at Wolverhampton in 1682, where, even as a child, he was considered precocious in the ways of crime.¹

Wild was apprentice to a buckle-maker until about 1700, when he deserted his position and his wife. He went to London, but involvement in debt led to his imprisonment for a period of five years. After his release, Wild set up a brothel in partnership with a pickpocket and prostitute named Mary Milliner. Through her good offices, Wild became acquainted with the members of London's underworld and began to participate in their activities. In 1708, however, Wild went into business for himself as a criminal organizer, receiver of stolen goods, and thief-taker.

Wild gradually organized a unique criminal corporation. He had, under his direction, thieves of all types; he organized these men's activities to make maximum use of their talents. The members of Wild's band were forced to carry out his orders and also to turn over to him the major portion of their loot.

In order to dispose of the stolen goods, Wild opened an office to which people could apply for the recovery of "lost" property. Wild thus presented himself to the public as merely the middle-man between thief and victim. The victim of the robbery agreed to pay a certain price for the recovery of the property; he also agreed to ask no questions about Wild's methods. After some delay the goods were returned to the owner. Goods that were not called for were altered beyond recognition by craftsmen in Wild's employ, or they were shipped to Holland, where Roger Johnson, a
well-known smuggler, managed Wild's foreign operations.

Wild's extraordinary power over his gang was due, in part, to the fact that he protected the obedient, either by hiding them if they were pursued or arranging for their rescue or acquittal (by tampering with witnesses) if they should be arrested. If, however, one of the gang refused to obey Wild, he ruthlessly turned him over to the law and was instrumental in securing his conviction and execution. In addition, he informed against members of rival gangs. By these proceedings he acquired credit with the authorities as a useful citizen and zealous upholder of the law. To confirm his reputation he subsidized The Weekly Journal to proclaim him 'Thief-Catcher General of Great Britain and Ireland.'

Wild's activities were temporarily restrained when a law was passed in 1718 which made it a felony to take money or reward for securing the return of stolen property without prosecuting the thief. Wild then explained his remunerations as gifts from persons grateful for his services; the authorities, also grateful for his services, did not pursue the matter.

In 1724 Wild incurred the wrath of the public because of his part in the arrests of two famous criminals, Jack Sheppard and Joseph Blake, alias Blueskin. Blueskin had been a member of Wild's

\[2\text{Dudden, I, 450.}\]
gang but had quarrelled with his chief; he withdrew and established a rival band of thieves. The revengeful Wild hunted down Blueskin and, after a long pursuit, effected his capture. After Blueskin's trial and conviction Wild went to Newgate to visit his former companion. As they were drinking a glass of wine, Blueskin suddenly reached for a small knife and slashed Wild's throat. The wound, although serious, was not fatal.

Jack Sheppard had acquired wide renown and was something of a public favorite, due primarily to his incredible ability to break out of prisons. Sheppard and Blueskin were both hanged in November, 1724. Wild's cold-blooded pursuit of these two criminals led the public to demand action against him.

An opportunity soon arose for action against Wild. In January, 1725, Roger Johnson was arrested and imprisoned; he naturally appealed to Wild for assistance. Wild then led a group to the prison, provoked a riot, and helped Johnson to escape. For this bold and imprudent action Wild was himself arrested and imprisoned in Newgate in February, 1725. He did not, however, permit his incarceration to interfere with the conduct of his business. While in Newgate he received ten guineas from a Catherine Stetham for the return of some stolen lace. She informed against him, and Wild was brought to trial for a violation of the law of 1718. Wild's guilt was proved, and, although he pleaded for mercy because he had
secured the conviction of seventy-six criminals, he was sentenced to death.

Wild apparently became mentally deranged under the apprehension of his coming execution. Rev. Thomas Purney, the Ordinary of Newgate, reported that Wild asked strange and confused questions about life after death and about the manner of the deaths of several famous Greeks and Romans. The night before his execution, Wild attempted to kill himself by taking laudanum; ironically, he took an overdose and survived. The next morning, May 24, 1725, before an enormous crowd, Jonathan Wild was hanged on Tyburn Hill.

Even before Jonathan Wild's death, his possibilities as a political symbol were apparent to at least one member of the Opposition, Jonathan Swift. In "Blueskin's Ballad," Swift recounts Blueskin's attempt to cut Wild's throat; the setting in this poem, as in Fielding's Jonathan Wild, is the Old Bailey, rather than Newgate Prison where the historical attack occurred. Swift points out that Blueskin's attempt to murder Wild makes the world safe for petty thieves (pickpockets and highwaymen) and great thieves (those who rob in Customs and cheat in the Excise). One stanza is a direct statement about Walpole:

Some say there are Courtiers of highest Renown

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3 Ibid., 451-52. 4 Irwin, 23.
Who steal the King's Gold and leave him but a Crown;
Some say there are Peers and some Parliament Men
Who meet once a Year to rob Courtiers again;
    But let them have their swing
To pillage the King,
And get a blue Ribbon instead of a String
For Blueskin's sharp penknife has set you at Ease,
And ev'ry Man round me may rob if he please.\(^5\)

Most of the Opposition writings which used Wild as the foil for an attack on Walpole appeared after Wild's execution. However, the first piece of unmistakable Opposition propaganda which employed the parallel of Wild and Walpole appeared on May 12 and May 19, 1725, in a two part essay in Mist's \textit{Weekly Journal}. The ironic tone of the essay is so similar to the tone of Fielding's \textit{Jonathan Wild} that there have been speculations that Fielding wrote the essay in Mist's. Dudden believes that this article is too finished a piece of satire for Fielding to have written at eighteen years of age.\(^6\)

In this essay, Jonathan Wild, termed by the author a "great man," is reported to have believed that "Men of Parts . . . should be maintained by the Publick . . . whether it was done by boldly picking their Pockets, or boldly taking their money by force."\(^7\)

\(^6\) Dudden, I, 454.
\(^7\) Mist's \textit{Weekly Journal}, quoted in Irwin, 23.
Wild is said to have approved the moral climate of the times, for "a man's thriving and growing great in the World" is not impeded by such trifles as "Honour and Conscience, which now ... your busy pushing People look upon to be Chimeras. ... ." 8

Throughout this report Wild expresses the conviction that men of intelligence and wit are naturally privileged to prey upon mankind; he characterizes as "fools and projectors" those who are fit only to dupe their equals in "South-Sea schemes." 9 Such fools can never hope to be counted among the truly great rogues.

The final paragraph of this essay contains the anonymous author's most cutting remarks. He first attributes to Wild Walpole's well-known religious scepticism and follows by placing Wild in Walpole's political party: "As to Religion, he was a Free-thinker, and I'm afraid, a little inclin'd to Atheism. ... As to Party, he was both in Principle and Practice a right modern Whig, according to the Definition of those Gentlemen, which is express'd in their Motto--Keep what you get, and get what you can." 10

These articles contain the two charges against Walpole most common in the Opposition press. First, Walpole was accused of lacking Honor and Conscience in distribution of offices, of arbitrarily assigning government positions to his relatives and

8 Ibid. 9 Ibid. 10 Ibid.
political allies. Secondly, Walpole was accused of governing by corruption—corruption of electors, of local government officials, and of members of Parliament. In addition, the Mist's articles constitute the first appearance in an Opposition periodical of the thief-statesman parallel so popular with the Opposition writers.

The two part essay in Mist's Weekly Journal appeared during the two weeks of Jonathan Wild's trial and execution; his importance as a political symbol grew considerably after his death, when it could be pointed out that such criminal activity led to an ignominious death.

Not long after Wild's execution, the rapidly consolidating Opposition forces wished to begin a literary campaign against Walpole; they were in search of a symbol which could be used effectively to vilify the Prime Minister. The public image of Jonathan Wild was exactly the image the Opposition hoped to create of Walpole; a ruthless, arrogant, self-centered and ambitious man, a man who aimed, at any cost, to gratify his craving for power. In addition to this established public image, the Opposition writers knew that the very comparison of Walpole to a notorious thief would be degrading to Walpole.

This analogy between the statesman and the thief was immediately taken up by the Opposition writers and became the most common single device in the literary war against Walpole that
lasted until his fall from power in 1742. The comparison was used frequently by the Opposition's two most prominent periodicals, *The Craftsman* and *Common Sense*.

In 1728 *The Craftsman* stated that "the wicked Politician only stands erect by himself in the first and highest Rank of Plunderers; and seems, in his Prosperity, to look down and despise the Law, which he has broken." 11 Four years later, an issue of this paper asks "what Reasons can We have to suppose that a Man, who plunders a whole Nation without Remorse, would not in a lower Sphere, pick a Pocket, or take a Purse on the Road . . .?" 12

Finally, in 1736, Nicholas Amhurst (editor of *The Craftsman*) lashed out at Walpole:

As perfidy is the basest of all Vices, on one Side, so nothing is more grating to human Nature, on the other, than being made Dupes, or Bubbles. This is so odious in private Life that the Vilest of Criminals are ashamed of it, and often Chuse to suffer an ignominious Death, rather than betray their Companions—But when it is practised in Publick Life, by one Court against another, it is called Policy, and generally looked upon as a Mark of political Wisdom; though in Truth it is only a bastard Kind of it, and substituted in the Room of superior Abilities; for there is certainly a wide Difference between Sound Policy, which is founded upon a comprehensive Knowledge of Affairs, and the mean Arts of Trickery which require only a False, Deceitful Heart and a little Cunning . . . But when such base Arts are put in practise by a Minister against the People of his own Country,

11 *The Craftsman*, No. 97 (May 11, 1728).

12 *The Craftsman*, No. 320 (August 19, 1732).
it is still more infamous and provoking: for what may be esteemed only State-Craft and Fair Play against another Nation (which hath perhaps used Him in the same Manner) is downright Treachery and Breach of Trust against Those in whose Service he is retained.\(^{13}\)

This passage is an excellent illustration of the Opposition's contention that there is more honor among criminals than politicians. Amhurst makes use of a second common argument of the press: that what men consider vices in private life (treachery, cunning) are elevated to the virtues (sound policy) of public or political life.

Common Sense; or, The Englishman's Journal took up the battle against Walpole in February, 1737, when it was founded by Lord Chesterfield and Lord Lyttleton. In the first issue, the Preface states that the material in the articles "diverts itself with the Follies of great Criminals, such Criminals as Laws cannot, or at least do not punish."\(^{14}\)

In the issue of Common Sense for November 17, 1738, there appeared a speech by a criminal leader, Bob Booty (obviously Walpole), to his recalcitrant gang. At length he warns them, in the slang of the London underworld, that if he hangs, he will inform against the whole gang: "If you fancy that, by giving me up, you may slip your own necks out of the halter, you are bit. --If it is

\(^{13}\) The Craftsman (April 3, 1736).

\(^{14}\) Common Sense, I (1738), quoted in Irwin, 29.
decreed, that I must swing ... I'll peach every knave and fool among you, that is to say, the whole gang here present, d---m my eyes if I don't and so look to it."  

There are two direct references to Jonathan Wild in Common Sense. The first appears in an essay on Oliver Cromwell's arrogant, arbitrary method of dealing with Parliament, a transparent commentary on Walpole. The author speculates that if Jonathan Wild and his gang had seized control of the House of Commons and enacted legislation, such laws might have been obeyed, but only "till people should have strength and courage to seize Jonathan and the whole gang, and hang them all up."  

The second reference to Wild occurs in a two-part essay that appeared in Common Sense on July 10 and 17, 1742, several months after Walpole's fall. The article is devoted to jubilation at the fall of the Administration and caution lest people now begin to pity Walpole. The author first employs the direct parallel of the common thief and the thieving statesman:  

All the people on Earth must have an Abhorrence for those Times, where one Criminal is hang'd for raking a Groat upon a Road, and another honour'd for stealing a Million in an Office; --as if when Robbery is accompany'd with Breach of Trust, and where it affects the Freedom of a Nation, the

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15 Common Sense (November 17, 1738.)

16 Irwin, 30-31.
Extravagance of the Villainy had disarm'd Justice. 17

The author assails those who would show mercy to Walpole on the grounds that he has a deserving family. Every great criminal, says the author, leaves behind a family; he uses "the late Mr. Jonathan Wilde" as an "Instance of what a Misfortune it is to a Family to lose its Head." 18 The author then continues the comparison of Wild and Walpole, reminding the public that Walpole provided handsomely for his family and friends, with money and positions, while he was in office:

I am credibly inform'd, that this Great Man [Jonathan Wild] left not only a disconsolate Widow behind, but several other ladies whose fatherless Issue Jonathan thought himself obliged in Honour to provide for; but so suddenly was he taken off by the Malice of his Enemies, that he had not Time to procure those Settlements and those Honours for his Family and Friends, which they certainly deserve'd much better than the Family and Friends of another Person that shall be nameless . . . 19

So effective was the literary Opposition's use of Wild that the historical personage gradually lost his identity and came to be regarded as a symbol of evil and cruelty. It was of the symbol, and not of the man, that Fielding wrote in The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great.

17 Common Sense (July 17, 1742), in Gentleman's Magazine, XII (July, 1742), 364.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
Fielding was certainly acquainted with the Opposition's use of Wild to represent Walpole; indeed, in The Champion of March 3, 1740, Fielding himself made reference to Wild (and, by implication, to Walpole) to point out that virtue does not always accompany fame.

Since Fielding was interested in Wild as a symbol, only a biographical outline was required. This information Fielding acquired from three sources: 1) certain newspaper accounts published about the time of Wild's execution (among them probably the Mist's articles); 2) Thomas Purney's The Ordinary of Newgate his Account of the Behaviour, last Dying Speeches and Confessions of the Four Malefactors who were executed at Tyburn . . . the 24th of May, 1725; 3) Daniel Defoe's True and Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of the late Jonathan Wild; not made up out of Fiction and Fable, but taken from his own Mouth, and collected from Papers of his own Writing.

Henry Fielding's version of the life of Jonathan Wild was published in 1743; when it was written, however, is a matter of critical controversy, a controversy inherent in the structure of the work. "The Wild section, if the chapters constituting it were put together, would be a complete little biography, with a definitely political colouring. The Wild-Heartfree section is a

20 Irwin, 32.
narrative of a series of incidents, composed by the author in a
different mood and manner, and deftly intercalated, at suitable in-
tervals, into the Wild biography." In addition, the events in
the Wild section are not referred to in the Wild-Heartfree section,
nor are the events in the latter section related to those in the
former.

The major reason for placing the composition of Jonathan
Wild earlier than 1742 is the bitterness and intensity of Field-
ing's attack on Walpole. It seems more likely that Fielding pre-
pared such an attack in the period immediately after the Licensing
Act than that he composed it after the Prime Minister's fall in
February, 1742. In addition, there are strong similarities in tone
and style between Jonathan Wild and Fielding's writings for The
Champion from 1739-1741.

The primary reason advanced for a date of composition later
than 1742 is that there are certain passages in the novel which
could not have been written earlier. For example, in the chapter
"Of Proverbs," which appeared only in the 1743 edition, there is a
reference to William Pulteney's elevation to the peerage, July 13,
1742. Also, in Book I, Chapter 14, Fielding states that he com-
posed a simile about the Alps while travelling "westward over the

\[21\] Dudden, I, 476.
hills near Bath." Fielding is known to have spent at least part of the summer of 1742 in Bath.  

There is no definitive answer to the question of the date of Jonathan Wild; strong probability favors Dudden's solution that the different sections of the work were written at different times. The political Wild narrative was apparently written about 1740. When Fielding decided to include Jonathan Wild in the Miscellanies, he found himself dissatisfied with it because of the altered political situation and because he had developed a new style in the writing of Joseph Andrews. Dudden proposes that Fielding then wrote Book IV, Chapter 3, a satire on Walpole's successors. Fielding then wrote the Wild-Heartfree episodes to universalize the conflict; instead of being merely a polemic against Walpole, Jonathan Wild became an allegory of the constant struggle of greatness and goodness.

Whatever the date of composition, Jonathan Wild was first published as Volume Three of Fielding's Miscellanies in 1743. In the "Preface" to these Miscellanies, Fielding wrote an elaborate denial that Jonathan Wild was intended to represent a specific individual. The ironical tone of the disclaimer is very close to the ironical tone of the novel:

22 Ibid. 23 Ibid., 482-83. 24 Ibid.
To confess the Truth, my Narrative is rather of such Actions which he might have performed, or would, or should have performed, than what he really did; and may, in Reality, as well suit any other such great Man, as the Person himself whose Name it bears.

A ... Caution I would give my Reader is, that as it is not a very faithful Portrait of Jonathan Wild himself, so neither is it intended to represent the Features of any other Person. Roguery, and not a Rogue, is my Subject; and as I have been so far from endeavoring to particularize any Individual, that I have with my utmost Art avoided it; so will any such Application be unfair in my Reader, especially if he knows much of the Great World, since he must then be acquainted, I believe, with more than one on whom he can fix the Resemblance. 25

In 1754 Fielding decided to republish Jonathan Wild as a single duodecimo volume; this reprint was issued on March 19, 1754, at a cost of three shillings per copy. The text of the second edition represents a considerable revision over the 1743 text; the author had considerably softened the attack on the Prime Minister. By 1754 Fielding seems to have undergone a change of heart regarding Walpole. Shortly after Walpole's fall, Fielding referred to him as one of the best of men and of ministers. In the second edition of Jonathan Wild, therefore, Fielding eliminated many of the offensive passages; for example, in most places where "Prime Minister" (an obvious reference to Walpole) appeared in the 1743 edition, the word "statesman" was substituted in the 1754 edition.

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The "Advertisement" to the 1754 edition is written in the same spirit of irony as the "Preface" to the 1743 Miscellanies; whether the remarks are the work of Fielding or of the publisher has not been determined. As in the "Preface," the "Advertisement" affirms the existence of a secondary meaning in the novel by the very vehemence of the denial.

Advertisement from the Publisher to the Reader.

That any personal Application would have ever been possibly drawn from them will surprize all who are not deeply versed in the black Art (for so it seems most properly to be called) of deciphering Mens Meaning when couched in obscure ambiguous or allegorical Expressions: This Art hath been exercised more than once on the Author of this little Book, who hath contracted a considerable Degree of Odium from having had the Scurrility of others imputed to him. The Truth is, as a very corrupt State of Morals is here represented, the Scene seems very properly to have been laid in Newgate; Nor do I see any Reason for introducing any Allegory at all; unless we will agree that there are, without those Walls, some other Bodies of Men of worse Morals than those within; and who have consequently a Right to change Places with the present Inhabitants.26

In the "Preface" to the Miscellanies, Fielding stated that it was not his intention to give "a very faithful portrait" of Jonathan Wild. Fielding did indeed take considerable liberties with Wild's biography, so that the narrative would reflect his own twofold purpose; first, to attack Robert Walpole by using the

26 Henry Fielding, "Advertisement from the Publisher to the Reader," Miscellanies (London, 1743).
familiar robber-statesman parallel; second, to deal with the ethical conflict of greatness and goodness. Fielding was clearly not interested in writing a conventional criminal biography as Defoe had done; he therefore used only the outlines of Wild's career and made the criminal's story into an ironic narrative.

In writing this novel, Fielding added both character and incident and altered actual incidents in Wild's life. The only historical characters in the work are Jonathan Wild, Roger Johnson, Blueskin, and the Ordinary of Newgate. Such interesting people as Count La Ruse, Snap, Laetitia, and the Heartfrees are also inventions of Fielding's fertile imagination.

As mentioned above, Fielding preserved the outlines of Jonathan Wild's life; Fielding's Wild was precocious in the ways of evil and showed an early inclination to crime. He founded a large organization of thieves and robbers obliged to obey him, resold stolen goods to the owners, protected the obedient members of his gang and turned the recalcitrant over to the law. He had a quarrel with Blueskin and barely escaped being murdered. He was finally arrested for violation of the law of 1718, imprisoned, tried, and condemned. He discussed his impending doom with the Ordinary of Newgate, attempted to commit suicide by taking laudanum, and was hanged at Tyburn before an immense crowd.
To this Fielding has added certain incidents. For example, there is no historical basis for Wild's transportation to America (Book I, Chapter 7); this chapter, like the narrative of Mrs. Heartfree's travels, may have been introduced as a burlesque of the world tour. Among the other incidents invented by Fielding are the conspiracy with Count La Ruse to dupe and swindle Heartfree (II, 1-3), Wild's marriage to Laetitia (III, 7, 8), Wild's contest and triumph over Johnson in Newgate (IV, 3), Wild's last deed--picking the parson's pockets (IV, 14).

Besides adding certain incidents, Fielding substantially altered three incidents in Wild's life. In Book III, Chapter 14 and Book IV, Chapter 1, Fielding recounts the "unpleasantness" between Wild and Blueskin. There is a totally imaginary quarrel over the disposition of some booty, Wild disappears and returns with the police. Historically, of course, after the quarrel Blueskin formed a rival gang, and Wild hunted him down. Fielding then presents the scene in Old Bailey as Heartfree and Blueskin, both Wild's victims, are convicted on the same day. Fielding then presents Blueskin's attack on Wild as occurring in Old Bailey rather than Newgate where the historical attack took place.

In Book IV, Chapter 3, Fielding tells of Wild's contest with Roger Johnson for the kingship of Newgate prison. Although Johnson was a real person the events described are purely imaginative.
Finally, there is a dialogue between Wild and the Ordinary of Newgate in Book IV, Chapter 13. Dudden describes Fielding's alteration: "...Wild's interview with the Ordinary of Newgate is historical; but Fielding turned a serious conversation into a farcical dialogue, and at the same time unwarrantably pictured the Ordinary in question—the Reverend Thomas Purney, a thoroughly estimable young man and something of a pastoral poet—as a brutal and scandalous clergyman befuddled by punch."²⁷

Clearly Fielding was not being ironic when he announced that he did not intend to give "a very faithful Portrait" of Jonathan Wild; he rather planned to use Wild to give a portrait of the man who virtually ruled England for twenty-one years, Robert Walpole.

Fielding attacks Walpole in two ways in Jonathan Wild: first, by specific allusions; second, by the analogy he establishes and develops between Walpole, the politician, and Wild, the criminal. There are three types of specific allusions to Walpole in Jonathan Wild: 1) the use of the epithet "Great Man"; 2) the use of the title "Prime Minister"; 3) references to people, places, and things connected with Walpole. Let us consider the satire on Walpole in Jonathan Wild, beginning with the specific allusions.

Jonathan Wild is ostensibly an attack on Greatness and Great

²⁷Dudden, I, 457.
The terms "greatness," "great man," and "great men," are constantly kept before the reader. Modern reprints often do not make clear that in the 1743 edition these words were printed in capital letters, sometimes in extra large capital letters, a device often used by the periodical writers of the Opposition in attacking Walpole. 28

As we have seen, through the years from 1725 to 1742, the Great Man in England was Robert Walpole. Even a casual survey of the minor writings of the period shows that, through hundreds of pamphlets and thousands of periodical writings, the public had become accustomed to the association of the term "Great Man" (usually in capital letters or italics) with "Robin," "little Robin," and the "Robinocracy." Thus the extensive use of the epithet "Great Man" in Jonathan Wild would immediately turn the reader's attention to Walpole.

In the first chapter of Jonathan Wild, Fielding states that the Great Man is by nature a force for destruction: "...greatness consists in bringing all manner of mischief on mankind, and goodness in removing it from them" (I, 1).

Throughout the novel, Fielding uses the term "Great Man" in

statements referring to government; usually these references heighten a diatribe against Walpole. For example, in Book IV, Chapter 2, Fielding uses one of his favorite devices, in pretending shock that the public has shown itself so ungrateful to great men. In the passage below, Fielding attacks the great man (Walpole) for concern only with advancement of his own ambition and for his high-handed violation of the rights of the British citizens:

If we had any leisure we would here digress a little on that ingratitude which so many writers have observed to spring up in the people in all free governments towards their great men; who, while they have been consulting the good of the public, by raising their own greatness, in which the whole body (as the kingdom of France thinks itself in the glory of their grand monarch) was so deeply concerned, have been sometimes sacrificed by those very people for whose glory the said great men were so industriously at work; and this from a foolish zeal for a certain ridiculous imaginary thing called liberty, to which great men are observed to have a great animosity.

One of Fielding's frequent complaints against Walpole (both in the plays and in this novel) is that the Minister was arbitrary in assigning government posts to his political associates and equally arbitrary in removing these same associates from office. Fielding's readers who had been following the Opposition attacks, as well as those who knew only of Walpole's election tactics, were aware that the necessities of politics dictated the Prime Minister's choice of friends and retainers. Anyone who ceased to be loyal or useful was speedily dismissed.
When Wild arrives at Newgate (IV, 2) he is unperturbed by his arrest, for the keeper of the prison and several of the minor officers are old friends; to his sorrow, Wild finds that these former friends are no longer loyal. Fielding now refers to the officers of the prison as great men, for they have proved themselves worthy of the title by their perfidy to Wild; Fielding then draws the analogy between such great men and Walpole, making the comparison explicit by the use of the words "courts" and "Newgate":

To confess a melancholy truth, it is a circumstance much to be lamented, that there is no absolute dependence on the friendship of great men; an observation which hath been frequently made by those who have lived in courts, or in Newgate, or in any other place set apart for the habitation of such persons. (IV, 2)

In the last chapter in the novel Fielding sets out to describe in detail the character of the great man; the chapter is a thinly disguised summary of Fielding's view of Walpole's character.

The dominant trait of the great man is ambition; associated with this is ingenuity in contriving plots and the means to fulfill them. The great man must be free of the vices of modesty and good nature, and, while his lust is second only to his ambition, he is totally unfamiliar with "what simple people call love." So powerful is avarice in the great man that Wild, for example, was unable to bear to have even the smallest share of booty assigned to the members of his gang. Fielding believed that Walpole had robbed
and pillaged England, during his twenty-one years of power, for his personal aggrandizement and that Walpole was unable to allow the smallest share of revenue diverted to expenses for the benefit of the nation.

In addition to the virtues described above, the great man is convinced that he is above the law. Wild, says Fielding, believed that laws were not meant to punish thieves; Fielding had many times criticized Walpole for sweeping aside legal objections to his actions and to his assumption of the office of "prime minister."

After describing Wild as the epitome of the great man, Fielding sets down certain maxims for attaining greatness, which Wild is said to have composed. The statements are so constructed that they describe the road to greatness in either thievery or political life. Most of the maxims are indictments of Walpole; he is accused of placing political expediencey and self-interest above honesty and service to the nation and of therefore practicing secrecy, deception, and revenge. Maxims 12 and 15 accuse Walpole of hypocrisy, in pretending virtue while indulging in corrupt practices. The following "Maxims of Greatness" are particularly pertinent to Fielding's attack on Walpole:

2. To know no distinction of men from affection, but to sacrifice all with equal readiness to his interest.
3. Never to communicate more of an affair than was necessary to the person who was to execute it.

4. Not to trust him who hath deceived you, nor who knows he hath been deceived by you.

5. To forgive no enemy, but to be cautious and often dilatory in revenge.

6. To shun poverty and distress, and to ally himself as close as possible to power and riches.

12. That virtues, like precious stones, were easily counterfeited; that the counterfeits in both cases adorned the wearer equally, and that very few had knowledge or discernment sufficient to distinguish the counterfeit jewel from the real.

15. That the heart was the proper seat of hatred, and the countenance of affection and friendship. (IV, 15)

These maxims are Fielding's best summary of his case against Robert Walpole and constitute Fielding's most direct and savage denunciation of the "Great Man."

Thus Fielding uses the epithet "Great Man" for Wild to draw the reader's attention to Robert Walpole and to remind the reader that such a man is a destructive force, since he partakes of the essentially vicious quality of greatness. Since "Great Man" and "greatness" are the key words in Jonathan Wild, the epithet also serves to tie the political satire (Wild as the representative great man) to the allegorical conflict of greatness and goodness (Wild-Heartfree).
Besides designating Wild as a "Great Man," Fielding also employs the title which had come to be assigned to Walpole's office, "Prime Minister." This term is used principally to aid in drawing the analogy between the offices of Wild and Walpole, the chief of a band of thieves and the head of a political party.

In 1743 Walpole was the only man in England with whom the title "Prime Minister" could be associated. It was a phrase, like "Great Man," frequently used by Opposition writers to describe Walpole's position in the government. In 1743, people would still remember the attack on Walpole led by Pulteney and Sandys in February, 1741, the protest of the minority of the Lords of February 13, and all the debate and strife that followed, up to and after Walpole's fall. The major point with which Sandys began and which formed the heart of his attack and of the protest of the House of Lords was that, according to the Constitution, there could be "no sole and prime minister." Walpole had aggregated to himself the authority implied by such a title and was therefore attacked by the Opposition as an enemy of the traditional structure of English government.

Fielding, must, of course, have been aware that the English reader would associate the term "prime minister" with Robert Walpole; he uses the term frequently throughout the novel, often in places where another word would be applicable. For example, in
Book IV, Chapter 14, Wild is about to be executed; in discussing the futility of attempting to foil Fortune (Wild's attempted suicide) Fielding says, "...whether she [Fortune] hath determined you shall be hanged or be a prime minister, it is in either case lost labour to resist."

In Book II, Chapter 8, Wild comes to visit the downtrodden Heartfree, "not with that downcast countenance which betrays the man who, after a strong conflict between virtue and vice, hath surrendered his mind to the latter, and is discovered in his first treachery; but with that noble, bold, great confidence with which a prime minister assures his dependent that the place he promised him was disposed of before." Wild chides Heartfree for extending credit to the ne'er-do-well Count La Ruse, "as the said prime minister chides you for neglect of your interest in not having asked in time." Here Fielding returns to the charge frequently made against Walpole that he liberally dispensed promises of favors immediately before an election, promises he had no intention of keeping once victory was secured.

By the time Fielding published the revised edition of Jonathan Wild in 1754, Walpole had been dead for some nine years; the political significance of the novel was thus outdated. In addition, Fielding was a supporter of the government in power
headed by Henry Pelham; a bitter invective such as Jonathan Wild would be inappropriate. In revising the work, therefore, Fielding eliminated many of the political overtones. The major revision was the deletion of the term "prime minister" in many places and the substitution of the more general word "statesman."

In addition to the use of phrases to remind the reader of Walpole, Fielding scatters throughout Jonathan Wild references to specific persons, places, or things connected with Walpole.

In the 1743 edition of Jonathan Wild there appeared a chapter entitled "Of Proverbs," apparently never never printed since. The twelfth Proverb states:

Debauching a Member of the House of Commons from his Principles, and creating him a Peer, is not much better than making a Woman a Whore, and afterwards marrying her. Here a Member of the House of Commons is set forth in the lovely State of virgin Simplicity and Innocence, and it is insinuated that if you first debauch him from that State of Purity and Make him a Rogue, he remains a Rogue still, notwithstanding a subsequent Peerage; as a Woman who is debauched remains a Whore still, notwithstanding a subsequent Marriage. And this the Proverb would say further, notwithstanding the World calls the former RIGHT HONOURABLE and the latter an HONEST Woman.

Thus having (to use the Words of that noble Author [Lord Bacon] once more) staid somewhat longer on these Sentences than is agreeable to the Proportion of an Example, and perhaps offended some, who will direct the Force of this Chapter (if it have any) where it was little meant; I now

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29 Dudden, I, 463-64.
return to our Hero. . . 30

The statement "making a Woman a Whore, and afterwards marrying her" refers to Walpole's marriage to Maria Skerrett in 1738, after she had been his mistress for many years. The reference to "Debauching a Member of the House of Commons...and creating him a Peer" is a jibe at William Pulteney, who successfully led the Opposition to Walpole and then accepted the title of Earl of Bath in July, 1742. 31

Book I, Chapter 2 is entitled "Giving an account of as many of our hero's ancestors as can be gathered out of the rubbish of antiquity, which hath been carefully sifted for that purpose." In this chapter, Fielding purports to trace the family of Jonathan Wild back to the time of Hengist, a Germanic leader who died in 488 A.D. Fielding may, in this account, be burlesquing the long accounts of ancestry found in many criminal biographies. He is certainly writing a brief parody of William Musgrave's _Brief and True History of Robert Walpole and His Family_. In this biography, published in 1738, Walpole receives some forty pages of discussion and his ancestors thirty-eight pages.

30 "Of Proverbs" appears as the eleventh chapter of the 1743 edition of _Jonathan Wild_.

31 Dudden, I, 481.
In this account of Wild's ancestry, Fielding first assigned to Wild a grandfather named James. He later changed the name to Edward, so that the names would parallel Walpole's ancestry. Thus, Wild's father is Jonathan, and his grandfather is Edward; since Walpole's father was Robert and his grandfather Edward.

Book I, Chapter 5 contains a dialogue between Wild and Count La Ruse regarding the advantages of the life of a thief as opposed to that of a statesman (see below). There are, in this chapter, two direct jibes at Walpole. Fielding writes, "A booty of £10 looks as great in the eye of a bridle-cull [highwayman], and gives as much real happiness to his fancy, as that of as many thousands in the statesman; and doth not the former lay out his acquisition in whores and fiddles with much greater joy and mirth than the latter in palaces and pictures?" Walpole had spend enormous sums on "palaces and pictures." He expended in building, adding and improving at Houghton (in Norfolk) the sum of two hundred thousand pounds (equivalent to several million dollars). He built a lodge in Richmond Park at a cost of fourteen thousand pound. His collection of pictures was estimated, by Horace Walpole, to have cost him forty thousand pounds. Walpole's enemies contended that for this expenditure he had acquired the funds by the sale of honors, places, and pensions, and by use of secret service money.
Later in this chapter Wild says, "How much braver is an attack on the highway than at a gaming-table, and how much more innocent the character of a b--dy-house than a c[our]t pimp."

Walpole's permissive attitude toward George II's mistresses, and his use of them to further his own plans, were well known. It was generally known that Walpole suggested to the Queen that Sophia de Walmoden (one of the King's favorites) should be brought to England from Hanover; Walpole actually imported Mme. de Walmoden after the Queen's death. 32

From about 1725 until 1742 Walpole was the target of spirited denunciations by the members of the Opposition. Walpole effectively eliminated the theatrical satires on himself and his Administration by the Licensing Act of 1737; the Opposition periodicals, however, continued to assail Walpole on every possible charge. There came to be a strong feeling among the leading members of the Opposition that Walpole would attempt to force legislation through Parliament which would provide for censorship of the press. 33 Fielding refers to the "inconvenience" which a free press causes to Great Men in Book III, Chapter 5:

There is one misfortune which attends all GREAT MEN and their schemes, vis., that in order to carry them into execution they are obliged, in proposing their purpose

32 Wells, 22-23. 33 Dudden, I, 461.
to their tools, to discover themselves to be of that disposition in which certain little writers have advised mankind to place no confidence—an advice which hath been sometimes taken. Indeed, many inconveniences arise to the said GREAT MEN from these scribblers publishing without restraint their hints or alarms to society, and many great and glorious schemes have been thus frustrated, wherefore it were to be wished that in all well-regulated governments such liberties should be by some wholesome laws restrained, and all writers inhibited from venting any other instructions to the people than what should be first approved and licensed by the said GREAT MEN, or their proper instruments or tools—by which means nothing would ever be published but what made for the advancing their most noble projects.

Although Jonathan Wild is successful in his public projects, he enjoys something less than domestic tranquility in his marriage to Laetitia Snap. Book III, Chapter 9 recounts the dialogue between Jonathan and Laetitia two weeks after their marriage. After much name-calling and expressions of mutual hatred, the two agree to release one another from the marriage vow, although they will continue to inhabit the same house. When they meet later in Newgate prison, each expresses great delight that the other is to be hanged.

The lack of felicity in Wild's marriage parallels Walpole's unhappy first marriage to Catherine Shorter. She was a vain shallow woman, greedy for praise but a violator of all standards of social behavior. Dudden describes her as "a woman who in high life displayed the same kind of qualities that Fielding's Laetitia
displayed in low."  

The epithets, titles, and allusions are all used to point up the satire on Walpole in *Jonathan Wild*; the major portion of the attack on Wild is contained in the analogy between Wild, the thief, and Walpole, the politician. This satire is concentrated into five chapters in the novel: Book I, Chapter 5: "A dialogue between young Master Wild and Count La Ruse, which, having extended to the rejoinder, had a very quiet, easy, and natural conclusion"; Book I, Chapter 14: "In which the history of greatness is continued"; Book II, Chapter 6: "Of Hats"; Book III, Chapter 14: "In which our hero makes a speech well worthy to be celebrated, and the behaviour of one of the gang, perhaps more unnatural than any other part of this history"; and Book IV, Chapter 3: "Curious anecdotes relating to the history of Newgate."

The structure of these five chapters has been carefully planned. In the first (I, 5) Wild is presented with a choice. The same talents, his talents, go to make up the statesman or the thief; which life shall he choose? Wild, of course, elects to become a thief; however, the reader is invited to consider what would

34 Dudden, I, 460.  
35 Ibid.
have happened had Wild chosen a life in politics. Fielding clearly believes that the result of Wild in political life would be Walpole. The second chapter (I, 14) considers Wild's method of operation in his chosen profession. Wild's decision to head a gang corresponds to Walpole's determination to head a political party. The methods to be employed to achieve these two apparently dissimilar ends are startlingly similar. The third (II, 6) and fourth (III, 14) chapters deal with the leader coping with the problems of office. In the former, Wild reconciles the factions in his gang of criminals as the political leader must bring accord to dissenting elements in his party. The next chapter shows the leader dealing with recalcitrance in an "underling." Wild turns Blueskin over to the police; Walpole had the power to dismiss from office, exile, or hang a difficult politician. In the fifth chapter (IV, 3) the leader's fall from power and replacement by another leader is portrayed. In this chapter not Wild, but Roger Johnson, represents Walpole.

Thus in five chapters, cleverly interwoven in the narrative, the career of Wild, together with the parallel career of Walpole, is traced from beginning to end.

In Book I, Chapter 5, Fielding initiates the comparison of Wild and Walpole. The chapter is a mock debate between Wild and Count La Ruse on Wild's future. The theme of this discussion of
Wild's future plans is the similarity between the common thief's abilities and purposes, and those of the statesman and prime minister. The two men are agreed that the same qualities go to form a statesman as a thief; the question is, which state is preferable? Count La Ruse argues that a life at court, with political power, is more desirable; Wild prefers the life of a criminal, since, for one thing, it is more honorable:

In civil life, doubtless, the same genius, the same endowments, have often composed the statesman and the prig, for so we call what the vulgar name a thief. The same parts, the same actions, often promote men to the head of superior societies, which raise them to the head of lower; and where is the essential difference if the one ends on Tower-hill and the other at Tyburn? . . . Besides, let us a little consider the secret quiet of their consciences; how easy is the reflection of having taken a few shillings or pounds from a stranger, without any breach of confidence, or perhaps any great harm to the person who loses it, compared to that of having betrayed a public trust, and ruined the fortunes of thousands, perhaps of a great nation.

This paragraph implies that there is no essential difference between the man executed at Tyburn (the place of execution of common criminals) and the man executed at Tower-hill (the place of execution of the upper classes). Fielding might wish his reader to recall that Walpole had spent several months in the Tower prison, early in his political career.

This chapter contains several references to the "great statesman," "tool of state," and "great men." To increase the
irony of the comparison between statesman and thief, Wild admits the similarity of qualities in a casual, offhand manner, as though the analogy were commonly accepted: "If, therefore, you had only contended that every prig might be a statesman if he pleased, I had readily agreed to it: but when you conclude that it is his interest to be so, that ambition would bid him take that alternative, in a word, that a statesman is greater or happier than a prig, I must deny my assent."

In this chapter, also, there are two direct references to Walpole--one to his lavish expenditures for his homes and one to his attitude to King George II's mistresses (see above, p. 187).

Once Wild has perceived the advantages of being a thief rather than a politician, he has only to implement his decision. This he does in Book I, Chapter 14.

In this chapter Wild shrewdly analyzes the uses to which man may be put in the world. He begins by stating that there are two types of men, those who use their own hands, and those who use the hands of others. The former are the "rabble," while the latter form the "genteel" part of the world. Among those who employ the hands of others, there is also a division--those who employ hands for the benefit of society and those who employ hands for their own benefit only. The former group consists of yeomen,
manufacturers, merchants and gentlemen; among those who employ hands for their own use only, he places "conquerors, absolute princes, statesmen [originally prime ministers] and prigs." Wild then speculates that the difference between a prime minister and a thief is only that the former employs more hands than the latter; greatness then becomes only a matter of employing a large number of hands. "Now," remarks Wild, "suppose a prig had as many tools as any prime minister ever had, would he not be as great as any prime minister whatsoever? Undoubtedly."

Based on his analysis of the ways in which men are employed, Wild formulates a plan to organize a gang, with himself as chief; in his scheme, he once more equates himself with a political leader. Wild's speech, outlining his design, forms an almost exact equation with Fielding's beliefs about Walpole's methods as a political leader:

What then have I to do in the pursuit of greatness but to procure a gang, and to make the use of this gang centre in myself? This gang shall rob for me only, receiving very moderate rewards for their actions; out of this gang I will prefer to my favour the boldest and most iniquitous (as the vulgar express it); the rest I will, from time to time, as I see occasion, transport and hang at my pleasure; and thus (which I take to be the highest excellence of a prig) convert those laws which are made for the benefit and protection of society to my single use.

Wild then as leader of a gang of thieves stands for Walpole as leader of a gang of politicians. Walpole's political minions
rob the nation only for him, receiving the small reward of some place or preferment; the implication in the above speech is that only the very wicked ("the boldest and most iniquitous") can rise to a high place. Walpole may circumvent the laws by disposing of his adherents who become troublesome and refuse to support him; thereby, Fielding concludes, he perverts the purposes of the laws designed to protect men from despots, since he uses the laws to protect and further his own despotic system.

Fielding intrudes himself into this chapter to make comment on certain aspects of the story. One of his reflections is a mock lament on the unhappiness which seems to be the lot of great men when one considers the ends to which the great man will go to gratify his own wishes, it is unfortunate that he receives so little reward. "It is pity that THOSE for whose pleasure and profit mankind are to labour and sweat, to be hacked and hewed, to be pillaged, plundered, and every way destroyed, should reap so LITTLE advantage from all the miseries they occasion to others."

One of the few times that Fielding's mask of irony slips is in this chapter; in the passage that concludes his interjection, he lashes out at all great men, conquerors and statesman, for the pain and injustice they have brought to humanity:

"...when I behold one GREAT MAN starving with hunger and freezing with cold, in the midst of fifty thousand who are
suffering the same evils for his diversion; when I see another, whose own mind is a more abject slave to his own greatness, and is more tortured and racked by it, than those of all his vassals; lastly, 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 I am almost inclined to wish that Nature had spared us this her MASTERPIECE, and that no GREAT MAN had ever been born into the world.

This is one of the most serious passages in Jonathan Wild; it shows Fielding's contempt for those political leaders who failed to place the welfare of their people first. It makes clear that Fielding's hatred for Walpole was not only directed at corruption and political favoritism. Fielding held Walpole responsible for the terrible social evils, particularly the desperate plight of the poor, that were permitted to spread, while the middle class and upper classes enjoyed peace and prosperity.

The most famous chapter in Jonathan Wild is certainly Book II, Chapter 6, "Of Hats." It could be removed from the novel without changing the story, but Coleridge said that "brief as it is, [it] exceeds any thing even in Swift's Lilliput or Tale of the Tub." 36

In this chapter, Fielding describes the personnel of Wild's gang in unmistakeably political terms and shows Wild openly

announcing that their object is to rob the public.

The gang itself is composed of various types of indigents who have one quality in common; they were "willing to live luxuriously without labour." These men were divided into groups according to the kind of hat they wore; one group "wore hats fiercely cocked," while the second group preferred the "nab or trencher hat, with the brim flapping over their eyes." Fielding equates the hats with principles. In time, these groups began "to think there was something essential in their differences, and that their interests were incompatible with each other, whereas, in truth, the difference lay only in the fashion of their hats."

These words are directed against Robert Walpole; throughout his career as prime minister, his enemies insisted that Walpole's followers were collected, by bribery, from all the political parties; the single aim of Walpole and his band was to plunder the people, but this was hidden in the "guise of love for liberty and patriotism." 37

Wild addresses the dissident members of the gang. He first informs them that he is ashamed that men engaged in such a "glorious" undertaking as robbing the public are quarrelling among themselves. The hats, or principles, are only outward signs "to impose

37 Wells, 45.
on the vulgar." The great men are thus relieved of the necessity of acquiring the inward substance of principles.

Wild first proves to the man that they are all engaged in a common venture (robbing the public) and must not let petty differences cause discord. He then gives them instruction for concealing their criminal activity, which Fielding wants the reader to apply to concealment of corrupt political activity: "You do wisely, therefore, when in a crowd, to amuse the mob by quarrels on such accounts, that while they are listening to your jargon you may with greater ease and safety pick their pockets." Fielding would equate the whole process of debate in Parliament with the diverting quarrels, while even the men publicly opposed to each other are working together to defraud the public.

The second chapter dealing with Wild as a leader is Book III, Chapter 14; it tells of Wild's encounter with Blueskin, a member of the gang who refuses to surrender to Wild a piece of stolen property. Blueskin possesses two qualities of a great man, "undaunted courage, and an absolute contempt of those ridiculous distinction of meum and tuum, which could cause endless disputes did not the law happily decide them by converting both into suum."

Blueskin has "acquired" a valuable watch which he refuses to turn over to Wild; as leader of the gang, Wild is to receive
stolen property, which he then resells to those who were robbed.

In this chapter, his scope of activity widens and he becomes a "thief-taker." The rebellious Blueskin leaves Wild and adjourns to a tavern, a common meeting place of the gang; he there arouses his comrades against Wild. The gang is ready to depose its leader, when Wild walks in with the police and turns Blueskin over to them.

The implications in this chapter regarding Walpole are, of course, that he was dishonest not only in dealing with the common people and the Opposition but also in dealing with his own party. Should any party member prove rebellious, Walpole was in a position to permanently remove him from public life.

In the quarrel about the watch, Blueskin charges Wild with being a selfish leader, one not interested in carrying out his responsibility to the "gang" but only in his own personal aggrandizement; just so did Fielding and the other Opposition writers accuse Walpole of disregarding the responsibilities of an elected official to his constituents, and of securing only his own interests and not exercising leadership in the nation. "I know not who put you at the head of [the gang]," cried Blueskin; "but those who did certainly did it for their own good, that you might conduct them the better in their robberies, inform them of the richest
booties, prevent surprizes, pack juries, bribe evidence, and so contribute to their benefit and safety; and not to convert all their labour and hazard to your own benefit and advantage."

Wild accuses Blueskin of ingratitude and reminds him of "that piece of ribbon you wear in your hat, with which I dubbed you captain." This is reminiscent of the threads of red, blue, and green in Gulliver's Travels, which were used to reward the successful Lilliputians; Wild's statement also recalls Fielding's proverb about debauching a member of the House of Commons and then creating him a Peer (see above p. 185). The ribbon represents one of the orders of distinction awarded for services performed on behalf of England, while being "dubbed Captain" refers to elevation to the Peerage. In 1725, at Walpole's request, the King revived the Order of Bath; soon afterward, the order was conferred on Walpole's brother, Horatio, the first commoner so honored since 1660. Horatio Walpole was thereafter referred to (especially by the Opposition) as "Mr. Bluestring." Fielding thus satirizes the use of awards of distinctions and peerages to reward political friends.

After Blueskin has been turned over to the authorities, Fielding concludes that Wild's betrayal of his gang member was a necessity for a criminal (or political) leader:
Thus did this great man by a resolute and timely example (for he went directly to the justice when Blueskin left him) quell one of the most dangerous conspiracies which could possibly arise in a gang, and which, had it been permitted one day's growth, would inevitably have ended in his destruction; so much doth it behove all great men to be eternally on their guard, and expeditious in the execution of their purposes; while none but the weak and honest can indulge themselves in remissness or repose.

The most controversial section of Jonathan Wild is Chapter 3 of Book IV, in which the rivalry between Wild and Johnson for supremacy in Newgate prison is described. Wild arrives at Newgate to find Johnson reigning as "King" of the debtors. After some strife, comparable to an election, Wild's party prevails. Wild then strips Johnson of the finery which was the symbol of office; however, he finds that "as to the waistcoat, it fitted him very ill, being infinitely too big for him; and the cap was so heavy that it made his head ache."

Several interpretations have been assigned to this section, as to the identity of Wild and Johnson. The basic allegory, as described by Dudden, is clear enough:

Newgate represents the country given over to corruption; the debtors are the taxpayers, destined to be plundered, no matter which party is in power; the prigs are the greedy politicians and placemen; the contest between Wild and Johnson, with its party cries and violent dissensions, signifies a parliamentary election; while the suppression of Johnson by Wild symbolizes a change in the Ministry. So much is clear. But who are the rival leaders whom
Fielding here had in mind?\textsuperscript{38}

In Fraser’s Magazine, 1858, Mr. Keightley wrote, "There can certainly be little doubt but that the Roger Johnson whom Wild supplants in Newgate is Robert Walpole. . . . I take Wild here to represent Pulteney, who was the chief agent in overthrowing Walpole, and the chapter to have been inserted by Fielding in disgust at the conduct of Walpole's successors."\textsuperscript{39}

In the Quarterly Review of December, 1855, Whitewell Elwin wrote, "These two men were intended to represent the leaders of the political factions of England. Roger Johnson is Sir Robert Walpole, who was compelled to resign at the beginning of 1742; and Lord Wilmington, who succeeded him, seems to be pictured in Wild."\textsuperscript{40}

W. L. Cross, drawing an analogy between Jonathan Wild and The Beggar's Opera, suggests that Wild, like Lockit, represents Charles Townshend.

J. E. Wells believes that the victorious Wild represents William Pulteney. After Walpole's fall, Pulteney refused George II's invitation to form a new government, but Pulteney asked to

\textsuperscript{38}Dudden, I, 462.

\textsuperscript{39}Keightley, quoted in Wells, 2.

\textsuperscript{40}Whitewell Elwin, quoted in Wells, 3-4.
be made a member of the council. His subsequent actions made him unpopular with The Patriots.

Aurelion Digeon holds that the "new" Wild, after Johnson has been overthrown, represents the Earl of Wilmington, who became First Lord of the Treasury after Walpole's resignation. As Irwin points out, the characters of Wild and Wilmington are inconsistent. Wild is aggressive and arrogant. Wilmington, even after he entered the cabinet, was considered a personal and political non-entity. 41

The best theory is that advanced by W. R. Irwin:

Perhaps a better candidate than either of these [Townshend or Pulteney] is John Carteret. Carteret, too, had for some time been associated with the Opposition. It was he who, on February 13, 1741, introduced in the House of Lords the motion urging the King to dismiss Walpole forever from his service, and supported it with an eloquent address. But when Walpole left the cabinet in February, 1742, Carteret gladly accepted the position of Secretary of State in the new government, which was made up largely of Walpole's men, and soon became virtually prime minister. For his conduct in office Carteret was in December, 1743, denounced by William Pitt, who was becoming the most prominent of the Patriots. It is easy to see how Carteret, the renegade Patriot, might be as distasteful as Walpole to Fielding... 42

Fielding's satire on Walpole is no aimless or merely vindictive attack. His conclusion comes in the speech of the grave man, which, in the "Advertisement" to the 1754 edition, Fielding

41 Irwin, 119. 42 Ibid.
recommends to the reader's attention.

The grave man speaks to all the debtors in Newgate (taxpayers) who have been victimized by the prigs (politicians). The debtors are distressed because Jonathan Wild has not kept the promises he made to them that he would alleviate their wrongs.

In the grave man's speech, at the end of the satire on Walpole, Fielding sets forth his own political creed:

Nothing sure can be more justly ridiculous than the conduct of those who should lay the lamb in the wolf's way, and then should lament his being devoured. What a wolf is in a sheepfold, a GREAT MAN is in society. Now, when one wolf is in possession of a sheepfold, how little would it avail the simple flock to expel him and place another in his stead! Of the same benefit to us is the overthrowing one prig in favour of another. And for what other advantage was your struggle? Did you not all know that Wild and his followers were prigs [politicians], as well as Johnson and his? What then could the contention be among such but that which you have now discovered it to have been? Perhaps some would say, is it then our duty tamely to submit to the rapine of the prig who now plunders us for fear of an exchange? Surely no, but I answer, it is better to shake the plunder off than to exchange the plunderer. And by what means can we effect this but by a total change in our manners? Every prig is a slave. His own priggish desires, which enslave him, themselves betray him to the tyranny of others. To preserve, therefore, the liberty of Newgate is to change the manners of Newgate. . . . Instead of being ready, on every opportunity, to pillage each other, let us be content with our honest share of the common bounty and with the acquisition of our own industry.

The grave man enunciates a political creed based on justice, mutual assistance, and, above all, honesty. Each member's paramount concern must be for the welfare of the community, for if
each man's first concern is his own welfare, he will soon return to the type of society that is conducive to the growth of great men.

The speech of the grave man was, Fielding reports, received with much applause; however, Wild continued to extract contributions and extract tribute from the prisoners. Thus, Fielding concludes, as long as England's governmental system permits a single man to amass as much power as Walpole had, the ordinary citizens of the country will be at the disposal of such a person's whim.

Beyond the political satire in Jonathan Wild there is a moral allegory. This allegory involves the conflict of Greatness and Goodness. Greatness is represented by Wild and Goodness by his intended victim, Mr. Heartfree.

Jonathan Wild's major character defect is his overriding ambition, an ambition that permits him to wantonly destroy other men for his own gain. Heartfree's worst defect is his total passivity. Fielding believed that true virtue is an active force, that goodness involves not only being good but doing good. He wrote that "men often become ridiculous or odious by over-acting even a laudable part: for Virtue itself, by growing too exuberant, and (if I may be allowed a metaphor) by running to seed changes its very nature, and becomes a most pernicious weed of a most
beautiful flower. 43 Good nature, he also wrote, is not "that cowardice which prevents us from repelling or resenting an injury."

The naive Mr. Heartfree receives Wild's attempts to ruin him with "the uncomprehending passivity of innocence." 44 The fact that Heartfree eventually wins, while Wild goes to the gallows, is a statement of Fielding's belief in "the ultimate and eternal justice of the universe." 45 Heartfree's endurance is due to some providential force and not to his own efforts, for not once does Heartfree actively attempt to help himself in his distress. In fact, twice he is presented smugly glorying in his own goodness (III, 2; III, 10). 46

Thus, the lesson of the moral allegory is that of the via media. Neither Wild nor Heartfree is an ideal good man, for, as Fielding wrote in An Essay on Conversation, "real greatness is the union of a good heart with a good head." Heartfree has a good heart and Wild has a good head. Somewhere between the two the

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43 Henry Fielding, The Champion (March 15, 1739/40), Works XV, 244.


46 Ibid., 308.
ideal is to be found.

Fielding thus presents his picture of an ideal man in *Jonathan Wild* by negation: Wild is brilliant and active but devoted to himself only; Heartfree is devoted to others, but he is stupid and passive. Fielding's ideal man, who is not pictured, is an intelligent man who knows that the active principle of goodness "may perhaps be said to constitute the most essential barrier between us and our neighbors the brutes" (Book I, Chapter 6).
CONCLUSION

In his early political plays, Henry Fielding showed a desire to write to please the politically sophisticated London audiences and an ability to use topical material for this purpose. Although *The Author's Farce*, *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, and *The Grub-Street Opera* are termed Fielding's early political plays, their major importance lies in Fielding's experiments with the techniques he later perfected in his political plays. In the later political plays, the political satire is the reason for the plays' existence; the audience is to be taught by being delighted, and Walpole's authority is to be undermined by ridicule.

In addition to this change in purpose, there are certain changes in technique from the early to the later political plays. In the later plays, Fielding showed his mastery of the "rehearsal" form. He first used this device, rather ineptly, in *The Author's Farce* in 1730. Luckless' farce, presented as a play-within-a-play, totally unbalances the structure of the work. The love plot, which Fielding develops in the first two acts of the play along the lines of a conventional comedy, is suspended while the farce is presented. The audience, caught up in the rowdy humor
of the farce, tends to forget the problems of the young playwright and his sweetheart. The love plot is then "dragged in" once again and resolved.

In his later political plays, Fielding uses the rehearsal frame as a structural device; in *Pasquin* and *The Historical Register*, it is a device to achieve unity, while in *Eurydice Hiss'd*, it is employed to point up a contrast.

In *Pasquin* Fielding presents his political satire in Trap-wit's comedy and in Fustian's tragedy. He has deliberately chosen the setting for the two plays—a rural town at election time for the comedy and the court of a Queen (Common-Sense) for the tragedy. He has also carefully chosen the "low" comic characters of the Mayor and his wife in the comedy and the overblown and pompous Firebrand in the mock tragedy. To present both the comedy and the tragedy in a single play, Fielding uses the rehearsal framework; the play-house, the rehearsal, and the spectators at the rehearsal constitute the single thread of unity in *Pasquin*.

Much the same goal is achieved by using the rehearsal form in *The Historical Register*. This play has no continuing plot whatsoever; it is rather a series of episodic satires—some political, some social. Therefore Fielding again uses the rehearsal setting to provide a semblance of unity for the diverse episodes.
In Eurydice Hiss'd the rehearsal device is presented to establish the contrast between Mr. Spatter, the author of the farce in rehearsal, and Pillage, a character in the farce who is himself the author of a farce. Pillage, who represents both Fielding and Robert Walpole, is made ridiculous by the contrast the audience observes between him and Spatter and by Spatter's comments about Pillage.

In all three of the later political plays, Fielding employs the rehearsal device for "audience direction." At all the rehearsals there are present one or more observers unfamiliar with the play; these spectators represent the audience. Through judicious commentary by the author-character, Fielding is able to point up the satire by directing the audience's attention to certain scenes or actions.

Between 1730-31 (the years of the early political plays) and 1736-37 (the later political plays), Fielding was "converted" to the Opposition position. From Pasquin in 1736 until approximately 1741, he crusaded, first through the drama and then through his journalistic writings, against Robert Walpole. When Fielding

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1 For a discussion of the possibility that Fielding abandoned the Opposition in 1741, see Martin C. Battestin, "Fielding's Changing Politics and Joseph Andrews," Philological Quarterly, XXXIX (1960), 39-55.
became firmly allied with the Opposition, and when he began to write plays to further their cause, he saw the need for concentrating the political satire in the plays, either by scene or by character. This necessity had not operated in the early political plays; thus, in *The Author's Farce* and *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, the political jokes are scattered throughout the play, with no attempt to build a cumulative effect.

In order to gain the maximum effect from his dramatic political satire, Fielding concentrated his attack by character or by scene in the later political plays. In *Pasquin*, the satire is presented in the scenes of *The Election* and in the character of Firebrand in Fustian's tragedy. In *The Historical Register*, the satire on politics is contained in three scenes at the structural high points of the play—the first scene, the middle scene, and the final scene. *Eurydice Hiss'd* takes advantage of both plot and character to attack Walpole; the plot is an allegory on the defeat of the Excise Bill, while the author of the "damned farce," *Pillage*, represents Walpole.

The lapse of time between the later political plays and *Jonathan Wild* cannot be determined; almost certainly, most of the political portions of the novel (except for the "Newgate scene," IV, 2) were written before Walpole's fall.
The form of the prose narrative was relatively new to Fielding, which probably accounts for some resemblances between Jonathan Wild and the later political plays, particularly The Historical Register. Thus, the structure of Jonathan Wild is episodic as is the structure of the plays. In Jonathan Wild, there is political satire throughout the novel, but the major attack is concentrated in five chapters—-at the beginning, middle, and end of the novel. This, of course, recalls the placement of the political scenes in The Historical Register. The final similarity between the plays and Jonathan Wild is that all attack Robert Walpole.

There are also important differences between the plays and Jonathan Wild. In this novel, for the first time, Fielding was able to present a "finished" portrait of the character he was attacking. He could spend several pages discussing the criminal master plan, identical with a political scheme, and the character of the master criminal, the same as that of a "prime minister."

In the additional space provided by the prose narrative Fielding could work for the cumulative effect of the satire on the reader; he did not have to concern himself, as he had in the plays, with providing immediate, "line-by-line" amusement for his audience. Thus the tone of Jonathan Wild is far more bitter than that
of any of the plays; it is, in fact, closer to the satirical tone of Jonathan Swift than to any of Fielding's plays.

Because the attack on Walpole is expanded in this novel into an allegory on the conflict of Greatness and Goodness, Jonathan Wild is not merely a topical political satire against Robert Walpole. It is also a statement about the qualities common to all "great men," for any man who employs oppression or corruption to gratify his personal ambition is a "great man."

Thus Jonathan Wild is an important transition in Fielding's work, for in this novel he ceases to be merely an eighteenth-century writer attacking Robert Walpole and becomes a writer concerned with the universal problem of the oppression of the innocent by the wicked. Fielding's growing bitterness toward all tyranny and all conquest motivated by personal gain appears in this novel.

I fancy, reader, . . . thou art unacquainted with these GREAT MEN, and hast not had sufficient instruction, leisure, or opportunity, to consider what happens to those who pursue what is generally understood by GREATNESS. For surely, if thou hadst animadverted, not only on the many perils to which GREAT MEN are daily liable while they are in their progress, but hadst discerned, as it were through a microscope (for it is invisible to the naked eye) that diminutive speck of happiness which they attain even in the consummation of their wishes, thou wouldst lament with me the unhappy fate of these GREAT MEN, on whom nature hath set so superior a mark that the rest of mankind are born for their use and emolument only, and be apt to cry out: "It is pity that those for whose pleasure and profit man-
kind are to labour and sweat, to be hacked and hewed, to be pillaged, plundered, and every way destroyed, should reap so little advantage from all the miseries they occasion to others." For my part, I own myself of that humble kind of mortals who consider themselves born for the behoof of some GREAT MAN or other, and could I behold his happiness carved out of the labour and ruin of a thousand such reptiles as myself, I might with satisfaction exclaim, Sic, sic juvat. But when I behold one GREAT MAN starving with hunger and freezing with cold, in the midst of fifty thousand who are suffering the same evils for his diversion, when I see another, whose own mind is a more abject slave to his own greatness, and is more tortured and racked by it, than those of all his vassals, lastly, 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 I am almost inclined to wish that nature had spared us this her masterpiece, and that no GREAT MAN had ever been born into the world. (II, 14)
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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Mary Elizabeth Devine has been read and approved by five members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

26 May 1964
Date

Signature of Adviser